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Racial Identity Development for Black Adolescents: Over Time and At School

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Author
Saafir, Amirah Lindsey

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Racial Identity Development for Black Adolescents:

Over Time and At School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Amirah Lindsey Saafir

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Racial Identity Development for Black Adolescents:

Over Time and At School

by

Amirah Lindsey Saafir

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Sandra H. Graham, Chair

This dissertation consists of two studies that explore the development of ethnic racial identity for

Black adolescents during middle and high school. Both studies draw from a longitudinal school-

based study of about 6,000 ethnically diverse early adolescents' social and psychological

adjustment in 26 schools that varied in ethnic diversity. The analytic sample for this dissertation

consisted of only students that self-identified as Black/African American. In Study 1, I examined

the developmental trajectory of growth in 3 parameters of ethnic racial identity—ethnic pride,

ethnic exploration, and out group orientation—from 6th-12th grade. Piecewise latent growth curve

models revealed that each aspect of ethnic racial identity followed a unique pattern of growth.

While ethnic pride and out group orientation seemed to both grow in middle and high school,

ethnic pride was relatively stable in middle school and then showed a pattern of growth in high

school. Furthermore, both ethnic pride and ethnic exploration showed a significant drop at the

start of high school. In Study 2, I focused in on ethnic pride to explore school ethnic context as a

potential explanation for changes in ethnic pride over time, especially at the transition to high school. I considered a variety of aspects of the school ethnic context including actual ethnic representation of Black students, perceived representation, and change in representation. I also explored the impact of racial discrimination as a psychological aspect of the ethnic context. Results from latent growth curve models revealed that only *perceived* ethnic representation impacted ethnic pride. I found that perceptions of declining representation from middle school to high school predicted the drop in ethnic pride at the start of high school. Furthermore, perceiving more same ethnic peers in 9th grade predicted a faster recovery for ethnic pride during high school. Findings from this dissertation point to an important relationship between school ethnic context and ethnic racial identity.

The dissertation of Amirah Lindsey Saafir is approved.

Jaana Helena Juvonen

Tyrone C. Howard

Walter R. Allen

Sandra H. Graham, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

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Education

Howard University

BS: Psychology   **2012**

Selected Recent Publications

Chen, X., **Saafir, A**., & Graham, S. (2020) Ethnicity, Peers, and Academic Achievement: Who Wants to be Friends with the Smart Kids? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 1-13.

Elzein, K., Dhillon Brar, M., Cisneros, N., **Saafir, A**., Regassa, G., & Lopez, B. (in review) Social Justice Mentorship of Student Activists. *Journal of College Student Development.*

Saafir, A., & Graham, S. (in progress) Representation Matters: Perceptions of Change in Ethnic Representation and Racial Identity Development for Black Adolescents at the Transition to Highschool.

Selected Recent Presentations

Saafir, A. & Graham, S. (accepted April 2020). Ethnic Identity Development for Black Adolescents Across the School Transition. Paper accepted to be presented at American Education Research Association Annual Meeting.

Saafir, A. & Graham, S. (presented March 2019). What Does it Mean to Be Black?: Ethnic Exploration, Racial Discrimination, & Perceptions of School Climate. Poster presented at Society for Research in Child Development Bi-Annual Meeting.

Saafir, A. & Graham, S. (presented March 2019). What Does it Mean to Be Black?: Ethnic Exploration, Racial Discrimination, & Perceptions of School Climate. Poster presented at Society for Research in Child Development Bi-Annual Meeting.

Graham, S. & **Saafir, A.** (presented April 2018) Social Identity Complexity as a Buffer of the Effects of Racial Discrimination on Multiethnic Middle School Students. Poster presented at the Society for Research on Adolescents Bi-Annual Meeting.

Saafir, A., Levy, H., & Graham, S. (presented April 2017). Ethnic Identity in Context. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Meeting.

Selected Honors and Awards

UC-HBCU Fellow	2013-2017
Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship	2015
Hot Metal Bridge Post-Baccalaureate Fellow	2013

Teaching and Mentorship

Course Instructor   **2019 to 2020**

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)
- Served as faculty instructor for a 16 week, 35 student on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Privilege in Educational Contexts.
- Developed multimedia lesson plans geared toward helping students unpack societal structures that impact student educational experiences and development
- Provided regular feedback student writing and presentations.
- 90% of students finished the course feeling confident in their ability to analyze and evaluate course theories and use them to critique real world situations.

Education Project Management

Program Director   **2017 to Present**

Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program—Los Angeles, CA
- Lead diverse, cross-functional team of mentors, organizers, and researchers in coordinating support for student activist leaders of color organizing around social justice issues impacting education including racial and gender discrimination, housing insecurity, and mass incarceration.
- Awarded $50,000 Spencer Foundation small research grant.
- Developed research reports and presentations for program stakeholders including, funding agencies, academic administrators, students, and community members.
- Conducted program evaluation research including developing quantitative survey and qualitative interview protocol, conducting 30+ interviews and focus groups, and tracking the longitudinal growth of student leadership skills.

Skills

- SPSS, SAS, Stata, MPlus, NVIVO, MAXQDA,& Qualtrics
- Large-scale and longitudinal data analysis
- Project Coordination and Management
- Grant Writing

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Chattel slavery, segregation, and now mass incarceration--the Black American experience in the US has been historically tumultuous. Movements like Black Lives Matter, which resist the disproportionate and unnecessary use of deadly force on Black people by law enforcement, highlight an ever present need to defend Black humanity. Thus, it is not surprising that this social context has been found to have a negative impact on the overall well-being of Black people in the United States. In fact, racial discrimination has been linked to outcomes such as more depression and anxiety, reduced performance in school (Benner, Wang, Shen, Boyle, Polk & Chang, 2018), and even lower birth outcomes (Collins, David, Handler, Wall, & Andres, 2004; Mustillo, Krieger, Gunderson, Sidney, Mcreath & Kiefe, 2004). With so much at stake, one source of resilience Black people have turned to is an emphasis on racial pride. Much like the Black Power movements of the 60's which encouraged an unapologetic love for Black people and Black culture, current movements such as Black Girl Magic and Black Boy Joy emphasize and affirm Black people and our importance in this society and beyond. Racial pride as a source of resilience is supported by a large body of research (Rivas-Drake, Syed, Umaña-Taylor, Markstrom, French, Schwartz, & Lee, 2014).

In the literature, ethnic/racial identity is defined as the extent to which a person feels connected to and proud of their ethnic group membership. Having a strong positive sense of ethnic/racial identity has been found to buffer the impact of racial discrimination on school adjustment outcomes such as academic achievement (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), anxiety (Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008), and overall psychological well-being (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). Yet, while we know ethnic identity to be a source of resilience, much less is known about how ethnic identity develops over time and the contextual

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factors that influence and promote the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity. In this two-study dissertation use a longitudinal framework to explore the developmental trajectory of ethnic racial identity for Black adolescents and the impact of physical and psychological features of the school ethnic context on change in ethnic racial identity over time.

The research literature has long associated a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity with positive school adjustment outcomes (Rivas-Drake et al, 2014) but much less is known about how to support this important developmental process. To understand how to support ethnic racial identity, we must first understand how it develops. Scholars have begun this process by theorizing a number of stages or phases that people go through on their journey to developing a sense of ethnic identity (Parham, 1989; Phinney, 1989; Cross, 1995). These stages consider the extent to which a person has explored what it means to be a member of their ethnic group and feels a sense of commitment to that group. For example, the foreclosed stage refers to a person that has not yet explored their ethnic group membership whereas the achieved stage refers to someone who has explored and now feels committed and proud to be a member of their ethnic group (Phinney, 1989). Many scholars theorize a developmental order to these stages such that older adolescents would be more likely to be at a "higher" stage of ethnic identity development than younger adolescents. A number of cross sectional studies support this developmental argument (Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1992). However, using a cross-sectional approach to understand a developmental process is limiting. While we can draw conclusions by comparing different subpopulations to one another (i.e. older vs. younger), a longitudinal lens is needed to truly understand the numerous paths that an individual can take to achieving a strong positive sense of ethnic identity.

In the first study of my dissertation specifically explored the trajectory of ethnic racial identity development for Black adolescents from 6th-12th grade. I chose this window of time because it captures both moments of stability and transition in a student's school matriculation process. Scholars are in agreement that school transitions are often difficult for students (e.g. Benner & Graham, 2009), so it is important for us to understand not just the impact of these transitions on ethnic racial identity development but also what the developmental process looks like both before and after the transition. Exploring ethnic identity development across this window of time helps to identify a) unique patterns of growth for different aspects of ethnic racial identity b) key periods when students are developing certain aspects of ethnic identity and c) moments of time when ethnic identity development seems to be most impacted (i.e. school transitions). Understanding this developmental process allows us to contextualize key moments in the ethnic identity development process with other developmental milestones, like school matriculation and transitions.

Once we understand the developmental trajectory of ethnic identity, we must then consider the ways school-related factors might influence this process. Former Governor Jerry Brown recently vetoed a bill that would have required all California high schoolers to take ethnic studies before graduating from high school. This decision raises a question about the school's role in supporting ethnic racial identity development. While there is very little research on the specific impact of school level factors on ethnic racial identity, there is a large body of literature highlighting the impact of school context on adolescent adjustment. For example, diversity scholars argue that school ethnic context is particularly influential on factors such as the friends students make, their sense of school belonging and safety, and even their attitudes toward other

ethnic groups (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Benner & Graham, 2009; Juvonen, Kogachi, & Graham, 2018; Graham, 2018)

The research literature on ethnic representation and salience provides a plausible argument for how school ethnic context might also influence ethnic identity development. It has been found that being in the ethnic numerical minority can make ethnicity more salient. For example, numerical minority children are more likely to spontaneously mention race when asked to describe themselves (McGuire, McGuire, Child, &; Fujioka,1978) and Mexican adolescents in predominantly non-Latino schools report higher levels of ethnic identity in comparison to their peers in majority Latino schools (Umana-Taylor, 2004).

Study 2 of this dissertation explored this phenomenon by looking at the impact of changes in school ethnic context on ethnic racial identity development for Black students. While there is a large body of literature highlighting the impact of school transitions on school adjustment (Eccles, Lord, Roeser & Barber, 1997; Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002; Benner & Graham, 2007; Uvaas & McKevitt, 2013) very few studies specifically explore the impact of changes in school ethnic context (Benner & Graham, 2007; Benner & Graham, 2009) when transitioning and even fewer studies explore how changes in school ethnic context might impact one's understanding and connection to their ethnic group membership (French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006; Zhou, Lee, & Syed, 2019) . In Study 2, explored this by looking at how changes in school ethnic context from middle to high school might impact a person's ethnic identity development with specific attention to the extent to which changes in ethnic representation—the number of same ethnic peers at school—from middle to high school impact and explain changes in ethnic identity at the transition to high school.

Understanding growth in ethnic racial identity over time and the impact of contextual factors like school ethnic context are essential for understanding how to promote the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic identity. This is especially important given the well-documented role of ethnic racial identity as a source of resilience against the impact of toxic environmental factors such as racial discrimination.

Data for these studies came from the UCLA Middle and High School Diversity Project, a longitudinal study exploring the impact of school diversity on school adjustment from 6th grade to one year post high school. Students (N=5,991) were recruited from 26 middle schools in Northern and Southern California during the fall of their 6th grade year and were surveyed twice in 6th grade and once every year thereafter. During the course of the study, students transitioned from the 26 middles schools to 440 high schools where we continued to survey them. Thus, this sample is ideal for exploring developmental processes and the impact of school ethnic context. This dissertation will utilize a subset from this data set (N=724) containing just students who self identify as Black/African American.

I chose this subsample because ethnic identity (as we understand and measure it now) seems to resonate most with people from marginalized ethnic groups. In fact, ethnic minority youth tend to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity than their white peers (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). Ethnic minority youth also tend to hold ethnic identity as central to their self concept and express positive feelings about their ethnic group membership (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010).

STUDY 1

Black Identity Development During Adolescence

Black Identity Development During Adolescence

The current sociopolitical climate in the United States leaves Black youth particularly vulnerable to environmental stressors such as racial discrimination at both the individual and systemic level. As supported by the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), environmental stressors such as racial discrimination can have negative impacts across many areas of adolescent development (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). While it is imperative that we work on rectifying these issues at the systemic level, PVEST also emphasizes the utility of identifying and utilizing cultural sources of resiliency. Research points to a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity as a source of resilience for Black youth (Rivas-Drake et al, 2014). Ethnic racial identity is defined as how important ethnic racial group membership is to a person's identity and how connected they feel to that group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Yet, with over 20 years of scholarly research on ethnic racial identity development, there still is not clarity around the nature of ethnic racial identity development and how to support this important form of resilience. Existing literature points to adolescence as a critical period for ethnic racial identity development. However, few existing longitudinal studies have been able to capture enough time points to explore the unique trajectories of ethnic racial identity development that might exist at different stages of adolescent development. The current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by exploring ethnic racial identity development for Black students from 6th-12th grade. This study especially focuses on the unique growth trajectories of different aspects of ethnic identity, how these trajectories might be different in middle versus high school, and the specific impact of the transition to high school. Relevant literature reviewed below describes what is currently known about ethnic racial identity development and highlights some of the limitations of the existing work that this study aims to address.

Ethnic Racial Identity Over Time

To understand how to support ethnic racial identity, we must first understand how it develops. While there are many theoretical models of the ethnic racial identity development process (Phinney, 1989; Cross, 1995; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Quintana, 1998), the literature largely supports the notion that ethnic racial identity development is a process composed of different facets or stages. These stages usually include some process of coming to understand what it means to be a member of one's ethnic group, how one feels about being a member of that group, how connected one feels to that group, and the relationship between that group and other ethnic groups. Among the most prominent theories is Jean Phinney's Multigroup Model of Ethnic Identity which suggests that ethnic identity development starts with a racialized event(s) that makes ethnic racial group membership more salient for a person. This starts a process of exploration of what it means to be a member of their ethnic group, which leads to feelings of connectedness and positive affect toward that group. It is at this point that a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity is believed to be achieved. Largely influenced by literature on ego identity development (Marcia, 1966), this process is conceptualized into stages such that an individual goes from a state of unawareness (diffusion) of their ethnic racial identity to a state of exploration (moratorium) followed by a resolution (achievement). A foreclosed stage is also included for individuals who have not explored their ethnic identity but still feel a strong sense of connectedness to their ethnic racial group (Phinney, 1990).

In alignment with other theories of identity development, scholars seem to be in agreement that adolescence is a critical period for ethnic identity development. Most existing theories presume a person moves closer and closer to the achieved ethnic identity throughout

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adolescence. However, the existing studies testing this theory vary greatly in both methodological approach and findings.

Early cross sectional studies of ethnic racial identity using stages found evidence that older adolescents are more likely to be at the achieved stage than younger adolescents (Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1992) and this trend has been corroborated in more recent studies (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). However, using a cross-sectional approach to understand a developmental process is limiting. While we can draw conclusions by comparing different subpopulations to one another (i.e. older vs. younger), a longitudinal lens is needed to truly understand the numerous paths that an individual can take to achieving a strong positive sense of ethnic identity.

In response to this limitation, scholars have worked to explore the progression through the stages of ethnic racial identity development using a longitudinal approach. An early study classifying middle school students into stages at different time points demonstrated evidence of movement to higher stages over time but attrition made it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions (Phinney and Chivara, 1992). More recently, scholars have been able to find evidence of stages that are consistent with Phinney's model, but less support for the linear progression through the stages such that a person gets closer and closer to achieved ethnic racial identity over time. For example, one study using cluster analyses to classify middle and high school students into stages at two time points (one year apart) found that while some students progressed to higher stages at time point two, others regressed or remained stable (Seaton, Scottham, & Sellers, 2006). Findings from another study showed evidence of fluctuations in ethnic identity status over time such that some students both progressed and regressed in status over a four year period (Seaton, Yip, Morgan-Lopez, and Sellers, 2012). These previous studies

therefore suggest that ethnic racial identity may be more fluid than initially theorized. This notion is supported by Cross's (1989) Nigrescence model which suggests that racial identity is not a strict linear progression with a specific endpoint, but rather new life challenges can cause an individual to reexamine their race and draw new conclusions about what it means to be a member of their ethnic group.

Moving away from the stage approach, other scholars have looked at the change in *overall* ethnic identity over time. Specifically, they use an aggregate measure of ethnic identity that collapses the ethnic exploration and items from Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; 1990). Consistent with previous studies, some scholars have found evidence of stability in ethnic identity over time. For example, Clubb (1998) found African American middle schoolers to have consistently low, moderate, or high ethnic identity over time. Other scholars have found evidence of change in ethnic identity over time, although the nature of that change varies. While one study examining ethnic identity development among middle and high school students over a 15-month period found evidence of an increase in ethnic identity over time (Perron, Vondracek, Skorikov, Tremblay, and Corbie`re, 1998), another more recent study across the same developmental period found patterns of stability and decrease in addition to patterns of growth (Huang and Stormshak, 2011). These findings, again, illustrate the nuanced ways in which ethnic identity can change over time for an individual.

These mixed findings also raise some questions about study limitations. All of these studies vary substantially in length; some being as short at 15 weeks and as long as 4 years including the transition to high school. This raises a question about what is a reasonable amount of time to expect a change in ethnic identity and what is it about time that should create this change. Borrowing from the ego identity literature, it has been found that identity commitment

(one's understanding of what it means to be a member of their identity group) can change over time as a person has different experiences (Marcia & Friedman, 1970). Thus, rather than time alone being the operative variable, perhaps it is environmental changes that occur in relation to time—for example, the transition to high school.

It is also possible that, similar to stages, this aggregate measure of ethnic racial identity limits our view of the ways ethnic identity is changing. Aggregate measures assume that higher composite scores indicate achieved ethnic racial identity (Umana-Taylor, 2009). This means a student who is high in exploration and low in pride will not look any different from a student who is low in exploration and high in pride. This distinction is important as it is possible that as a person moves closer to achieved ethnic identity, they might do less exploration as they begin to feel certain about what it means to be a member of their ethnic group and start to feel more connected. This idea is supported both theoretically in Phinney's model as well as empirically by literature showing ethnic exploration to decelerate during high school (Pahl & Way, 2006). Perhaps to fully understand changes in ethnic racial identity over time, we must explore changes in each individual component of ethnic racial identity to better understand the full range of ways a person's ethnic identity might grow and change over time.

To address this issue, scholars have begun to take a more nuanced approach by examining developmental trajectories for individual parameters of ethnic racial identity. Using this method, some scholars have found growth in ethnic identity over time to depend on the parameter being measured and the moment in the developmental process. For example, one prominent study found both ethnic exploration and ethnic pride to increase during early adolescence while only ethnic pride increased during middle adolescence (French et al., 2006). This is consistent with Phinney's model of ethnic identity development which theorizes ethnic

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exploration to peak in middle adolescence and begin to decline as adolescents become more certain about the meaning of their ethnic group memberships and feel less need to explore (Phinney, 1992). Pahl and Way (2006) found ethnic exploration to follow a quadratic pattern from 10th grade to one year post 12th grade such that growth decelerated over the 4 years while ethnic pride did not change over time. Similarly, a more recent study looking at ethnic racial identity development for college students also found evidence of this quadratic developmental pattern for ethnic exploration (Zhou, Lee, & Syed, 2019). However, more similar to the French et al. (2006) study, ethnic pride was found to consistently increase over time.

Taken together, the existing research on ethnic identity development suggests that ethnic racial identity does change over time and the nature of that change varies based on the specific parameter of ethnic racial identity. Research suggests the nature of this change might also vary by developmental period such that, for example, the growth trajectory of ethnic identity during early adolescence might be different from that in middle or late adolescence. However, there are not enough longitudinal studies covering a long enough period of time to really compare trajectories by developmental period. Existing literature also points to a relationship between understandings and interactions with other ethnic groups and one's own ethnic identity but to our knowledge, no studies capturing the longitudinal development of ethnic identity include a construct that captures those experiences with other ethnic groups.

The Current Study

The current study explores the growth trajectory of different parameters of ethnic racial identity over time. Specifically, I examined the development of ethnic pride, exploration and out group orientation from 6th-12th grade for Black adolescents.

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This study adds to the existing literature in a critical way by including out group orientation. Out group orientation is a term coined by Jean Phinney to refer to a person's desire to spend time with and understand individuals from ethnic groups other than their own (1992). While not conceptualized to be a part of ethnic identity, it has been highlighted as an important, related factor as a person's perception of what other ethnic groups think about their group can have implications for their own ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1992). Similar constructs are also included in other models of ethnic identity. For example, Seller et al.'s Multidimensional Model of Black Identity includes items on public regard which capture a person's perceptions of what other people think of their ethnic group.

Outgroup orientation is especially relevant given the current study's focus on Black youth. In a society as diverse as the United States, interacting with people from other ethnic groups is an inevitable part of life. However, for Black youth it has been found that more cross-ethnic peers, unfortunately, is also associated with feeling increasingly vulnerable to racial discrimination (Carter, 2007). This is not to say that Black youth should not spend time with cross-ethnic peers but rather those interactions will likely inform the ways they understand their Black identity whether formally or informally. In fact, scholars have found racial discrimination to influence public regard for Black youth such that more experiences with racial discrimination are associated with increased perceptions that other ethnic groups view Black people negatively as well more negative personal views about being Black (Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). Including out group orientation in this study gives a more complete picture of the ways Black youth are coming to develop a sense of ethnic racial identity.

This study also adds to existing literature by capturing parts of early, middle, and late adolescence in one study. Adolescence has been identified as a key period for identity

development and is marked by rapid growth and change among youth as they work to find themselves along their journey to adulthood (Marcia & Friedman, 1970). Existing studies exploring ethnic racial identity development among youth in the historic numerical minority tend to zero in on one particular period of adolescence—early, middle, *or* late. There *are* some existing studies that capture more than one stage of adolescence but these studies tend to center around the transition from middle to high school, only capturing one or two time points before or after the transition. Given the variation in the literature regarding the nature of change in ethnic racial identity over time, this study from 6th-12th grade allowed us the unique opportunity to explore patterns in ethnic identity development across critical moments of stability and transition in a student's matriculation by capturing the entirety of middle and high school as well as the transition to high school. To our knowledge, no published longitudinal studies on ethnic racial identity development capture such an extended period of time.

The purpose of the current study was to explore the development of ethnic pride, exploration, and out group orientation during middle and high school. Extending previous research, I was especially interested in understanding the specific growth trajectory of each parameter during early and middle/late adolescence and how they might differ. To explore this I employed piecewise growth curve analyses to estimate the trajectory of change in each parameter in middle school and high school, separately. Post hoc analyses also allowed for the comparison of the slope of each parameter in middle school and high school to examine unique growth patterns that might exist during early versus middle/late adolescence. Based on existing literature, I hypothesized that ethnic exploration would increase during middle school and then begin to plateau in high school as students become more sure of what being Black means to them. Consistent with studies showing stability in ethnic identity during middle school, I

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hypothesized the trajectory of ethnic pride would remain relatively flat in middle school and then begin to increase in high school as students have explored their ethnic racial identity and started to develop a sense of pride and connectedness to Black people.

I also assessed the extent to which the transition to high school impacted each parameter. A large body or research shows that school transitions can greatly impact students' psychosocial development (Benner & Graham, 2009). Thus, I was also interested in exploring the impact transitioning to high school has on the development of ethnic racial identity. I used Wald tests to compare the intercept of each parameter at the end of middle school (8th grade) to the intercept at the beginning of high school (9th grade). I hypothesized that the transition to high school would be marked by a significant drop in ethnic pride and an initial increase in ethnic exploration as students work to adjust to their new school environment.

Method

Participants

The data for this study comes from the UCLA Middle School and High School Diversity Project, an ongoing longitudinal study that examines the impact of racial/ethnic diversity on students' psychosocial and educational outcomes from 6th grade to one year post high school. The total sample includes 5,991 students who were recruited from 26 urban middle schools in Northern and Southern California, all of which varied in ethnic composition.

To determine ethnicity, participants were asked to select their ethnicity from a list of 13 options: American Indian, Black/African-American, Black/other country of origin, Latino/other country of origin, Mexican/Mexican-American, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Filipino), East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Japanese), Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese,

Cambodian, Thai, Laotian), South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani), White/Caucasian, Multiethnic/Biracial, and Other. The ethnic composition of the original sample was 11% Black/African American, 15% East/Southeast Asian, 24% European American/White, 33% Latino/Mexican, 2% South Asian, 3% Filipino/Pacific Islander, 3% Middle Eastern, and <1% Native American. The analytic sample for this study is comprised of a subset of 724 students who self-identified as African American/Black.

Procedure

Participants were recruited in middle school in three cohorts from 2009 to 2011 and then re-recruited in 9th grade from the 440 high schools to which they transitioned. All students required parent consent and student assent to participate. Data collection procedures remained consistent across middle school and high school with the exception of the transition from paper surveys in middle school to surveys completed on iPads in high school. Data were collected in 9 waves with Waves 1 and 2 occurring in the fall and spring of 6th grade, respectively, and each subsequent wave occurring in the spring of the academic years. Data for the current analysis were collected at Wave 2-Wave 8 (spring of 6th grade to spring of 12th grade). Students completed surveys during non-academic classes while trained graduate student researchers monitored and provided assistance as needed. Upon completion of the survey, students were thanked and given an honorarium.

Measures

    Ethnicity self-report.

    Ethnic Pride. Ethnic pride was measured using a subset of 3 questions from the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Respondents rated items (e.g., "I am proud that I

am a member of my ethnic group") using a 5-point Likert Scale; (1 = *Definitely Yes* 5 =*Definitely No*) (α = .65-.84)

Ethnic Exploration. Ethnic exploration was measured using 1 question from the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Respondents rated the item (e.g. "I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group") using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = *Definitely Yes* 5 =*Definitely No*). Note: there are three ethnic exploration items from the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure included on the UCLA Middle and High School Diversity Study survey from Waves 2-4 (α = .76-.81; for this sample); however, starting at Wave 5 only one of these items was included in the survey administered to the students. Given the longitudinal nature of this study, only that one item is used in these analyses.

Out Group Orientation. Out group orientation was measured using a subset of 3 questions from the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Respondents rated items (e.g., "I spend time with people from other ethnic groups") using a 5-point Likert Scale; (1 = *Definitely Yes* 5 =*Definitely No*) (α = .78-.83).

Time. Time is measured using student grade level. Students were surveyed during the fall (Wave 1) and spring (Wave 2) of 6th grade and then the spring of every year following until one year post 12th grade (Wave 3-Wave 9). This study includes data from the spring of 6th grade until the spring of 12th grade (Wave 2 -Wave 8).

Covariates.

Gender. Gender is measured using self-report at Wave 2 (spring of 6th grade). It is important to note that at Wave 2 the options included on the survey for this item were

dichotomous such that students had to pick male or female. 50% of the analytic sample identified as female.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is measured using parent education level as a proxy. In addition to the student surveys, parents/guardians were asked to complete a brief survey at the beginning of 6th grade and the beginning of 9th grade at the time of consent. For this study, I will be using the reported education level for 6th grade. Included in this survey was a question on parent educational background where parents were asked to indicate their highest education level from the following options: (1) elementary/junior high, (2) some high school, (3) high school diploma or equivalent, (4) some college, (5) 4-year college degree, or (6) graduate degree (M= 4.23, SD= 1.095).

School ethnic context. School ethnic context was measured using California Department of Education data to calculate Simpson's Index of Diversity (Simpson, 1949) at the grade level. Simpson's Diversity Index reflects the probability that two students randomly selected from a group (i.e., ninth grade) will belong to different ethnic groups. Values range from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating more school diversity. Simpson's scores for this sample range from .03-.79.

$$D_C = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{g} P_i{}^2$$

Results

Analytic Plan

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Prior to estimating piecewise growth curve models, preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the descriptive properties and bivariate correlations among the study variables. Next, unconditional piecewise growth curve models were estimated to unpack the developmental trajectory of ethnic pride, ethnic exploration, and out group orientation from 6th to 12th grade. This technique was used because it takes into consideration the change that occurs at the transition from middle to high school by allowing for two intercepts and two growth factors—one set modeling growth in ethnic identity in middle school and one set for high school (Benner & Graham, 2009). Post hoc analyses were conducted to examine the significance of the change in each parameter at the transition from middle school to high school (8th to 9th grade).

All analyses were conducted in M Plus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012, version 7.3). The estimation procedure MLR was specified to handle missing data through full-information maximum likelihood (FIML). FIML allows for the inclusion of all available data in the analyses by fitting the covariance structure model directly to the observed raw data for each participant (Enders, 2010). As with most longitudinal studies, not all participants had complete data at each assessment wave. The majority of adolescents participated in at least 2 out of 3 waves in middle school (n=591, 81%) and about half of the sample participated in at least 3 out of 4 waves in high school (n=362; 50%). Table 1 reports the number of participants for each measure at each data wave. The final analytic sample consisted of 724 participants at the first wave of data collection (51% females). I compared baseline reports of key study variables to examine differences between students included in the study and those omitted due to missing data. Results showed no significant differences between students missing data and those with complete data on ethnic pride (, exploration, or outgroup orientation in spring of 6th grade.

Another issue relevant to this sample was the nesting of students within schools. To address this I used the CLUSTER function which takes into account the particular middle school and high school the student attends and produces correctly adjusted standard errors in the model estimations accordingly (Benner & Graham, 2009).

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations

Descriptive statistics for ethnic pride, ethnic exploration, and out group orientation are presented in Table 1 for the full analytic sample. Overall the sample had high a relatively high sense of ethnic identity with the mean values from 6th-12th grade above the median (3) for ethnic pride (3.59-4.43), ethnic exploration (3.17-4.2), and outgroup orientation (3.95-4.48). Mean estimates suggest there is an increase in all parameters over time. This pattern of growth continues through high school for out group orientation, however, ethnic pride and exploration seem to drop at the start of 9th grade and then resume a pattern of increase.

Using MPlus, I estimated piecewise growth models for each parameter. Unconditional models only included time and the ethnic identity parameter of interest. Latent variables were created for each growth curve model such that each model had a separate intercept and slope for middle school and high school and in some cases, a quadratic growth term as well. Change over time was estimated for middle school by setting the paths from 6th-8th grade of each observed parameter to the latent slope factor equal to 0, 1, and 2, centering data at 6th grade. Observed parameters for high school were centered at 9th grade by setting the paths from 9th-12th grade to 0,1, 2, and 3. Intercept, slope, and quadratic factors were allowed to vary and residual variances were freely estimated. CFI and RMSEA fit statistics were used to determine the best fit model for each parameter (Table 2).

Ethnic Exploration

Model fit statistics indicate the piecewise model fit the data well for ethnic exploration (Table 2). Figure 1 depicts the patterns of change for ethnic exploration in middle and high school. Ethnic exploration followed a quadratic growth pattern in middle school, starting off relatively low and stable in 6th and 7th grade and then rapidly increasing in 8th grade with an intercept of 4.2. Exploration was significantly impacted by the transition to high school; it dropped at the start of high school with a 9th grade intercept of 3.23 (W=351.22; p<.001) However, exploration quickly recovered with rapid increase from 9th to 11th grade followed by a deceleration in growth in 12th grade. This plateau effect is consistent with my hypothesis.

Ethnic Pride

Ethnic pride starts high in middle school. Possible values for ethnic belonging range from 1 to 5 and ethnic belonging has an intercept at the 6th grade time point of 4.25. Ethnic pride remains relatively stable throughout middle school with only a slight, yet significant, linear increase. (*b*=.037; p<.05). Consistent with our hypothesis, ethnic pride significantly drops at the transition to high school with an intercept of 4.34 in 8th grade and 3.60 in 9th grade (W=668.11; p<.001). Ethnic pride then shows a pattern of increase until 11th grade when it begins to plateau.

Outgroup Orientation

Growth in outgroup orientation throughout middle school is slow and steady with a small but significant slope (*b*=.07; p<.001). Unlike pride and exploration, outgroup orientation is

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slightly higher in 9th grade compared to 8th grade with mean values of 4.1 and 4.3, respectively (W= 21.79; p<.001). Outgroup orientation continues to grow in high school until 10th grade when, similar to pride and exploration, outgroup orientation begins to plateau.

Findings show ethnic exploration, ethnic pride, and out group orientation significantly change from 6th to 12th grade; however, the growth trajectory seems to vary by both parameter and developmental period. Each parameter is also differentially impacted by the transition to high school.

Effects of Individual and School Level Characteristics

The second set of analyses of piecewise growth models included covariates that were phase independent (i.e. gender and parent education) and time varying (i.e. school diversity and free and reduced lunch). Using MPlus I started with our unconditional models for each parameter and added gender, parent education, Simpson's diversity, and free and reduced lunch to the model to see how growth in each parameter of ethnic identity might vary based on demographic and contextual factors. Model fit statistics indicate models with covariates still fit the data well (Table 3).

Findings suggest there is a significant impact of parent education on ethnic exploration, especially in middle school. Specifically, higher parent education is associated more ethnic exploration at the start of middle school (*b*=-.28; p=.003). However, students coming from homes with less educated parents catch up to their peers from more highly educated homes by 8th grade. Parent education did not have a significant impact on the growth of ethnic pride or outgroup orientation (Table 4.).

By in large, gender did not have a significant impact on the growth trajectory of ethnic pride, exploration, and outgroup orientation over time (Table 4). Surprisingly, school level characteristics also did not have a significant impact on the growth of ethnic identity in middle school or high school.

Discussion

This study places ethnic racial identity development in the broader context of adolescent development. This is an important addition to the literature as previous studies primarily focus on either a particular part of adolescent development—early, middle, or late—or center solely around the transition to high school. The unique and extensive time frame of this study from 6th-12th grade allowed us to examine long-term patterns of growth for ethnic pride, exploration, and outgroup orientation both before and after the transition to high school. Findings show ethnic pride to be high and unchanging in middle school but show patterns of steady growth in high school. Additionally, ethnic pride and ethnic exploration seemed to be particularly impacted by the transition to high school.

Unique Trajectories of Parameters

One of the key aims of this study was to examine the unique growth trajectories of different parameters of ethnic racial identity over time. Consistent with my hypotheses I found ethnic pride, exploration, and out group orientation to follow their own unique patterns of growth throughout middle school and high school. In middle school, ethnic pride remained high and stable while both exploration and outgroup orientation grew. At the start of 9th grade, both ethnic pride and exploration dropped significantly while outgroup orientation maintained slow, steady

growth. Both ethnic pride and exploration recovered by 10th grade and continued to grow and eventually plateau by 12th grade.

These patterns of growth remained consistent even after taking contextual and demographic covariates into consideration. I was especially surprised to see gender did not have a significant impact on the growth of any of the parameters over time. Existing literature particularly among Black adolescents has shown gender differences in both the function of ethnic racial identity for Black youth. For example, one study of Black middle and high school students found racial centrality, a measure similar to ethnic/racial pride, to moderate the relationship between racial discrimination and academic attitudes for both boys and girls but racial centrality buffered the impact of racial discrimination and grades for Black boys only (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008). Similarly, I thought I might see different patterns of growth by gender across ethnic pride, exploration, and outgroup orientation over time. Non-significant differences suggest complexities in the ways contextual factors impact different properties of ethnic racial identity such that gender impacts the function of ethnic identity but not the growth trajectory.

Relationships Between Parameters

One major contribution of this study is the inclusion of outgroup orientation. While scholars have theorized a relationship between ethnic racial identity and outgroup orientation, to our knowledge this is the first study to explore the growth of these parameters simultaneously. Compared to other parameters, outgroup orientation seemed to especially follow its own pattern of growth. Unlike pride and exploration, outgroup orientation shows slow steady growth over time and does not seem to be substantially impacted by the transition to high school. These

differences in the growth patterns of outgroup orientation compared to ethnic pride and exploration do not suggest a relationship between these variables. However, correlation analyses from this study revealed a moderate positive relationship between outgroup orientation and both ethnic exploration and ethnic pride.

Similarly, theories suggest an interrelationship between ethnic exploration and pride such that an individual must first explore what it means to be a member of their racial/ethnic group before developing a sense of connectedness and pride in their group membership. However, findings from this study provide mixed support for the idea that ethnic exploration proceeds ethnic pride. Correlation analyses from the current study show ethnic pride and ethnic exploration become increasingly more correlated over time. This finding is also supported by extant literature. Douglas and Taylor (2015) conducted parallel growth analysis among a sample of Latinx adolescents using ethnic exploration and pride and found evidence of their influence on the growth trajectory of one another. However, findings from the current study also show ethnic pride to start and remain high in middle school. If the growth of ethnic pride is contingent on prior exploration, how could pride start high in middle school while exploration starts low?

One explanation for this finding is that the ethnic racial identity development process starts earlier than initially theorized. Perhaps students have done some exploration around what it means to be Black prior to middle school and thus they have already developed a strong positive sense of ethnic identity. Existing literature provides some evidence that young children are aware and processing their ethnic racial group membership earlier than we thought. For example, elementary students in the ethnic racial minority at their school have been found to spontaneously mention race when asked to describe themselves. In addition, literature on racial socialization suggests that Black parents often equip their children with positive messages about

their ethnic racial group membership in preparation for the inevitable racism and discrimination they will face.

This type of socialization from parents has been linked to the development of a strong positive feelings toward one's ethnic racial group. In Phinney's model of ethnic identity development this would be considered the foreclosed stage where an individual shows a strong sense of ethnic identity that does not appear to be rooted in their own personal exploration of their ethnic group membership but rather messages from a parent or guardian about race. However, as Black youth continue to explore their ethnic group membership in both middle and high school, ethnic pride starts to show a pattern of growth that could be indicative of a sense of ethnic belonging that is rooted in one's own exploration of their ethnic racial group membership.

While the specific influence of ethnic pride, exploration, and outgroup orientation on the growth of one another is outside the scope of the main analysis for this study, future studies should not only explore the ways each individual parameter changes over time but also how these changes might be interrelated.

Growth Trajectory Specific to Developmental Period

Findings from the current study suggest the trajectory of growth in ethnic racial identity is contingent on the period of adolescence in question, such that some growth patterns may be more common during particular developmental periods. Take ethnic pride for example. If we look just at the growth trajectory of ethnic pride in middle school it would appear ethnic pride is stable over time. On the other hand, the trajectory of ethnic pride in high school we see patterns of rapid growth at the beginning of high school followed by decelerated yet continued growth at

the end of high school. These findings illustrate two vastly different growth patterns for ethnic pride in middle adolescence compared to late adolescence.

Existing literature suggests ethnic racial identity can remain stable, progress, and even regress over time. Mixed findings across studies have made it difficult to truly understand the nature of growth in ethnic racial identity throughout a person's development. However, findings from this study high light that attention to developmental period might help unearth connections across existing studies around the growth patterns of different parameters of ethnic racial identity. For example, many existing studies focusing on middle adolescence suggest stability in ethnic racial identity of time (Clubb, 1998; Huang & Stormshak 2011) while studies capturing high school often show change and in most cases growth in ethnic racial identity (Seidman and French; Pahl and Way, 2007).

Another example of the importance of developmental period is also illustrated at the transition from middle school to high school. In this study, both ethnic pride and ethnic exploration are marked by a drastic drop at the start of high school, however, both parameters recover by 10th grade. These findings suggest that regressive moments in ethnic racial identity development could be momentary and in response to changes in environment. Had we only examined the growth of ethnic racial identity from middle school to the start of high school, ethnic racial identity would have appeared to regress over time however, capturing multiple time periods during both middle and late adolescence depicts a much more dynamic and nuanced process.

Ethnic Racial Identity Across the Lifespan

Overall, findings from this study fit within a life span view of ethnic racial identity development. This study suggests that changes in environment like the transition from middle to high school might be particularly influential in shaping the trajectory of growth in ethnic racial identity. These findings suggest ethnic racial identity development is not a linear and finite process but rather ongoing and filled with ebbs and flows. This aligns with a life span view of ethnic racial identity development where ethnic identity is constantly growing and changing as a person engages in new experiences and environments that unearth new perspectives and understandings about one's ethnic racial group membership. High pride at the start of middle school could be indicative of the ethnic racial identity process starting prior to the start of adolescence. In addition, in this study we see ethnic pride and exploration are negatively impacted by the transition to high school and then quickly recover. If the transition to high school can have this impact, what about the transition to college or the working world?

Studies exploring ethnic racial identity development among college students suggest that ethnic racial identity does continue to grow and change in early adulthood. For example, Willis and Neblett (2019) explored ethnic racial identity development among a sample of college students over a 3 year period and found evidence of growth in multiple parameters of ethnic racial identity development. Similarly, a study looking at change in ethnic exploration and commitment at the transition to college found evidence of growth in both parameters over the course of the first two years of college with growth in exploration decelerating over time (Syed, 2018).

Given mounting evidence that the ethnic racial identity development process is ongoing, future studies should explore factors that predict shifts in the trajectory of growth in different parameters of ethnic racial identity. What is it about school transitions that seems to spark shifts

in ethnic racial identity? Theories suggest environmental changes can cause a person to

reexamine their ethnic racial identity. Perhaps contextual differences between middle and high

school might play a role.

Table 1.

Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables.

	Explore 6th	Explore 7th	Explore 8th	Explore 9th	Explore 10th	Explore 11th	Explore 12th	N	Mean	SD
Pride 6th	.36**							629	4.27	0.65
Pride 7th		.34**						507	4.3	0.63
Pride 8th			.80**					458	4.33	0.61
Pride 9th				.63**				459	3.59	0.71
Pride 10th					.52**			319	4.39	0.6
Pride 11th						.66**		314	4.42	0.69
Pride 12th							.71**	311	4.43	0.67
Outgroup 6th	.34**							672	3.95	.63
Outgroup 7th		.28**						564	4.06	.63
Outgroup 8th			.19**					513	4.10	.60
Outgroup 9th				.14*				368	4.26	.57
Outgroup 10th					.39**			369	4.37	.59
Outgroup 11th						.36**		359	4.47	.61
Outgroup 12th							.42**	360	4.44	.65
N	629	349	457	458	319	314	311			
Mean	3.4	3.39	4.2	3.17	4.03	4.13	4.2			
SD	1.01	0.99	0.8	1.07	0.91	0.97	0.91			

	Pride 6th	Pride 7th	Pride 8th	Pride 9th	Pride 10th	Pride 11th	Pride 12th	N	Mean	SD
Outgroup 6th	.37**							672	3.95	.63
Outgroup 7th		.24**						564	4.06	.63
Outgroup 8th			.26**					513	4.10	.60
Outgroup 9th				.27*				368	4.26	.57
Outgroup 10th					.38**			369	4.37	.59
Outgroup 11th						.39**		359	4.47	.61
Outgroup 12th							.49**	360	4.44	.65
N	629	507	458	459	319	314	311			
Mean	4.27	4.3	4.33	3.59	4.39	4.42	4.43			
SD	.65	0.63	0.61	.71	0.6	0.69	0.67			

Note. *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 2.

*Model Fit Statistics and Growth Terms of Unconditional Growth Models for Ethnic Pride,
Exploration and Outgroup Orientation*

	Model Fit		Middle School			High School		
	CFI	RMSEA	Inter	Slope	Quad	Inter	Slope	Quad
Ethnic Pride	.91	.09	4.25***	.04**	—	3.6***	.89***	-.21***
Ethnic Exploration	.90	.07	3.41***	-.40***	.40***	3.22***	.87***	-.19***
Out group Orientation	.99	.03	3.96***	.07***	—	4.26***	.18***	-.04*

*Note. *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001*

Table 3.

Summary of Growth Models with Covariates for Ethnic Exploration, Belonging, and Outgroup

Orientation

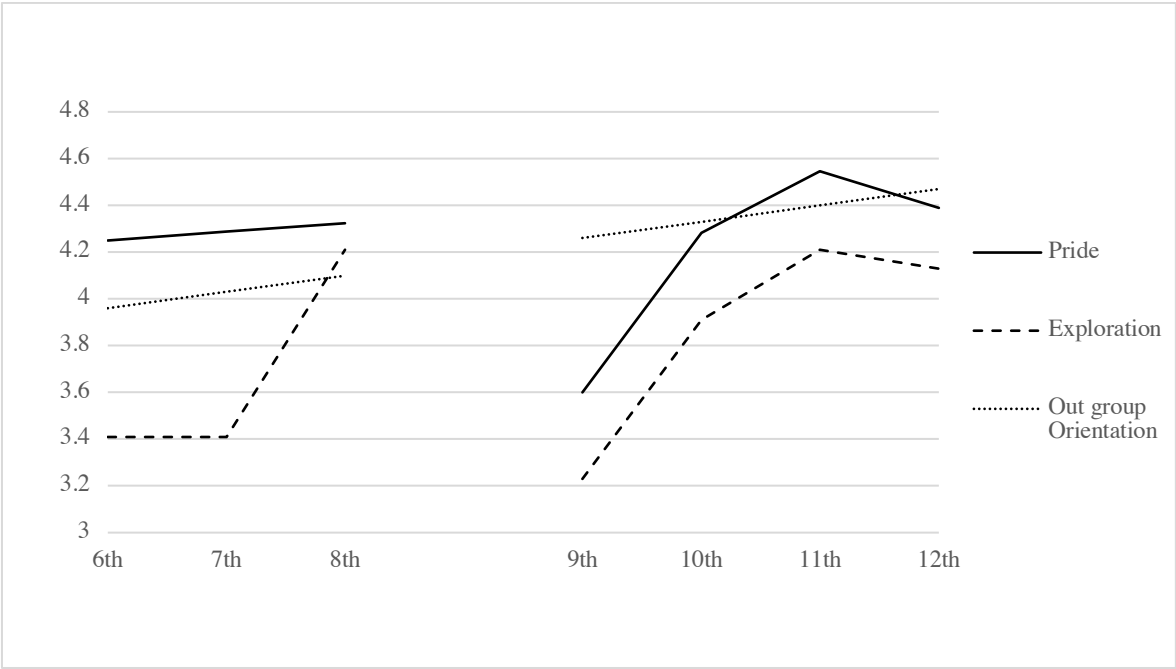|	Chi-square			
	Chi-square value (df)	p value	CFI	RSMEA
Ethnic Exploration	129.75 (73)	.00	.84	.04
Ethnic Pride	104.5 (72)	.01	.95	.04
Outgroup Orientation	83.04 (72)	.18	.97	.02

Figure 1. Unconditional growth trajectory of study variables in middle and high school.

Table 4.

Piecewise Growth Model for Ethnic Pride, Exploration, and Outgroup Orientation with

Covariates.

	Middle School			High School		
	Inter (SE)	Slope (SE)	Quad (SE)	Inter (SE)	Slope (SE)	Quad (SE)
Ethnic pride	4.11 (.16)***	.05 (.12)	—	3.59 (.24)***	1.01 (.26)***	-.23(.06)***
Parent edu	.03 (.026)	-.01 (.02)	—	.02 (.04)	-.05 (.05)	.01 (.41)
Gender	-.02 (.06)	.02 (.03)	—	-.04 (.08)	-.17 (.10)	.07 (.03)*
Ethnic Exploration	2.87 (.41)***	.98 (.55)*	-.25 (.30)	3.06 (.52)***	.97 (.51)*	-.17 (.12)
Parent edu	.10 (.04)*	-.28 (.10)*	.12 (.05)*	.07 (.07)	-.05 (.08)	.00 (.02)
Gender	-.22 (.12)	.13 (.26)	.01 (.13)	-.10 (.17)	-.10 (.17)	.05 (.05)
Out group Orientation	3.87 (.25)***	.02 (.14)	—	4.29 (.15)***	.13 (.17)	-.03 (.05)
Parent edu	.01 (.03)	.00 (.01)	—	.01 (.02)	.01 (.03)	.00 (..01)
Gender	.14 (.08)			.01 (.08)	-.07 (.45)	.03 (.03)

*Note. School diversity and free and reduced lunch were also included in the model as time varying predictors. Effect were all non-significant.   *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001.*

STUDY 2

Representation Matters: Perceptions of Change in School Ethnic Context and Black Identity

Development Across the Transition to Highschool.

Representation Matters: Perceptions of Change in School Ethnic Context and Black Identity Development Across the Transition to High School.

The ethnic composition of the United States is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. By the year 2060 it is expected that white Americans will make up only 43% of the population, a 40% decrease over the course of a century (Taylor, 2014). Yet, as the racial and ethnic diversity of the country increases, schools are more segregated than ever. The average White student attends a school that's 80% White and African American or Latinx students typically attend schools where at least 60% of the student body is from their own racial/ethnic group (Graham, 2018). Furthermore, racialized school level policies like academic tracking often leave White and Asian students overrepresented in advanced level courses while Black and Brown students are consistently underrepresented (Chen, Saafir, & Graham, 2020). These policies substantially shape the racial ethnic context of the school environments in which students spend at least a third of their day. With racial tensions rising in the US, scholars have started to explore the impact school ethnic context can have on the psychosocial adjustment and over all well-being of Black students.

One way school ethnic context may be impactful is in shaping the development of students' thoughts and ideas about their ethnic/racial group membership. Literature on school diversity highlights the impact access to diverse peers can have on the attitudes and relationships youth build with students from ethnic backgrounds other than their own (Knifsend & Juvonen 2013). Same ethnic representation at school has also been found to impact ethnicity salience and even ethnic racial identity development (McGuire, McGuire, Child, &; Fujioka, 1978). Furthermore, it is no surprise that race-related environmental stressors at school like racial discrimination have been found to negatively impact Black students (Benner et al., 2018).

However, having a strong sense of ethnic racial identity has been found to help Black adolescents process negative racialized experiences like racial discrimination and mitigate some of its deleterious effects (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin & Cogburn, 2008).

Ethnic pride is particularly associated with positive adjustment for Black youth in the ethnic racial identity research literature (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). In Study 1, we learned that ethnic pride drops substantially at the transition to high school. Literature on the development of ethnic racial identity suggests that new life experiences can lead to shifts in ethnic racial identity as new experiences give way to new understandings about one's racial/ethnic group membership (Parham, 1989). Study 2 explored school ethnic context as a predictor of change in ethnic pride over time. I was particularly interested in the impact of changes in ethnic representation from middle school to high school on the drop in ethnic pride in 9th grade and subsequent recovery in 10th grade. I also explored school ethnic context as a buffer of the negative impact of racial discrimination on ethnic pride. Relevant literature below describes what is currently known about the relationship between different aspects of the school ethnic context and ethnic racial identity development.

Ethnic Representation and Ethnic Identity

It has long been established that ethnic minority individuals tend to report a greater sense of ethnic racial identity than their white counterparts (Phinney, Dupont, Espinosa, Revill, & Sanders, 1994). Scholars attribute this heightened sense of ethnic racial identity to increased salience of ethnicity for ethnic minority individuals, citing lived experiences of societal inequality, discrimination, and marginalization as promoting salience of ethnic group

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membership (Phinney, 1992). Salience, in this context, refers to the utility of ethnicity as a distinctive characteristic from other individuals in that context (McGuire et al., 1978).

Literature on numeric ethnic representation, which refers to the proportion of same ethnic peers in a particular context, suggests that representation of one's ethnic group has implications for ethnicity salience and in turn ethnic identity development. Specifically, it has been found that being in the ethnic numerical minority can make ethnicity more salient. For example, numerical minority children are more likely to spontaneously mention race when asked to describe themselves (McGuire et al,1978) and Mexican adolescents in predominantly non-Latino schools report higher levels of ethnic identity in comparison to their peers in majority Latino schools (Umana-Taylor, 2004). This work suggests a relationship between school context and ethnic identity such that when a student has fewer same ethnic peers, ethnicity is a salient and distinctive characteristic which could in turn could inform ethnic racial identity development. However, whether or not this increase in ethnicity salience is related to positive ethnic racial identity development is unclear.

Scholars exploring the experiences of Black students at school have found Black students often feel singled out at school because of their race. In the literature, this is referred to as hyper-visibility which involves Black students being overly noticed by racial out-group members. In this sense, having fewer same ethnic peers leads to increased ethnicity salience for the student but also makes Black students feel more vulnerable to discriminatory treatment due to their race (Carter, 2007).

Research has shown the development of same ethnic safe spaces to be useful in mitigating the negative impact of hypervisibility. Beverly Tatum defines these safes spaces as physical places in the school where Black students are known to gather. In Tatum's, "Why Are

All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria," (2017), she found that Black students were gathering together during lunch as a means of reflecting on some of the issues of race they were experiencing. These spaces have been found to provide a place in school where Black students can unpack and make meaning around difficult racialized experiences. They also create a space for Black students to build a sense of ethnic racial identity rooted in validation and affirmation by others with whom they have a shared life experience and a shared since of racial affinity (Carter, 2007). In this sense, having access to more same ethnic peers seems to be beneficial not only for the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity but for the overall well-being of Black students. In fact, Black students have described experiencing a sense of peace when among same-ethnic peers (Solorzano et al, 2000; Carter, 2007; Tatum, 2017).

Taken together, extant literature provides evidence of a relationship between school ethnic context and ethnic racial identity development, albeit complex. It seems having fewer same ethnic peers might be beneficial in making ethnicity more salient for Black youth, but that does not necessarily translate to a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity. Same ethnic peers may be uniquely beneficial in supporting the development of ethnic pride. A Black middle school student in a predominantly white school might seek out same ethnic peers to process racialized experiences at school. But what happens if that middle school student transitions to a high school where Black students are in the majority? In Study 1 of this dissertation we learned that ethnic pride drops significantly at the start of high school. Perhaps *changes* in the school ethnic context at the transition from middle to high school might also help us better understand the growth trajectory of ethnic pride across the transition to high school.

Changing School Ethnic Context

There is a large body of research literature highlighting the impact of school transitions on school adjustment and specifically the adverse impact school transitions (Isakson, & Jarvis, 1999; Neild, 2009). This begs the question—what is it about transitioning to high school that is difficult for students? One explanation is changes in school ethnic context. While research literature is limited, there is some evidence that changes in school ethnic context from middle school to high school impact student adjustment. For example, scholars have found that transitioning from a middle school with more same ethnic peers to a high school with fewer same ethnic peers was related to less school belonging and lower grades as well as an overall dislike for school (Benner & Graham, 2009).

There is even some literature examining the impact of changing school ethnic context specifically on ethnic racial identity development. One prominent study found the transition from an ethnically homogeneous middle school to a more ethnically heterogeneous high school was marked by a rise in exploration. Furthermore, these authors found that ethnic pride rises in the subsequent year, perhaps as a result of the increased exploration (French et al., 2006). This not only is in alignment with Phinney's developmental theory of ethnic identity but also highlights the specific impact changes in school ethnic context can have on ethnic identity development over time. This also further emphasizes the varying ways ethnic context can be impactful in shaping Black students thoughts about their race/ethnicity.

Perceived Ethnic Representation

To add to these complexities, research also shows that the ethnic context of the school is not always in alignment with the context that students experience every day. Even when Black students are in the numerical majority at school, it is still possible to perceive themselves to be in

the minority. This can occur, for example, due to discrepancies between the ethnic composition of the overall school in comparison to the ethnic makeup of a student's classes. This discrepancy can have an impact on many aspects of these students lives, including the ethnic composition of their friend groups (Chen et al., 2020).

Thus, in addition to considering school ethnic context using actual ethnic representation, context can also be assessed based on student *perceptions* of their ethnic group representation. Perceptions of representation might also be particularly relevant when considering developmental processes like ethnic racial identity that are largely informed by one's personal experiences and their *perceptions* of those experiences.

School Psychosocial Ethnic Context

In addition to aspects of the physical ethnic context like numerical ethnic representation, there are also psychosocial components of the ethnic context like racial discrimination that may also be relevant to ethnic racial identity development. Racial discrimination , unfortunately, is part of day-to-day life for many Black people living in the United States (Banks, Kohn-Wood & Spencer, 2006). This is the case even during adolescence. In a study of 314 African American adolescents, 93% reported experiencing at least one racial hassle within the past year (Sellers, 2006). The deleterious effects of racial discrimination on psychosocial adjustment and overall well-being are well-documented (Benner et al., 2018). Particularly during adolescence, research literature consistently shows experiences of racial discrimination in the school context to negatively impact students' academic achievement (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006), school engagement (Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers, 2007), and self-esteem (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes & Rowley, 2007) along with many other indicators of psychosocial

adjustment. Given these findings, it is clear that the prevalence of racial discrimination needs to be addressed. But given its long history in the United States, scholars have also turned their attention to exploring ways to reduce the negative impact of racial discrimination. Consistent with a risk and resilience framework (Rutter, 1987), a number of scholars assert that cultural resources can minimize the negative effects of discrimination on minority youths' adjustment (Coll, Akerman, & Cicchetti, 2000; Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011). Ethnic/racial identity is one such cultural factor.

In addition to the direct benefits of ethnic identity, the literature overwhelmingly supports the utility of a strong positive sense of ethnic identity as a buffer against the impact of harmful environmental factors such as discrimination on adolescent psychosocial development (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin & Cogburn, 2008; Sellers et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). In fact, some argue that ethnic/racial identity is one of the most protective assets for minority youth (Phinney, 2003). A strong sense of belonging to one's ethnic group has been connected to increased well-being and fewer mental health problems, particularly among those who have experienced discrimination (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). Ethnic identity has also been found to reduce the impact of racial discrimination on psychological outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Bynum et al 2008; Sellers et al., 2006). Feeling more connected to one's ethnic group has even been found to buffer the negative impact of school racial discrimination on academic outcomes such as self-perception of academic ability, school achievement, and engagement in problem behaviors (Wong et al, 2003).

Scholars believe ethnic identity serves this buffering role is by providing access to a repertoire of strategies for managing discriminatory experiences (McMahon & Watts, 2002; Shelton et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2003). A strong positive ethnic identity also helps youth from

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minoritized ethnic groups to process racial discrimination without internalizing negative stereotypes about their ethnic group (Mandara, Gaylor-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Spencer, 1995). These studies support ethnic identity as a protective cultural asset. More specifically, the current research literature especially points to the utility of having positive feelings about one's ethnic group membership and feeling connected to one's ethnic group as being protective against the impact of racial discrimination on adolescent adjustment. Given this known robust relationship between ethnic racial identity and racial discrimination, it is possible that school context and particularly school ethnic context might impact the nature of this relationship.

The Current Study

The current study examined the impact of different aspects of school ethnic context on the development of ethnic pride across the transition to high school for Black adolescents. Specifically, I explored the following research questions:

1. Do changes in school ethnic context from middle school to high school predict ethnic pride in 9th grade?

2. Given the decline in ethnic pride in 9th grade, does ethnic context predict the recovery of ethnic pride later in high school?

3. Does school ethnic representation buffer the impact of racial discrimination on ethnic pride?

This study serves to add to the growing body of literature exploring the impact of changes in school ethnic context on adolescent development. While the body of literature on school transitions is vast, less attention has been given to the specific impact of changes in school ethnic

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context. Existing literature points to an important relationship between school ethnic context and ethnic racial identity development. However, variation in research findings highlights the need to use a more nuanced view of school ethnic context in order to truly understand how it impacts ethnic racial identity development. While some studies suggest being in the minority makes ethnic racial group membership hyper visible and thus more salient, other studies suggest that hyper visibility is actually harmful for Black student adjustment and that actually having access to more same ethnic peers is beneficial. In order to truly unpack the complexities within the relationship between context and identity we must attend to the nuance in these time varying relationships. This longitudinal study allowed us to explore not just the immediate impact of changing context on ethnic racial identity development but the lasting impact throughout the duration of high school.

This is important as we work to understand the optimal context for supporting strong positive ethnic racial identity development for Black students. Consistent with Tatum's hypervisibility theory, I hypothesized that transitioning to a high school with fewer same ethnic peers would result in a drop in ethnic pride at the start of high school and a slower recovery in ethnic pride throughout high school compared to Black students transitioning to high schools where they were more represented.

Much of the interest in understanding the development of ethnic pride centers around it's utility as a cultural tool of resilience in the face of a racialized society that holds discrimination against Black people as a core value. Thus, it is important for us to understand not only how school ethnic context can support strong ethnic racial identity development but support Black adolescents in the face of an inescapable environmental stressor like racial discrimination. Given the protective function same ethnic spaces have been found to serve for Black students, I

hypothesized that moving to a high school with more same ethnic peers would buffer the negative impact of racial discrimination on ethnic racial identity development.

Looking at the impact of ethnic representation and racial discrimination in tandem adds to the literature by helping us understand how both physical aspects of the school context and psychosocial components like racial discrimination can influence one another and shape Black student adjustment. Perhaps it is not just about the ethnic composition of the school but also how the school community treats students across racial lines. This study attends to the nuance of the school ethnic context by considering not just the ethnic makeup of the school environment but the racial climate as well.

Method

Participants

Participants came from the same subsample of 724 Black students from the UCLA Middle and High School Diversity study.

One of the strengths of this sample, particularly for Study 2, is that the middle schools from which students were recruited for the UCLA Middle and High School Diversity study were strategically selected for their racial/ethnic make-up to include: majority, balanced and diverse schools. Schools were classified using data published by the California Department of Education to determine the percentage of students from each ethnic group represented in the 26 middle schools. A school was considered to be a majority school if one ethnic group comprised at least 50% of the school population and was at least twice as big as the next largest group at the school (N=11). A school was considered to be balanced if two ethnic groups comprised at least 70% of the school with neither group being twice as large as the other and both groups being at least

twice as large as any other ethnic group in the school (N=9). Lastly, diverse schools were classified as schools where there was neither a clear majority or two balanced groups (N=6; See Table 2). This attention to ethnic make-up during recruitment makes this sample ideal for understanding the impact of changes in ethnic context over time.

Table 1. *School Ethnic Composition Criteria*

School Type	Selection criteria
Majority (n=11)	One group comprises at least 50% of the school and is at least twice as big as the next largest group.
Balanced (n=9)	Two groups comprise at least 70%, with neither being more than twice as large as the other. Each of these two groups is at least twice as large as each remaining group.
Diverse (n=6)	No clear majority or two balanced groups.

Measures

Ethnic pride, gender, parent SES, free or reduced lunch, and school diversity from Study 1 were used in this study. In addition, given the focus on ethnic context, Study 2 also includes measures of both perceived and actual ethnic representation at each wave as well as change variables that takes into consideration changes in actual ethnic representation from middle to high school as well as changes in perceived representation. Lastly, we included racial discrimination to explore the relationship between ethnic pride, discrimination, and school context.

Ethnic representation.

Percent Same Ethnicity. Percent same ethnicity is defined as the proportion of Black students in a particular grade at each school out of the total number of students in that grade. This value is calculated separately for each school and is calculated using public data from the California Department of Education.

Perceived Same Ethnicity. Perceived same ethnicity is defined as the proportion of Black peers students perceive in their grade at their school. Perceived same was measured each year using a single item, "How many students at this school are from your ethnic group?". Participants responded using a 7-pt Likert scale (1="none or hardly any (less than 10%)" to 7="all or almost all (90-100%).

Change in percent same ethnicity. Change in actual ethnic representation is defined as the change in percent same ethnic from middle to high school. Specifically, change in actual representation was calculated by subtracting 9th grade percent same ethnicity from 8th grade such that higher numbers would indicate more same ethnic peers in middle school compared to high school (i.e., a decrease in same ethnic group representation across the transition to 9th grade).

Change in perceived same ethnicity. Change in perceived representation is defined as the change in perceived same ethnicity from middle school to high school. Similar to change in actual representation, change in perceived representation was calculated by subtracting 9th grade perceived same ethnicity from 8th grade perceived same ethnicity such that higher numbers indicate a perception of more same ethnic peers in middle school compared to high school.

Racial Discrimination. Racial discrimination was assessed in 9th grade using a measure of teacher racial discrimination. The measure was adapted from a version of the Adolescent

Discrimination Distress Index (ADDI; Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000). Respondents rated 4 items (e.g. *"Treated disrespectfully by adults in your school because of your race/ethnic group"*) on a 5 point scale from 1= "Never" to 5= "A Whole Lot".

Results

Analytic Plan

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the descriptive properties and bivariate correlations among the study variables (Table 2). Next, we zeroed in on the drop in ethnic pride at the start of 9th grade and the recovery during 10th and 11th (found in study 1) by estimating an unconditional latent growth curve model for the development of ethnic pride from 8th to 11th grade. We then developed a conditional model to explore the impact of school ethnic context on the development of ethnic pride. We added 8th and 9th grade percent and perceived same ethnicity as level 2 predictors as well as *change* in percent and perceived same ethnicity to understand the impact of change in ethnic representation from middle school to high school.

Lastly, I examined the impact of racial discrimination on ethnic pride in varying school ethnic contexts by estimating a latent growth model with ethnic representation, racial discrimination, and their interaction predicting growth in ethnic pride from 9th-11th grade. Demographic and contextual covariates were also included in the model including school ethnic diversity, free and reduced lunch, gender, and parent education.

Just as in Study 1, the MLR estimation procedure was used to address missing data through FIML. We used TYPE=COMPLEX to account for the nesting of students within schools (Enders, 2010).

Descriptive statistics and zero order correlations.

Descriptive statistics for ethnic pride, percent same ethnicity, perceived same ethnicity, change in percent same, change in perceived same, and discrimination are presented in Table 2. Mean statistics show, on average, Black student in this sample make up less than 30% of the school population in both middle and high school with a decrease in representation in high school. On the other hand, mean statistics show Black students in this sample *perceive* themselves to make up about half of the student population in middle and high school with perceptions of slightly less representation in middle school compared to high school. This suggests some mismatch between the actual availability of Black peers at schools and students perceptions of availability. Correlation analysis shows a significant correlation of .393 and .438 between percent same and perceived same in 8th and 9th grade, respectively.

Unconditional Growth Models for Ethnic Pride, Exploration and Outgroup Orientation.

Based on the growth trajectory of ethnic pride found in Study 1, we expected a cubic model to fit the data best. This was supported by model fit statistics (Table 3). In alignment with Study 1, ethnic pride drops at the start of high school, recovers by 10th grade and then begins to plateau in 11th grade (Figure 1).

Predicting the Drop and Recovery of Ethnic Pride

The next set of analyses were geared toward understanding the impact of school ethnic representation and specifically, the utility of change in ethnic representation from middle to high school in explaining the drop in ethnic pride at the start of high school and subsequent recovery.

To explore this relationship we created a conditional model predicting ethnic pride from 8th to 11th grade including percent and perceived same ethnicity in 8th and 9th grade as well as

change in percent and perceived same ethnicity from 8th to 9th grade. Given the similarity between these four variables, we decided to drop 8th grade percent and perceived same from the final model due to lack of model convergence. To insure 8th grade representation was not influencing our results, we tested three different versions of the conditional model: 1) percent same and perceived same for 8th and 9th grade 2) percent and perceived same for 8th grade and change in percent and perceived same 3) change in percent same and perceived same and percent and perceived same for 9th grade. Neither 8th grade perceived nor percent same had a significant impact on ethnic pride in any version of the model, thus, we decided to remove them from the model.

Additional contextual covariates were added including school diversity, free and reduced lunch, gender, and parent education. Due to the complexity of the model, parent education was dropped from the final model because there was no statistically significant impact on ethnic pride and model fit improved when parent education was omitted. This is also consistent with findings from Study 1 pertaining to parent education.

Model fit statistics showed adding the aforementioned school ethnic context variables to the model improved model fit in comparison to the unconditional model (Table 3).

Contrary to our hypothesis, results showed change in percent same from 8th to 9th grade did not have a significant impact on the drop in ethnic pride at 9th grade (*b*=-.044; p=.811). However, change in *perceived* same did predict 9th grade ethnic pride; but not in the expected direction. Black students transitioning to a high school where they perceived themselves to be *less* represented than in their middle school started 9th grade with a significantly higher sense of ethnic pride than students transitioning to high schools where they perceived more same ethnic peers than middle school (*b*=.055; p=.01; Figure 3). In other words, students who perceived

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themselves to be more represented in middle school compared to high school started high school with a higher sense of ethnic pride than those that perceived themselves to be less represented in middle school.

Analyses revealed neither change in percent same ethnicity (b=.017; p=.931) nor change in perceived same ethnicity (*b*= .014; p=.311) predicted the growth of ethnic pride during high school. Instead, perceived same ethnicity in high school seemed to drive the growth of ethnic pride (*b*=.10; p=.01), in fact, over and above the impact of actual percent same ethnicity in high school. Specifically, students who perceived Black students made up the majority of their school (> 60%) fared better on ethnic pride than those perceiving Black students to be in the minority (<20%) (Figure 4.)

Ethnic Representation, Ethnic Pride and Racial Discrimination

In the final set of analyses we examined the impact of school ethnic context on the relationship between ethnic pride and racial discrimination. These analyses focused on growth in ethnic pride in high school (9th to 11th grade) as a function of both ethnic representation and experiences of 9th grade racial discrimination from teachers. Similar to the previous analyses, change in percent same ethnicity and perceived same ethnicity were included as well as 9th grade percent and perceived same ethnicity. School diversity, gender, and free and reduced lunch were also included as covariates.

Results revealed a main effect of racial discrimination from teachers on ethnic pride such that students who perceived more racial discrimination experienced a slower recovery in ethnic pride during high school (*b*=-.543; p=.001). This was especially true for students attending high schools where they perceived themselves to be in the minority. In this context, students

experiencing high discrimination in 9th grade? recovered more slowly and plateaued faster compared to students perceiving low racial discrimination. On the other hand, students perceiving high discrimination at high schools where they perceive themselves to be in the majority, still experienced a slower recovery but were able to catch up to their peers experiencing low racial discrimination by 11th grade (Table 5).

Discussion

One of the main aims of the current study was to explore the impact of change in school ethnic context on the growth of ethnic racial identity during adolescence. Specifically, I was interested in the impact of changes in ethnic representation from middle school to high school on ethnic pride. I looked at ethnic representation in two ways: actual representation and perceived representation. I hypothesized that changes in actual representation from middle to high school would influence the drop in ethnic pride at the start of high school. Surprisingly, only change in *perceived* representation from middle and high school predicted ethnic pride at 9th grade. While all students reported significantly less ethnic pride at the start of high school, students transferring to high schools where they perceived themselves to be less represented than their middle school seemed to experience less of drop in ethnic pride compared those who perceived themselves to be more represented in high school compared to middle school.

Perceived ethnic context and ethnic racial identity

Perceptions of less representation in high school predicting higher ethnic pride in 9th grade was an unexpected finding. Extant literature shows having access to same ethnic peers and friends is associated with a stronger sense of ethnic pride. Extending this work, I expected transitioning to a high school with more same ethnic peers would be associated with better

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outcomes in 9th grade related to growth in ethnic pride. However, there are competing literatures on the optimal ethnic context in which ethnic racial identity is primed. While some literature suggests more same ethnic peers is related to a stronger sense of ethnic racial identity, literature on ethnicity salience shows ethnic/racial group membership to be more online when there are fewer same ethnic peers because race/ethnicity is more of a distinguishing feature in that context. It is possible Black students transitioning from a middle school where they perceived themselves to be in the majority to a high school where they perceive themselves to be in the minority feel a stronger sense of ethnic identity in high school now that their race/ethnicity is more of a distinguishing feature at school. On the other hand, students who were used to their race/ethnicity being a distinguishing feature in middle school might be less focused on ethnic/racial identity as they are finally in a space where their race/ethnicity does not have to be the focal point. Future research should explore ethnicity salience as a moderator of the relationship between ethnic pride and school ethnic context at the school transition.

I also expected change in ethnic representation from middle to high school to predict growth in ethnic pride throughout high school. However, neither change in actual representation nor change in perceived representation significantly impacted the growth trajectory of ethnic pride. Instead, perceived representation in 9th grade seemed to drive the recovery and continued growth of ethnic pride in high school. Students who perceived themselves to be in the majority in high school recovered from the drop in 9th grade faster and maintained a higher sense of ethnic pride for the remainder of high school compared to students who perceived themselves to be in the minority. Taken together, it seems there is a nuanced relationship between perceptions of ethnic representation in high school and ethnic pride such that growth in ethnic pride is impacted in different ways at different times. While transferring to a high school where Black students are

perceived to be in the majority can be a risk factor for some students at the start of high school depending on perceptions of ethnic representation in middle school, ultimately perceiving more same ethnic peers in high school is beneficial for long term growth in ethnic pride for all students.

Different ways of looking at ethnic context

In addition to the variety of ways school ethnic context can impact ethnic racial identity development, this study also highlights the multitude of ways school ethnic context can be operationalized and measured. I explored ethnic context using actual representation, perceived representation, change in representation, and school diversity. Just as each of these measures captures a different aspect of the school ethnic context, they also vary in the ways they impact ethnic racial identity development. Considering the impact of each aspect (or lack of impact, simultaneously provides a more nuanced understanding of the ways context can impact ethnic racial identity development. For example, I found neither actual representation nor change in actual representation to have a significant impact on ethnic racial identity development. Based on this finding alone we might conclude that actual school ethnic context is not related to ethnic racial identity. However, I also found that perceived ethnic representation impacted the growth of ethnic racial identity—change in perceived representation impacted ethnic racial identity at the start of high school and perceived representation in high school impacted the growth of ethnic racial identity throughout high school. Taken together, we see that while actual representation does not directly impact growth in ethnic racial identity, there must at least be enough same ethnic peers available at school for students to perceive themselves to be well represented. In alignment, literature on school diversity suggests a critical mass of same ethnic

peers is essential for students from underrepresented backgrounds to navigate and thrive in the school context without feeling isolated and alone. Thus it seems availability of a critical mass of Black peers is necessary to support positive ethnic racial identity development for Black adolescents. More research is needed to identify what that critical mass should be.

School ethnic diversity was also included in this study as a covariate. Different from ethnic representation, school ethnic diversity does not only measure the proportion of Black students at school but rather the variability in number and size of different ethnic groups present at a particular school. Just like actual representation, we found no significant impact of school ethnic diversity on ethnic racial identity development. Given findings around perceived representation, perhaps a measure of perceived school diversity might be useful in fully understandings the way school ethnic diversity can impact ethnic racial identity development. Future studies should not only explore the impact of perceived school diversity and ethnic racial identity but also the possible ways the relationship between perceived representation and ethnic racial identity might be modified by perceived school diversity.

Perceived vs percent same

Findings from this study suggest adequate ethnic representation can in fact support the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity. However, this relationship is complex, with students' perceptions of their representation being more impactful than their actual representation. This raises questions about the relationship between perceived representation and actual representation. Correlation analyses from this study revealed a moderate, significant relationship between perceived ethnic representation and actual ethnic representation (b=.438; p<.05; Appendix A). While this shows some alignment between

perceived and actual ethnic representation, this also reveals some mismatch. One reason for incongruity between perception of representation and reality could be a discrepancy between the actual number of Black students present at a school and the number of same ethnic peers Black students are coming into contact with throughout the day.

Studies on school and classroom diversity show overall ethnic/racial diversity of a school does not always align with the ethnic/racial diversity students experience in their classes (eg., Juvonen, Kogachi & Graham, 2018; Kogachi & Graham, in press). One reason for this mismatch in school and classroom ethnic context could be policies and practices that divide students across racial lines like de facto segregation and academic tracking . Such policies have led to the over representation of White and Asian students in honors and advanced placement courses and underrepresentation of Black and Latinx students. This means that Black students in advanced academic courses often see fewer same ethnic peers in their classes and likely throughout the day despite the overall representation of Black students at their school (Chen et al., 2020). To unpack this discrepancy further, future studies should explore the impact of the school and classroom context on ethnic racial identity development simultaneously.

Future studies should also explore the spaces at school outside of class in which Black students are spending their time. Studies have shown students in the ethnic numerical minority at school tend to create their own same ethnic spaces and friend groups in response to lack of representation at school (Tatum, 2017). Extracurricular activities become particularly important in high school as options increase and they become more emphasized to appeal to colleges and other post high school opportunities. Black students might seek out cultural or traditionally Black spaces like a Black student association in search of same ethnic peers. These spaces can serve as both a place to build relationships and make same ethnic friends as well as a place to learn and

explore Black identity. Literature on same ethnic safe spaces emphasizes the tendency of students in the ethnic racial minority to seek out same ethnic peers with which they process racialized experiences and provide support (Carter, 2007). Students in the ethnic numerical minority at their school who spend a great deal of their time in same ethnic spaces might perceive higher same ethnic representation at school.

Relatedly, same ethnic friendships might also help explain perceptions of more same ethnic peers at school. Beyond participation in extracurricular activities with other Black students, having a Black friend or friend group might contribute to perceptions of more Black student representation. Literature on adolescent development overwhelmingly emphasizes the importance and influence of peers and especially friends during adolescence. Studies show homophily to predict adolescent friendships such that people are more likely to befriend people with whom they share commonalities (e.g. Maxwell, 2002; Young, 2011; McCormick et al., 2014). Scholars also agree that once youth become friends, they tend to adjust their behaviors and attitudes to be more like one another (Hodges, 1999; Maxwell, 2002; McCormick et al, 2014). In alignment, same ethnic friendships have been found to be related to more positive views about one's ethnic group membership. Thus it is possible that same ethnic friendships not only influence perceptions of school ethnic context but also ethnic identity itself. Future studies should explore relationships between same ethnic friends and perceptions of school ethnic context as well as ethnic racial identity.

School ethnic context as a buffer

Consistent with extant literature, we found experiences of racial discrimination from teachers to be related to lower ethnic pride in high school. However, we found perceptions of ethnic representation to buffer this relationship such that students perceiving higher

discrimination from teachers who also perceived themselves to be in the ethnic/racial majority

eventually caught up to their peers experiencing less racial discrimination from teachers. This

suggests that not only does ethnic pride help buffer the impact of racial discrimination on

psychosocial outcomes, as found in previous literature, but also school ethnic context buffers the

impact of racial discrimination on ethnic identity. This highlights a complex relationship

between ethnic context, identity, and processing racialized experiences. Future studies should

explore the ways in which having access to more same ethnic peers might be useful in processing

negative racial climate

Table 2.

Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables.

| Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Percent Same 8th	--								
2. Percent Same 9th	.35**	--							
3. Percent Change	.53**	-.61**	--						
4. Perceived Same 8th	.39**	.17**	.16**	--					
5. Perceived Same 9th	.28**	.44**	-.18	.32*	--				
6. Perceived Change	0.05	-0.2	.25**	.61*	-.55*	--			
7. Racial Discrimination 8th	-.04	-.02	-.03	-.04	-.10	0.02	--		
8. Racial Discrimination 9th	-.12*	-.05	-.03	0	-.10	0.09	.49**	--	
9. Ethnic Pride 8th	-.01	.00	-.01	.11*	-.01	.11	.01	-.05	
10. Ethnic Pride 9th	.01	.00	.00	.08	-.02	.10	.12**	-.01	.59**
N	430	285	285	407	265	257	418	262	427
Mean	.29	0.25	0.05	3.9	3.74	0.04	1.47	1.34	4.34
Std Deviation	0.2	0.22	0.24	1.55	1.47	1.74	0.73	0.6	.61
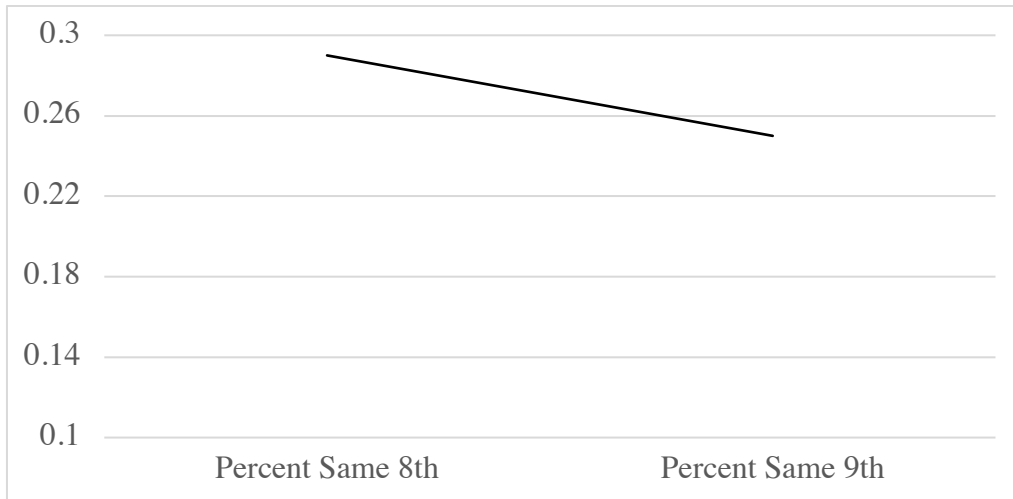
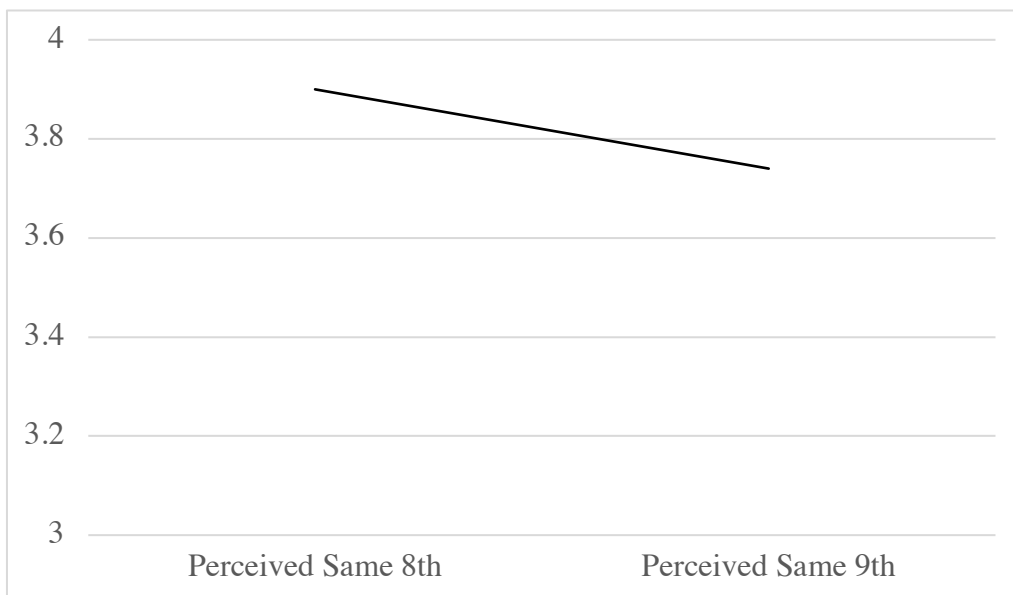Figure 1a. Change in Percentage of Black Peers at School from 8th to 9th Grade

Figure 1b. Change in Perceived Representation from 8th to 9th Grade

Table 3. *Model Fit Statistics for Growth Model Predicting Ethnic Pride with School Ethnic*

Representation and Covariates.

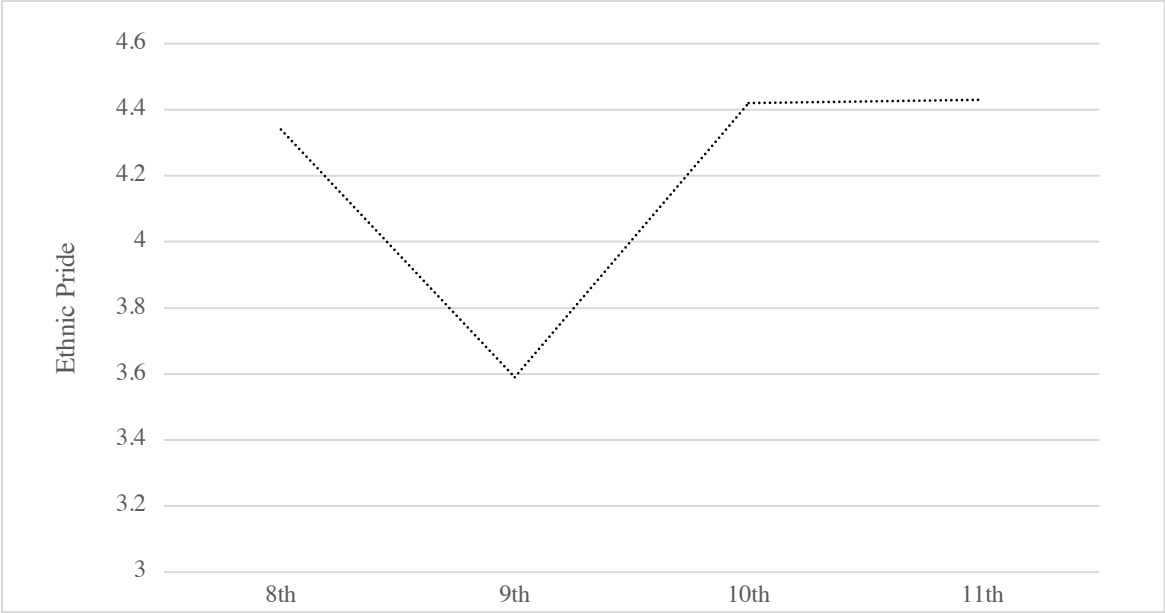|	CFI	RMSEA	Inter	Slope	Quad	Cube
Unconditional	.97	.07	3.59***	.44***	.79***	-.40***
Conditional	1.00	.00	3.43***	.46**	.81***	-.43***

Note. *p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001****

Figure 2. Unconditional Growth Model Predicting Ethnic Pride from 8th-11th grade.

Table 4. *Impact of Ethnic Representation on Ethnic Pride from 8ᵗʰ-11ᵗʰ Grade*

	Intercept	**Slope**	**Quadratic**	**Cubic**
Means	3.44 (.174)***	.439 (.168)**	.811 (.005)***	-.434 (.085)***
Ethnic representation				
9th percent same	-.156 (.203)	-.355 (.211)	-.068 (.193)	.171 (.106)
9th perceived same	.038 (.048)	.100 (.036)**	.041 (.234)	-.039 (.019)*
change in percent same	-.036 (.183)	.017 (.200)	.007 (.143)	.018 (.090)
change in perceived same	.051 (.023)*	.014 (.311)		
Covariates				
gender	.04 (.124)	-.189 (.112)	-.103 (.121)	.077 (.074)

Note: Time varying covariates (school diversity and free and reduced lunch) are not depicted but were included in the model and were non-significant; p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001***
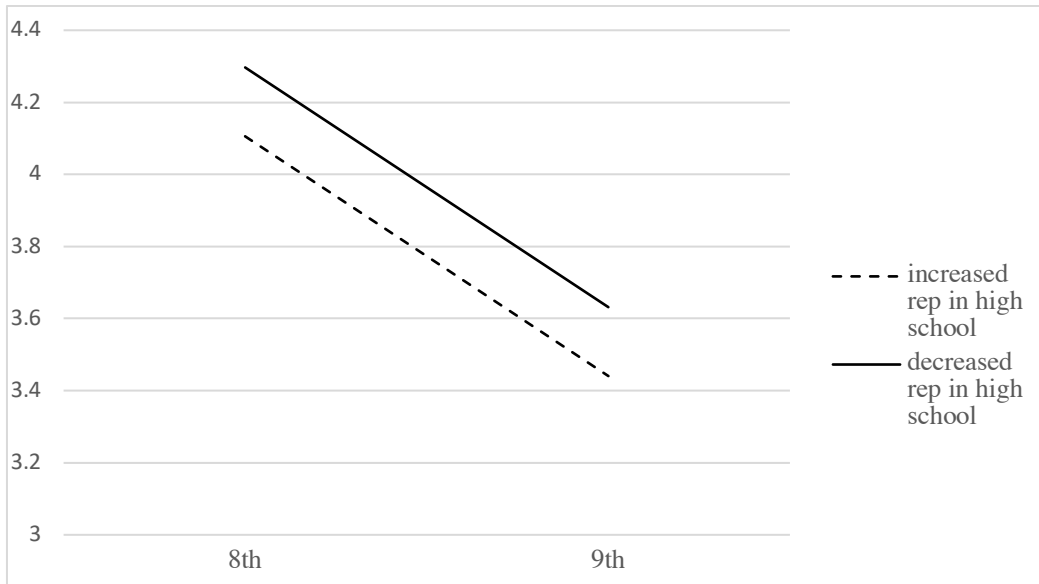
Figure 3. Impact of change in perception of ethnic representation from middle school to high
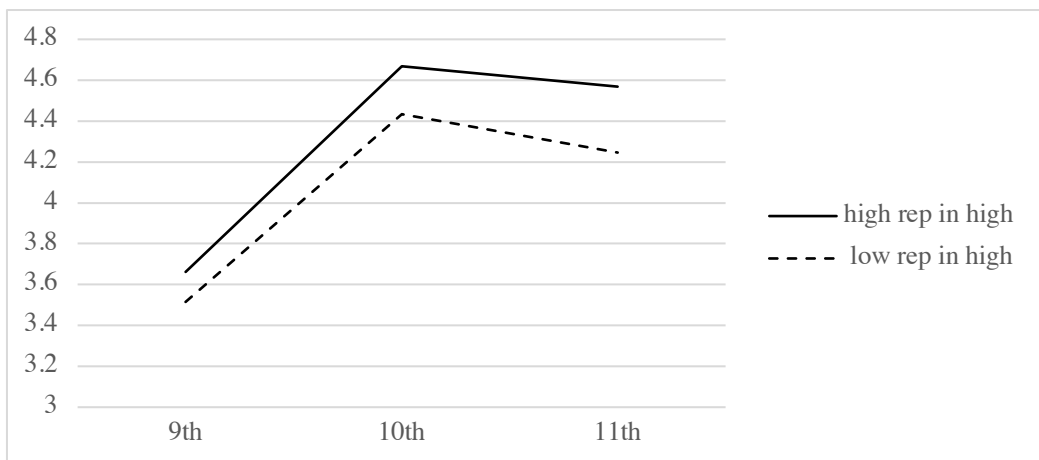
school on ethnic pride

Figure 4. Recovery of ethnic pride during high school as a function of perceived representation

Table 5. Perceived Representation & Racial Discrimination Predicting 9th-11th Grade Ethnic Pride

	Intercept	Slope	Quadratic
Means	1.99 (.409)***	3.402 (.532)***	-.977 (.208)***
Ethnic representation			
9th percent same	-.133 (.246)	-.514 (.392)	.418 (.184)*
9th perceived same	.377 (.083)***	-.178 (.055)**	-.043 (.025)
change in percent same	.014 (.201)	---	---
change in perceived same	.063 (.025)*	---	---
Racial Discrimination	.809 (.216)***	-.575 (.169)**	-.048 (.089)
Perceived x Discrimination	-.246 (.055)***	.148 (.048)**	---
Covariates			
gender	.014 (.121)	-.313 (.280)	-143 (.122)
parent education	.070 (.050)	-.195 (.098)*	.064 (.043)

Note: Time varying covariates (school diversity and free and reduced lunch) are not depicted but were included in the model and were non-significant; p<.05, p<.01**, p<.001****
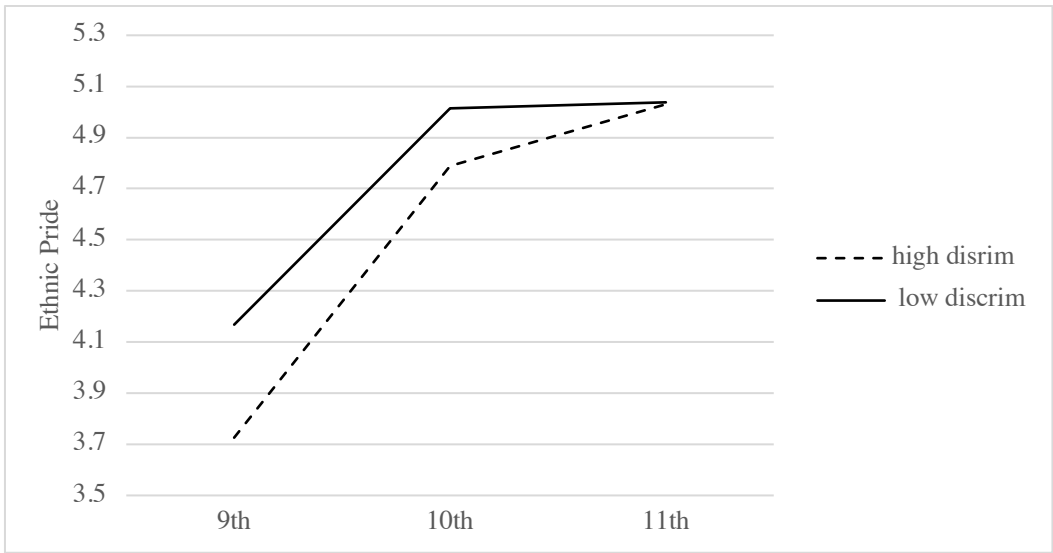
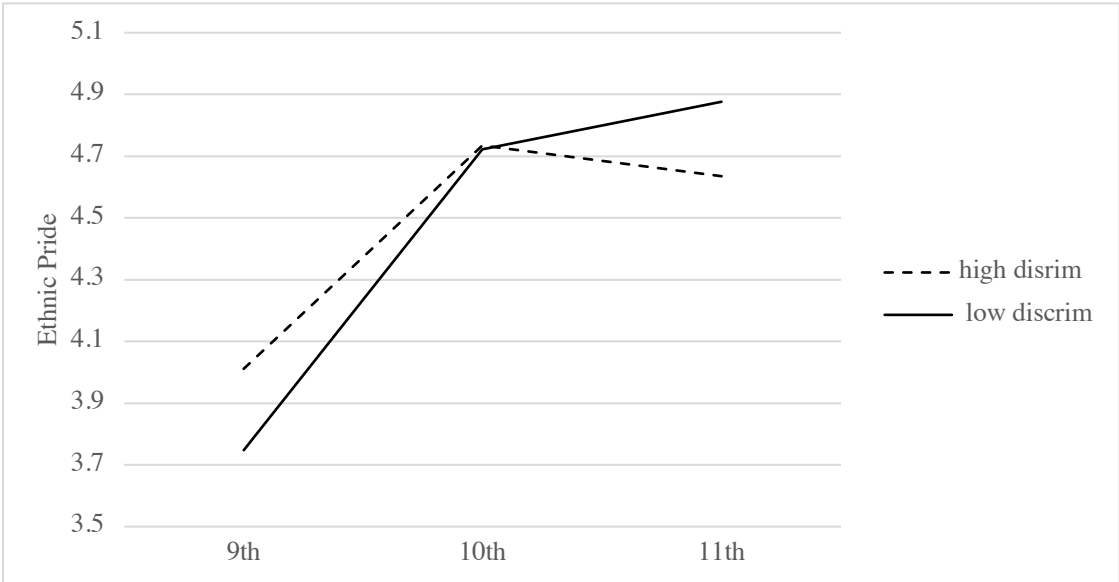Figure 5a. Ethnic pride as a function of discrimination when perceived ethnic representation is high.

Figure 5b. Ethnic pride as a function of discrimination when perceived ethnic representation is low.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The first aim of this dissertation was to understand the long term patterns of growth for different parameters of ethnic racial identity. As suspected we found different parameters of ethnic racial identity to follow different, often non-linear, patterns of development over time. The second goal of this dissertation was to understand the contextual correlates of change in ethnic racial identity over time. We found perceptions of school ethnic context to be particularly influential on the growth and change in ethnic racial identity for Black adolescents. Findings from this dissertation contribute to the literature in a number of critical ways.

One way is that it helps us make sense of existing literature on ethnic identity. Scholars have long worked to understand the development of ethnic racial identity over time. However, extant literature lacks clarity around the nature of change in ethnic racial identity over time. Some studies suggest ethnic identity is stable over time, others increasing over time, and some even point to regression over time. Findings from this dissertation suggest all of these things can be true. Growth in ethnic racial identity seems to ebb and flow over time as youth progress through different developmental stages and experience new environments.

In Study 1, we learned developmental period is particularly important for understanding growth in ethnic racial identity over time. Growth in middle adolescence can look much different than growth in late adolescence. For example ethnic pride shows relatively no change in middle school but rapidly grows in high school. Likewise, many existing studies illustrating stability in ethnic identity over time take place in middle adolescence while those demonstrating growth tend to take place in late adolescence. Thus, attending to developmental period might serve to help us draw connections across current studies of ethnic racial identity

The second aim of this dissertation was to understand the extent to which different aspects of the school ethnic context influence growth in ethnic racial identity. As is typical for many adolescent adjustment outcomes, the transition to high school negatively impacted ethnic pride, however, perceiving more same ethnic peers at school seemed to mitigate this relationship. Furthermore, we found perceptions of more same ethnic peers in high school also buffered the impact of racial discrimination on ethnic pride. Findings from this dissertation suggest more same ethnic peers and especially perceiving more same ethnic peers can be beneficial for Black identity development and even buffer the impact of known environmental stressors. Thus it seems understanding ethnic context is essential for furthering our understanding of ethnic identity.

Direction of the Field

Implications from this dissertation offer promising directions for the future of ethnic racial identity research. As we work to disentangle the complex process that comes with coming to understand the implications of one's ethnic group membership, attention to developmental period and ethnic context emerge as two key future directions for the field.

Applying a more developmental lens to ethnic racial identity can shape the way we conceptualize and measure ethnic identity in the future. We found that patterns of growth in ethnic racial identity varied greatly from early to middle/late adolescence. Furthermore, high ethnic pride at the start of middle school suggests the ethnic racial identity process begins far before middle school. Future studies should turn their attention to ethnic racial identity development among younger children.

Extant literature already shows us that young children are typically at least aware of their race, thus it stands to reason they might also try to start making meaning of their racial group membership (McGuire et al,1978). This is especially relevant when we think about ethnic racial identity development for Black children. Given the sociopolitical context of the United States, Black parents tend to start socializing their children around race even as early as preschool (Caughy, Randolph, & O'Campo, 2002). Extending our exploration of ethnic racial identity development to younger children will help us understand when youth first begin trying to make meaning of their ethnic racial/group membership. Understanding the beginning of the ethnic racial identity process will allow us to strategize around ways to promote positive ethnic racial identity for Black youth just as they are starting to grapple with ideas about race. Similarly, we should also extend the scope of ethnic racial identity literature toward older populations as well. In fact, a growing number of scholars have begun to explore ethnic racial identity among college students and have found similar patterns of growth (Syed, 2018; Willis & Neblett, 2020).

This research also has theoretical implications for the way we consider ethnic context in ethnic racial identity research. Ethnic context is not new to the conversation among ethnic identity scholars. Most theories of ethnic racial identity allude to a relationship between context and ethnic racial identity development in some way. In Phinney's Multi Ethnic Identity Model, racial discrimination is positioned as a catalyst for the ethnic identity development process (Phinney, 1992). In Sellers Multidimensional Model of Black Identity, he attends to perceptions about societal opinions of Black people (Sellers et al., 1998). Some scholars have even delved into the impact of ethnic context analytically (French & Seidman, 2006, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, 2009; Zhou, Lee, & Syed, 2019). Yet, while research has begun to explore ethnic context as a peripheral factor in relation to ethnic racial identity development,

this dissertation suggests ethnic context must be centered in order to further our understanding of ethnic racial identity development.

Findings from this dissertation highlight the way ethnic racial identity seems to be inextricably connected to one's environment. The messages and ideas that Black youth form around their ethnic group membership are informed by the people and places with which they spend their time. This is supported in the racial socialization literature which shows that messages youth hear from parents and other close family and friends impact their own thoughts and feelings about their race (Hughes et al., 2006). This literature also shows that these messages can vary based on environment. For example, parents are more likely to prepare their children for racial bias when they live in a neighborhood with a poor racial climate (Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011). As the field moves to better understand how to support the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity, we must turn our attention more specifically to ethnic context.

There are a number of ways we can start working to more actively incorporate ethnic context into ethnic racial identity research. One is simply through the research questions that are asked. Now that we have a large body of literature on the process and content of ethnic identity, it is time to start exploring "why". Why does ethnic racial identity change over time? Ethnic context is a promising lead. Future research should delve into questions around the ways both physical and psychological components of the ethnic context can cause shifts in ethnic racial identity.

Scholars should especially consider questions around the myriad of ways ethnic context can be conceptualized. This dissertation included measures of actual ethnic representation, perceived representation, change in representation, and school diversity as well as racial

discrimination as a measure of racial climate. All of these tend to ethnic context at the school level. Future studies should extend our view of ethnic context by considering the ethnic context of specific spaces at school. Like classes for example. Research shows classroom ethnic context does not always align with that of the overall school (Chen et al., 2020). Perhaps classroom ethnic context has its own unique impact on ethnic identity. Similarly, the ethnic context of extracurricular activities might also uniquely shape ethnic racial identity for Black youth. Honing in on the varied ways we can conceptualize context will help us unpack the dynamic ways ethnic context and ethnic racial identity can move in tandem.

Relatedly, friend groups might be another space at school with which to explore the ethnic context in relation to ethnic identity. Research literature overwhelming emphasizes the influence of peers and especially friends during adolescence (Hodges, 1999; Salvy, De La Haye, Bowker & Hermans, 2012). Furthermore, it has been found that friends tend to pick each other due to perceived similarities and become even more similar to one another over time (Maxwell, 2002; Young, 2011; McCormick et al., 2014). Same ethnic friends have even been found to be associated with more positive feelings toward one's own ethnic group (Reynolds, 2007). Thus, questions around the ethnicity of the friends a person has in relation to ethnic racial identity might shed some light on the impact of a particularly influential aspect of the school context.

Another way to give attention to ethnic context is in sample selection. Specifically, it is ideal that participants are sampled across diverse ethnic contexts. One strength of this dissertation is that the schools included in the study were specifically selected for their school ethnic composition. Black student representation across the schools varied greatly such that sometimes Black students were in the majority, sometimes the minority, and other times somewhere in between. This variability allowed us to get at the nuance in the relationship

between ethnic context and ethnic racial identity because we could explore differences in student outcomes and experiences across vastly different ethnic landscapes. Future studies should strive to not just look at the growth in ethnic identity or the content of it but rather the way these aspects of ethnic racial identity are uniquely shaped by the environment.

Implications for Schools

One of the main goals of this dissertation was to better understand how and when schools should promote ethnic racial identity development. Findings do lend themselves to some important takeaways school administrators and policy makers.

First, findings differentiating growth patterns of ethnic racial identity by developmental period have some practical implications as well. As we move toward finding ways to promote the development of a strong positive sense of ethnic racial identity, understanding differences by developmental period could be useful in determining when to promote which aspects of ethnic racial identity. For example, growth in ethnic exploration in 7th and 8th grade suggests middle school might be an optimal time to support ethnic exploration.

One way schools can support this exploration is by investing energy in providing students with in-school opportunities to explore their ethnic racial group membership through, for example, course curriculum. The implementation of an ethnic studies requirement for high school students has been a major topic among school administrators across the country. There is much debate around whether or not students should be required to learn about the histories of people of color in the US. However, findings from this dissertation support the need for students to learn about their ethnic group membership, not just in high school but perhaps even sooner. Not only does ethnic exploration rapidly grow in middle school but Black students start middle

school with a strong sense of ethnic pride which suggests that some exploration may be happening even before middle school. Through the implementation of courses throughout K-12 that center the experiences and voices of historically marginalized people, schools can start to do their part in supporting positive ethnic racial identity development at the curriculum level.

Similarly, high school seems to be a prime time for not only continued ethnic exploration but also developing a sense of ethnic pride. Thus, high schools should focus on providing meaningful opportunities for Black students to connect and build community with same ethnic peers. One way to do this is by providing culturally relevant groups and activities for Black students to participate. Literature on same ethnic safe spaces emphasizes the utility of same ethnic peers in processing and making meaning around racialized incidences as well as developing positive feelings toward one's own ethnic racial group (Tatum, 2017). Providing structure and support for students to participate in and create monoethnic safe spaces like a Black Student Association is one way schools can support and promote growth in ethnic pride for Black students at the programmatic level. However, even with administrative support, creating and participating in same ethnic safe spaces requires access to same ethnic peers at school.

To complicate this issue of availability of same ethnic peers, there seems to be a discrepancy between Black students perceived representation at school in relation to their actual representation. Thus, perceptions of representation and actual representation differentially impact ethnic racial identity. One explanation is that the peers Black students come into contact with everyday are not reflective of the overall ethnic context of the school. Studies on school and classroom diversity show overall ethnic/racial diversity of a school does not always align with the ethnic/racial diversity students experience in their classes (Graham, 2018). This means the ethnic context of the school may not align with the student's daily experience with the school

context. This may mean there is a mismatch in school and classroom ethnic context such that classes are less diverse compared to the overall school which is often an indication of de facto segregation or academic tracking that divides students across racial lines.

While racism and segregation are not new issues within our educational system, findings from this dissertation emphasize the detrimental impact of not having access to same ethnic peers at school. Yes, school diversity is important but that diversity must include a critical mass of same ethnic peers in order to support personal identity development for Black students. In the literature on college diversity, critical mass is defined as "meaningful numbers" or "meaningful representation" of ethnic minorities to ensure a diverse educational environment that does not leave underrepresented students feeling isolated or marginalized (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014). This research take this a step further by emphasizing the need for those same ethnic peers to be accessible. It is not enough for Black students to merely be present at school, they must also have opportunities to interact and engage with each other in order to truly reap the protective benefits of having same ethnic peers.

School ethnic context is a macro level issue that must be addressed at the school policy level. Despite rapidly increasing ethnic racial diversity in the US, schools are more segregated than ever. School administrators along with government officials must work to develop legislation that lends itself to the creation of a more thoughtfully diverse student body. Students should be able to attend schools where the school ethnic context not only reflects national diversity but also supports their own ethnic/racial development. Furthermore, it is imperative that this diversity does not just exist at the school level but is reflected in all Black students daily experiences at school.

Developing a school ethnic context that is conducive for Black identity development is especially important when we think about ethnic racial identity development for Black students in the broader context of American society. Racial discrimination against Black people is a pervasive issue that needs to be addressed at the macro level. However, years of continued racism and oppression against Black Americans has shown us racism is an issue that is slow to change if it is changing at all. While we know structural change is what is truly needed, cultural tools of resilience like ethnic racial identity and same ethnic peers can help mitigate the psychosocial impact of these structural inequalities on Black youth in the meantime. Given the current sociopolitical climate which leaves Black people disproportionately targeted, incarcerated, and killed by state sanctioned violence, now more than ever, schools must do their part to insure Black students can *at least* feel supported and empowered at school.

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