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Perceiving High or Low Home–School Dissonance: Longitudinal Effects on Adolescent Emotional and Academic Well-Being

Revathy Arunkumar and Carol Midgley
Combined Program in Education and Psychology
University of Michigan

Tim Urdan
Department of Psychology
Santa Clara University

For some adolescents, the beliefs, values, and behavioral expectations at home and at school are in conflict, and negotiating the boundaries between these two contexts is difficult. We administered surveys, including a scale assessing perceptions of home–school dissonance, to an ethnically diverse sample of students ($N = 475$) in the 5th grade in elementary school and the following year in middle school. Contrary to our hypothesis, African American students did not report more dissonance than European American students. High dissonance students (top 3rd on the Dissonance scale) were more angry and self-deprecating, had lower self-esteem, were less hopeful, felt less academically efficacious, and had a lower grade point average than did low dissonance students (bottom 3rd on the scale). Additionally, high dissonance students experienced a greater decline in grade point average, and less of a decline in anger than did low dissonance students when they moved to middle school.

In his ecological model of development, Bronfenbrenner (e.g., 1979) emphasized that children experience a variety of contexts on a daily basis. He

Requests for reprints should be sent to Revathy Arunkumar, 1400 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109–1259. E-mail: revathy@umich.edu

further postulated that development is enhanced if the role demands in the different contexts are compatible, if there is mutual trust among the participants in the different settings, and if there is goal consensus across the settings. Two of these contexts or "worlds" as some have called them (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991) are the home and the school. The dominant beliefs, values, and behavioral expectations in these two contexts may be similar or markedly different. For some children, the values and expectations at home and school overlap enough so that the boundaries become blurred, and children can integrate their roles in one context with their roles in the other context (Levine & Moreland, 1995). Other children encounter values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations at school that are different from the ones espoused at home. This becomes particularly problematic when differences across these contexts are stigmatized. That is, when what is valued in one context is devalued in another context. Phelan et al. (1991) have examined similarities and differences in adolescents' multiple worlds and have drawn attention to the importance, in terms of both emotional and academic well-being, of making smooth transitions from one world to another. They have been concerned in particular about youngsters who struggle to integrate two or more conflicting worlds. The ability of young people to move between these settings has both immediate and long-term implications for the quality of their lives, their success in school, and their future life expectations (Phelan et al., 1991).

However, differences between home and school do not inevitably lead to trouble and conflict, and similarity to rapport and absence of conflict (Erikson, 1987). Phelan (1998) found that some students experienced problems crossing the home–school border even when they described the sociocultural components of their worlds as congruent. For example, students may be faced with similar unrealistic expectations at home and at school that are difficult to fulfill and that provoke stress. Other students are able to negotiate the different beliefs, values, and expectations at home and school without being unduly affected. This study focuses in particular on those students who express concern because their lives at home and at school are like "two different worlds."

Ethnographic studies have suggested that African American students experience more dissonance between home and school than do European American students (e.g., Delpit, 1990; Fordham, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Ogbu, 1992). Students from cultures outside the mainstream may experience a sense of dissonance when they encounter a devaluing of their beliefs and behaviors at schools that reflect the dominant White, middle class ideology. That is not to suggest that minority students or their families devalue schooling or do not believe that schooling is important for their future lives. There is ample evidence to the contrary (e.g., Mickelson,

1990; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Whereas minority students may encounter a devaluing of their beliefs and behaviors at school (Boykin, 1994; Delpit, 1988; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994), this is not the case for most European American students. For these students, schools are an extension of their experiences at home. From early in their lives, European American children learn that they are the norm (Nieto, 1996). They experience a sense of self-validation as they continue to learn the behaviors, values, and practices that are embraced at home.

Boykin (1994) pointed to the emphasis in schools on individualism, competition, impulse control, and strict adherence to time constraints as some of the manifestations of European American norms and values in schools. Similarly, Staples (1987) contrasted the value orientations of European American and minority students on several different dimensions including emotions, status, and individualism. He found, for example, that European Americans stressed the importance of controlling one's emotions and not exhibiting them in public, a value that is reinforced in schools. Minority students like African Americans valued spontaneity and the expression of feelings in both public and private. These students are likely to find the strict codes for behavior in school restrictive (Boykin, 1994). Boykin (1994) argued that African American students will not feel alienated from school if schooling and school achievement are embedded in a context in which their cultural values are upheld.

Other researchers have identified styles of communication and interaction as a potential source of dissonance between home and school for African American students. For example, Heath (1989) found that African American students sometimes misinterpreted teachers' style of questioning because it was different from the style adopted at home. When Heath helped teachers ask questions in more culturally and linguistically compatible ways, the children were more successful. Irvine and Fraser (1998) recommended that teachers of African American students use a culturally specific pedagogical style that is more compatible with what they experience at home. Sleeter and Grant (1991), in their study of students in desegregated schools, found that many of the minority students felt alienated from school because the academic content did not relate to their lives outside of school. Ladson-Billings (1994) described culturally relevant practices that are compatible with the experiences of African American children and contrasted them with the teaching practices that are common in most schools. However, these attempts at fostering compatibility between home and school are rare, therefore it is expected that African American students will perceive more dissonance between home and school than will European American students.

In addition to ethnicity, a number of other factors may play a role in students' perceptions of dissonance. Phelan and her colleagues (1991) put forth a generic model in which diverse reasons for experiencing dissonance between the expectations and values in various contexts were explored. For example, socioeconomic status may play a role in students' perceptions of dissonance. The values and expectations of students from poor or working class backgrounds may be significantly different from those of middle class students of the same ethnic group (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993, Willis, 1977). Children may perceive that their school life is different from their home life for other reasons, such as the religious practices or political beliefs that are fostered at home.

This study examines the relation between students' experiences of dissonance between their lives at home and at school and their emotional and academic well-being. Ethnographic studies vividly describe the debilitating effects on young people of perceiving that home and school are like two different worlds (Bernal, Saenz, & Knight, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan, 1988; Gibson, 1991; Ogbu, 1982, 1987; Patthey-Chavez, 1993; Phelan et al., 1991; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994; Tharp, 1989). In terms of both emotional and academic well-being, home–school dissonance takes its toll. These young people are likely to experience frustration and alienation, some of which will be internalized, affecting feelings of self-esteem and self-deprecation (Rosenberg, 1979), and some of which will be externalized in emotions such as anger (Grossman, 1995). This conflict between the values and expectations in the dominant contexts in their lives is also likely to impact perceptions about the future, resulting in a less hopeful outlook (Mickelson, 1990). In addition, these students are likely to experience academic difficulties and to question their academic competence (Grossman, 1995; Nieto, 1996). Stated simply, students who must deal with the burden of negotiating differences in the values and expectations at home and at school may suffer both emotionally and academically.

The ethnographic studies have provided important insights and have directed our attention to the negative consequences of experiencing dissonance. This study, building on this ethnographic research, examines these issues using survey methodology and a longitudinal design with a large sample of early adolescents. Much of the rich ethnographic documentation has focused on high school students. There seems to be a paucity of research in the early adolescent years when children are maturing cognitively and may be increasingly aware of the dissonance between the expectations and values at home and at school.

This is also a stage of life when most children in this country move from elementary to middle level schools. Typically, elementary schools provide a more family-like setting than do middle schools, with children staying

together as a group across the school day and interacting with a limited number of teachers. Elementary teachers are seen as less formal, and more personal and caring than middle school teachers (e.g., Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1988). Elementary teachers have a greater opportunity than do middle school teachers to get to know their students well and to make contacts with the home. This may provide them with the opportunity to understand and to adjust to differences in the expectations and values at home and at school for individual students. When children move to middle school, they may encounter teachers who know little about them and their families, and who are thus unable to accommodate or understand differences in behavioral expectations and values. For this reason, the negative effects of perceiving a dissonance between home and school may be exacerbated when students move to middle school.

In addition, there is evidence that the learning environment becomes more focused on relative ability and social comparison when students move to middle school (e.g., Anderman & Midgley, 1997). For example, the use of honor rolls and assignment to classes based on relative achievement becomes more prevalent in middle school. This increase in social comparison in the middle school is likely to foster students' focus on themselves and how they are different, thereby exacerbating the negative effects of experiencing dissonance between home and school. Minority students, who are overrepresented in lower ability groups, may be particularly vulnerable to this increased emphasis on relative ability, particularly those who are feeling alienated from school (Oakes, 1985, 1987). Phelan and her colleagues (1991) found that minority students in lower tracks felt disenfranchised, and they described tracking as contributing to their sense of cultural estrangement. Steele (1992) suggested that African American students may be more vulnerable than European American students to the negative effects of a learning environment in which relative performance is emphasized. This may be especially true for those African American students who are sensitive to the differences in the expectations and values at home and at school. Thus, it may be that dissonance will have a stronger impact on changes across the transition in the emotional and academic well-being for African American students than for European American students.

In summary we hypothesize that:

1. African American students experience higher levels of home–school dissonance than do European American students.
2. Students who experience high levels of dissonance between home and school (top one third on the measure of dissonance) feel less hopeful, more angry, have lower self-esteem, engage in more self-deprecation, feel

less efficacious, and have a lower grade point average (GPA) than students who experience no or low levels of dissonance (bottom one third on the measure of dissonance).

3. Students who experience high levels of dissonance between home and school exhibit a more negative pattern of change in their emotional and academic well-being when they move from the fifth grade in elementary school to the sixth grade in middle school than do students who experience no or low levels of dissonance.

4. Experiencing high or low dissonance has a stronger relation to changes across the transition in the emotional and academic well-being of African American students than European American students.

METHOD

This study is part of an ongoing, longitudinal research study examining the motivation and emotional well-being of students as they move from fifth grade in elementary school to ninth grade in high school. Data for this study were collected in the spring of 1995 when students were in the fifth grade in elementary school and again in the spring of 1996, when these students had moved to the sixth grade in middle school. Fifth-grade students and their teachers in 18 elementary schools in three ethnically and economically diverse working class school districts in southeastern Michigan were invited to participate in the study. Students were required to have parental permission to participate, and 83% received permission. During the 2nd year of the study, students moved to nine middle schools.

Trained research assistants administered surveys to students in their schools in two 40-min sessions. There were more than a dozen research assistants, some of whom were African American, and some of whom were from other countries such as New Zealand, Israel, and India. The majority of research assistants were European American. Students were told that this was not a test and that there were no right or wrong answers. They were assured that their answers would be kept confidential.

A total of 546 students participated in the study at both time points. Although there were small numbers of Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American students in the larger sample, there were not sufficient numbers to allow for comparisons across ethnic groups. Therefore these students were eliminated from this study and analyses were aimed at understanding differences between and within two ethnic groups: African Americans (n = 276) and European Americans (n = 199). The reliability of the scale measuring home–school dissonance was determined for this sample of 475 students. Additionally, to compare students who clearly ex-

perienced some feelings of dissonance between home and school from those who did not, we selected students who scored at the top or the bottom third of the distribution on the scale assessing home–school dissonance. Those who scored above 2.5 on the scale (those experiencing dissonance) or below 1.67 (those experiencing low or no dissonance) on the 5-point Home–School Dissonance scale constituted the two groups. These groups consisted of 144 high dissonance students and 164 low or no dissonance students ($N = 308$). The high dissonance group consisted of 84 African Americans and 60 European Americans. The low dissonance group consisted of 93 African Americans and 71 European Americans. There were 81 boys and 63 girls in the high dissonance group, and 79 boys and 85 girls in the low dissonance group. Chi-square analyses determined that there were no significant differences in the representation of boys and girls, $\chi^2(1, N = 308) = 2.00$, $p = .16$, or African Americans and European Americans, $\chi^2(1, N = 308) = .08$, $p = .77$, in the high and low dissonance groups. In the low dissonance group, 66 students (40.47%) received free lunch and 7 students (4.36%) received reduced fee lunch. In the high dissonance group, 68 students (47.22%) received free lunch and 7 students (5.15%) received reduced fee lunch. There were no significant differences in the representation of students receiving free or reduced lunch in the low and high dissonance groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 308) = 1.8$, $p = .40$.

Measures

Home–school dissonance. Because there was no existing scale for use in empirical studies, we constructed a scale assessing perceived dissonance between home and school for this study. It was derived from our reading of many of the ethnographic studies that have examined this issue, particularly the generic view of dissonance articulated by Phelan and her colleagues (1991). Care was taken to write items that were clear and at a level that early adolescents in the fifth and sixth grades would be able to understand and answer. The items were piloted with a small number of fifth-grade students to ensure that they were relatively unambiguous and easily comprehended. Based on comments from these students, some items were eliminated and some were revised. Further, the scale was revised and improved after the first time it was administered to the larger sample (spring of fifth grade in elementary school) to improve the distribution and to eliminate one item about which some students had questions. This, along with the fact that the students were more cognitively mature at the end of the sixth grade than at the end of fifth grade, led to our decision to use the sixth-grade scale to create the dissonance groups. The scale consists

of six items, each on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*), to 3 (*somewhat true*), to 5 (*very true*). Items include, for example, "I feel troubled because my home life and my school life are two different worlds," and "I don't like to have my parents come to school because their ideas are very different from my teachers' ideas." A factor analysis conducted with these six items indicated that they formed a single factor explaining 43% of the variance. An examination of the six items in the Home–School Dissonance scale indicated that the means ranged from 1.80 to 2.76 and the standard deviations ranged from 1.14 to 1.37. None of the items were skewed. Internal consistency reliability, using Cronbach's alpha, was .73. The items in the scale are listed in the Appendix. Table 1 includes descriptive information about the items in the scale.

The survey also included scales assessing students' emotional and academic well-being. Emotional well-being was assessed in terms of students'

TABLE 1
Descriptives of the Items on the Home–School Dissonance Scale

					Interitem Correlation				
	M	*SD*	*Factor Loading*	*Item Total Correlation*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Think about how home life is different from home life of other students.	2.76	1.37	0.39	0.34	1.00				
2. Important to parents, not important to teachers.	2.39	1.28	0.50	0.42	0.19	1.00			
3. Family viewpoint is different from that of teachers' viewpoint.	2.31	1.24	0.59	0.51	0.28	0.42	1.00		
4. Parents and teachers have different ideas about learning.	1.91	1.19	0.68	0.53	0.22	0.30	0.35	1.00	
5. Don't like parents to come to school.	1.80	1.14	0.61	0.48	0.20	0.26	0.34	0.47	1.00
6. Home life and school life are two different worlds.	2.09	1.33	0.54	0.45	0.27	0.23	0.27	0.40	0.32

Note. $N = 475$. Scale skew = 0.52. Variance explained = 43%, $\alpha = 0.73$. For boys, the factor loading ranged from 0.49 to 0.67, variance explained = 45%, $\alpha = 0.77$, $N = 232$. For girls, the factor loading ranged from 0.30 to 0.72, variance explained = 39%, $\alpha = 0.68$, $N = 243$. For African Americans, the factor loading ranged from 0.38 to 0.74, variance explained = 42%, $\alpha = 0.71$, $N = 276$. For European Americans, the factor loading ranged from 0.16 to 0.45, variance explained = 44%, $\alpha = 0.74$, $N = 199$.

hopefulness about the future, their self-esteem and self-deprecation, and their feelings of anger. Academic self-efficacy and final GPA were used as measures of academic well-being. Items on all of the scales, except for anger, used the following anchors: 1 (*not at all true*), 3 (*somewhat true*), and 5 (*very true*). All scales, along with the items, the alpha coefficients, and the skew at Years 1 and 2, are included in the Appendix.

Hopefulness. The Hopefulness scale was constructed by the research team for use in the larger study. The five items on the Hopefulness scale assess students' feelings of hopefulness about their future. For example, "I am excited about what the future holds for me." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .74 for Year 1 and .75 for Year 2.

Self-esteem and self-deprecation. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was used to assess self-esteem and self-deprecation. Five items from this scale were used to measure positive self-esteem and four items were used to measure self-deprecation. The decision to divide self-esteem into two dimensions was based in particular on the work of Owens (1994) and by our earlier work with this scale (Midgley, Arunkumar, & Urdan, 1996). In both cases, general self-esteem emerged as a bidimensional construct, which included positive self-esteem (hereafter referred to as self-esteem) and self-deprecation. Earlier research indicated that there were distinct differences in the way each of these dimensions of global self-esteem related to other factors, for example, achievement and depression (Owens, 1994). Items measuring self-esteem included positively worded items such as "I feel I have a number of good qualities." Self-deprecation included negatively worded items such as "I feel I do not have much to be proud of." Cronbach's alpha was .72 for self-esteem and .76 for self-deprecation at Year 1 and .77 for both self-esteem and self-deprecation at Year 2.

Anger. The scale assessing anger is part of the Symptom Checklist–90 (SCL–90), a self-report symptom inventory developed by Derogatis and his colleagues (Derogatis, Rickels, & Rock, 1976). The five items on this scale ask students to indicate how often they have felt angry during the past month. The scale includes items such as "How often have you felt really mad at other people?" All the items were on a 5-point anchored scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*), to 3 (*sometimes*), to 5 (*almost always*). The alpha coefficients were .82 the 1st year and .85 the 2nd year.

Self-efficacy. The scale measuring academic self-efficacy was taken from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (Midgley, Maehr, & Urdan, 1996) and has been used in a number of studies with both elementary and middle school students. This scale assesses students' beliefs that they can master the work they are given in school. Although the items are not specific to a subject matter area or task, they are specific to the students' experiences in their classrooms that year. It includes items such as "I'm certain I can master the skills taught in class this year." The alpha coefficients were .78 the 1st year and .74 the 2nd year.

Information was also collected from school records. An overall GPA was calculated for each student by computing the average of their grades at the end of the school year in the core subjects (social studies, language arts, math, and science). Grades were coded using a 13-point scale ranging from 1 (*E*) to 13 (*A*+). An estimate of socioeconomic status (SES) was calculated based on students' participation in the free and reduced fee lunch program in school. Qualifying for receiving free or reduced fee lunch in school depends on level of income and the number of people in the family. School records indicated whether students received free lunch, lunch at reduced rates, or no reduction in the price for lunch, by the following, 1 (*free*), 2 (*reduced*), and 3 (*no reduction*). Information about students' ethnicity was also collected from school records.

RESULTS

As a first step, we conducted *t* tests on the whole sample ($N = 475$) to compare the mean levels of dissonance experienced by African American and European American students and the mean levels of dissonance experienced by boys and girls. There were no significant differences in the extent of home–school dissonance experienced across the two ethnic groups, $M_{(\text{African American})} = 2.22$, $SD = .82$, $M_{(\text{European American})} = 2.18$, SD = .79; or across boys, $M = 2.27$, $SD = .88$, and girls, $M = 2.14$, $SD = .73$.

We then used repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to assess main and interaction effects on the dependent variables. Dependent variables included measures of students' emotional and academic well-being, namely, hopefulness, anger, self-esteem, self-deprecation, self-efficacy, and GPA. Between-subject factors included high and low home–school dissonance groups (top and bottom third on the Dissonance scale), ethnicity, and their interaction. The within-subject factor was year (fifth-grade elementary school, sixth-grade middle school), and its interaction with home–school dissonance and ethnicity. SES and gender were included as covariates in the analyses for all the dependent variables.

Fifth-grade GPA was included as a covariate in conducting the repeated measures ANCOVA for hopefulness, anger, self-esteem, self-deprecation, and self-efficacy. Means and standard deviations on the measures of emotional and academic well-being for the whole sample, and for students experiencing high and low dissonance between home and school, are presented in Table 2. Table 3 includes means and standard deviations for students in the high and low dissonance groups separately for African American and European American students. Table 4 includes the *F* values for the main and interaction effects on students' emotional and academic well-being. All between-subject and within-subject main effects are presented, but only significant interactions are reported. Our research questions and hypotheses involved both main effects and interaction effects, which are presented separately.

Main Effects

The main effect results from the repeated measures ANCOVA analyses indicated that there were significant differences between students who experienced high levels of dissonance (top one third on the Dissonance scale) and students who experienced low or no dissonance (bottom one third on

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Measures of Emotional and Academic Well-Being

	Whole Sample[a]				*Low Home–School Dissonance*[b]				*High Home–School Dissonance*[c]			
	Year 1		*Year 2*		*Year 1*		*Year 2*		*Year 1*		*Year 2*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Hopefulness	4.38	0.64	4.41	0.65	4.48	0.58	4.52	0.60	4.27	0.70	4.24	0.68
Anger	2.99	1.15	2.73	1.07	2.72	1.11	2.33	1.08	3.31	1.11	3.14	0.99
Self-esteem	4.23	0.74	4.34	0.67	4.35	0.66	4.44	0.63	4.07	0.76	4.14	0.73
Self-deprecation	1.83	0.86	1.72	0.74	1.59	0.72	1.46	0.61	2.04	0.93	2.04	0.83
Self-efficacy	4.16	0.67	4.11	0.74	4.26	0.63	4.31	0.67	4.01	0.71	3.94	0.78
Grade point average	8.34	2.28	7.66	2.75	8.60	2.26	8.11	2.66	7.86	2.27	6.85	2.77
Socioeconomic status	2.11	0.97			2.14	0.97			1.99	0.98		

Note. Grades were coded on a 13-point scale (1 = *E*, 13 = *A*+). Socioeconomic status was coded on a 3-point scale (1 = *free lunch*, 2 = *reduced fee lunch*, 3 = *no reduced lunch*). Measures of emotional well-being and self-efficacy were coded on a 5-point scale. The low dissonance group included the bottom one third of the sample, and the high dissonance group included the top one third of the sample on the home–school dissonance scale.

[a]$N = 475$. [b]$N = 164$. [c]$N = 144$.

TABLE 3
Means and Standard Deviations for Measures of Emotional and Academic Well-Being for African American and European American Students Experiencing High and Low Home–School Dissonance

	High Dissonance Group								*Low Dissonance Group*							
	African American[a]				*European American*[b]				*African American*[c]				*European American*[d]			
	Year 1		*Year 2*		*Year 1*		*Year 2*		*Year 1*		*Year 2*		*Year 1*		*Year 2*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Hopefulness	4.39	0.68	4.26	0.69	4.10	0.71	4.20	0.66	4.46	0.56	4.52	0.55	4.51	0.61	4.51	0.67
Anger	3.42	1.13	3.17	0.98	3.15	1.08	3.09	1.02	2.97	1.21	2.59	1.11	2.39	1.03	1.99	0.96
Self-esteem	4.12	0.75	4.18	0.69	4.00	0.79	4.09	0.79	4.30	0.70	4.42	0.61	4.42	0.62	4.45	0.67
Self-deprecation	2.09	1.04	1.99	0.86	1.97	0.77	2.11	0.78	1.66	0.75	1.45	0.58	1.51	0.68	1.48	0.66
Self-efficacy	4.05	0.73	4.05	0.74	3.96	0.67	3.79	0.82	4.25	0.62	4.21	0.66	4.28	0.66	4.43	0.67
Grade point average	7.65	2.27	6.47	2.62	8.16	2.24	7.43	2.89	8.11	2.22	7.45	2.60	9.21	2.18	8.98	2.48
Socioeconomic status	2.04	0.96			1.93	1.01			2.05	0.99			2.25	0.94		

Note. Grades were coded on a 13-point scale (1 = *E*, 13 = *A*+). Socioeconomic status was coded on a 3-point scale (1 = *free lunch*, 2 = *reduced fee lunch*, 3 = *no reduced lunch*). Measures of emotional well-being and self-efficacy were coded on a 5-point scale. The low dissonance group included the bottom one third of the sample, and the high dissonance group included the top one third of the sample on the home–school dissonance scale.

[a]$N = 84$. [b]$N = 60$. [c]$N = 93$. [d]$N = 71$.

TABLE 4
Effect of Cultural Dissonance, Ethnicity, and Year in School on the Emotional and Academic Well-Being of Students

	Hopefulness	*Anger*	*Self-Esteem*	*Self-Deprecation*	*Self-Efficacy*	*GPA*
Between subjects						
Cultural dissonance	14.83***	33.95***	14.69***	40.43***	17.64***	11.10***
Ethnicity	2.82	9.10**	0.46	0.14	1.26	19.65***
Cultural Dissonance × Ethnicity					3.96*	
Within subjects–year						
Year	0.01	15.85***	3.52	0.71	0.74	32.45***
Year × Cultural Dissonance		3.88*				4.24*
Year × Ethnicity				4.35*		

Note. Values are *F* values. All between-subject and within-subject main effects are presented, but only significant interactions are presented. Sex, socioeconomic status, and grade point average (GPA) were included as covariates for all measures of emotional well-being, and for self-efficacy. Sex and socioeconomic status were included as covariates for GPA.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

the Dissonance scale) on all measures of well-being (see Table 4). Students who were in the group reporting high levels of home–school dissonance were less hopeful and more angry, had lower self-esteem and were more self-deprecating, felt less academically efficacious, and had a lower average GPA than students who were in the group that experienced low or no dissonance.

Both ethnicity and year were found to have main effects on anger and GPA (see Table 4). African American students were more angry and had a lower GPA than did their European American counterparts. Students as a whole were less angry and had a lower GPA after they moved from the fifth grade in elementary school to the sixth grade in middle school.

Interaction Effects

A number of interaction effects were examined. There was a significant home–school dissonance group by ethnicity interaction on students' reports of their academic self-efficacy. Experiencing a dissonance between home and school had a stronger impact on the academic efficacy of European American students than on the efficacy of African American students

(see Table 4 and Figure 1). Post hoc ANCOVA analyses revealed that, when controlling for gender, SES, and fifth-grade GPA, there was no difference between the high and low dissonance groups on feelings of efficacy within the African American sample, $F(1, 156) = 3.14$, $p < .08$, whereas there was a significant difference between the dissonance groups within the European American sample, $F(1, 123) = 14.30$, $p < .000$. European American students in the high dissonance group had lower feelings of self-efficacy than did their low dissonance peers (the means and standard deviations for the high and low dissonance groups are presented separately for African American and European American students in Table 3).

Next, we wanted to determine whether there were any Dissonance Group × Year, or any Dissonance Group × Ethnicity × Year interactions on any of the dependent variables. First, there was a significant Year × Dissonance Group interaction for GPA. The decline in GPA from fifth to sixth grade was greater for the high dissonance group than for the low dissonance group (see Figure 2). Post hoc analyses using repeated measures ANCOVA conducted for students experiencing high and low levels of dissonance separately indicated that although there was a significant decline in GPA from Grade 5 to Grade 6 for students experiencing both high, $F(1, 133) = 24.94$, $p < .000$, and low, $F(1, 154) = 7.99$, $p < .005$, levels of dissonance, the decline was steeper for the students in the high dissonance group.

A Year × Dissonance interaction was also noted for anger. Students in the low dissonance group reported a greater decline in anger as compared to students in the high dissonance group. Analyses using repeated measures ANCOVA conducted separately for students experiencing high and low dissonance indicated that although there was no significant decline in anger for students experiencing higher levels of dissonance, there was a significant decline in anger for students experiencing low levels of dissonance, $F(1, 152) = 18.74$, $p < .000$ (see Figure 3).

Finally, a Year × Ethnicity interaction emerged for self-deprecation, $F(1, 160) = 4.35$, $p < .05$. The change in self-deprecation across the transition was different within each ethnic group. Post hoc repeated measures ANCOVA conducted separately for the two ethnic groups indicated that there was a significant decrease, $F(1, 160) = 4.48$, $p < .036$, in self-deprecation from Grade 5 to Grade 6 for the African American students in this sample. The decrease in self-deprecation from Grade 5 to Grade 6 was not significant for the European American students, $F(1, 127) = .77$, $p < .381$. There were no significant three-way (Dissonance Group × Ethnicity × Year) interactions on any of the dependent variables.

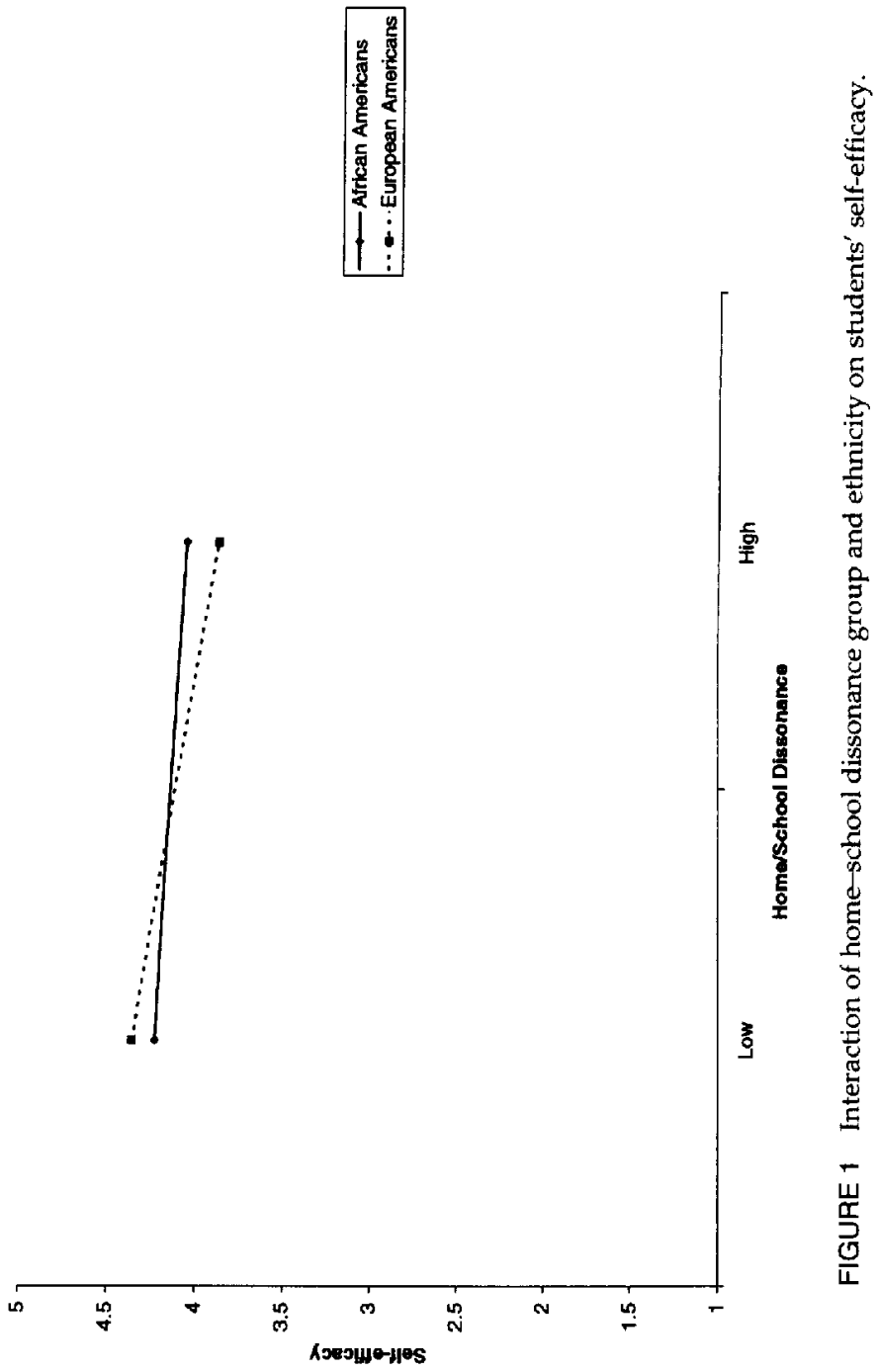

FIGURE 1 Interaction of home–school dissonance group and ethnicity on students' self-efficacy.

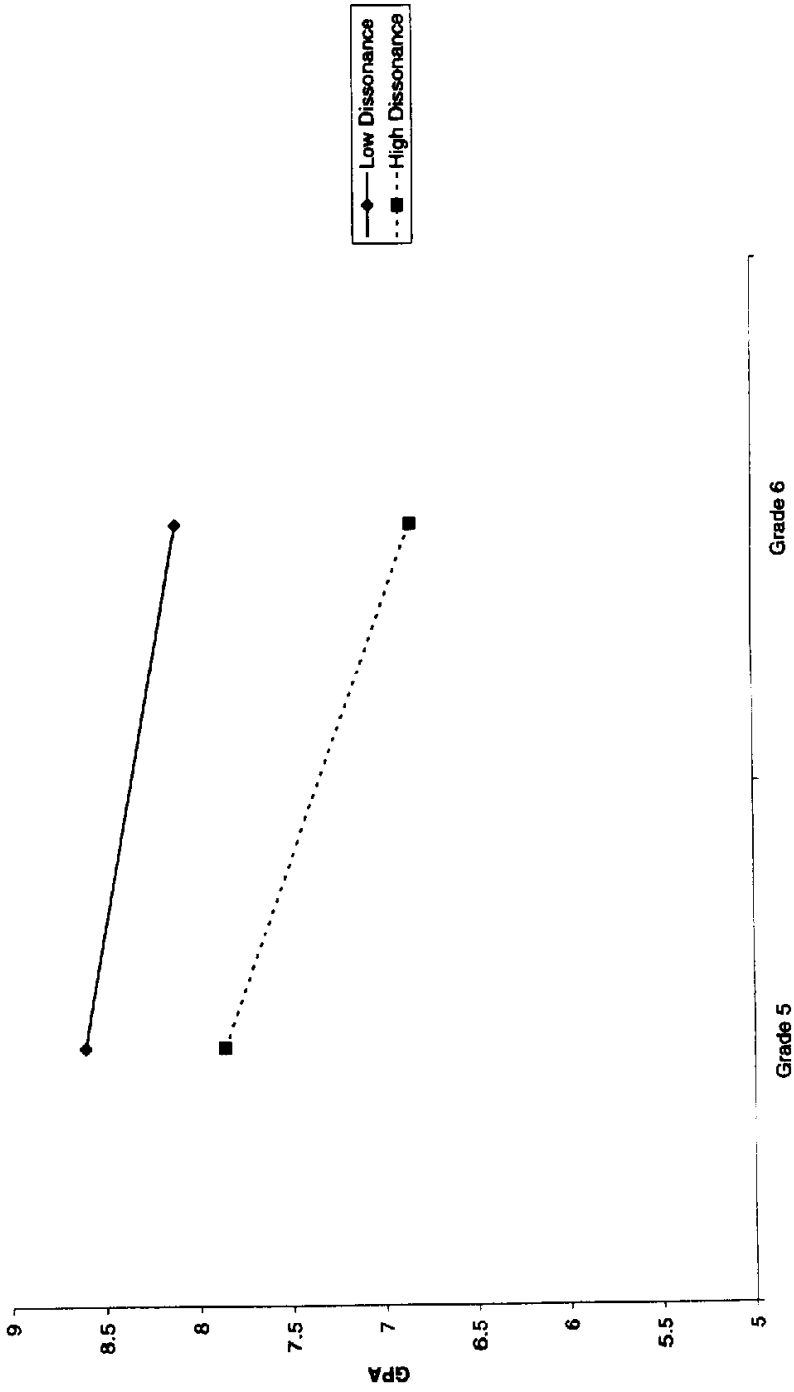

FIGURE 2 Interaction of home–school dissonance group and year on students' grade point average.

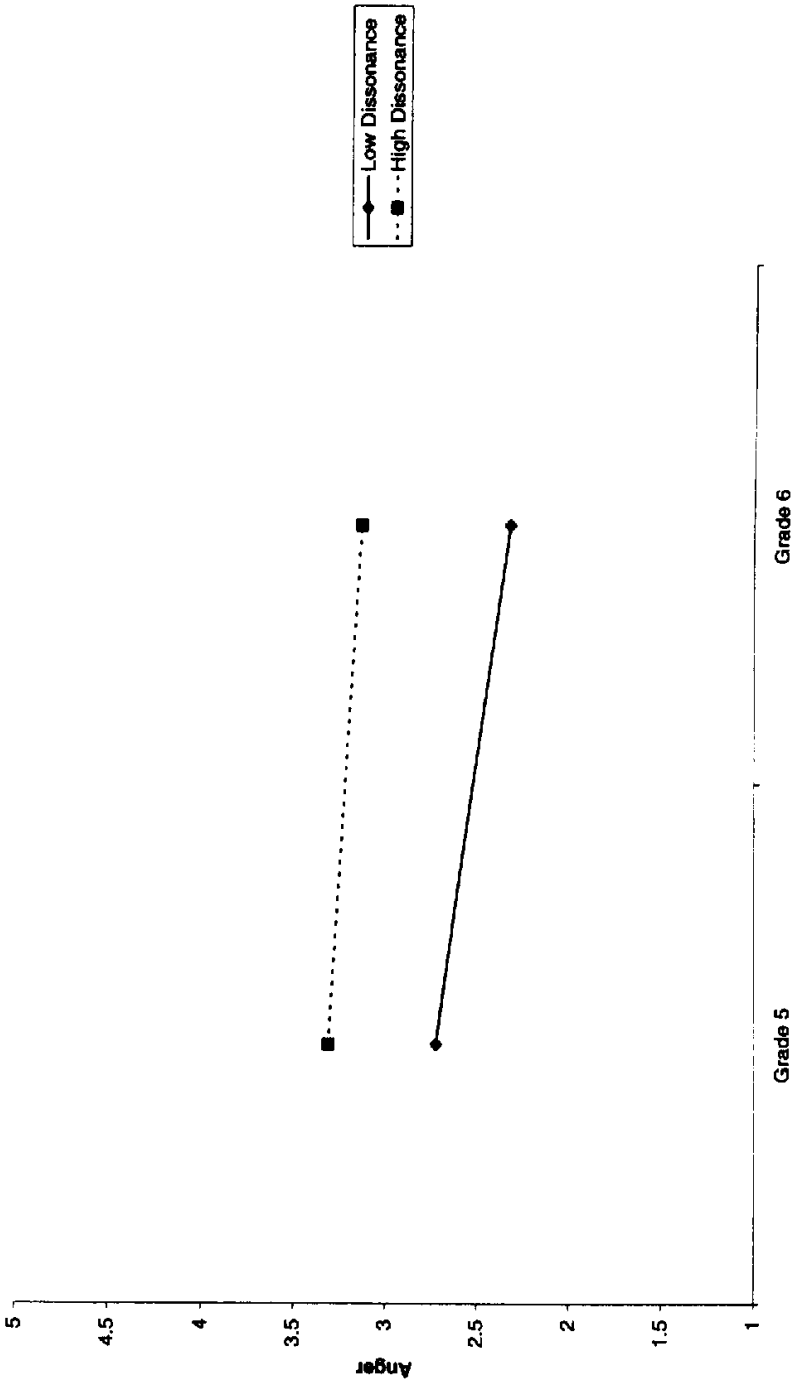

FIGURE 3 Interaction of home–school dissonance group and year on students' anger.

DISCUSSION

In this economically and ethnically diverse sample, African American and European American students did not differ in their perceptions of dissonance between home and school. This finding is contrary to what was hypothesized, and contrary to what has been proposed in much of the theory and ethnographic research. Many of the ethnographic studies included only minority students, because they were the group assumed to be experiencing problems resulting from a discord between the culture at home and in school. The sample selected for this study was not based on that assumption. Although theorists have suggested that the values and expectations promulgated in schools are more compatible with those of European American than African American students, we are unaware of quantitative verification. Results of the study lend support to Phelan's view that there are a variety of reasons for students' feelings of a lack of concordance among their worlds. It is possible that students from different ethnic groups have different reasons for experiencing dissonance. There is still much to be learned about the roots of dissonance.

This study provides strong support for our hypothesis that students' academic and emotional well-being is jeopardized when they experience high levels of dissonance between the values and expectations at home and in school. There were significant differences between students who experienced high levels of dissonance (top third on the Dissonance scale) and students who experienced low or no dissonance (bottom third on the Dissonance scale) on all measures of both emotional and academic well-being. Perceiving a high degree of dissonance between home and school was associated negatively with hopefulness about the future, self-esteem, feelings of academic efficacy, and GPA and positively with anger and self-deprecation. These findings, using survey methods and quantitative analyses, provide support for the ethnographic studies (e.g., Davidson, 1996; Delpit, 1990; Fordham, 1996; Nieto, 1996; Phelan et al., 1991, 1994) that have described quite eloquently the difficulties that are experienced by adolescents who must, on a daily basis, cross the boundaries between their conflicting worlds. For many of these students, this is a painful experience that undermines their feelings about themselves, their hope for the future, and their chances of academic success. As noted by Phelan et al. (1991), "students' competence in moving between settings has tremendous implications for the quality of their lives, and their chances of using the educational system as a stepping stone to further education, productive life experiences, and meaningful adult life" (p. 224).

These results draw attention to the need to put more resources into finding ways to help these children feel more comfortable with their divergent

worlds. Some have suggested that incorporating courses or programs in school that legitimize and value different cultures, or making special efforts to involve all parents in school activities in ways that assure they feel comfortable and part of the school community (Eccles & Harold, 1996) will ameliorate feelings of dissonance. The measure of perceived home–school dissonance developed and tested in this study may be of help to those evaluating the effects of programs such as these. However, this may not be enough. Phelan and her colleagues (1994) drew attention to a range of educational practices that appear to exacerbate feelings of dissonance including ability grouping, practices that fail to encourage student interaction, and discipline practices that "pit" students against each other (p. 440). It will be important in future quantitative studies of home–school dissonance to examine whether there are specific teaching practices, or patterns of practices that exacerbate or ameliorate students' feelings of dissonance.

There was limited support for our hypothesis that students who experience a high level of dissonance between home and school exhibit a more negative pattern of change in their emotional and academic well-being when they move from the fifth grade in elementary school to the sixth grade in middle school than do students who experience no or low levels of dissonance. Students in the low dissonance group (bottom third on the Dissonance scale) reported feeling angry less often after the transition than before, whereas students in the high dissonance group (top third on the Dissonance scale) did not report feeling less angry after the transition. Anger can be a destructive emotion, and it is cause for concern that high dissonance students exhibited a more negative pattern of change than did low dissonance students. These findings should be of interest to middle school teachers and administrators. In each of the school districts in which this study took place, steps were being taken by middle school teachers and principals to improve the sense of belonging and community among students. At least some teaming and block scheduling had been implemented in each of the schools and many had instituted advisory programs for the sixth graders. Although these efforts may have had a beneficial effect on low dissonance children who reported feeling angry less frequently after the transition to middle school, the anger of high dissonance children did not decrease. Middle school reform has been a high priority in this country. Perhaps the next step in middle school reform is to consider programs that will meet the needs of students who feel uncomfortable because of differences between the values and expectations at home and at school.

Similar to previous studies (e.g., Schulenberg, Asp, & Petersen, 1984; Simmons & Blyth, 1987), GPA declined on average across the transition. Whether this represents a drop in performance or a more rigorous approach to grading in the middle school is open to debate (e.g., Eccles &

Midgley, 1989). Teachers often say that grades are necessary to motivate students. How motivating is it to receive lower grades in middle school than in elementary school? Further examination of the reasons for this decline in grades seems warranted. In addition, high dissonance students had a lower GPA than low dissonance students in both the fifth and sixth grade, and they also experienced a greater decline in GPA when they moved to middle school than did low dissonance students. Students who perceive that parental values and beliefs are at odds with those at school and who feel worried and upset because their lives at home and school are like two different worlds, receive lower grades than do their counterparts who do not perceive this dissonance. In turn, moving to the larger, more impersonal middle school environment may exacerbate this negative relation between dissonance and performance.

Our hypothesis that experiencing high or low dissonance has a stronger relation to changes across the transition in the emotional and academic well-being of African American students than of European American students was not supported. That is, the interaction between dissonance, year, and ethnicity was not significant. Although, as reported previously, there was an interaction between year and dissonance for both GPA and anger, this did not differ for African American and European American students. We suggested that the move to a more performance-oriented middle school learning environment may undermine feelings of well-being for African American students in particular. This is in line with Steele's (1997) finding that African American students are particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative reactions in learning environments in which relative ability is made salient. Although previous studies have documented an increase in the emphasis on relative ability after the transition to middle school (e.g., Anderman & Midgley, 1997), it may be that in the schools in this study, all of which were undergoing reforms including moving away from ability grouping in the sixth grade, this was no longer the case.

Although we did not include hypotheses for the main effects of ethnicity, for the interaction between ethnicity and dissonance, or for the interaction between ethnicity and year on academic and emotional well-being, several interesting findings emerged. First, there were main effects of ethnicity on GPA and anger (see Table 4). In interpreting these results, it must be kept in mind that these analyses only included students who were in the two dissonance groups, thereby excluding one third of the original sample. African American students felt more angry and received lower grades than did European American students. The findings for GPA are well known, and the need to address this achievement gap has been widely discussed. In this ethnically and economically

diverse sample, even when controlling for SES, the gap was present. Also, the fact that African American students reported feeling angry more frequently than did European American students is an important finding, particularly in light of the tendency of African American students to express more positive attitudes than those expressed by European American students (e.g., Mickelson, 1990). The higher levels of anger coupled with the lower average grades of African American students paint a scenario in which school alienation can flourish. This lends some credence to Fordham's (1996) finding that some African American students in her sample actively desisted from doing well in school and engaged in activities that indicated a lack of commitment to the ideals and values sanctioned in the school context to be accepted by their peers.

The significant interaction between ethnicity and dissonance group for academic self-efficacy was interesting. European American students in the high dissonance group felt significantly less efficacious than those in the low dissonance group. In contrast, African American students in the high and low dissonance groups did not differ in their feelings of efficacy. This may shed some light on the contradictory findings regarding ethnicity and efficacy in some previous studies (Mickelson, 1990; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991). Other factors, such as feelings of dissonance, may have an effect on the relation between ethnicity and feelings of academic efficacy. The experiences of African American students in schools, as compared to European American students, may have helped them cultivate the skills necessary to cope with perceived home–school dissonance. From childhood these children may have been taught to cope with a sometimes hostile or negative environment. So when they perceived a dissonance between home and school, they may not have internalized it in the way that the European American students did, and therefore it may not have had as strong an impact on their feelings of efficacy. That experiencing a dissonance between home and school is related to European American students' feelings of academic efficacy needs further investigation. Although the causes and effects of experiencing dissonance between home and school have been described in some detail for minority students (e.g., Ogbu, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), similar studies involving ethnic majority students are relatively rare.

The significant interaction between ethnicity and year for self-deprecation is also of interest (see Table 4). Although there was a decrease in self-deprecation for both ethnic groups across the transition, this decrease was only significant for the African American students. It is heartening that self-deprecation decreases during this transition that can sometimes be difficult for students. Although some studies have provided

preliminary evidence that African American students have a more difficult time with the transition than European American students (e.g., Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994; Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991), there is no evidence of that in this study.

This study is correlational and we cannot rule out the possibility, for example, that students' anger or experiences with declining grades lead to dissonance, rather than the reverse. We also acknowledge that for many of the analyses, only students at the higher and lower ends of the Dissonance scale were included. But this does represent a first effort to use quantitative methods to examine issues related to perceived dissonance between home and school in a large sample of African American and European American adolescents. We still have much to learn about the factors in schools and classrooms that ameliorate or exacerbate perceived dissonance. However, we agree with Phelan and her colleagues (1991) that:

> in order to create environments in which students are able to work together in classrooms, to solve problems jointly, and to have equal investment in schools and learning, we need to identify the institutional structures that operate to facilitate boundary crossing strategies and that do not require students to give up or hide important features of their lives. (p. 246)

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APPENDIX
Scales Used in the Study

Home–school dissonance (six items)
α = 0.73, skew = 0.52
I think a lot about how my life at home is different from the home life of many of the students in this school.
I am concerned because what's important to my parents is not always important to my teachers.
I often think about how different my family's viewpoint is from my teachers' viewpoint.
I feel upset because my teacher and my parents have different ideas about what I should learn in school.
I don't like to have my parents come to school because their ideas are very different from my teachers' ideas.
I feel troubled because my home life and my school life are like two different worlds.

Hopefulness (five items)
α = 0.74, skew = –1.16 (Year 1)
α = 0.75, skew = –1.27 (Year 2)
When I think about my future, I feel quite hopeful.
I don't like thinking about my future.
I feel like good things are going to happen in my life.
Things are going to work out well for me in a few years.
I am excited about what the future holds for me.

Anger (four items)
α = 0.82, skew = 0.14 (Year 1)
α = 0.85, skew = 0.25 (Year 2)
How often have you felt so angry that you wanted to smash or break something?
How often have you felt really mad at other people?
How often have you felt you couldn't control your temper?
How often have you felt so upset that you wanted to hit or hurt someone?

Positive self-esteem (five items)
α = 0.72, skew = –1.12 (Year 1)
α = 0.77, skew = –0.98 (Year 2)
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
I feel I have a number of good qualities.
I am able to do things as well as most other people.
I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Self-deprecation (four items)
α = 0.76, skew = 1.02 (Year 1)
α = 0.77, skew = 1.26 (Year 2)
At times I think I am no good at all.
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
I certainly feel useless at times.
All in all, I am inclined to think I am a failure.

Academic self-efficacy[a] *(seven items)*
α = 0.78, skew = –0.81 (Year 1)
I'm certain I can master the skills taught in class this year.

(*Continued*)

I can do even the hardest work in this class if I try.
If I have enough time, I can do a good job on all my class work.
I can do almost all the work in class if I don't give up.
Even if the work is hard, I can learn it.
I'm certain I can figure out how to do even the most difficult class work.
No matter how hard I try, there is some class work I'll never understand.
$\alpha = 0.74$, skew = –0.80 (Year 2)
I'm certain I can master the skills taught in school this year.
I can do even the hardest work in my classes if I try.
If I have enough time, I can do a good job on all my class work.
I can do almost all the work in school if I don't give up.
Even if the work is hard, I can learn it.
I'm certain I can figure out how to do even the most difficult schoolwork.
No matter how hard I try, there is some class work I'll never understand.

[a]There are slight differences in the wording of the items on this scale for the fifth and sixth grades; in the sixth grade, students were asked about their classes because they were no longer in self-contained classrooms.