

Ethnic Identity, Discrimination, and School Social Adjustment among Canadian Youth

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Abstract

The study examined the relation between ethnic regard, a component of ethnic identity, and discrimination, and their contribution to school social adjustment among 340 Canadian youth in grades 8-9. Furthermore, the study examined how the connection between ethnic regard and school social adjustment varies as a function of ethnic group membership. Multiple regression analyses demonstrated that higher levels of ethnic regard were linked to higher levels of adjustment at school. However, further analyses showed that youth reporting high levels of ethnic regard and frequent discrimination may be more vulnerable in their schools. Additionally, youth of different ethnic groups had varied experiences. For youth of Vietnamese backgrounds, for example, a stronger sense of ethnic regard contributed to better social adjustment at school. These results, similar to previous studies, suggest that the research on the buffering effects of different components of ethnic identity remains equivocal.

Keywords: adolescence, discrimination, ethnic identity, private regard, public regard, school adjustment

1. Introduction

Although multiculturalism is a defining quality of the Canadian fabric, ethnic discrimination, defined as the unjust treatment of others based on ethnicity (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006), exists within its communities and institutions. Indeed, findings from the *Ethnic Diversity Survey* (Statistics Canada, 2002) indicated that 20% of members of ethnic minority groups frequently experienced discrimination. Noh and Kaspar (2003) found that more than 40% of the Korean immigrants living in Toronto reported being insulted, called names or treated unfairly and about 7% had been hit or handled in a rough manner. Youth experience ethnic discrimination in Canadian schools long before they reach adulthood (Larochette, Murphy, & Craig, 2010; Li, 2009). The negative impact of such discrimination has been well documented in previous research, especially that conducted in the U.S. Specifically, greater ethnic discrimination has been linked to diminished academic motivation (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), internalizing problems, including lower self-esteem and higher depression (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Greene et al., 2006; Nyborg & Curry, 2003; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Wong et al., 2003), as well as loneliness and helplessness (Wong et al., 2003).

The experience of victimization, however, appears to vary across ethnic groups. For example, among Canadian youth, Larochette et al. (2010) found that youth of African backgrounds reported more ethnic victimization than their peers of Asian, South Asian, and European backgrounds. As well, Closson, Darwich, Hymel, and Waterhouse (2013) found that Canadian youth of African/Caribbean and Middle Eastern backgrounds experienced higher levels of ethnic discrimination than their Asian, South Asian, and Caucasian peers. Given such variability, it becomes important to understand those factors that impact both the experience of ethnic discrimination and its effects. To this end, the present study sought to explore variations in ethnic discrimination across groups as well as the role one's own ethnic identity plays in modifying the impact of discrimination on its victims.

Ethnic group membership is a salient, perhaps central, aspect of one's identity, especially for youth growing up in ethnically diverse societies (Costigan, Su, & Hua, 2009; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Phinney, 1990). How an individual feels about his or her ethnic group is particularly important for ethnic minority youth given their cultural differences from the dominant society (e.g., Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005). Although there is currently no single, unified definition of ethnic identity, scholars agree that ethnic identity is a multidimensional

concept involving one's psychological relationship with her/his ethnic group (Phinney, 1990). Of interest in the present study is ethnic regard, the evaluative component of ethnic identity, reflecting the degree to which one's ethnic group is positively viewed, by both self and others (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). *Private regard* refers to the extent to which the individual has a positive view of her/his ethnic group; it involves feeling proud and happy to be a member of one's ethnic group. *Public regard*, a second component of ethnic identity, reflects an individual's assessment of the extent to which others value or devalue his/her ethnic group. Current research shows that one's own sense of pride in their ethnicity (private regard) is only weakly to moderately correlated with their perception of how others perceive their ethnic group (public regard) (see Ashmore et al., 2004).

Both private and public regard have been linked to various indices of well-being and adjustment for youth (e.g., Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Specifically, youth who report a sense of pride in their ethnic group report lower stress (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006), greater sense of connectedness to school, higher academic achievement, and higher self-esteem (Chavous et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Similarly, higher levels of public regard have been associated with greater motivation and academic engagement (Chavous et al., 2003; Rivas-Drake, 2010). Rivas-Drake et al. (2008) found that sixth grade students who reported higher levels of private regard and public regard reported higher self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms. The present study extends this literature by examining the links between private and public regard and youth social adjustment at school as reflected in their feelings of belonging at school and their feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Consistent with arguments presented by Hughes et al. (2011), it is important to evaluate ethnic identity, and especially public regard, within the context in which ethnicity is made salient, in this case, the school.

1.1 The Moderating Role of Private Regard and Public Regard

According to García Coll et al. (1996), cultural capital, such as ethnic identity, could protect youth from the negative repercussions of ethnic discrimination. Support for this hypothesis comes from studies examining the protective role of private regard and public regard in alleviating the negative effects of discrimination on well-being (e.g., Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Greene et al., 2006). For example, Greene et al. (2006) found that a sense of pride and belonging in one's ethnic group protected ethnic minority youths' self-esteem from the negative impacts of ethnic discrimination. Similarly, Bynum, Best, Barnes, and Burton (2008) found that African American youth who experienced discrimination but reported higher levels of private regard were less likely to report anxiety symptoms. Rivas-Drake et al. (2008) also found that higher levels of private regard protected African American youth from the exacerbating effects of discrimination on depressive symptoms, although this moderating effect was not observed among Chinese American students. In contrast, Sellers et al. (2006) did not find that private regard played a significant protective role for African American youth.

Studies conducted with adults and young adults (e.g., Lee, 2005; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008; Yoo & Lee, 2008) have also challenged the hypothesized protective role of *strong* feelings of identification with one's group, and instead suggest that having a strong sense of ethnic pride could heighten feelings of distress for those who experience discrimination. For example, Lee (2005) found that Korean American young adults who reported a strong sense of pride in their ethnic group experienced higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower levels of social connectedness if they were frequent victims of discrimination. As well, Yoo and Lee (2008) found that Asian American college students who had a strong sense of pride in their ethnic group experienced a diminished sense of well-being when they had to read a scenario about them being rejected multiple times from nightclubs because of their ethnic group. Smith (2011) reasoned that a threat to one's ethnic group when one has a strong sense of pride in the group could be perceived as a threat to oneself.

Similarly, studies exploring the potential buffering effect of public regard have also demonstrated inconsistent results. Specifically, consistent with the García Coll et al. (1996) hypothesis, Rivas-Drake et al. (2008) found that for Chinese American youth, feeling that their group was valued by society served as a protective factor, weakening the link between discrimination and depression. However, this finding contradicts results of other studies of African American youth. Particularly, several studies have suggested that, for African American youth, lower levels of public regard protected their well-being when exposed to higher levels of discrimination (see Rivas-Drake et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 2006). For example, Sellers et al. (2006) found that low public regard protected African American youth facing discrimination from depressive symptoms and perceived stress (see also Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Interestingly, higher levels of public regard may expose some African American

youth to greater risk. For example, Caldwell et al. (2006) found that African American youth with high public regard reported engaging in higher levels of violent behavior when faced with higher levels of discrimination. Sellers and his colleagues (Sellers et al., 2006; Shelton & Sellers, 2003) have reasoned that for African American youth low public regard could be protective because they may have a stable understanding that their group is underappreciated. Nonetheless, the extent to which different dimensions of ethnic identity play a protective role in buffering the impact of discrimination remains inconclusive, and may vary across different ethnic minority groups.

The present study sheds light on the experiences of youth of diverse ethnic groups, including Vietnamese and Filipino youth, whose ethnic identities remain understudied. In particular, the present study aimed to expand the literature by exploring whether youths' sense of school belonging and their reported loneliness and dissatisfaction with their social relationships varied as a function of ethnicity and, more importantly, whether ethnicity moderated the link between private regard/public regard and social adjustment at school above and beyond youths' reports of discrimination. Exploring this question was motivated by the inconclusive results reported to date on how private regard and public regard can impact the effects of discrimination on youth from different ethnic backgrounds.

2. Method

2.1 Procedure

Data for the present study were collected by the authors and trained research assistants as part of a larger study of ethnic identity and newcomers to Canada that was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioral Research Ethics Board as well as the participating school district. Students in grades 8 and 9 from two culturally diverse secondary schools were invited to participate in the study. Students who received parental consent for participation and who themselves agreed to participate completed a paper-and-pencil survey during a single 60-minute group testing session.

2.2 Participants

A total of 340 students (203 girls, 135 boys) in grades 8-9 (M age = 13.70 years, SD = 0.85) participated in the study. Participation rate was 37% and 43% across the two schools (Note 1). Participants reported a wide range of ethnic backgrounds: 162 (48%) students were Asian, 65 (19%) students were South East Asian, 42 (12%) were South Asian, 2 (1%) were White, 9 (3%) students were of West Asian, Arab, Caribbean, African, and Latin American descent, and 58 (17%) students were of mixed or other backgrounds. Only one student reported being of Aboriginal background. Students identifying with more than one ethnic group on this item (e.g., Filipino and Vietnamese or Asian and White) were excluded from analyses, leaving a total of 323 participants in the final sample.

For the analyses that examined the role of ethnic group membership, a subset of the total sample was used. Specifically, only those participants (except for youth of European origin) who identified with one country of ancestral origin (n = 263) were included. The subsample included 149 students who identified as Chinese (44%), 39 (11%) who identified as Filipino, 34 (10%) as Indian, 27 (8%) as Vietnamese, and 14 (4%) as European.

2.3 Measures

2.3.1 Ethnicity

Students were asked about their ethnicity twice. First, in the demographic portion of the survey, they were asked to identify their ethnic background on a single multiple-choice item. Students could select all the ethnic backgrounds that applied to them. Later in the survey, and immediately before answering questions about private regard and public regard, students were asked to complete an open-ended item to identify what *they considered* their ethnic background to be ("*In terms of ethnicity or ethnic group, who do you consider yourself to be?*"). Students were asked to consider their response to this question in answering subsequent items on private and public regard. They were instructed to identify only one ethnic group, either including only the national origin or ethnicity (e.g., Chinese or Asian) or national origin or ethnicity hyphenated with Canadian (e.g., Chinese-Canadian or Asian-Canadian). If students described themselves as having more than one national origin or ethnicity, they were asked to specify the one with which they identified more strongly. The few students who included more than one ethnic group were excluded from subsequent analyses.

2.3.2 Private Regard

Private regard was assessed using three items adapted from previous measures of the construct, including the Private Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), the Private Regard Subscale from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1998), and the MIBI-Teen (Scottham et al., 2008). Responses to the three items (e.g., “*I feel proud to be from my ethnic group*”; $\alpha = .68$), each rated on a five-point scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, were averaged to provide an overall assessment of each participant’s feelings of private regard for their own ethnic group with higher scores indicating higher levels of ethnic pride.

2.3.3 Public Regard-School

Perceived public regard at school was assessed using a composite of eight items adapted from previous scales, including the Public CSE (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), the MIBI-Public Regard Subscale (Sellers et al., 1998), and the MIBI-T- Public Regard Subscale (Scottham et al., 2008). The eight items measured the extent to which students believed that adults and other students in their school respected and valued their ethnic group (e.g., “*Adults at my school respect my ethnic group*”; “*Students at my school think that my ethnic group is good*”). Students rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree with higher scores indicating higher levels of respect of their ethnic group at school. Initially, public regard from peers at school was tapped separately from public regard-adults (four items each). However, given that the two scales were strongly correlated, $r = .65$, the scales were combined to create a single index of perceived public regard at school ($\alpha = .85$).

2.3.4 Ethnic Discrimination

Student experiences with ethnic discrimination were assessed using six items adapted from Fisher et al.’s (2000) Peer Discrimination Distress Subscale, one of three subscales that make up the Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index. Specifically, a few of the terms were changed to make them easier for early and middle adolescents (e.g., “*How often have you had experiences with other calling you names because of your ethnicity?*”; “*How often have you had experiences with other students threatening you because of your ethnicity?*”). Students rated each item on a 5-point, Likert scale ranging from (1) never to (5) several times a week. Initially, responses to all six items were averaged to create an overall composite index of ethnic discrimination. Higher scores indicated more frequent experiences of ethnic discrimination. However, due to restricted range (scores ranges from 1.00 to 3.33) and low variability, we followed previous studies (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2008, 2009) by recoding each response into a binary item (0 = never, 1 = at least once), then summing responses across items to yield a total score indicating the number of instances of discrimination each youth experienced, with scores ranging from 0 (no instances of discrimination) to 6 (all six types of discrimination were reported).

2.3.5 School Belonging

Student’s feelings of school belonging were assessed using a scale developed by Goodenow (1993). Each of the 18 items included in this scale were rated on a five-point, Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (e.g., “*I feel like a real part of this school*”; “*I feel proud of belonging to this school*”; $\alpha = .91$). Negatively-worded items (e.g., “*It is hard for people like me to be accepted here.*”) were reverse scored, and student responses across items were averaged to compute an overall index of school belonging, with higher scores indicating greater school belonging.

2.3.6 Loneliness at School

To measure loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school, items were adapted from the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Scale developed by Asher, Hymel, and Renshaw (1984). Specifically, the 15 items included in this scale were used to assess the extent to which youth felt included and supported at school. Before answering the questions, students were prompted to think of students at their school (e.g., “*I have lots of friends*”; “*I feel alone*”; $\alpha = .89$). The items were rated on a five-point, Likert scale, ranging from (1) never to (5) always. The few items that were positively worded were reverse scored so that lower scores indicated higher levels of loneliness and social dissatisfaction.

3. Results

3.1 Preliminary Analyses

Means and standard deviations for each of the measures included in the present study are presented in Table 1. Also presented in the Table 1 are results of Pearson Product Moment Correlations exploring the relationships among these variables (ethnic discrimination, private regard, public regard at school, school belonging, and social satisfaction at school). As expected, student reports of public and private regard were only moderately correlated. Also, reported ethnic discrimination was negatively related to feelings of school belonging and positively related to feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Not surprisingly, the strongest correlation observed was the negative relation between school belonging and reported loneliness and social dissatisfaction.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables (N = 340)

	Mean (SD)	Ethnic Discrimination	Private Regard	Public Regard	School Belonging	Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction
Ethnic Discrimination	1.35 (1.47)	1	-.17**	-.21**	-.32**	.31**
Private Regard	4.04 (0.69)	-	1	.42**	.41**	-.27**
Public Regard	3.56 (0.55)	-	-	1	.49**	-.27**
School Belonging	3.64 (0.60)	-	-	-	1	-.67**
Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction	1.97 (0.59)	-	-	-	-	1

** $p < .01$

Grade and sex differences in ethnic discrimination, private regard, public regard at school, school belonging and loneliness were assessed using a two-way (Grade X Sex) analysis of variance. Given the number of analyses conducted, significance level was adjusted to .01 using the Bonferroni correction. Results of these analyses, presented in Table 2, indicated no significant sex main effects nor sex by grade interactions. However, significant grade differences were observed for student reports of private regard, $F(1, 335) = 13.47, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.04$ and public regard, $F(1, 332) = 10.40, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$, with grade 8 students reporting higher private and public regard at school than grade 9 students. Students in grade 8 also reported significantly higher levels of school belonging than students in grade 9, $F(1, 323) = 7.32, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.02$. Student reports of ethnic discrimination and loneliness at school did not vary across grade level.

Table 2. Grade and sex differences (N = 340)

	Grade	
	Grade 8 M (SD)	Grade 9 M (SD)
Ethnic Discrimination	1.32 (1.49)	1.40 (1.44)
Private Regard**	4.15 ^a (0.67)	3.89 ^b (0.70)
Public Regard**	3.63 ^a (0.58)	3.46 ^b (0.47)

School Belonging	3.71 ^a (0.60)	3.53 ^b (0.60)
Loneliness and Dissatisfaction	1.92 (0.58)	2.04 (0.60)
Sex		
	Girls	Boys
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Ethnic Discrimination	1.23 (1.49)	1.53 (1.42)
Private Regard	4.00 (0.71)	4.10 (0.67)
Public Regard	3.61 (0.52)	3.49 (0.58)
School Belonging	3.61 (0.64)	3.68 (0.54)
Loneliness and Dissatisfaction	2.00 (0.61)	1.91 (0.57)

** $p < .01$

To examine ethnic differences, a subset of the sample was used ($N = 263$). Given the number of analyses conducted, significance level was adjusted to .01 using the Bonferroni correction. As shown in Table 3, ethnic discrimination, private regard, public regard, school belonging, and loneliness did not vary as a function of ethnic group membership.

Table 3. Ethnic group differences ($N = 263$)

	Ethnic Group				
	Chinese	Indian	Vietnamese	Filipino	European
	M (SD)				
Ethnic Discrimination	1.39 (1.56)	1.56 (1.76)	0.77 (1.11)	1.49 (1.54)	1.36 (1.53)
Private Regard	4.00 (0.70)	4.12 (0.85)	4.21 (0.56)	4.21 (0.57)	4.14 (0.50)
Public Regard	3.64 (0.46)	3.48 (0.72)	3.49 (0.54)	3.71 (0.55)	3.18 (0.56)
School Belonging	4.27 (0.71)	4.42 (0.82)	4.43 (0.68)	4.21 (0.68)	4.05 (0.74)
Loneliness and Dissatisfaction	1.96 (0.53)	1.70 (0.61)	2.15 (0.93)	2.09 (0.63)	1.94 (0.45)

** $p < .01$

3.2 Main and Moderating Effects of Private and Public Regard

To examine the extent to which private regard and public regard at school buffered the negative effects of discrimination on youths' sense of school belonging and loneliness, two sets of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. The first examined the main and moderating effects of private regard and public regard at school on school belonging; the second examined their effects on loneliness at school. In both analyses, grade and sex were entered in the first step, followed by ethnic discrimination, entered at Step 2. To examine the unique effects of private regard and public regard at school, those two variables were entered in the third step. The final step included the interaction terms Discrimination x Private Regard and Discrimination x Public Regard at School to assess the moderating role of private regard and public regard. Following Aiken and West (1991), all the variables in the interaction term were centered. As well, significance level was adjusted to $p < .008$ using the Bonferroni correction.

3.2.1 School Belonging

The results of the first analysis, presented in Table 4, show that private regard and public regard-school significantly contributed to the variations in school belonging, above and beyond ethnic discrimination, $\Delta F(2, 314) = 49.50, p < .001$. In fact, their addition contributed 21% to the variation in school belonging. However, they did not significantly moderate the association between discrimination and school belonging, $\Delta F(2, 312) = 2.81, p = .06$.

Table 4. Moderated multiple regression of grade, sex, discrimination, private regard, and public regard-school on school belonging (N = 340)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	<i>ΔR</i> ²
Step 1					.03	.02	.03
Grade	-0.18	.07	-.15	-2.67**			
Sex	.08	.07	.06	1.16			
Step 2					.13	.12	.10**
Discrimination	-.13	.02	-.31	-5.95**			
Step 3					.33	.32	.21**
Private Regard	.17	.05	.19	3.59**			
Public Regard-School	.40	.06	.37	7.02**			
Step 4					.35	.33	.01
Discrimination x Private Regard	-.05	.03	-.09	-1.81			
Discrimination x Public Regard-School	.06	.03	.09	1.83			

** $p < .008$

3.2.2 Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction at School

As presented in Table 5, results of the second regression analysis showed that private regard and public regard-school were also significant predictors of reported loneliness at school above and beyond discrimination, $\Delta F(2, 311) = 10.00, p < .001$, explaining an additional 5% of the variance in social dissatisfaction at school. The interaction of private regard with reported discrimination was also significant, $\Delta F(2, 309) = 5.93, p < .01$, contributing 3% to the overall variance in social dissatisfaction at school. Thus, private regard, but not public regard at school, moderated the association between ethnic discrimination and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school. Figure 1 shows that the negative effects of higher levels of discrimination on loneliness were worse for students who had higher levels of pride of their ethnic group.

Table 5. Moderated multiple regression of grade, sex, discrimination, private regard, and public regard-school on loneliness and dissatisfaction school (N = 340)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	ΔR ²
Step 1					.02	.01	.02
Grade	.13	.07	.11	1.90 ⁺			
Sex	-.09	-.07	-.08	-1.35			
Step 2					.17	.16	.15**
Discrimination	.10	.02	.26	4.77**			
Step 3							
Private Regard	-.11	-.05	-.12	-2.11*			
Public Regard-School	-.18	-.06	-.16	-2.78**			
Step 3					.20	.18	.03**
Discrimination x Private Regard	.10	.03	.19	3.42**			
Discrimination x Public Regard-School	-.04	-.04	.06	-1.04			

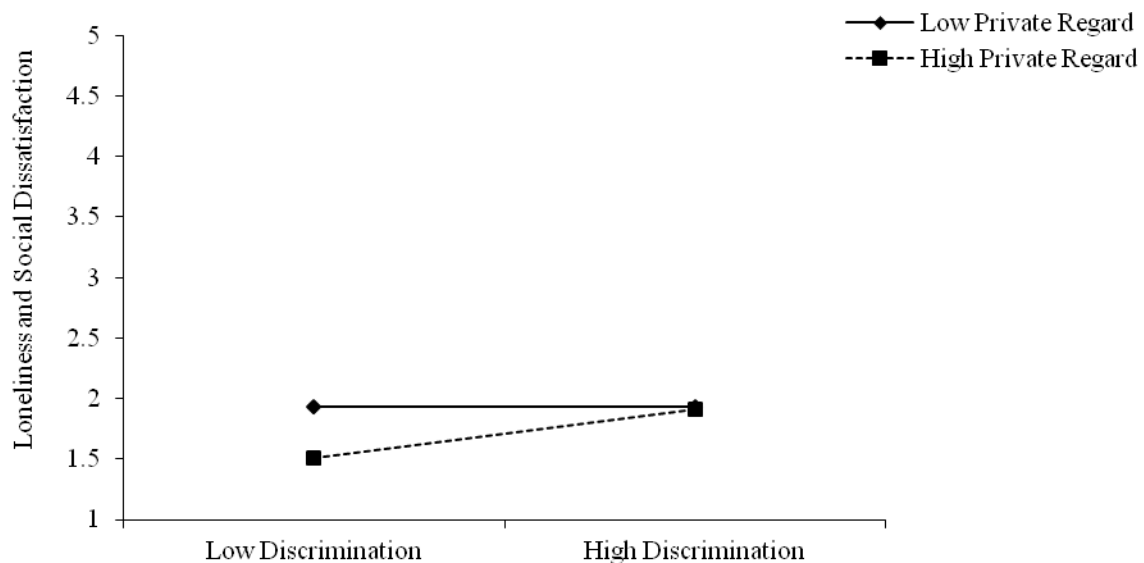
** $p < .008$ 

Figure 1. Two way interaction of discrimination x private regard on loneliness and social dissatisfaction

3.3 Main and Moderating Effects of Ethnic Group Membership

The final set of two regression analyses explored the extent to which ethnic group membership moderated the association between private regard/public regard and school belonging and social satisfaction at school, respectively. For these analyses, significance level was adjusted to $p < .01$ using the Bonferroni correction, and a subset of the total sample ($n = 263$) was used, comparing only ethnic groups that included a reasonable number of students. Given that ethnicity was a categorical variable, youth identifying as Chinese (largest group) were used as the reference group to assess the experiences of other ethnic groups in comparison to the experiences reported by their Chinese peers. Given the reduced sample, sex and grade were not included in these analyses and results for public and private regard were evaluated separately. As a result, four three-step models were assessed; two for each outcome (belonging, social satisfaction), with one model testing the moderating effect of ethnicity on Private Regard and the other testing the moderating effect of ethnicity on Public Regard-School. For each of the four analyses, ethnicity was entered in the first step, private regard or public regard in the second step, and the interaction term was entered in the third step.

3.3.1 School Belonging, Discrimination, Private Regard, and Ethnicity

Results of the first analyses, as presented in Table 6, showed that ethnic group membership did not play a significant role in explaining variations in school belonging. However, higher levels of ethnic discrimination were associated with lower levels of school belonging, whereas higher levels of ethnic pride (private regard) were associated with higher levels of school belonging. Ethnic group membership did not significantly moderate the link between private regard and school belonging, $\Delta F(4, 241) = 2.37, p = .05$.

Table 6. Moderated multiple regression of ethnicity, discrimination, and private regard on school belonging ($n = 263$)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	ΔR ²
Step 1					.03	.02	.03
Indian	.11	.12	.06	0.96			
Vietnamese	-.22	.13	-.11	-1.66			
Filipino	-.05	.11	-.03	-0.44			
European	-.32	.17	-.12	-1.88			
Step 2					.25	.23	.22**
Discrimination	-0.10	.02	-.25	-4.29**			
Private Regard	.32	.05	.36	6.18**			
Step 3					.28	.25	.03
Private Regard x Indian	.23	.13	.12	1.83			
Private Regard x Vietnamese	.41	.20	.12	2.03			
Private Regard x Filipino	.06	.17	.02	0.34			
Private Regard x European	-.43	.30	-0.08	-1.43			

** $p < .01$

3.3.2 School Belonging, Discrimination, Public Regard-School, and Ethnicity

Results of the second analysis conducted, as presented in Table 7, showed that ethnic group membership did not play a significant role in explaining variations in school belonging. Higher levels of public regard, however, were linked to higher levels of school belonging. Thus, students who felt that others at school respected their ethnic group reported a greater sense of connectedness to school. However, ethnic group membership did not moderate the link between public regard and feelings of school belonging, $\Delta F(4, 236) = 0.24, p = .92$.

Table 7. Moderated multiple regression of ethnicity, discrimination, public regard on social school belonging (n = 263)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	ΔR ²
Step 1					.03	.02	.03
Indian	.12	.12	.06	1.00			
Vietnamese	-.21	.13	-.11	-.162			
Filipino	-.05	.12	-.03	-0.42			
European	-.32	.17	-.12	-1.86			
Step 2					.30	.29	.27**
Discrimination	-.09	.02	-.23	-4.09**			
Public Regard-School	.50	.06	.44	7.74**			
Step 3					.31	.28	.00
Public Regard x Indian	.07	.16	.03	0.40			
Public Regard x Vietnamese	.01	.21	.00	0.03			
Public Regard x Filipino	-.06	.18	-.21	-0.31			
Public Regard x European	.21	.28	.05	0.77			

** $p < .01$

3.3.3 Loneliness, Discrimination, Private Regard, and Ethnicity

Results of the third set of analyses explored the potential moderating role of ethnicity on the relation between private regard and ethnic group membership. Interestingly, ethnic discrimination was not linked to loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school. Importantly, ethnicity moderated the association between private regard and social satisfaction, $\Delta F(4, 238) = 3.60, p < .01$, explaining an additional 5% of the variance in social satisfaction (Table 8). Figure 2 shows that, in comparison to youth of Chinese descent, youth of Vietnamese descent reported significantly higher levels of private regard.

Table 8. Moderated multiple regression of ethnicity, discrimination, and private regard on loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school (n = 263)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	ΔR ²
Step 1					.04	.03	.04
Indian	-.25	.12	-.14	-2.19			
Vietnamese	.20	.13	.10	1.50			
Filipino	.14	.11	.08	1.20			
White	-.01	.17	-.00	-0.05			
Step 2					.19	.17	.15**
Discrimination	.11	.02	.29	4.77**			
Private Regard	-.19	.05	-.22	-3.63**			
Step 3					.24	.21	.05**
Private Regard x Indian	-.26	.13	-.13	-2.00			
Private Regard x Vietnamese	-.71	.21	-.22	-3.46**			
Private Regard x Filipino	-.21	.17	-.08	-1.20			
Private Regard x White	-.09	.31	-.02	-0.28			

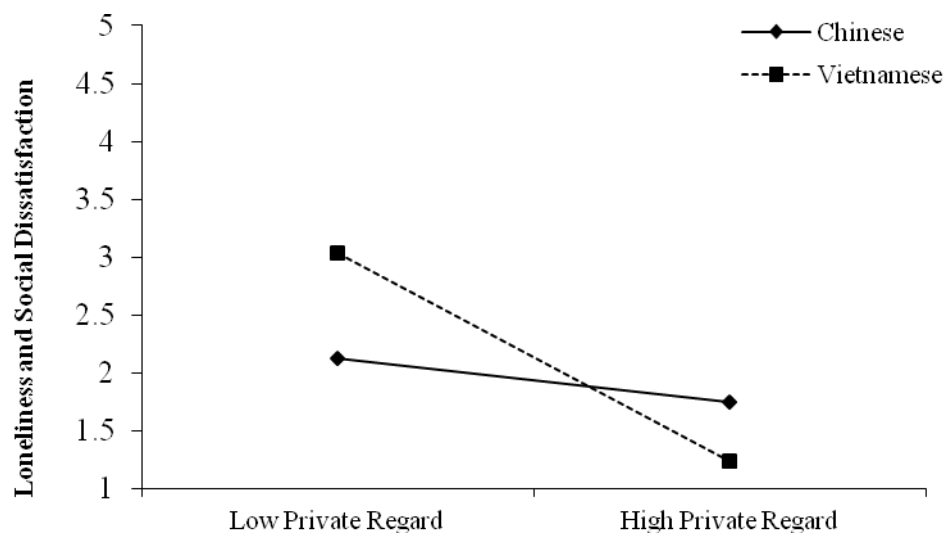
** $p < .01$ 

Figure 2. Two way interaction of private regard x ethnic group membership on loneliness and social dissatisfaction

3.3.4 Loneliness, Discrimination, Public Regard-School, and Ethnicity

As shown in Table 9 higher levels of public regard at school were linked to lower levels of loneliness and social dissatisfaction with one's relationships at school. However, there were no ethnic differences in reported loneliness and ethnic group membership did not play a significant role in moderating the relation between public regard and loneliness.

Table 9. Moderated multiple regression of ethnicity, discrimination, and public regard-school on loneliness and social dissatisfaction (n = 263)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj R</i> ²	ΔR ²
Step 1					.04	.03	.04
Indian	-.26	.12	-.15	-2.24			
Vietnamese	.19	.13	.10	1.43			
Filipino	.13	.11	.07	1.13			
White	-.02	.17	-.01	-0.09			
Step 2					.18	.16	.14**
Discrimination	.11	.02	.28				
Public Regard	-.22	.07	-.20**				
Step 3					.21	.17	.03
Public Regard x Indian	-.16	.17	-.07	-0.90			
Public Regard x Vietnamese	-.31	.23	-.09	-1.37			
Public Regard x Filipino	-.50	.20	-.17	-2.45			
Public Regard x White	-.39	.30	-.10	-1.29			

** $p < .01$

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to expand the current literature on the connections between ethnic identity, ethnic discrimination, and social adjustment within an ethnically diverse school context. Of primary interest was whether higher public and private regard, the two evaluative components of ethnic identity, would protect students against the effects of discrimination on their social adjustment at school. The current study also explored the extent to which ethnic group membership moderated these relationships.

Results showed that higher levels of both private and public regard were linked to greater school belonging and less loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school, above and beyond the negative effects of ethnic discrimination. That is, students who reported greater pride in their ethnic group and who believed that others held a positive view of their ethnic group were more socially adjusted in their schools, as reflected in higher feelings of belonging and less reported loneliness. These results are consistent with previous research conducted in the U.S. demonstrating a positive connection between private regard, public regard, and school belonging among African American students (Chavous et al., 2003). Results of the current study extend previous findings

by examining these links across a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, including youth of Filipino, Vietnamese, and East Indian backgrounds.

Subsequent analyses explored whether and how private and public regard influenced the relationship between ethnic discrimination and social adjustment at school. Our findings revealed that private regard, but not public regard, moderated the association between ethnic discrimination and loneliness at school. Thus, for students reporting higher levels of pride in their ethnic group membership, high levels of discrimination were linked to them feeling less satisfied and lonelier at school. Although some previous research has shown that ethnic identity, including ethnic pride, can protect youth from the negative effects of higher levels of discrimination (e.g., Phinney, 1990; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Wong et al., 2003), other research (e.g., Lee, 2005) conducted with young adults has shown that individuals with a high sense of ethnic pride who experienced more discrimination reported more depressive symptoms and lower levels of social connectedness. Interpreting the results, Lee argued that high levels of ethnic pride played a protective-reactive role because it had a buffering effect only when the risk of discrimination was low. However, it was associated with poorer adjustment among individuals experiencing greater discrimination. In reviewing the role of ethnic identity as a coping strategy for dealing with discrimination, Brandolo and her colleagues (2009) claimed that the effects of different aspects of ethnic identity, including private regard are complex. In fact, the authors concluded that, although dimensions of ethnic identity, including ethnic regard, may lead to overall feelings of well-being, they seem insufficient for buffering the deleterious effects of discrimination. The results of the present study appear to corroborate these claims.

Yip, Gee, and Takeuchi (2008) attributed the lack of a definitive answer on whether ethnic identity's components buffered or exacerbated the effects of discrimination on wellbeing to the use of different samples across a wide age range. To address this limitation in the literature, they used a stratified sample by age in years (18 to 30; 31 to 40; 41 to 50, and 50 to 75) to examine whether centrality, a component of ethnic identity, ameliorated or exacerbated the effects of discrimination across different age groups (18-75) of Asian Americans. The authors found that the effects of centrality did not indicate a uniform pattern across the life span suggesting that ethnic identity may serve different functions across the life span. Unfortunately, their study did not include school-aged children.

Given that the extant literature suggests that youth of different ethnic minority groups may have different experiences in their schools (e.g., Closson et al., 2013), the present study extended previous research by investigating whether the relation between private regard and public regard, respectively, and adjustment at school varied as a function of ethnic group membership. Specifically, the final question addressed in the current study was whether the relationships ethnic identity and social adjustment varied as a function of ethnicity while controlling for the negative effects of discrimination. Compared to students who identified as Chinese, the largest group in the sample, students of Vietnamese descent who reported high levels of private regard reported less loneliness and social dissatisfaction with their relationships at their school. Recent qualitative research has suggested that a more developed ethnic identity in Vietnamese students is linked to increased empowerment (Suyemoto, Day, & Schwartz, 2015). The present findings suggest a protective factor of ethnic identity against feelings of loneliness, perhaps based on a stronger sense of community and social support amongst Vietnamese students. Overall, the present results demonstrate that the role of ethnic identity is not necessarily the same for youth from different ethnic groups and that further research on the factors that impact these relationships is needed.

One limitation of the current research was focusing only on private regard and public regard. Ethnic identity is a multi-dimensional construct, with multiple complex and dynamic components that are dependent on social context (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). Future research should further explore the role of social embeddedness and behavioral involvement, which are the degree to which ethnic identity is implicated in daily social relationships and the degree to which people's actions reflect their ethnic identity respectively (Ashmore et al., 2004). These facets of ethnic identity need to be further explored to develop a true sense of the breadth and depth of ethnic experiences in adolescence.

The results of the present correlational study showed that adolescents with a strong sense of ethnic pride may be more vulnerable to high levels of ethnic discrimination. In order to begin to identify causal direction of influences, the field would benefit from longitudinal research that examines the strength of ethnic pride from early adolescence, when questions about identity emerge, to adulthood and its effects on changes in the associations between discrimination and social adjustment. Moreover, ethnic identity does not develop in a

vacuum. The current study focused on the school as a context where significant social experiences and identity development takes place. Future research should expand to include the home context as well as other areas of cultural influence (e.g., places of worship; cultural centers).

In contrast to private regard, public regard from adults and peers at school did not play a significant buffering role in the present study. A few studies conducted with African American youth (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 2006) have shown that high levels of public regard increased their vulnerability to discrimination. In contrast, other studies with youth of other ethnic groups, including Asian American youth, have shown that high levels of public regard were a protective factor attenuating the link between discrimination and indices of well-being such as self-esteem and depression (Sellers et al., 2006). Therefore, the non-significant moderating role of public regard in the present study was somewhat surprising. Nonetheless, this could be attributed to the items used to tap public regard. The present study focused on youth perceptions of the respect that their ethnic group enjoyed from peers and adults at their school. Following previous studies (e.g., Rivas-Drake, 2012) other aspects of public regard might also be considered in future research, such as others' perceptions of one's group as successful.

Finally, it may be worthwhile in future research to examine public regard messages expressed by the majority culture in comparison with messages expressed by one's own culture. For example, in a recent study, Perkins, Wiley, and Deaux (2014) explored public regard in terms of messages expressed by the majority culture in comparison to messages expressed by one's culture of origin. They found that public regard from one's culture of origin had a larger impact on individual self-esteem than public regard expressed by the majority culture. They also found that second-generation immigrants of color reported more negative views of their ethnicity from the majority culture than were reported by first-generation immigrants of color. Future studies could explore the multiple sources of evaluation, including a culture of origin as well as the majority culture. Additionally, research should determine whether positive messages about one's ethnic group from people of a similar background buffers the link between ethnic discrimination and social adjustment and whether such messages from the dominant or majority society also play a protective role.

4.1 Educational Implications

The present findings are a reminder that schools need to create spaces for their students to explore their different identities and be able to discuss their exploration with their teachers and peers. Through dialogue, youth can gain a better understanding of themselves and feel that they are not alone in figuring out who they are and how their belonging to certain social groups shapes their experiences. The school curriculum could be another way of helping youth of different ethnic backgrounds feel visible. For example, youth need to be exposed to a curriculum that represents the experiences and lives of people of similar ethnic backgrounds and other backgrounds. Finally, educators need to understand what contextual factors could lead some youth to feel that a threat to their ethnic identity is a threat to themselves and their wellbeing. As our world becomes more and more ethnically diverse, researchers need to keep exploring what could be done to ensure that youth of different ethnic backgrounds feel that they matter in their schools and classrooms.

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Note

Note 1. Lower return rates were reported in previous studies with middle and late adolescents requiring active parental consent (e.g., Esbensen, Melde, Taylor, & Peterson, 2008; Rivas-Drake, 2011).

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