



Me, Myself and Us? The Relationship between Ethnic Identity and Hope, Resilience and Family Relationships among Different Ethnic Groups

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author LZ designed the study, performed the statistical analysis and prepared the first draft of the manuscript. Author MC oversaw the study, reviewed and approved the final manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

For ethnic minority populations, ethnic identity is associated with an increase in psychological well-being while also being recognized as a protective factor against discrimination and family distress. The aim of this study is to determine the association between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, social connectedness, experiences of discrimination and family relations in a diverse group of ethnicities. This study is correlational in nature and took place at Mount Royal University, located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, between January and April 2019. We included 326 introductory psychology students ranging in age from 17 to 48 with participants identifying as White, Asian, South Asian, Mixed, Black, Latino, First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and Middle Eastern. Participants were asked to complete six questionnaires measuring ethnic identity, resilience, hope, social connectedness, experiences of discrimination and family relations. Results revealed a significant relationship between ethnic identity and hope ($r = .14, p = .01$). Additionally, family relationships

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were a significant moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience ($F(1, 322) = 4.98, p < .05$). Finally, White participants had a significantly weaker ethnic identity when compared to the Asian, South Asian and Black participants (*Welch's* $F(7,41) = 9.39, p = .001, \eta^2 = .22$). Ethnic identity is associated with higher levels of hope, while strong family relationships moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience. Furthermore, individuals who identify as White have a weaker ethnic identity compared to individuals who identify as Asian, South Asian and Black. More research is required to understand ethnic identity in the White population to help bring awareness to the power and privilege associated with Whiteness and to find ways in which this awareness can help reduce systemic racism and discrimination.

Keywords: Ethnic identity; resilience; hope; social connectedness; discrimination; family relations; whiteness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Canada is an extremely diverse, multicultural nation encompassing many different nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities. According to the 2016 Canadian National Household Survey, over 7.6 million people identify as a visible ethnic minority, representing 22.3% of the Canadian population while over 1.6 million people identify as Indigenous comprising 4.3% of the Canadian population [1,2]. For ethnic minority populations, social determinants such as race can have a significant impact on their health resulting in increased physical and mental hardships and a decrease in overall psychological well-being [3,4]. Research suggests ethnic identity is central to the health and well-being of ethnic minority groups and has been associated with higher levels of resilience, hope, and social connectedness, while subsequently acting as a protective factor against discrimination and family distress [5,6,7]. The current study sets out to explore whether there is a relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness while investigating whether discrimination and/or family relationships mediate the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness. Additionally, few studies have explored the construct and role of ethnic identity within individuals who identify as White and thus, this study will explore whether there are significant differences in ethnic identity among different ethnic groups.

Ethnic identity can be defined as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to group membership” and is associated with improved psychological well-being in ethnic minority groups [8,9,10]. The development of one’s ethnic identity is complex, guided by a dynamic three-stage framework [11].

First, an individual is unaware of their ethnicity and through the process of socialization within family, community, and society, positive and negative feelings about their ethnicity begin to develop. Second, an individual begins to explore their ethnicity and through this exploration they may become aware of racism and discrimination against them due to their ethnicity. Finally, through their investigation an individual achieves a realistic and secure sense of their ethnic group membership and their own ethnic identity. Ultimately, an individual will eventually reach the stage of acceptance in their search to understand their ethnic identity; however, the process of discovering ethnic identity is unique, highly salient and requires an appraisal of preconceived notions and attitudes [11].

Resilience can be defined as “the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances or obstacles” and encompasses multiple factors such as adaptability, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, social support, and optimism [12,13]. External factors such as social norms and the society an individual may find themselves in can influence one’s resilience and impact their understanding of their own culture through behavior, language and communication within this sociocultural system [14]. Most research on resilience has focused on White participants and therefore, more research is required on resilience in ethnic minority populations to determine if there is a relationship between ethnic identity and resilience [15]. Indeed, Johnson et al. [16] explored resilience in ethnic minority populations by utilizing Ugandan and Tanzanian adolescents and found a significant relationship between ethnic identity and enhanced self-efficacy. Similarly, a study conducted by Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, and Chen [15] revealed a significant relationship between one’s search for ethnic identity and increased levels of resilience in

Latino, African American and Asian-American undergraduate students. Finally, resilience may be a protective factor against depression and depressive symptoms in the Aboriginal population [17,18,19]. In all, emerging literature suggests there is an association between ethnic identity and resilience in ethnic minority populations.

In addition to resilience, studies have found an association between hope and ethnic identity. According to Snyder's Hope Theory, hope consists of a cognitive set of reciprocal interconnected factors including agency thinking and pathway thinking [20]. Agency thinking is the ability to determine a desired goal while pathway thinking is the ability to generate ways to achieve a desired goal. Chang and Banks [21] indicate agency and pathway thinking can increase positive goal-seeking behaviours, problem-solving behaviours, and well-being. In fact, Yao and Yang [22] suggest ethnic identity and group membership encourage an individual to be part of a community with shared interests, resulting in the hope seeking behaviours of agency thinking and pathway thinking. Few studies have investigated hope across different ethnicities while even fewer studies have investigated the relationship between hope and ethnic identity. Chang and Banks [21] examined hope in African-American, Asian-American and Latino participants and found the relationship between agency thinking, pathway thinking, and variables such as life satisfaction varied considerably between the different ethnic groups. Yager-Elorriaga, Berenson, and McWhirter [23] found a significant relationship between ethnic identity and increased levels of hope in Latino youth, suggesting ethnic identity may be a powerful tool for Latino youth experiencing discrimination and feeling hopeless. Finally, Yao and Yang [22] found a positive association between ethnic identity and hope in Chinese students suggesting this association has a pivotal role in the mental health of ethnic minorities. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that a positive relationship exists between ethnic identity and hope.

Similarly, there is evidence to suggest an association between social connectedness and ethnic identity. Connection is extremely important to the human experience and literature suggests a lack of connectedness can result in physical and mental health problems [24,25,26]. Connectedness as a construct is vast and encompasses many different factors; however, the current study focuses on social

connectedness which can be defined as "the level of an individual's integration into his or her social milieu and the fullness of the resulting associative networks" [27]. Ethnic minorities experience social isolation from their peers at a higher rate compared to their White counterparts; however, studies have revealed there is a positive association between ethnic identity and social connectedness [28]. Gummadam, Pittman, and Ioffe [29] found ethnic identity was a protective factor for minority undergraduate students experiencing feelings of isolation. Likewise, Lee [30] found a connection between ethnic identity and increased social connectedness in Asian-American undergraduate students while Santos and Collins [31] found an association between ethnic identity and school connectedness in Latino youth. Thus, there is evidence to support the idea there is a relationship between ethnic identity and social connectedness.

Experiences of discrimination can be harmful to the psychological well-being of those who are victimized. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, almost 23% of Canadians face daily discrimination with individuals identifying as Black, Asian, Indigenous, Latino, Arab, or other reporting significantly more experiences than White individuals [32]. Additionally, Indigenous students who openly participate in traditional practices and culture on campus experience significantly more discrimination than those Indigenous students who do not [33]. For those individuals who have experienced discrimination, it is vital that interventions are introduced to promote forgiveness and resilience while affirming their values [5]. In fact, for Korean Americans, having pride in one's ethnic identity has been found to mitigate harmful consequences of discrimination such as depression and depressive symptoms while increasing feelings of social connection [5]. Although there is evidence to suggest ethnic identity can mitigate the effects of discrimination, each minority group experiences discrimination differently and therefore, future research is needed to understand this relationship. This study will explore whether discrimination mitigates the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness.

In addition to discrimination, negative family relationships and distress can influence the psychological well-being of all family members. In Canada, ethnic minority and Indigenous youth are more likely to grow up in poverty resulting in

feelings of alienation, a negative identity, and overall family distress [7,34,35,36]. Although few studies have examined the relationship between ethnic identity and family relationships, studies that have been conducted have found that for ethnic minority families facing increased hardship and adversity, there was a negative association between ethnic identity and family distress. In other words, as ethnic identity increased, levels of family distress decreased [37,38]. One such study investigated ethnic identity in low income African American families in the USA and results revealed high levels of ethnic identity were correlated with low levels of parent-child conflict and emotional distress particularly in fathers [7]. More research into the relationship between ethnic identity and family relationships is needed; however, findings to date suggest there is a negative association between ethnic identity and family distress. This study will examine if family relationships influence the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness.

As is evident from the research discussed, studies on ethnic identity have primarily focused on ethnic minorities and individuals of color while the exploration of a White ethnic identity has been minimal. Researchers have suggested White individuals do not think about their ethnicity nor are they aware of the privilege and advantages they are afforded due to their ethnicity [11]. More recently, Knowles and Peng [39] suggest the construct and understanding of Whiteness is complex and often goes un-noticed and unacknowledged within the White population, while Grossman and Charamaraman [40] propose Whiteness is often seen as the dominant or default ethnicity and therefore, an examination of one's culture or ethnicity is not important to White individuals. In fact, Perry [41] argues "Culturelessness can serve, even if unintentionally, as a measure of white racial superiority" (p. 56) suggesting the White population are above and beyond culture or in other words, "developmentally advanced" (p. 59). As asserted by Phinney [11], it is vital that White people critically examine and explore their beliefs and assumptions about their ethnicity in relation to other cultures and ethnicities around them. Thus, this study will measure ethnic identity in the White population to determine if there are significant differences in ethnic identity among different ethnic groups.

To build upon existing literature, address knowledge gaps, and address the lack of

diversity in previous studies, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of ethnic identity among a diverse group of undergraduate psychology students. First, the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness will be explored. Consistent with previous research, it is hypothesized there will be a positive correlation between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness. Second, discrimination as a moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness will be examined. It is predicted discrimination will weaken the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness. Third, family relationships as a moderator of the relationship between resilience, hope, and social connectedness will be investigated. It is hypothesized that family relationships will strengthen the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness. Finally, differences in ethnic identity among various ethnic groups will be explored. Consistent with previous literature, it is hypothesized there will be significant group differences in levels of ethnic identity, specifically, the White population will have lower levels of ethnic identity.

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

In total, 335 introductory psychology students participated in this study. After screening for outliers and removing participants with duplicate results or missing ethnicity, the final sample consisted of 326 participants with an age range of 17 to 48 ($M = 21.27$, $SD = 4.64$). Of this, 81% were females and 18% were males while 1% identified as non-binary. Additionally, 54.9% of the participants identified as White ($n = 179$), followed by Asian (14.4%; $n = 47$), South Asian (11.7%; $n = 38$), Mixed (6.1%; $n = 20$), Black (4.3%; $n = 14$), Latino (3.4%; $n = 11$), First Nations, Metis, Inuit (2.8%; $n = 9$), and Middle Eastern (2.5%; $n = 8$). Participants received 1% credit towards their introductory psychology course grade.

2.2 Materials

Participants were asked to provide demographic information including age, sex, and ethnicity. In addition, participants completed six questionnaires as follows: Revised (12-Item) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), the

Five-by-Five Resilience Scale (5x5RS), the Hope Scale, the Social Connectedness Scale – Revised (SCS-R), the Discrimination Measure, and the Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS).

2.2.1 Revised (12-Item) multigroup ethnic identity measure

The Revised (12-Item) MEIM is a 12-item self-report measure used to assess ethnic identity [42]. Prior to starting the survey, participants are asked to identify their ethnicity. Next, participants rate statements such as “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me” or “I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments” on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). For this study, a global score for ethnic identity was calculated for each participant by taking the mean score of all 12 items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of ethnic identity [43]. The MEIM demonstrated good reliability in this study ($\alpha = .88$).

2.2.2 Five-by-five resilience scale

The 5x5RS is a 25-item self-report measure used to measure resilience and five related protective factors including optimism, social support, emotion regulation, self-efficacy, and adaptability [43]. Participants rate statements such as “In general, I can switch gears easily” or “In general, I am very sensitive and easily hurt” on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Very Inaccurate*) to 5 (*Very Accurate*). The 5x5RS provides an overall measure of resilience in addition to a measure for each associated factor. For this study, a global score of resilience was calculated for each participant by reverse scoring appropriate items and taking the mean score of all 25 items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. In the present study, the 5x5RS exhibited good reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

2.2.3 Hope scale

The Hope Scale is a 12-item self-report measure used to assess hope along two subscales: agency and pathway [20]. Participants rate statements such as “I energetically pursue my goals” and “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam” on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Definitely False*) to 4 (*Definitely True*). For this study, a global score of hope was calculated for each participant by removing the filler questions and taking the mean score of 8 items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of hope. For this

study, the Hope Scale demonstrated satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .79$).

2.2.4 Social connectedness scale (SCS-R)

The SCS-R is a 20-item self-report measure used to measure positive and negative aspects of social connectedness [24]. Participants rate statements such as “I am in tune with the world” and “I feel like an outsider” on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). After reverse scoring the appropriate items, a global score of social connectedness is calculated for each participant by taking the mean score of 20 items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of social connectedness. The SCS-R exhibited good reliability in this study ($\alpha = .93$).

2.2.5 Discrimination measure

The Discrimination Measure is a 9-item self-report measure used to assess experiences of daily discrimination [44]. Participants are asked how often certain events have happened to them including “You are treated with less respect than other people” and “People act as if they are afraid of you” and rate each item on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 5 (Almost Everyday). A global score of discrimination is calculated by taking the mean of all 9 items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of discrimination. The Discrimination Measure demonstrated good reliability in the present study ($\alpha = .89$).

2.2.6 Brief family relationship scale (BFRS)

The BFRS is a 16-item self-report measure used to measure perceptions of family relations on three subscales: cohesion, expressiveness and conflict [45]. Participants rate statements such as “In our family we really help and support each other” and “In our family we argue a lot” on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at All*) to 3 (*A Lot*). A global family relationship score is calculated for each participant by reverse scoring the appropriate items and taking the sum of all 16 items, with higher scores indicating stronger family relationships. The BFRS exhibited good reliability in the current study ($\alpha = .93$).

2.3 Procedure

Participants were recruited through the introductory psychology student pool via a recruitment poster. This study was conducted entirely online via SurveyMonkey. Upon registration through the online recruitment

system, participants were automatically redirected to the informed consent page which explicitly stated that by clicking “Next”, they had given their consent to participate in the study. Once consent was obtained, participants were presented with the six questionnaires (MEIM, 5x5RS, Hope Scale, SCS-R, Discrimination Measure, and BFRS) in random order and asked to provide their age and gender. A debriefing form was presented as the final screen of the survey. The total time to complete the survey was approximately 30 minutes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Prior to analysis, data was screened for potential errors. Duplicate participant entries and participants who did not report their ethnicity were removed from the analysis. Data was screened for outliers using Mahalanobis Distance and extreme multi-variate outliers were removed from the analysis. Finally, mean imputation was used for cases with random and minimal missing data. Table 1 presents the psychometric properties of the six variables measured.

3.1.1 Ethnic identity and resilience, hope and social connectedness

First, to determine if there was a positive relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, ethnic identity and hope, or ethnic identity and social connectedness, a bivariate correlational analysis was conducted (Table 2).

In partial support of the initial hypothesis, results showed a significant relationship between ethnic identity and hope ($r = .14, p = .01$); however, there was not a significant relationship between ethnic identity and resilience or ethnic identity and social connectedness. Although not part of the original hypothesis, there were significant intercorrelations between resilience, hope, and social connectedness which will be addressed in the discussion section.

3.1.2 Discrimination

Second, to determine if discrimination moderated the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness, three separate moderation analyses were conducted using the Process Macro [46]. Discrimination was not a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness and therefore, the initial hypothesis that discrimination would weaken the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness was not supported (Table 3).

3.1.3 Family relationships

Third, to determine if family relationships moderated the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness, three separate moderation analyses were conducted using the Process Macro [46]. Results are presented in Table 4. Family relationships were not a statistically

Table 1. Psychometric properties of the major study variables

Measure	M	SD	Range	
			Potential	Actual
MEIM	2.78	.50	1.0 – 4.0	1.0 – 4.0
5x5RS	3.33	.57	1.0 – 5.0	1.4 – 4.8
Hope	3.03	.40	1.0 – 4.0	1.5 – 4.0
SCS-R	4.10	.82	1.0 – 6.0	1.1 – 5.8
Discrimination	1.42	.90	0 – 5.0	0 – 5.0
BFRS	37.60	7.51	17.00 – 48.00	17.00 – 48.00

*MEIM = Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure; 5x5RS = Five-by-Five Resilience Scale; SCS-R = Social Connectedness Scale – Revised; BFRS = Brief Family Relationship Scale

Table 2. Intercorrelations for scores on the MEIM, 5x5RS, hope scale and SCS-R

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. MEIM	-			
2. 5x5RS	.099	-		
3. Hope	.144*	.630*	-	
4. SCS-R	.098	.600*	.537*	-

*MEIM = Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure; 5x5RS = Five-by-Five Resilience Scale; SCS-R = Social Connectedness Scale – Revised. * $P < .01$

Table 3. Results for discrimination as a moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness

	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>p</i>
Resilience	.00	1.71	1	322	.19
Hope	.00	.50	1	322	.48
Social Connectedness	.00	1.30	1	322	.25

significant moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and hope or ethnic identity and social connectedness; however, there was statistically significant moderation of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, $F(1, 322) = 4.98, p = .03$. An examination of the interaction plot (Fig. 1) showed that as family relationships increased in strength, the slope relating ethnic identity and resilience also increased. Specifically, the Johnson-Neyman technique showed that when participants scored 47 or higher on the BFRS, there was a significant positive relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, while scores below 47 on the BFRS did not indicate a significant positive relationship between ethnic identity and resilience (Fig. 2).

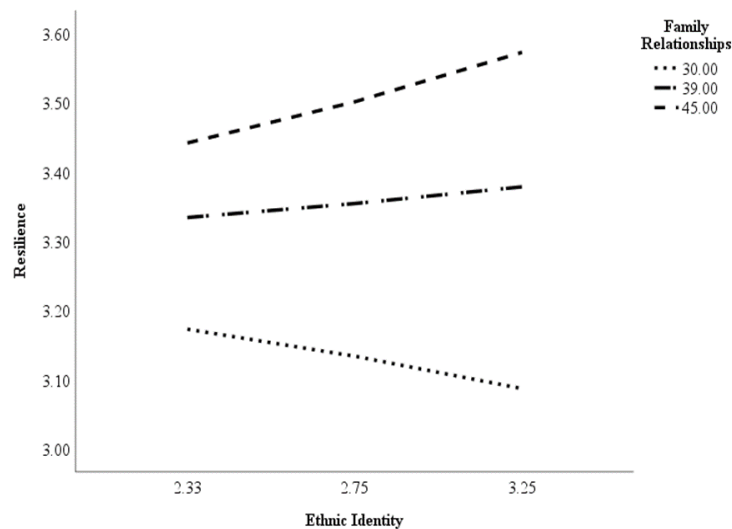
3.1.4 Ethnic identity

Forth, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in ethnic identity between ethnic groups. Table 5 presents the psychometric properties for MEIM scores separated by ethnic group. Due to unequal sample sizes and therefore a violation of the assumption of homogeneity, *Welch's F* test was used for the analysis of variance. Results revealed significant mean differences between ethnic identity based on ethnic group, *Welch's F*(7,41) = 9.39, $p = .001, \eta^2 = .22$. To determine the significant differences between groups, Games-Howell was used as a post-hoc procedure. The White participants ($M = 2.60, SD = .42$) reported

Table 4. Results for family relationships as a moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness

	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>p</i>
Resilience	.01	4.98	1	322	.03*
Hope	.00	.32	1	322	.57
Social Connectedness	.00	.02	1	322	.89

* $P < .05$

**Fig. 1. Interaction between ethnic identity and resilience with family relationships as the moderator**

significantly lower levels of ethnic identity than Asian participants ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .46$), South Asian participants ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .50$), and Black participants ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .45$) ($ps < .05$); however, there was not a statistically significant difference in ethnic identity levels between White participants and First Nations, Metis, Inuit participants ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .69$), Latino participants ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .48$), Middle Eastern participants ($M = 2.97$, $SD = .52$), or Mixed participants ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .46$). Thus, lower levels of ethnic identity were reported by White participants compared to Asian, South Asian and Black participants.

3.2 Discussion

This study explored the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness, determined whether discrimination or family relationships moderated the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness, and investigated ethnic identity among different ethnic groups.

3.2.1 Ethnic identity and resilience, hope and social connectedness

First, the hypothesis that ethnic identity is related to resilience, hope, and social connectedness was partially supported as there was a significant relationship between ethnic identity and hope; however, results from the analysis yielded a very small relationship between the two variables. Consistent with previous research, the present study found a positive correlation between ethnic identity and hope, yet it is important to note that these studies were conducted mostly on participants who identified as an ethnic minority, while over 55% of the participants in the current study identified as White [22,23]. The difference in ethnicities between studies could potentially explain why the relationship between ethnic identity and hope was so small. Future research should examine whether the relationship between ethnic identity and hope differs between different ethnic groups to determine if this relationship is present for some ethnic groups and not others. The results of correlational analysis should be interpreted with caution as correlation does not imply causation. Correlational analysis cannot determine if ethnic identity increases hope, if hope increases ethnic identity, or if there is a third factor contributing to the positive relationship between ethnic identity and hope. Future studies could utilize experimental research to try and establish the

causal connection between ethnic identity and hope.

Interestingly, the present study did not yield a significant relationship between ethnic identity and resilience or social connectedness, a finding that is inconsistent with previous studies [15,16]. It should be noted that previous studies exploring the association between ethnic identity and resilience or social connectedness have mostly utilized participants who identified as an ethnic minority. It is possible that the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience or social connectedness is present for some ethnicities and not for others and future studies could explore if there are differences between ethnicities in relation to this association. Results may potentially reveal that ethnic identity is not positively associated to psychological well-being for those who find themselves in the ethnic majority compared to those in an ethnic minority.

Although not part of the initial hypothesis, exploratory analysis revealed significant intercorrelations between resilience, hope, and social connectedness. This finding is not surprising considering all three are associated with psychological well-being; however, future research could examine whether the relationship between these three variables is consistent between different ethnic groups.

3.2.2 Discrimination

Second, the prediction that discrimination weakens an association between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness was not supported. Previous studies have found a relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms, social isolation, and low self-esteem; however, ethnic identity was found to mitigate the negative effects of discrimination by acting as a protective factor [5]. Whereas ethnic identity was used as the moderator in previous studies, discrimination was used as the moderator in the current study which may explain the inconsistent findings. Additionally, previous studies examining discrimination have utilized ethnic minorities for participants while over half the participants in the current study were White [5]. It is possible discrimination was not found to be a significant moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness because the majority of the participant sample did not experience high levels of discrimination. If so, it could be argued that discrimination as a moderator of the relationship

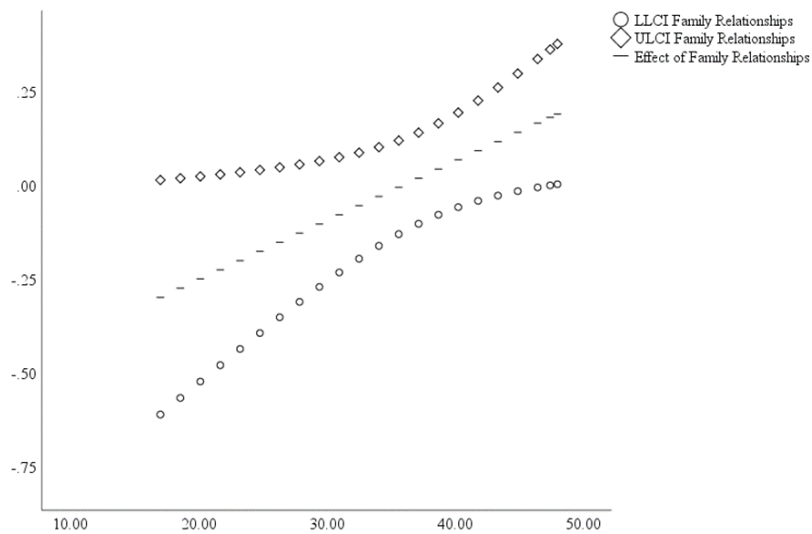


Fig. 2. Conditional slope linking ethnic identity and resilience as a function of family relationships

LLCI = lower level for confidence interval; ULCI = upper level for confidence interval

Table 5. Psychometric Properties of MEIM Scores for Each Ethnic Group

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Asian	47	2.91	.46	1.67 – 3.67
Black	14	3.26	.45	2.17 – 3.92
First Nations, Metis, Inuit	9	3.10	.69	1.92 – 4.00
Latino	11	2.69	.48	1.58 – 3.42
Middle Eastern	8	2.97	.52	2.01 – 3.75
Mixed	20	2.78	.46	1.92 – 3.75
South Asian	38	3.14	.50	2.08 – 4.00
White	179	2.60	.42	1.00 – 3.67
Total	326	2.78	.50	1.00 – 4.00

**MEIM = Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure*

between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, or social connectedness depends on the social context an individual may find themselves in. In other words, whether someone identifies as an ethnic majority versus an ethnic minority may determine whether discrimination is a significant moderator. Future research could investigate discrimination levels among different ethnic groups to determine how discrimination moderates the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience, hope, and social connectedness.

3.2.3 Family relationships

Third, the prediction that family relationships would moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and hope or social connectedness was not supported; however, family relationships were a significant moderator of the relationship

between ethnic identity and resilience. In other words, as family relationships increased in strength, the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience became more positive; however, it is important to note this relationship was only significant for family relationships scored at 47 or above, out of a possible 48. For participants who scored lower than 47 on the BFRS, family relationships were no longer a significant moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience. This finding is similar with previous studies where ethnic identity significantly moderated the relationship between family hardships and distress. It is important to note this study is strictly correlational and therefore, analysis cannot determine how family relationships are interacting with ethnic identity and resilience. It is possible strong family relationships aid in developing a stronger sense of ethnic identity resulting in higher resilience, or

it could be that close family relationships facilitate resilience which in turn strengthen one's ethnic identity. It is clear there is an interaction between family relationship, ethnic identity, and resilience; however, future studies should seek to explore the mechanisms of the interaction by conducting experimental research to establish a causal connection.

3.2.4 Ethnic identity

Finally, the prediction that ethnic identity was significantly different among ethnic groups was supported. Specifically, White participants in this study had a significantly lower ethnic identity compared to the Asian, South Asian, and Black participants. This result offers an interesting contribution to the growing body of literature suggesting White people are not aware of their ethnic identity nor have they ever had to think about their ethnicity or how it has benefited their lives [11,39,40]. White privilege affords White people benefits that appear so normal that they have never had to question where to live, which school to attend, where to get healthcare or which mall to shop at without being followed – they have never encountered judgement or discrimination based on their skin color [47]. In the current study, the lack of ethnic identity in the White participants could be because participants may have never been asked about their ethnic identity prior to completing the MEIM. Future studies could conduct qualitative follow-up interviews with White participants to determine if they gained an awareness of their own ethnicity after completing the MEIM and if so, if this awareness impacted them in a positive, negative, or neutral way. Phinney [11] suggests awareness of Whiteness can bring with it a sense of cognitive dissonance resulting in feelings of indifference, discomfort, guilt, fear, anger, and denial. Although it can be uncomfortable, the conversation about Whiteness should be occurring in the classroom, specifically in post-secondary education. Boatright-Horowitz et al. [47] suggest the lack of discussion surrounding Whiteness and White privilege in post-secondary institutions only perpetuates systemic racism that has been so deeply engrained in our society and leaves students feeling shocked, in denial and defensive when initially confronted with the idea. For true inclusion to take place, Yeung, Spanierman, and Landrum-Brown [48] argue it is crucial for White students to acknowledge their power and privilege. Future research could explore ways in which these important conversations could be had in a post-secondary

setting in a non-judgemental environment such as open circle dialogues, peer support groups, role playing, and speaker sessions where both those who discriminate and those who have been discriminated against share their lived experiences. Additionally, future studies could explore if culture and diversity initiatives on campus result in more open-minded attitudes within the White population and if so, how these initiatives could be expanded on.

There are some important caveats to note regarding the results. Utilizing an open-ended question, participants were asked to self-identify their ethnicity on the MEIM and therefore, this self-identification was open to an individual's interpretation of how they chose to define themselves. Utilizing qualitative research methods such as informal conversations or interviews with each participant around ethnicity and ethnic identity would have garnered a deeper, more complete understanding of how an individual defines themselves. Similarly, some participants self-identified as mixed ethnicity and therefore, without further follow-up and for analysis purposes, these participants were simply placed into a mixed ethnicity category. For mixed ethnicity participants, it would have been interesting to examine if they identified or connected more strongly with one of their ethnic heritages compared to the others. In the same way, the blanket term White was used to categorize participants who identified as White, Caucasian, Canadian, or European; therefore, no distinction was made between the different self-identifications and levels of ethnic identity. For example, a White participant with European heritage such as Ukrainian, Scottish, or British may have reported a stronger ethnic identity compared to White participants with Canadian heritage; however, this was not measured within the current study. Future studies could investigate whether ethnic identity differs for White participants depending on how they define their ancestry. Finally, it is possible that ethnic identity is more important for individuals who find themselves in the ethnic minority. If so, research examining ethnic identity in the White population in a social context where they are in fact the ethnic minority may yield different results. It could be argued it is not the case that White participants don't have an ethnic identity, but rather, any ethnic majority would have a weaker connection to their ethnic identity when compared to the ethnic minority. Obviously, more research is required to understand ethnic identity in the White population.

4. LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study was the lack of ethnic diversity in the participant pool; however, this lack of ethnic diversity resulted in the interesting finding that White participants having a significantly lower ethnic identity, contributing to the growing body of research surrounding Whiteness. The lack of ethnic diversity in the current study may have resulted in not finding support for a significant relationship between ethnic identity and resilience or social connectedness, even though there is evidence to suggest ethnic identity is critical to well-being of ethnic minority groups. Future studies must engage ethnic minority groups and community members in ethnic identity research to determine the important role ethnic identity has on their health and well-being.

Additionally, this study was limited by using self-report measures which are open to interpretation and subject to bias. Although self-report measures provide concrete numbers that enable statistical analysis of the data, qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups would have resulted in a greater understanding of what ethnic identity means for each individual. Furthermore, a conversation between the researcher and a participant may have allowed for an informal discussion surrounding Whiteness and White privilege and started the process of awareness within each participant.

Finally, ethnic identity is complex and there have been some discrepancies about whether the MEIM measures ethnic identity globally or measures multiple components of ethnic identity [42]. New research with the MEIM suggests ethnic identity does in fact comprise two separate and distinct factors of exploration and commitment; however, the two are very closely related and measures can be computed as a composite score or two separate scores [42]. Although the MEIM is a concise measure for ethnic identity, Phinney and Ong [42] argue it is generic and researchers should utilize multiple measures to capture the multifaceted construct of ethnic identity.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study revealed three key findings: 1) ethnic identity is related to hope; 2) family relationships strengthen the relationship between ethnic identity and resilience; and 3)

White participants have a weaker ethnic identity than Asian, South Asian, and Black participants. As the ethnic minority population continues to grow in Canada, it is important to find ways to support and foster psychological well-being within these populations. Ethnic identity is associated with an increase in well-being and future research should focus on how ethnic identity can be promoted and strengthened in these vulnerable populations. Furthermore, it is evident that ethnic identity operates differently in the White population and future research should focus on how to bring more awareness, open-mindedness, and understanding of Whiteness to the White population. Ultimately, an understanding of ethnic identity and “us” vs “the Other” will start the process of breaking down systemic racism and discrimination.

CONSENT

Authors declare that informed consent was obtained from each participant for publication of this research study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Authors hereby declare that this study was approved by the Mount Royal University Human Research Ethics Board, Study Number 101573 and performed in accordance with their ethical standards.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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