



Ethnic Identity Development across the Transition from High School to College

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Introduction



Background

- ❑ Aspects that characterize ethnicity are someone's race, religion. Country of origin, language and cultural background
- ❑ Ethnic identity is considered important because of its relationship to the psychological well being of ethnic minority group members
- ❑ recent research has provided evidence that college attendance facilitates students' exploration and understanding about the role that ethnicity plays in their lives and their adjustment to mainstream U.S. society (Syed & Azmitia, 2010)
- ❑ Chavira and Phinney (1991) found that adolescents with high ethnic identity had higher self esteem and were more proficient in dealing with threats such as discrimination and stereotypes



Purpose of this Study

- ❑ Understanding the trajectories of ethnic identity can contribute to understanding of how different social contexts that adolescents enter could provide different opportunities for individuals to explore the significance of their ethnicity.
- ❑ The goal of this study is to extend research of ethnic identity development by examining how three components of ethnic identity: ethnic search, and commitment; change across the transition from high school to college.
- ❑ We are expecting to see an increase across all three components of ethnic identity.

Method



Participants & Materials

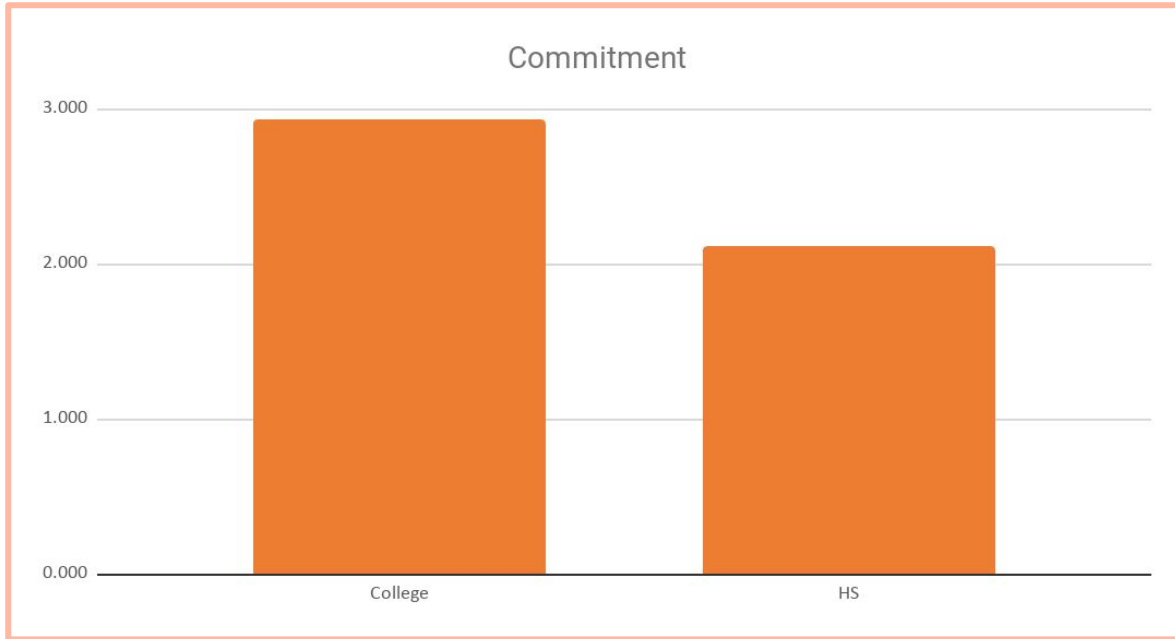
- ❑ We recruited the entire 12th grade from three public high schools in the Buffalo area.
- ❑ The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) revised (Phinney, 1992) was used in this study
 - ❑ Items are rated on a four-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree through 4= strongly agree).
 - ❑ The measure contained 13 items:
 - ❑ 5 ethnic identity search
 - ❑ 7 achievement and/or commitment
 - ❑ 3 questions on self identification of ethnicity, father's and mother's ethnicity.



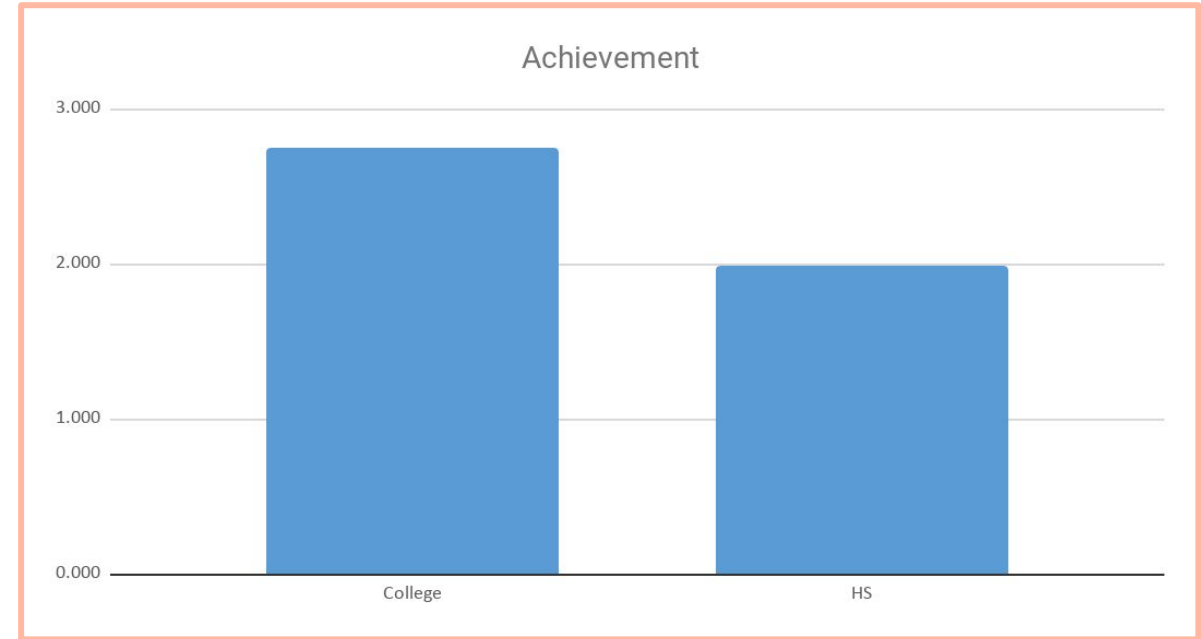
Procedure

- ❑ In the 12th grade, we asked the participants to complete a 2 page questionnaire
 - ❑ We allotted participants class time to complete the questionnaire
 - ❑ The response rate approached 100%.
- ❑ Two years later, we invited participants via e-mail, telephone, and mail to complete a similar questionnaire using a commercial, web-based survey service.

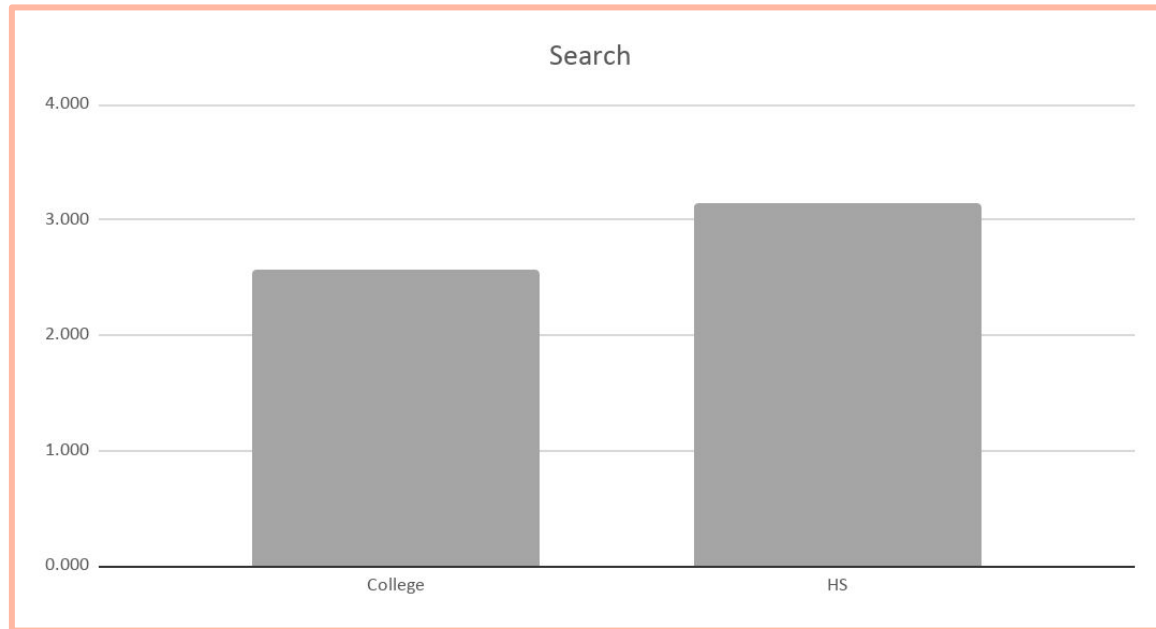
Results



- ❑ We observed a significant increase in ethnic identity commitment across the transition from high school to college




- ❑ There was a normative increase in ethnic achievement over time



- ❑ There was a normative decrease in ethnic search over time.
- ❑ The participants reported significantly higher for ethnic search while in high school

Discussion

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- ❑ We were expecting to see an increase across all three components of ethnic identity across the transition from high school to college
 - ❑ Our findings supported the hypothesis for the commitment and achievement components
 - ❑ Participants were more likely to commit to their ethnic identity while in college
 - ❑ Participants reported significantly higher levels of ethnic identity achievement in college
 - ❑ Whereas there was a normative decrease in ethnic search over time.
 - ❑ This finding does not support our initial hypothesis.



Implications

- ❑ Our study suggests that there are greater opportunities, such as extracurricular activities, at colleges than high school's that facilitate exploration of one's cultural background.
- ❑ It is possible that young adults established a relatively strong understanding of and belonging to their ethnic group during the transition from high school to college.
- ❑ Future research should attempt to administer this study to participants not in school, to further analyze how ethnic identity develops across other transitions

Critique



Limitations

- ❑ A limitation in our study is that our sample consisted of primarily students in high school and college.
- ❑ We did not have a sample of non-college-going adults to observe and analyze their ethnic identity development.
- ❑ Since our study focused on long term effects of the transition to college, we did not have data immediately after the participants transition to college.