A Longitudinal Study of Ethnic Discrimination, Ethnic-Racial Identity, Gender, and Educational Values among Latina/o Early Adolescents

by

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses conflicting findings regarding gender differences in the moderating role of ethnic private regard in the longitudinal association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values among Latina/o early adolescents. Participants included 689 Latina/o early adolescents in middle school ($M_{age} = 12.06, SD = .98$ at Time 1; $M_{age} = 12.66, SD = 1.00$ at Time 2). Two waves of data were collected approximately eight months apart. Ethnic private regard moderated the association between school ethnic discrimination at time 1 and educational values at time 2 only among Latino male early adolescents, such that the negative association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values existed only for males with high ethnic private regard. Implications highlight the need to enhance teachers’ cultural competency in working with Latino male students.
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Introduction

For youth in the U.S. population, ethnic and gender disparities in education are a central issue affecting the social, health, and economic prospects of individuals from disadvantaged social groups (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Nitardy, Duke, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2014). The literature on these disparities among youth indicates that ethnic minorities (Nitardy et al., 2014; Rosenbaum, 2001) and males (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Perkins, Kleiner, Roey, & Brown, 2004; Voelkl, 1997) tend to report more negative educational outcomes than their peers. As the largest growing segment in the U.S. (Krogstad & Lopez, 2014) with the highest dropout rate among high school students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), the educational success of the Latina/o population is particularly vulnerable when considering the intersection of gender and ethnic identities. Specifically, Latino male youth are more likely to experience negative educational outcomes than their Latina female counterparts, including lower educational values (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bamaca, & Zeiders, 2009; Cammarota, 2004; Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998; Lopez, Ehly, & Garcia-Vásquez, 2002; Sánchez, Colón, & Esparza, 2005; Umaña-Taylor, Wong, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999b; Voelkl, 1997; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995).

Compared to other ethnic groups, Latina/o youth may face more barriers in school that lower their educational values and expectations for attaining higher education (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Pew Hispanic Center, 2009; Sánchez, Esparza, Colón, & Davis, 2010; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). Positive educational values and motivation are theorized to be a key factor in predicting educational achievement and achievement-related behaviors (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). Empirical evidence supports this
theory and demonstrates educational values and motivation predict better academic adjustment in higher education institutions and greater academic skill acquisition across time, specifically skills that are highly transferable to careers (Côté & Levine, 1997, 2000). Anderson and Keith’s (1997) longitudinal study further demonstrated that educational values and motivation was a significant predictor of standardized test scores among at-risk ethnic minority older adolescents. Kao and Tienda (1998) suggest that Latino/a youth tend to possess high educational aspirations in middle school and early adolescence, but they are less likely to maintain these aspirations in older adolescence. Interventions for promoting educational values during early adolescence may be key in supporting Latina/o students’ academic adjustment, as this period is a developmental stage of rapid physiological, social and cognitive transitions that sets the stage for success in secondary education (Eccles et al., 1993). Thus, the present study is concerned with examining factors that may promote or hinder educational values among Latina/o early adolescents.

Within the literature on educational disparities, research suggests that one factor affecting disparities in educational outcomes concerns youths’ exposure to ethnic discrimination (Pachter & García Coll, 2009; Phillips, 2011). Regardless of frequency or severity, perceived ethnic discrimination places youth at increased risk of negative life outcomes (Tobler et al., 2013) Previous research investigating protective factors to counter the negative effects of perceived ethnic discrimination on educational outcomes among ethnic minority youth populations have identified ethnic-racial identity (ERI), the beliefs and attitudes toward one’s ethnic-racial group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), as a potential moderator (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Dotterer,
McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). However, the influence of ERI as a moderator between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes among ethnic minority youth, especially Latina/o early adolescents, is unclear. Specifically, there is a need to examine the role of gender on the interaction between ERI, ethnic discrimination, and educational outcomes, as previous research indicates inconsistent gender differences (Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Some studies on Mexican-origin early adolescents suggest ERI may only be protective for males; for males who show higher levels of ethnic affirmation (i.e., sense of pride towards ethnic group), the positive relation between ethnic discrimination (in various contexts) and externalizing behaviors in class (i.e., disobedience and disruption in the classroom) was reduced (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Among African American youth, who experience similar academic disadvantages as Latina/o youth (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004), some researchers suggest ERI may not be a protective factor for males; early and older adolescent females who report less positive ethnic identity and more peer and teacher racial discrimination tend to have lower school bonding compared to those with less positive ethnic identity and less racial discrimination (Dotterer et al., 2009). The current study aims to address conflicting findings regarding the moderating role of ERI in reducing the negative effects of ethnic discrimination on educational outcomes, and it aims to address conflicting findings on the role gender plays in shaping these associations among Latina/o youth over the course of early adolescence.

In the following pages, a review of the literature on the relations between ethnic discrimination, ERI, and educational outcomes with consideration to gender differences
among Latina/o early adolescents is provided. The first section provides an overview of the theoretical framework guiding the current study. The second section reviews the literature on ethnic discrimination and its effects on Latina/o early adolescents’ educational outcomes. The third section discusses previous research on how ERI is related to educational outcomes for Latina/o adolescents. The fourth section reviews research on the role of ERI in the association between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes. The fifth section examines the moderating role of gender on the interaction of ethnic discrimination, ERI, and educational outcomes among Latina/o early adolescents’ educational outcomes. The final section outlines the goals of the current project.

**Risk and Protective Factors Theoretical Framework**

Theories on risk and protective factors in human development, specifically the protective factor model (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Rutter, 1987), offer a conceptual understanding of the risk factors impacting Latina/o early adolescents as well as the protective factors that can help them cope with these disadvantages. In the protective factor model, there is a moderating relationship between risks and protective resources in regards to positive outcomes for youth: protective resources reduce the impact of risk factors on developmental outcomes. Theories focused on development of ethnic minority youth suggest that social statuses, such as ethnicity and gender, are accompanied by potential risks and disadvantages due to detrimental mechanisms of social stratification, such as ethnic discrimination and gender biases (García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, 1999). The intersection of ethnicity and gender may pose a unique risk for ethnic minority males in school, as they must cope with both experiences of ethnic
discrimination as well as pressures to exhibit masculinity (Pleck, 1981). Ethnic discrimination limits the resources available to ethnic minority groups as well as their access to those resources, including high-quality schools (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Ethnic minority youths’ academic development is especially affected by ethnic discrimination and racism embedded in educational institutions, such as negative teacher expectations and attitudes towards specific ethnic groups, administrative practices of testing and tracking students, and biased curriculums and textbooks (Ogbu, 1978, 1991). The gender role strain model also highlights how social demands to endorse masculinity can conflict with positive academic behaviors (Pleck, 1995). Female students are theorized to benefit from developing emotional connections as well as adhering to feminine behaviors in school, whereas males face educational disadvantages from adhering to traditional masculinity, consisting of emotional stoicism as well as avoidance of femininity (Morris, 2012; Pleck, 1981, 1995).

While risks such as ethnic discrimination and gender role strain negatively influence educational outcomes for ethnic minority youth, many view ERI as a potential protective factor (Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1990, 1996; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It is not only important for ethnic minority youth to develop a salient ERI, but it is crucial they possess positive attitudes toward this identity to reduce the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination experiences (Tajfel, 1978). Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) social identity theory proposes that individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity (e.g., ERI) and self-image. When this identity is threatened by experiences of discrimination, individuals make efforts to enhance the status of their social groups and distinguish the group in positive ways (e.g., focusing on
positive attributes of the in-group). Many theorists postulate that, in the process of achieving a positive ERI, youth develop coping strategies for managing negative stereotypes and experiences of discrimination (Erikson, 1968; Miller, 1999; Phinney, 1993). These coping mechanisms prevent ethnic minority youth from internalizing negative perceptions about their ethnicity and maintain positive adjustment in various life domains. Thus, it is important for ethnic minority youth to develop this identity as well as positive perceptions related to their ethnic group in order to experience its protective functions.

**Ethnic Discrimination as a Risk Factor for Educational Outcomes**

For ethnic minority youth, oppressive experiences that occur within a specific setting impact their adjustment within that setting (Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002). Therefore, it is important to assess youths’ personal experiences with ethnic discrimination within the context of the school environment when examining the impact of these experiences on educational outcomes. Perceptions of school-based ethnic discrimination are often examined using measures of teacher discrimination, such as reports of ethnically-biased treatment and expectations from teachers (Berkel et al., 2010; Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Eccles, Wong & Peck, 2006; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Thomas et al., 2009; Whitbeck, Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, & Stubben, 2001; Wong et al., 2003). In the present study, ethnic discrimination is measured using a school discrimination scale assessing experiences of ethnic discrimination from teachers (Whitbeck et al., 2001).

Research on the links between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes tends to conceptualize educational outcomes using measures of school connectedness,
such as youths’ sense of belonging to their school (Dotterer et al., 2009; Kiang et al., 2012); academic achievement, including grades from classes or overall grade point average (GPA; Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Berkel et al., 2010; Chavous et al., 2008; Chithambo et al., 2014; DeGarmo & Martínez, 2006; Dotterer et al., 2009; Martínez et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2003); and educational values, specifically youths’ educational attitudes, engagement, and motivation to do well in school, which is consistent with the measure utilized in the present study (Alfaro et al., 2009; Chavous et al., 2008; Kiang et al., 2012; Perreira, Fuligni, & Potochnick, 2010; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Wong et al., 2003).

Educational values are less frequently examined as an outcome in this body of literature, yet these values are evidenced to be the foundation of greater academic adjustment and achievement (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Côté & Levine, 1997, 2000; Eccles et al., 1998). Assessing educational values among Latina/o early adolescents in middle school is particularly important, as research suggests that these educational values and aspirations peak in middle school and decline later in high school (Kao & Tienda, 1998).

In the literature on Latina/o youth, research suggests that perceived ethnic discrimination can adversely impact their educational outcomes, and these outcomes range from GPA to engagement and motivation (Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Berkel et al., 2010; Chithambo et al., 2014; DeGarmo & Martínez, 2006; Martínez et al., 2004; Perreira et al., 2010; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Through cross-sectional research, Spears Brown and Chu’s (2012) study of Mexican immigrant children indicated that ethnic discrimination from their teachers and peers was negatively related to school belonging. The findings of Perreira and colleagues
(2010) suggested that a negative association exists between perceived likelihood of
general discrimination (operationalized as perceptions of whether or not specific
situations of ethnic discrimination, such as being watched while shopping at a store,
would happen to them) and educational motivation for Latina/o older adolescents.
Martinez et al. (2004) further showed school barriers (comprised of ethnic discriminatory
experiences in school, school dissatisfaction, and unwelcoming school experiences)
predicted lower GPA as well as greater likelihood to drop out of school among Latina/o
early and older adolescents. Chithambo and colleagues’ (2014) cross-sectional research
demonstrated that Latina/o older adolescents’ experiences with ethnic discrimination (in
various contexts) were negatively and indirectly associated with their grades, mediated by
levels of relinquished control (i.e., a cognitive coping strategy in which life events are
experienced passively without efforts to change external circumstances or internal
cognitive appraisals). DeGarmo and Martinez (2006) found that Latina/o early and older
adolescents’ experiences with ethnic discrimination in school were negatively correlated
with GPA. Additionally, the longitudinal study of Berkel et al. (2010) showed that
Mexican American early adolescents’ experiences with ethnic discrimination from
teachers and peers over time were negatively associated with their grades and academic
self-efficacy. The longitudinal work of Benner and Graham (2011) further demonstrated
that perceived ethnic discrimination (in various contexts) had a negative, indirect effect
on Latina/o older adolescents’ GPA (via negative perceptions of school climate) across
time.

Within this body of empirical literature, some studies have found that gender
plays a role in the perceptions and associations of ethnic discrimination with educational
outcomes. Research suggests that ethnic minority male youth perceive higher levels of ethnic discrimination than ethnic minority female youth (Benner & Graham, 2011; Cassidy et al., 2004; Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000). Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2012) also found that ethnic discrimination (in various contexts) was a longitudinal predictor of lower GPA only for males in their sample of Mexican-origin early adolescents. Similarly, the longitudinal work of Alfaro and colleagues (2009) showed that the negative association between ethnic discrimination (in various contexts) and academic motivation over time only existed for males in their sample of Latina/o older adolescents, and ethnic discrimination was indirectly negatively associated with males’ GPA. Given these findings, the current study contributes to this literature by further examining the role of gender in the longitudinal association between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes.

**Ethnic-Racial Identity and Educational Outcomes**

Comprising an ERI is considered to be a crucial part in the normative development of ethnic minority early adolescents (Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umaña-Taylor, 2012; Williams, Tolan, Durkee, Francois, & Anderson, 2012). During early adolescence, ethnic minority youth begin to explore their ethnic background and associated values and beliefs (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). According to French and colleagues (2006), positive affect towards one’s ethnic-racial group develops throughout adolescence and may be especially important to consider at periods of school transition, such as the entry into and transition through middle school, a period that accompanies a new social landscape youth must navigate. As a result, the development of positive ERI is thought to influence ethnic minority youths’ adjustment in school (Yip, Douglass, &
Sellers, 2014). Thus, ERI may be particularly important to explore during the transition through middle school and early adolescence, a time of identity formation that determines individual values and future adulthood outcomes (Erikson, 1968).

Based on an overview of empirical findings, a positive ERI, often measured as ethnic affirmation or ethnic private regard, appears to have salubrious effects on Latina/o youths’ educational outcomes (Berkel et al., 2010; Chang & Le, 2010; Fuligni et al., 2005; Oyserman, 2008; Perreira et al., 2010; Rivas-Drake, 2010; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014b; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Supple et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Using cross-sectional data from a sample of Mexican-, Chinese-, and European-American older adolescents, Fuligni and colleagues (2005) found that higher levels of ethnic centrality and private regard was associated with more favorable educational values, such as positive beliefs in the utility of education and school success, enhanced intrinsic interest in school, and higher levels of identification with their school. In a similar cross-sectional study with Hispanic and Asian-American early and older adolescents, Chang and Le (2010) reported that positive ethnic identity was positively related to GPA in their Hispanic sample. In his two-study report on racial-ethnic self-schemas, Oyserman’s (2008) cross-sectional study suggested that greater dual racial-ethnic self-schemas (i.e., positive connections between one’s racial/ethnic group and the group’s contributions in broader society) was related to higher GPA, educational engagement, and bonding (i.e., belonging) in school among eighth-grade Hispanic and African-American early adolescents. Rivas-Drake’s (2010) cross-sectional research on Latina/o older adolescents indicated that positive public ethnic regard (from adults at school) impacted students’ GPA and perceived academic competence. In their cross-
sectional work with Latina/o older adolescents, Supple and colleagues (2006) found a positive association between ethnic affirmation and school performance, measured as grades, work habits, and cooperation in class. Perreira et al. (2010) also showed that, among Latina/o older adolescents, ethnic affirmation was associated with better educational values, including perceptions of the usefulness and future value of education. Spears Brown and Chu (2012) obtained similar findings with Mexican immigrant children that suggested a positive ethnic identity is positively related to educational values, such as perceived importance of academic success, utility of school, enjoyment of school, and academic self-efficacy; all of these studies however, rely on cross-sectional data, and there is a need to examine the relation between positive ERI and educational values longitudinally, which the present study undertakes.

There are very few longitudinal studies exploring the links between positive ERI and educational outcomes. Oyserman’s (2008) second study of twelfth-grade Hispanic and African-American older adolescents demonstrated that dual racial-ethnic self-schemas, or positive connections between one’s racial/ethnic group and the group’s contributions in broader society, predict enhanced school bonding over time. In their longitudinal work with Mexican American early adolescents, Berkel and colleagues (2010) demonstrated a positive indirect association between ethnic pride and academic self-efficacy through greater endorsement of Mexican-American values; moreover, academic self-efficacy was positively related to self-reported grades among Mexican-American early adolescents.

Previous studies on Latina/o and African American youth, two groups that experience similar educational outcomes and barriers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004),
suggest that gender may play a role in the link between ERI and educational outcomes. However, these findings are mixed. In their longitudinal study of African American older adolescents, Chavous and colleagues (2008) found that racial centrality was positively associated with academic importance and academic self-concept for males, whereas racial centrality had no relation to educational outcomes for females. Unlike measures discussed in the previous studies, racial centrality only measures the degree of importance racial identity to a person’s self-concept and does not indicate positive or negative affect towards this identity. Therefore, measures of centrality may not fully relate to educational outcomes in the same way as measures capturing affect towards one’s ethnic background. Divergent from the majority of the literature describing the benefits of positive ERI, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2012) showed through longitudinal data that greater ethnic affirmation was associated with decreases in GPA from seventh to eighth grade for males in their sample of Mexican-origin early adolescents. However, among females, greater ethnic affirmation was associated with increases in GPA from seventh to eighth grade. These mixed findings underscore the need to further explicate the role of gender in the association between ERI and educational outcomes, something the present study undertakes. The growing body of research on ERI and educational outcomes indicates a need for a longitudinal exploration of the relation between positive ERI and educational values across time. These variables are particularly relevant to explore during early adolescence and in middle school, a critical developmental period for Latina/o students in which there may be significant progressions in forming values and ERI exploration and affirmation (Erikson, 1968; French et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).
Ethnic-Racial Identity as a Protective Factor in the Association between Ethnic Discrimination and Educational Outcomes

A majority of the literature examining ERI as a protective factor against ethnic discrimination has focused on mental health outcomes. This body of research shows inconsistent results, demonstrating that ERI can either buffer or exacerbate the negative effects of ethnic discrimination on mental health (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2012; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Lee, 2005; McCoy & Major, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Rivas-Drake et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 2003; Tynes, Umaña-Taylor, Rose, Lin & Anderson, 2012; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008; Yoo & Lee, 2008). However, the smaller section of research exploring the interaction of ERI, ethnic discrimination, and educational outcomes supports the assertion that a positive sense of ERI can moderate the negative effects of ethnic discrimination on educational outcomes among ethnic minority youth (Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2003). Spears Brown and Chu’s (2012) cross-sectional research with Mexican immigrant children demonstrated that positive ethnic identity can reduce the negative effects of teacher ethnic discrimination on educational outcomes. In this study, the negative association between teacher ethnic discrimination and academic attitudes only occurred for children with less positive ethnic identities. Further, the negative association between teacher ethnic discrimination and school belonging only occurred for children with less positive ethnic identities. Peer ethnic discrimination was associated with greater school belonging for children with more positive ethnic identities; however, these patterns have not been explored longitudinally. Using longitudinal data, Chavous and colleagues (2008) found African American older adolescents with lower
racial centrality experience a stronger negative association between peer discrimination and school importance than those with higher racial centrality. In their longitudinal study of African American early adolescents, Wong and colleagues (2003) found that possessing a positive connection to one’s ethnic group moderated the negative association between ethnic discrimination (from peers and teachers combined) and educational outcomes (i.e., academic self-concept and GPA). For these early adolescents, as connection to their ethnic group increased, higher levels of ethnic discrimination were associated with smaller decreases in academic self-concept and GPA.

Additionally, there is evidence of differential findings based on the measure of ERI being used, specifically measures that do not indicate whether ERI is positive or negative. For instance, in their cross-sectional research on African American and Caribbean Black older adolescents, Thomas and colleagues’ (2009) demonstrated that adolescents with low racial centrality (the importance of race/ethnicity to one’s self-concept, which can be either positive or negative) who experience low levels of ethnic discrimination from teachers tend to report higher grades than those with low racial centrality who experience high levels of ethnic discrimination from teachers. However, high levels of racial centrality did not serve a protective role in the negative association between ethnic discrimination from teachers and grades. Based on protective theories of positive ERI (Cross, 1991; Erikson, 1968; Miller, 1999; Phinney, 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), racial centrality may not provide protective functions to moderate the effects of racial discrimination, because it does not necessarily entail positive attitudes associated with the identity.
Other studies suggest gender differences may exist in the interaction between ERI, ethnic discrimination, and educational outcomes. In their cross-sectional study of African American early and older adolescents, Dotterer et al. (2009) found that females who experienced more racial discrimination and reported less positive ethnic identity had lower school bonding compared to those who experienced less racial discrimination and reported less positive ethnic identity; ethnic identity did not moderate the relation between ethnic discrimination and school bonding for males. Using longitudinal data from African American older adolescents, Chavous and colleagues (2008) found that racial centrality moderated the association between racial discrimination (from peers and teachers) and academic outcomes differentially for males and females. For males, higher racial centrality was protective against the negative effects of racial discrimination from both peers and teachers on grades. For females, higher racial centrality was protective against the negative effects of racial discrimination from teachers on academic self-concept. In their longitudinal study of Mexican-origin early adolescents, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2012) indicated that for males with higher levels of ethnic affirmation, the positive relation between ethnic discrimination and externalizing behaviors in class (i.e., disobedience and disruption in the classroom) was reduced. Given these emergent patterns in the literature underscoring the role of gender in shaping these associations, the present study explores the influence of gender on the moderating role of ERI in the association between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes.

There are clear limitations within the literature on ERI as a moderator in the association between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes, including a scarce body of research using ethnic minority populations other than African American youth,
limited exploration of longitudinal effects of ERI as a moderator, and scarce examination of early adolescents’ educational values—an educational outcome that promotes academic resilience and other positive educational outcomes (Anderson & Keith, 1997). The current study will address these limitations by investigating positive ERI as a buffer against the negative effects of ethnic discrimination on educational values over time with consideration to gender differences among Latina/o early adolescents.

**Gender as a Moderator**

The intersection of gender and ethnicity are important to consider when examining ethnic discrimination, ERI, and educational outcomes among Latina/o youth. Latino male youth may experience more disadvantages in school due to ethnic discrimination as well as gender role strain. Latino male youth are given more freedom to participate in social activities outside the home than Latina female youth, and some suggest this may contribute to greater rates of exposure to ethnic discrimination (in extrafamilial settings) and consequently lower educational outcomes (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Others have posited that Latino male youth encounter discrimination not only from their ethnic minority status but also from exhibiting masculinity in school (Morris, 2005), which many view as a feminine environment (Connell, 1998; Spencer, 1999). For Latino male youth, endorsing and adhering to traditional masculinity (i.e., physical toughness and emotional stoicism) can negatively influence educational outcomes, as these gender-typed behaviors clash with positive academic behaviors (Santos, Galligan, Pahlke, & Fabes, 2013).

Consistent with gender disparities in education within the larger population, Latino male youth experience more negative educational outcomes (e.g., achievement,
belonging, and values in school) than Latina female youth (Cammarota, 2004; Lopez et al., 2002; Sánchez et al., 2005). Latino male youth are especially vulnerable to educational disadvantages compared to their female counterparts, as the gender gap in education is much wider among ethnic minority groups (Carter, 2005; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007). Previous research has investigated gender differences in academic behaviors among Latina/o youth. These studies show that Latina female youth tend to put greater effort into their schoolwork and spend more hours doing homework than their Latino male counterparts (Lopez et al., 2002; Sánchez et al., 2005). Based on this literature and the many disadvantages Latino male youth encounter, positive ERI may not be sufficient in protecting educational values against the risk of ethnic discrimination among Latino male early adolescents. Only one previous longitudinal study (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012) has examined the moderating role of gender on the interaction of ethnic discrimination, ERI, and educational outcomes among a Latino sample, specifically Mexican-origin early adolescents. The current study will clarify the role of gender in the aforementioned interaction and extend previous work by examining educational values among Latina/o early adolescents.

The Present Study

The present study aims to address weaknesses in the literature on the protective functions of ERI in the relation between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes while considering the impact of gender among Latina/o early adolescents during middle school. Four questions will guide the current research:
(1) What is the longitudinal association between perceived school ethnic discrimination and educational values during middle school among Latina/o early adolescents?

(2) What is the longitudinal association between ethnic private regard and educational values during middle school among Latina/o early adolescents?

(3) What is the moderating role of ethnic private regard in the longitudinal association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values during middle school among Latina/o early adolescents?

(4) Are there gender differences in the interaction between ethnic private regard, school ethnic discrimination, and educational values?

Based on the literature, the present study hypothesizes that school ethnic discrimination will be negatively associated with educational values (Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Berkel et al., 2010; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Martinez et al., 2004; Perreira et al., 2010; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), while ethnic private regard will be positively related to educational values for Latina/o early adolescents (Berkel et al., 2010; Chang & Le, 2010; Fuligni et al., 2005; Oyserman, 2008; Perreira et al., 2010; Rivas-Drake, 2010; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014b; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Supple et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). It is also predicted that ethnic private regard will moderate the relations between school ethnic discrimination and educational values, such that higher levels of ethnic private regard will offset the negative effects of school ethnic discrimination on education values compared to lower levels (Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2003). Based on the mixed findings
(Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), it is unclear how exactly gender will moderate the interaction between ethnic private regard, school ethnic discrimination, and educational values. Given previous findings that show ethnic minority male youth report more ethnic discrimination and its negative effects (Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Cassidy et al., 2004; Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), as well as mixed findings on the association between ERI and educational outcomes across gender, including a study which finds that greater ethnic affirmation in Latino male early adolescents negatively impact GPA across time (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), it is plausible that the positive influence of ethnic private in mitigating negative effects of school ethnic discrimination on educational values will not be present among Latino male early adolescents in the current study.

Method

Participants

Data for the present study were collected at an urban middle school located in a southwestern metropolitan city, where Latina/o students represented more than 60% of the overall student population at this school. Data were collected over the course of two years, and consisted of three waves of assessments with each being approximately eight to nine months apart. In between waves 1 and 2, the school increased in size as it absorbed several new students due to the closing of a nearby middle school, which significantly changed the student population at the school between waves 1 and 2. Given these changes, the present study utilizes data only from waves 2 and 3 of this larger study. Therefore, waves 2 and 3 will be referred to throughout the current study as time 1 and time 2.
The sample for the present study consisted of 689 Latina/o early adolescents ranging from 10 to 15 years old ($M_{age} = 12.06, SD = .98$ at wave 2; $M_{age} = 12.66, SD = 1.00$ at wave 3). The sample was predominantly identified as Mexican-origin (80.1%). In terms of gender, 51.2% ($N = 353$) reported being female, and 48.8% ($N = 336$) reported being male. The school district reported that 8.1% ($N = 56$) paid full price for school lunch while 79.1% ($N = 545$) were eligible for free or reduced lunch (data was not provided for 88 or 12.8% of participants), and eligibility for free and reduced lunch served as our proxy for socio-economic status (SES). In terms of generational status, 16.5% ($N = 114$) reported being first generation, indicating both the child and parents were born abroad; 40.8% ($N = 281$) reported being second generation, indicating both parents born abroad and the child was born in U.S.; 14.9% ($N = 103$) reported being second generation, indicating one parent was born abroad and the other parent and child were born in U.S.; and 27.6% ($N = 190$) reported being third generation, indicating both the child and parents were born in U.S. (data was not available for one participant).

**Procedure**

The school from which data were collected agreed to act in *loca parentis*, and the study employed a passive consent procedure as approved by the school district and the university Institutional Review Board. Prior to data collection, an informational letter and a consent form were given to the students to take home to their parents. The informational letter outlined the goals of the study, and the consent form gave parents the option to opt out of the study. These forms were available in English and Spanish to accommodate Spanish-speaking parents. Surveys were administered across two school days, during a total of two periods (approximately 90 minutes) in the students’ social
studies classrooms. The survey was administered in English, since all participants were fluent in English. To ensure confidentiality, once participants wrote their name on the survey cover, they removed this page. To aid comprehension, survey items were read aloud while students filled in their answers. Individualized assistance was provided in the event that an adolescent had difficulty completing a survey (e.g., students with learning disabilities or minimal language difficulties). As a way to thank students for their participation in completing the survey, students were given a pen at Time 1 and a water bottle at Time 2.

**Instrumentation**

**School ethnic discrimination.** Ethnic discrimination was measured using the School Discrimination subscale from the Perceived Discrimination Scale (Whitbeck et al., 2001), a two-item scale assessing participants’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination from their teachers. Questions included, “How often have you encountered teachers who are surprised that you as a person of your ethnic background did something really well?” and “How often have you encountered teachers who didn’t expect you to do well because of your ethnicity?” Response options for these items were on a four-point Likert scale ranging from *Almost never (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3), Very often (4).* Given that the scale is composed of only two items, a Spearman-Brown correlation was conducted, the recommended reliability test for two-item scales (Eisinga, Grotenhuis, & Pelzer, 2012). The Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient for T1 was .40 (*p* < .001) and T2 was .64 (*p* < .001). Given these results, these two items were averaged into a composite score on school ethnic discrimination, in which higher scores indicated more frequent experiences of ethnic discrimination from teachers.
**Ethnic-racial identity.** ERI was measured using an adaptation of the Private Regard subscale from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), a three-item scale that assesses the degree to which individuals feel positively about their ethnic group. Subscales of the MIBI have been successfully adapted and used with various ethnic groups, such as Latina/o samples (Fuligni et al., 2005), and is one of the most common measures used to assess ERI (Schwartz et al., 2014). Sample items include “I am happy that I am a member of my ethnic group” and “I feel good about people of my ethnic group.” Response options for these items were on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (5). Higher scores indicated more positive ERI. Internal reliability for the Private Regard subscale was .84 at time 1 and .89 at time 2.

**Educational values.** Educational values was measured using the Educational Values Scale (EVS; Fuligni et al., 2005), a five-item scale assessing the extent to which participants believe that education is important for their future success. Sample questions include “Doing well in school is the best way to succeed as an adult” and “People need to get good grades in school in order to get a good job.” Response options for these items were on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (5). Higher scores indicated greater perceived value of education. Internal reliability for the Educational Values Scale was .80 at time 1 and .86 at time 2.

**Analytic Plan**

Preliminary analyses explored the distribution of each continuous variable in the study. Pearson bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to explore associations among variables of interest. Hierarchical multiple linear regression was used to address
the research questions. The outcome variable was educational values at time 2. Step 1 included baseline levels of educational values and other demographic variables, including gender, given differential attainment among males and females (Chee, Pino, & Smith, 2005); district-reported lunch status as a proxy for socioeconomic status—a well-established predictor of achievement (Sirin, 2005); and generational status, given differential attainment among youth of diverse generational status (Rosenbaum & Rochford, 2008). Step 2 involved the measure of ethnic discrimination to explore its relation to educational values at time 2 with the demographics and educational values at time 1 included in the model; this step also introduced the ethnic private regard scale to examine its association with educational values at time 2. Step 3 involved three interaction terms between gender x ethnic discrimination, gender x ethnic private regard, and ethnic private regard x ethnic discrimination. Step 4 included a three-way interaction between ethnic private regard x ethnic discrimination x gender. Predictors were centered prior to incorporating these interaction terms, and significant interaction terms were graphed one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator to indicate high and low values.

**Results**

**Missing Data**

Missing data patterns were analyzed, and missing data were identified, which appeared to be missing at random (MAR; Schafer, 1999). Considering the sample as a whole and exploring missingness across waves of data collection, analyses of missing data showed that the age variable at T1 contained 7.7% (n = 53) missing data, and at T2 13.2% (n = 91), generational status contained .1% (n = 1) missing data, lunch status
 contained 12.8% \((n = 88)\), educational values at T1 contained 8.1% \((n = 56)\) and at T2, 13.4% \((n = 92)\), school ethnic discrimination at T1 contained 8.3% \((n = 57)\), and at T2, 14.1% \((n = 97)\), ethnic private regard at T1 contained 8.3% \((n = 57)\), and at T2 13.9% \((n = 96)\). Data on participants’ gender was complete. To reduce error and to account for missingness, a multiple imputation procedure was performed, whereby a pooled dataset was averaged from 20 datasets with imputed values that were derived from 200 iterations. This imputed dataset was used for analyses in the current study.

**Correlations among Study Variables**

Pearson’s bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine associations among study variables for males and females separately (see Table 1). Among females, the positive associations between ethnic private regard at T1 and T2 and educational values at T1 and T2 were only present among females. While more frequent experiences of school ethnic discrimination at T2 was associated with lower levels of ethnic private regard at T2 for females, school ethnic discrimination at T2 (and T1) was associated with higher levels of ethnic private regard at T2 for males. The negative association between school ethnic discrimination at T1 and educational values at T1 were only present among males.

**Hierarchical Linear Regression**

Hierarchical multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the moderating role of ethnic private regard in the longitudinal association between ethnic discrimination and educational values as well as potential gender differences in this association, as shown in Table 2. With educational values at T2 as the outcome and controlling for educational values at T1 and including age, generational and lunch status, and gender in
Step 1 of the model, there was a marginally significant main effect for age and gender such that older participants and males compared to younger participants and females tended to reported lower levels of educational values at T2. In Step 2, school ethnic discrimination at T1 and ethnic private regard at T1 were neither significant predictors of educational values at T2. In Step 3, interactions between school ethnic discrimination at T1 x ethnic private regard at T1, ethnic private regard at T1 x gender, and school ethnic discrimination at T1 x gender were introduced, and none of these interactions were significant. Finally, in Step 4, a three-way interaction between school ethnic discrimination at T1 x ethnic private regard at T1 x gender was introduced and there was significant effect. To ease interpretation of this three-way interaction, it is presented graphically in Figure 1 and results from the simple slope test using Dawson and Richter’s (2006) methods were used (±1 SD from the mean to identify high and low values of ethnic private regard and school ethnic discrimination). Simple slopes tests revealed that the regression slope for males with high ethnic private regard at T1 was negative and significantly differed from zero (t(334) = -2.01, p < .05), whereas the regression slope for females with high ethnic private regard, and the regression slopes for males and females with low ethnic private regard did not differ zero.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the moderating role of ethnic private regard in the relation between school ethnic discrimination and educational values while considering the role of gender in this interaction among Latina/o early adolescents during middle school. School ethnic discrimination at T1 was negatively associated with educational values at T1 only among Latino male early adolescents in the present study,
partially supporting hypothesis 1. This finding aligns with previous studies that show ethnic discrimination negatively relates to various educational outcomes and that these associations may vary according to gender among Latina/o youth (Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Berkel et al., 2010; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Martinez et al., 2004; Perreira et al., 2010; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). For example, in longitudinal studies conducted by Alfaro and colleagues (2009) as well as Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2012), a negative association between ethnic discrimination and GPA was only significant among males in samples of Latina/o older adolescents and Mexican-origin early adolescents (respectively).

However, the present study differs from these studies in that it examines the influence of school ethnic discrimination exclusively from teachers. In the literature on ethnic minority youth, researchers have emphasized the need to study specific sources of ethnic discrimination in relation to educational outcomes, due to evidence suggesting ethnic discrimination in different domains impacts students in different ways (Dubois et al., 2002; Niwa, Way, & Hughes, 2014; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). For example, some have asserted that ethnic discrimination from teachers may be more significant in influencing Latina/o students’ educational outcomes compared to other sources of ethnic discrimination, such as peers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Examining educational values also distinguishes the present study from previous longitudinal work, and this outcome is particularly relevant to ethnic discrimination from teachers. Rist (1970) attributes ethnic minority students’ poor educational outcomes, such as values, to the self-fulfilling prophecy whereby teachers’ low expectations for ethnic minority students prompts low motivation and performance from these students. Findings from qualitative research
further suggest that Latino male students may experience discouragement from teachers in regards to pursuing higher education, which could influence their educational motivation and values (Cerezo, Lyda, Beristianos, Enriquez, & Connor, 2013). The present study extends previous longitudinal research by examining the influence of ethnic discrimination in the specific school context of Latina/o early adolescents’ interactions with teachers, who play a significant role in students’ educational values (Harter, 1996).

While ethnic discrimination was negatively related to educational values for Latino male early adolescents, ethnic private regard (at T1 and T2) was positively related to educational values (at T1 and T2) over time only among Latina female early adolescents in the present study, partially supporting hypothesis 2. This result supports previous research on Latina/o youth that have demonstrated a positive sense of ERI is associated with positive educational outcomes (Berkel et al., 2010; Chang & Le, 2010; Fuligni et al., 2005; Oyserman, 2008; Perreira et al., 2010; Rivas-Drake, 2010; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014b; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Supple et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). In their longitudinal study, Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2012) described similar results in which the positive association between ethnic affirmation and GPA only existed for Mexican-origin female early adolescents. The current study adds to this body of literature by further clarifying the role of gender in the association between ethnic private regard and educational values, an outcome that predicts greater academic adjustment and that is less frequently examined in the literature, among Latina/o early adolescents.

Further analyses examined the aforementioned associations in greater depth. The hierarchical multiple linear regression model conducted in the present study controlled
for the effects of demographic variables, including age, generational status, lunch status, and gender. When these control variables were introduced in the regression model, the significant bivariate correlations between school ethnic discrimination and educational values as well as ethnic private regard and educational values were no longer statistically significant and did not appear to vary by gender. Turning to the question of whether ethnic private regard moderates the longitudinal association between ethnic discrimination and educational values, hypothesis 3 and 4 were supported. The present study found that ethnic private regard moderated the longitudinal association between school ethnic discrimination at T1 and educational values at T2 for only Latino male early adolescents, such that the negative association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values existed only for males with high ethnic private regard.

Inconsistent with the theoretical framework of the present study (Garmezy et al., 1984; Rutter, 1987), high ethnic private regard did not serve a protective role for males against the deleterious effects of school ethnic discrimination on educational values over time. This result adds a novel finding to previous research that show the negative association between ethnic discrimination and educational outcomes may only occur for ethnic minority youth with less positive ERI (Dotterer et al., 2009; Spears Brown & Chu, 2012; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2003). In their cross-sectional study of Mexican immigrant children, Spears Brown and Chu (2012) found that ethnic discrimination from teachers was negatively related to academic attitudes only among children with less positive ethnic identities. In the present longitudinal study, however, the negative association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values over time only
existed for males with more positive ethnic private regard, suggesting positive ERI may be a risk factor for Latino male early adolescents.

Based on the theoretical framework of this study, gender role strain (in addition to ethnic discrimination) may be a risk factor for the educational values of Latino male early adolescents with high ethnic private regard. The expectation among males to achieve traditional masculinity conflicts with their educational values and motivation to do well in school (Connell, 1995; Morris, 2012). In settings where there is high ethnic discrimination from teachers, Latino male youth may utilize identity-based strategies for coping with this adverse environment, such as maintaining a masculine social identity as well as a positive sense of ERI in response to discriminatory experiences in the classroom (Operario & Fiske, 2001; Pahl & Way, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Morris (2012) proposed that marginalized male youth might respond to disadvantages (e.g., ethnic discrimination) by developing a masculine social identity in order to achieve higher social status among their peers. This maintenance of disruptive masculine behaviors may result in males experiencing greater frequency and severity of disciplinary action from teachers at school, which may influence their motivation to do well in school (Connell, 1998).

Related to gender, researchers have postulated that more positive ERI may be detrimental to Latino male students’ educational outcomes during early adolescence when their ERI is less developed, because they may be more sensitive to stereotype threat and the negative perceptions others hold toward their identity as an ethnic minority male (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Qualitative research suggests that teachers may stereotype Latino male students as threatening and disobedient and act more strictly towards these
students. For Latino males with more positive ERI, these students may be hypersensitive to their teachers’ ethnic discrimination and consequently more affected by it. For Latino male students, positive ERI may not be protective against the negative effects of ethnic discrimination until older adolescence when a more robust development of ERI is achieved and can be used to manage exposure to discriminatory events (Erikson, 1968).

Furthermore, in the present study, for Latina female early adolescents with high or low ethnic private regard, the negative association between school ethnic discrimination and educational values did not exist. For the Latina female in this sample, the intersection of gender and ethnicity may offer more advantages for their educational values than positive ERI alone. Literature on Latina/o families has suggested that Latina female youth may be encouraged to engage in feminine, home-based responsibilities (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Sánchez et al., 2010; Villenas & Moreno, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999a). Some researchers have suggested that these family obligations keeping Latina female youth at home may account for their tendency to spend more hours doing homework and putting greater effort into their schoolwork (Lopez et al., 2002; Sánchez et al., 2005). There are some findings derived from qualitative research suggesting that these familial obligations may enhance Latina/o youths’ educational values and motivation for higher education, as some may view higher education as a means to supporting their family in the future (Sánchez et al., 2010). On the other hand, dedication to meeting familial obligations may actually take away time that Latina female youth could be spending on schoolwork.

Other qualitative research suggests that Latina female students may engage in feminine, achievement-related academic behaviors as “conscientious resistance” to empower themselves against social disadvantages, such as ethnic discrimination (Morris,
Expressions of femininity, such as emotional and compliant behaviors, may be auspicious within traditional classroom environments, specifically in developing positive attitudes toward school, emotional connections to teachers, and attachment to school (Austin, Clark, & Fitchett, 1971; Finn, 1980; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Morris, 2012). These behaviors may help to facilitate ethnic minority female students’ educational success and overcome institutional barriers in school, such as ethnic discrimination. However, the present study did not examine gendered behaviors, and therefore it is unclear why gender moderated the three-way interaction. Future research could expand on current findings by examining gendered behaviors and expressions of masculinity and femininity in relation to ERI, ethnic discrimination, and educational outcomes.

Limitations

There are several limitations to consider in the current study. First, the study relies on a two-item scale used to examine school ethnic discrimination, which may not have adequately captured this construct. Findings from this study relied on self-reported data from students only, rather than triangulated data (e.g., via use of teacher reports). Issues affecting self-report data such as social desirability effects are important to consider in the context of the study’s findings. In addition, participant responses may have been influenced by their exposure to different quality of classroom environments, and there was not a sufficient number of classrooms in this study to address these differences in learning environments by use of nested models. Moreover, the current study’s measurement of educational outcomes was limited to examining educational values. A more thorough measurement of educational outcomes could be attained by adding
measures of educational achievement, including GPA and standardized test scores. Furthermore, the Latina/o early adolescents comprising the sample for this study were predominantly from one region of the U.S., and findings are not generalizable to youth in other settings and from other backgrounds.

**Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, the present study adds to our understanding of how gender, ERI, and ethnic discrimination interact and impact educational outcomes among Latina/o early adolescents. The findings of the present study underscore the need for interventions that address ethnic discrimination among teachers within middle schools so as to better promote the academic success of Latina/o early adolescents, especially Latino youth. Finally, this study highlights the harmful effects of ethnic discrimination on Latino students’ educational outcomes, and school-based interventions and policies should focus on enhancing the cultural competency, awareness, and sensitivity of teachers to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students.
References


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Table 1  
Correlations of Study Variables by Gender  

Note: Correlations presented below the diagonal are for males (n = 336) and above the diagonal are for females (n = 353).  
Reduced meal = full price, 0 = full meal, 1 = free meal, 0 = 1st generation (parents born abroad), 1 = 2nd generation (child and parents both U.S.-born), 2 = 3rd generation (child and parents are both U.S.-born).  
Ranges from (1) 1st generation (child and parents are born abroad) to (4) 3rd generation (child and parents are both U.S.-born).  

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* p < .05, ** p < .01
Table 2

### Predicting Educational Values at T2 (N = 689)

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Notes:
1. \( 1 = \text{male}, 0 = \text{female} \)
2. \( 1 = \text{1st generation (child and parents are born abroad)} \) to \( 4 = \text{3rd generation (child and parents are both U.S. born)} \)
3. \( 1 = \text{free and reduced meal}, 0 = \text{full price} \)
4. \( * p < .05, ** p < .01 \)

Range from \( 1 \) to \( 4 \): Step 1: Age
Step 2: School Ethnic Discrimination at T1
Step 3: Ethnicity Regard at T1 x Gender
Step 4: School Ethnic Discrimination at T1 x Ethnicity Regard at T1 x Gender

\( \Delta \): Age 1
School Ethnic Discrimination at T2
Ethnicity Regard at T2
Figure 1. Three-way interaction between ethnic private regard, school ethnic discrimination, and gender on educational values controlling for levels of educational values at T1, lunch status, gender, age, and generational status.

Note: *Simple slope is different from zero ($p < .05$).