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Dual identity in context: The role of minority peers and school discrimination

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Abstract

Immigrant-origin minority adolescents combine their common national identity with distinct ethnic identities. Depending on different social ecologies they develop more or less compatible dual identifications. Taking an ecological approach to ethnic-racial socialization (ERS), we investigate how schools and peers as socializing agents can afford compatible ethnic and national identifications. We draw on the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey of 944 Turkish and Moroccan minority adolescents in 229 classrooms across 55 Belgian secondary schools with low (10%) to high minority presence (60%+). On average ethnic and national identifications were not significantly associated. In support of the protective role of minority peers, multilevel modeling revealed that national and ethnic identifications were more compatible in classrooms with more minority peers; while school discrimination undermined compatibility only in classrooms with fewer minority peers. We conclude that minority peers are key agents in the socialization of compatible ethnic and national identities.

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INTRODUCTION

Stories of discrimination experiences in Belgian schools abound, from a Moroccan minority student being pressured to write a school essay apologizing for the terror attacks of 9/11 to a Turkish minority student being told by his teacher that he and his kind belong in prison (Daily Racism, 2016). Repeated experiences of discrimination single out Turkish and Moroccan immigrant-origin minority members as devalued outsiders who are not equally included by majority institutions (Alanya et al., 2017). These experiences of discrimination communicate critical messages in the ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) of minority adolescents. ERS refers broadly to “the varied inputs into children’s and adolescents’ developing understanding of ethnic and racial issues” (Ruck et al., 2022). Taking an ecological approach to ERS, we focus on micro-systems of schools and peers as key socialization settings (Hughes et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). We extend research on ERS of minority adolescents beyond the most commonly interrogated family setting and we shift focus from ethnic-racial identity to the less studied compatibility of dual ethnic and national identities (Ruck et al., 2022; Verkuyten et al., 2019). In the school setting, we focus on schools and on peers as socializing agents that afford dual ethnic and national identities through a range of “explicit, implicit, deliberate, unintended, verbal, and nonverbal processes” (Ruck et al., 2022). In particular, we investigate the disruptive role of teacher discrimination and the potential protective role of the presence of minority peers in ERS (Saleem & Byrd, 2022; Santos et al., 2017).

Dual identifiers are often found to perform better at school and work, enjoy higher psychological wellbeing and more belonging to both majority and minority groups (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Verkuyten et al., 2019). In view of the potential benefits of dual identification for developmental outcomes, it is crucial to understand how socialization contexts may protect or disrupt the construction and enactment of dual identities. Therefore, we extend previous research on the socialization of ethnic-racial identity to the socialization of dual ethnic and national identity (Huguley et al., 2019; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Specifically, our study asks: How do Turkish and Moroccan origin Belgian minority adolescents negotiate their dual identities as members of distinct immigrant-origin communities and of the majority society? What is the role of school discrimination as a disruptive force; and can the presence of minority peers who share similar discrimination experiences provide a protective socialization context for dual identifiers?

Measuring dual identity compatibility

Following the most common operationalization of dual identity, we measure ethnic and national identity separately and we combine the two measures to assess dual identities (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2016). The traditional approach in acculturation research focuses on the strength of identifications. Usually, participants with high ethnic and high national identity are labeled as dual identifiers and participants are categorized using median split or cluster analysis (e.g., Klандermans et al., 2008; Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2013). We follow a more recently proposed approach that focuses on the extent of identity conflict or compatibility and uses the associations between ethnic and national identity (e.g., Fleischmann et al., 2019). Thus, we conceive of compatible dual identity as a positive or zero correlation between ethnic and national identity, and we operationalize less compatible dual identities as a negative correlation between ethnic and national identity. Our interest is in the association or dissociation between ethnic and national identification, which we operationalize by regressing national identification on ethnic identifi-

ation. Please note that this ordering is purely pragmatic and does not imply a specific causal order between ethnic and national identity; it also does not mean that we are (more) interested in national identification as the outcome. What we are interested in is how the socialization context, that is, minority peer presence, and peer perceptions of discrimination moderate the association (or dissociation) between ethnic and national identification. We therefore add interactions of ethnic identification with minority peer presence, and with peer perceptions of discrimination to our regression of national identification.

Minority experiences of discrimination and dual identity

Discrimination experiences during adolescence critically shape trajectories of ERS (Hughes et al., 2017; Ruck et al., 2022; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). When minority youth experience more discrimination, they engage in more identity exploration (Del Toro et al., 2021; Pahl & Way, 2006). Relatedly, their ethnic-racial identity becomes more central but their awareness of its negative public regard also increases (Del Toro et al., 2021; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). As schools are key socialization contexts, we ask how the ERS of minority adolescents is informed by school discrimination. We focus specifically on the socialization of their dual ethnic and national identities in the European migration context and investigate how minority adolescents reconcile their ethnic and national identifications in the school context. School discrimination refers here to the experiences of devaluation, hostile, or unfair treatment by school teachers among minority students. We reason that besides personal experiences of discrimination, vicarious experiences of discrimination within minority peer groups will inform minority adolescents' developing understanding of intergroup relations and hence the socialization of their dual identities (Kende et al., 2021; Watford et al., 2022). To assess vicarious discrimination experiences, we aggregated the personal discrimination experiences of minority peers within the same classroom. We thus extend previous research on discrimination and ERS in two ways: by shifting focus from ethnic-racial identities to the dual ethnic-national identities of immigrant-origin adolescents in Europe, and by highlighting the role of vicarious experiences of discrimination among minority peers in school.

Discrimination as a common socialization experience of minority adolescents makes it harder for them to sustain and perform dual ethnic and national identifications. Plausibly, discrimination experiences convey key socialization messages that reject the ethnic identities of minority youth and that devalue them as less than full national group members (Alanya et al., 2017; Gharaei et al., 2018). A handful of studies have directly related discrimination experiences to dual identity compatibility, which was assessed as the association between minorities' ethnic and national identifications. For instance, British Muslims were less likely to combine strong ethno-religious and national identifications when they experienced more discrimination due to their religious heritage (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Similarly, the ethnic and national identifications of Turkish and Moroccan minorities in five European cities were less compatible (negatively correlated) in the presence of personal discrimination experiences; in the absence of discrimination, in contrast, dual identities were more compatible (no or positive correlation) (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016). Likewise, a recent study among minority adolescents in Germany found less compatible ethno-religious and national identities when they experienced more discrimination (Fleischmann et al., 2019). Along similar lines, we expected that national identification would be less compatible with ethnic identification (negatively correlated) when minority adolescents collectively experienced more school discrimination (Hypothesis 1). This hypothesis would be supported by a significant cross-level interaction between individual-level ethnic identification and classroom-level

minority peer discrimination. More specifically, we expected that ethnic and national identification would be negatively associated at higher levels of minority peer discrimination but positively associated or dissociated at low levels of minority peer discrimination. We thus add to the literature on discrimination and ERS by zooming in on compatible dual identities and by highlighting collective experiences of discrimination in the minority peer group (Wiley et al., 2019).

Minority peer presence and dual identity

The socialization of ethnic-racial identity as well as national identities in minority adolescents depends crucially on social validation by supportive peers (Barrett & Davis, 2008; Gharaei et al., 2018; Rivas-Drake et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2017). In diverse classrooms the presence of minority peers could offer a supportive socialization context for the development of compatible dual identities, a supportive context that affords the enactment and mutual validation of dual identities in daily interactions (Barrett & Davis, 2008; Hughes et al., 2016; Verkuyten et al., 2019). Unlike their majority peers, Turkish and Moroccan minority adolescents see the ethnic culture of their immigrant families and communities as compatible with the (Belgian or Dutch) national culture of the majority society (Hillekens, Baysu & Phaet, 2019; Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2012; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Likewise, qualitative findings showed that minority friends explored and co-constructed multiple identities during adolescence together, suggesting that sympathetic minority friends enable the integration of ethnic and national identities (Hoare, 2019). Therefore, we expected that ethnic and national identification would be more compatible (i.e., less negatively associated or dissociated) in classrooms with more minority peers (relative group size) than in classes with fewer minority peers (Hypothesis 2). Following previous research on ERS, we use minority peer presence as a proxy for socialization in the minority peer group (Derlan & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). This hypothesis would be supported by a significant cross-level interaction between individual-level ethnic identification and classroom-level minority peer presence so that ethnic and national identification are negatively associated at lower levels of minority peer presence but positively associated or dissociated at high levels of minority presence.

The interplay of school discrimination and minority peer presence

From an ecological perspective on ERS, minority peers as socializing agents could mitigate detrimental effects of school discrimination (Hughes et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). For example, minority friendships buffered negative effects of school discrimination on well-being and school belonging in a predominantly Latinx sample of adolescents (Benner & Wang, 2017). Similarly, peer support mitigated the effect of discrimination (though not specifically school discrimination) on the adjustment of African American adolescents (Brody et al., 2006). Also in qualitative research on the ERS of Black, Asian and Latinx adolescents in American schools, supportive minority peer groups critically enabled these youngsters to resist commonly held stereotypes about their ethnic-racial groups in school (Way et al., 2008). Thus there is growing evidence of the socializing role of the minority peers, but this research did not directly address identity multiplicity and compatibility in the face of discrimination (Rivas-Drake et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2017). Still, building on such indirect evidence, we explore a possible protective role of minority peers in face of school discrimination. We reason that the presence of minority peers may buffer minorities' dual ethnic and national identifications in the face of discrimination. With the presence of

their minority peers, minority adolescents may sustain compatible dual identifications even as they collectively experience school discrimination. Thus, we will explore whether Hypothesis 1 is further conditional on the presence of minority peers in diverse classrooms, so that ethnic and national identifications would be less compatible (more negatively associated) at higher levels of experienced discrimination only in classrooms with fewer minority peers. Specifically, we test an interaction of minority peer presence and collective discrimination experiences at the classroom level as joint contextual moderators of the individual-level association between ethnic (predictor) and national identification (outcome). To conditionally support Hypothesis 1, we would need to observe a significant three-way cross-level interaction so that ethnic and national identification are more negatively associated at higher levels of discrimination only in classrooms with fewer minority peers.

The current study

The present study focuses on children of immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. We sample minority youth from these groups as they constitute the most discriminated and devalued groups in Belgian society and in Belgian schools (Alanya et al., 2017; Baysu et al., 2018). It is in this context that we ask how critical socialization experiences of school discrimination and minority peer presence enable or disrupt the ERS of dual national and ethnic identities among Turkish and Moroccan origin Belgian minority youth.

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected as part of the large-scale Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in secondary schools Flanders-Belgium (Phalet et al., 2018). In Flanders, students attend secondary school from the age of 12 to 18. The Flemish secondary school system assigns students to educational tracks with academic tracks preparing for higher education and vocational tracks preparing for entry into skilled labor. Immigrant-origin minority students are overrepresented in vocational tracks (Baysu et al., 2018). Secondary schools were sampled using a stratified random sampling design to represent a broad range of moderately (>10% minority students) to highly ethnically diverse schools (>60%).¹ This sampling design was modeled on the CILS4EU project, which consists of similar comparative surveys in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (CILS4EU, 2016). After obtaining ethical clearance from the school principal and parental and teacher consent, all eligible students in randomly selected classrooms ($n = 229$) across 55

¹We used a multi-step sampling design. In the first step, we selected schools – as our primary sampling units – using explicit stratification on % immigrant origin students in the target year. We achieved 48.7% response rate of originally sampled schools and replacement schools were selected through serpentine sorting on a range of implicit stratifiers to ensure that replacements would be most similar to the original school in case of non-response. The percentage of students speaking a foreign language at home (the administrative data collected by the Belgian government) was 31% across the schools. In a second step, we relied on school data about class size and track in the target year to randomly select classes within each school and year. In the final step, we selected all students in the selected classes.

schools participated in the survey during class hours.² The survey was introduced as a questionnaire about the social relations and schooling experiences of European youth. For the current study, we selected subsamples of Turkish and Moroccan minority students ($N = 944$) based on their self-reported country of birth (Turkey or Morocco) or parentage (one or both parents born in Turkey or Morocco). The sample included 49.5% boys, 52% Turkish-origin participants, and 40% second generation participants. Their ages ranged from 12 to 18 ($M = 15.06$, $SD = 1.17$).

Measures

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the measures are reported in Table 1.

National Identification was measured with one question: “How strongly do you feel Belgian?” (Phalet et al., 2018). Answers were given on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very strongly*). National identification was moderate: just above the midpoint of the scale.

Ethnic Identification was measured with two follow-up questions. First participants reported their membership of ethnic minority groups in Belgium in response to the question: “Some people feel that they are members of several groups. Which, if any, of the following groups are you a member of?” Participants could tick one or more ethnic categories, including Turks or Moroccans for our subsample. Next, they were asked to think about their main ethnic group membership and indicate the strength of their ethnic identification by answering the question (for our subsample): “How strongly do you feel Turkish / Moroccan?” The answers on both questions were combined and rated on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very strongly*).³ Overall identification was moderate to strong, above the midpoint of the scale.

The ethnic and national identity measures capture the attachment and belonging dimension of identification (Ashmore et al., 2004).

Individual experiences of school discrimination were measured by one standard question about personal experiences of school discrimination: “How often are you being discriminated against, treated unfairly or with hostility at school because of your ethnic origin or background?” (Baysu et al., 2016). This measure was combined with a composite scale of five items tapping experiences of devaluation by school teachers. Sample items are: “How often do teachers treat you unfairly or in a hostile way?”; “How often do teachers expect you cannot do anything right?”; “How often do teachers talk to you as if you are stupid?”; “How often do teachers make you feel you are not welcome?” (adapted from Brondolo et al., 2005). Answers were coded on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*almost always*); the mean level of experienced discrimination was somewhat closer to “some of the time” than to “never.”⁴ The standard question and the five items were combined in a reliable scale ($\alpha = .82$).

² We excluded 15 schools where the percentage of immigrant origin students fell below 10% at the school level as we were interested in schools where there would be a sizable presence of minority peers.

³ Participants of Turkish or Moroccan origin who did not tick the Turkish or Moroccan box were assigned a score of 1; those who did tick the box but were missing on the follow-up question were scored 2. As robustness checks, we replicated the analysis while assigning a score of 2 (weakly identified) instead of 1 (not identified) to all participants who were missing on either or both questions about ethnic identity. We also replicated the analysis using mean imputed values for the same participants.

⁴ Factor analysis confirmed that the combined scale formed a coherent factor. We also replicated the analysis without the explicit discrimination item as additional robustness check.

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. National Identification	3.11	1.25	–							
2. Ethnic identification	3.57	1.55	-.05	–						
3. Individual experiences of school discrimination	1.69	.57	-.08*	-.03	–					
4. Minority presence	.47	.24	-.07*	-.08*	.04	–				
5. Minority experiences of school discrimination	1.69	.63	-.05	-.11**	.60**	.10**	–			
6. Gender			.07*	-.02	-.11**	.07*	-.12**	–		
7. Age	15.06	1.17	-.08*	-.02	.01	.05	.02	.05	–	
8. Cognitive score	.58	.19	-.01	.06	-.24**	-.23**	-.18**	-.02	.00	–

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Minority experiences of school discrimination were measured by aggregating the self-reported frequencies of experienced discrimination across all Turkish and Moroccan-origin peers within each classroom. We averaged Turkish and Moroccan-origin students' scores as our contextual measure of the collective experience of school discrimination by minority peer groups at the classroom level.⁵

Minority presence in the classroom was measured as the relative minority group size by adding up the percentages of Turkish or Moroccan minority peers in participants' classroom – based on self-reported ethnic origin or parentage. Percentages ranged from 4% to 100%; 25% of minority students were in classes with less than 11% minority peers and 25% of minority students were in classes with only minority peers. There were on average 11 ($SD = 4.86$) students in a classroom.

Controls. As control variables we included participants' age (cf. supra), gender (1 = boy, 2 = girl), as well as an objective measure of cognitive performance on the inductive reasoning subtest of the Culture Fair Intelligence Test. In this way, we capture the effects of minority experiences of discrimination on national identity net of possibly overlapping variation in their cognitive performance (Cattell & Cattell, 1961).

Analytic strategy

Multilevel regression analyses were conducted using Mplus 7 to examine the relationships between ethnic identification and individual experiences of school discrimination (as individual-level predictors) and national identification (as an individual-level outcome). Multilevel analysis was appropriate because of the nested data structure of students (individual level) within classrooms (class level).⁶ Moreover, multi-level analysis was required to test hypothetical effects of minority presence and collective experiences of discrimination by minority peers as contextual moderators which were defined at the class level (Hox et al., 2010). In line with previous studies that directly assessed dual identity compatibility, we estimated the association between ethnic and national identification as an indicator of compatibility and interpreted either dissociation or positive associations (vs. negative associations) as evidence of compatibility between ethnic identification and national identification (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Staerklé et al., 2010).

To examine Hypotheses 1 and 2, we ran multilevel regression analyses with national identification as the outcome variable (Hox et al., 2010), first testing the null model. Second, ethnic identification and individual experiences of school discrimination were added as level 1 predictors while controlling for age, gender, and cognitive performance (“individual level main effects” model). Third, minority presence and minority experiences of school discrimination were added at the class level (“individual and class level main effects” model). Fourth, the effect of ethnic identification was allowed to vary between classes (“random effects model”). Fifth, the cross-level interaction between ethnic identification and minority presence was added (“two-way interaction model [MP]”). Sixth, the cross-level interaction between ethnic identification and minority experiences of discrimination was added instead (“two-way interaction model [MD]”).⁷ Finally, all

⁵ Because there is a high correlation between individual and minority experiences of discrimination, which might bias the estimates (Shieh & Fouladi, 2003), we also replicated the analysis without the individual measure, excluding bias issues.

⁶ We used the classroom level as our contextual unit of analysis because social interactions with teachers and classmates mainly take place in classrooms. Also, school-level variance was only 3% while class-level variance was 7%.

⁷ We also tested this interaction only looking at individual experiences of discrimination and replicated the results.

two-way interactions and a three-way interaction between ethnic identification, minority presence, and minority experiences of school discrimination were jointly added (“full” model). We tested improvement in model fit using the robust Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test of the log-likelihood ratio ($\Delta\chi^2$).

RESULTS

Table 2 shows all models with regression estimates, standard errors, significance levels, variance components, and model fit statistics. The null model showed the decomposition of the variance in national identification at the individual and class level. The variance was significant at both individual and class levels: 93% of the variance was at the individual level, while 7% of the variance was at the class level. This class-level variance corresponds to the roughly 10% variance usually found at the contextual level in school-based research (Hox et al., 2010).

First, looking at the effects on national identification at the individual level, Turkish and Moroccan minority adolescents who were more strongly ethnically identified were not significantly less identified nationally in the main effects models. Dissociation suggests generally compatible ethnic and national identifications among minority adolescents. However, adolescents who had individually experienced more school discrimination reported significantly lower national identification. Additionally, girls were more highly nationally identified than boys; and older adolescents reported lower national identification than younger adolescents. Objective cognitive performance was unrelated to national identification. At the class level, the main effect of minority experiences of school discrimination on national identification was not significant over and above individual experiences. However, minority presence significantly predicted national identification: minority youth were less strongly nationally identified in classrooms with higher (vs. lower) minority presence.

Turning to dual identity compatibility, we did not find the expected moderation by individually⁸ or collectively experienced discrimination, since neither the interaction of ethnic identification with individual experiences of school discrimination, nor the cross-level interaction with minority experiences of discrimination at the class level were significant. These non-significant findings did not support Hypothesis 1 that higher levels of discrimination would be related to less compatible ethnic and national identification. A significant positive cross-level interaction of ethnic identification with minority presence, however, was in line with Hypothesis 2 that higher minority presence would strengthen identity compatibility. A closer look at the interaction pattern revealed that, as expected, ethnic identification was less compatible with national identification in classes with fewer minority peers, whereas in classes with more minority peers ethnic and national identification were compatible (Figure 1). More precisely, at lower levels of minority presence (-1 SD = 23% minority peers) ethnic and national identifications were significantly negatively associated, $p < .001$ ⁹, whereas ethnic and national identifications were dissociated at higher levels of minority presence ($+1$ SD = 71%), $p = .270$. This pattern thus supported Hypothesis 2 that minority peers afford compatible dual identifications.

⁸In line with our theoretical focus on collective experiences, we only present the model with minority experiences of school discrimination in Table 2. The model with individual-level experiences of discrimination is available upon request from the authors.

⁹Significance of the mean differences between the high and low levels of discrimination (± 1 SD) and between high and low levels of ethnic identification (± 1 SD) was tested with the Wald Chi2 test.

TABLE 2 Multilevel regression models predicting national identification

	NULL MODEL		L1 PREDICTORS		L2 PREDICTORS		RANDOM SLOPES		TWO WAY INTERACTION		TWO WAY INTERACTION	
	B (S.E.)		B (S.E.)		B (S.E.)		B (S.E.)		(MD)	B (S.E.)	(MP)	B (S.E.)
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL												
Ethnic Identification (EI)												
Individual experiences of discrimination												
Control variables												
Gender												
Age												
Cognitive test score												
Intercept	3.12 (.05)***		3.03 (.7)***		3.06 (.07)***		3.08 (.07)***				3.08 (.07)***	
CLASS LEVEL												
Minority presence (MP)												
Minority school discrimination (MD)												
MP*MD												
EI*MD												
EI*MP												
EI*MD*MP												
Variance (Random Slopes)												
Residual variance												
Individual Level	1.46 (.07)***		1.45 (.07)***		1.44 (.07)***		1.38 (.08)***		1.38 (.08)***		1.38 (.08)***	
Class Level	.11 (.05)*		.09 (.05)†		.08 (.05)		.07 (.05)		.07 (.05)		.07 (.05)	
Model fit												
Number of parameters	3.00		8.00		1.00		11.00		12.00		12.00	
Deviance (−2LL)	3095.63		3079.24		3001.21		2997.20		2997.20		2990.66	
Akaike (AIC)	3101.63		3095.24		3021.21		3019.21		3021.20		3014.66	
Bayesian (BIC)	3116.18		3134.04		3069.48		3072.31		3079.13		3072.59	
Sample-Size Adjusted BIC	3106.65		3108.63		3037.72		3037.38		3041.02		3034.48	
Change in df		5.00		2.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		3.00
χ ²		15.40		87.74		3.48		.01		.01		6.17
p value for improvement in fit		.01		.00		.06		.91		.01		.10

*p < .05.
**p < .01.
***p < .001.
†p < .10.

FIGURE 1 Levels of national identification as a function of ethnic identification and minority presence

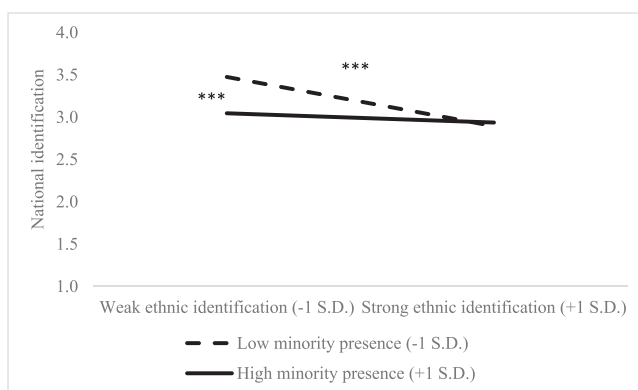
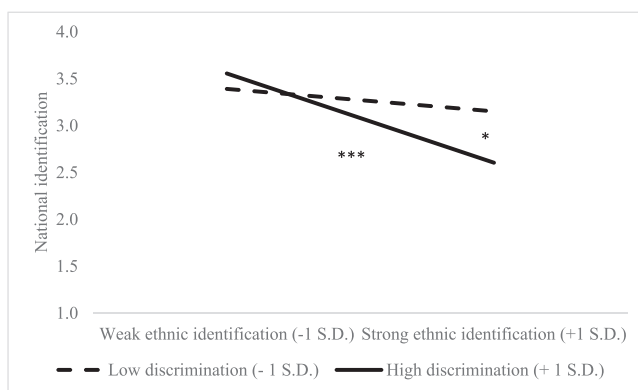


FIGURE 2 Levels of national identification as a function of ethnic identification and discrimination at low levels of minority presence



Finally, we explored a conditional variant of Hypothesis 1. We tentatively expected that higher minority presence might afford more compatible dual identities through mitigating the effect of minority experiences of school discrimination. Accordingly, we tested the three-way interaction of ethnic identification with minority presence and minority experiences of school discrimination as contextual moderators. A significant three-way cross-level interaction (“full model” in Table 2) indicated that minority presence and minority experiences of school discrimination jointly moderated the individual-level association between ethnic and national identification. First, we zoom in on the classes with fewer minority peers ($-1\text{ SD} = 23\%$). There, ethnic and national identification were less compatible when minority peers in class experienced more school discrimination ($+1\text{ SD} = \text{some of the time}$) (Figure 2). More precisely, in classes with fewer minority peers and high levels of school discrimination, minority youth who were more strongly ethnically identified were also less nationally identified (i.e., negative association), $p < .001$. In contrast, when minority peers in class experienced less school discrimination ($-1\text{ SD} = \text{never}$), minority youth’s ethnic and national identification were dissociated – in line with identity compatibility, $p = .394$. Together, the results at lower levels of minority presence partially support Hypothesis 1 that ethnic and national identification are less compatible when minorities experience more school discrimination. Furthermore, national identification was weaker in classes with higher (vs. lower) minority experiences of discrimination only for highly ethnically identified adolescents ($+1\text{ SD} = \text{very strongly}$), $p = .054$.

Second, turning to classes with more minority peers ($+1\text{ SD} = 71\%$), ethnic and national identifications were compatible regardless of discrimination experiences (Figure 3). In line with

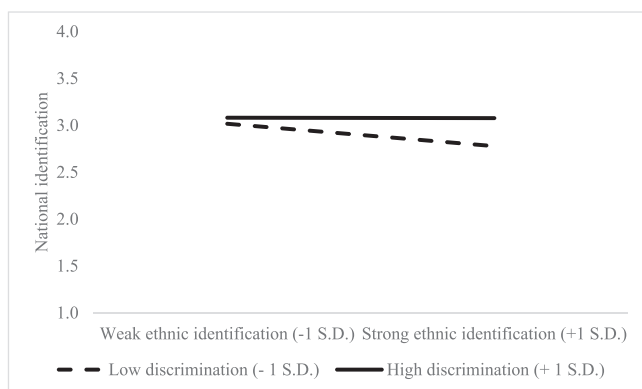


FIGURE 3 Levels of national identification as a function of ethnic identification and discrimination at high levels of minority presence

Hypothesis 2, at high levels of minority presence ethnic identification was unrelated to national identification, even when minority peers in class experienced more school discrimination ($ps = .194$ and $.976$ at low and high minority experiences of school discrimination, respectively). To sum up, this three-way interaction suggests that high minority presence protects compatible dual identifications in minority adolescents even in the face of school discrimination.

DISCUSSION

Minority adolescents are typically committed to both national and ethnic identities (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). While most minority adolescents maintain distinct ethnic identities, they share their common national identity with majority peers. Complementing a rich research tradition on ERS (Hughes et al., 2016; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), we shift focus to the less studied conjunction of dual ethnic and national identities (Fleischmann et al., 2019; Verkuyten et al., 2019). How well minorities can combine both identities depends on the intergroup context (Azzi, 2010; Chrysochoou & Lyons, 2010). Immigrant-origin minority adolescents can be made to feel like strangers in their own country when their claims on the common national identity are denied, or when their distinct ethnic-racial identity is seen as incompatible with the national identity (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

We thus conceive of minority identities as socially grounded in specific relational and institutional contexts. Drawing on an ecological approach to ERS (Hughes et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012), we argued that dual ethnic and national identities do not only exist inside the head of minority youngsters, but they are actively enunciated and enacted – and can be accepted or threatened – in ongoing social interactions with others. Our study extends previous research on ERS beyond the family by anchoring the dual identities of minority adolescents in their minority peer groups in ethnically diverse schools. We focused on the role of peers and teachers as socializing agents because a supportive peer environment might be especially protective, while teacher discrimination could be particularly disruptive in ERS (Ruck et al., 2022; Saleem & Byrd, 2022). We indeed found that both peer relations and school socialization matter. In particular, the presence of minority peers afforded more compatible dual ethnic and national identifications even in the face of teacher discrimination.

First, our results partially replicate previous research findings on identity compatibility and experiences of discrimination. Overall, Turkish and Moroccan-origin minority adolescents in Belgian schools identified fairly strongly with both their ethnic group and as Belgians. These results

replicate recent findings on the compatibility of ethnic and national identity among immigrant-origin German adolescents (Fleischmann et al., 2019). Moreover, our results did not support Hypothesis 1; critical socialization experiences of discrimination either individually or collectively were not consistently related to less compatible ethnic and national identities. However, this non-significant result was qualified by a significant interaction between minority peer presence and minority discrimination (see paragraph below on three-way interaction between ethnic identity, school discrimination, and minority presence).

Second, we expected and found more compatible dual identities in Turkish and Moroccan-origin minority adolescents when they had more minority peers in their class (H2). That is, we found a significant positive interaction between ethnic identification and minority peer presence. More specifically, ethnic identification was less compatible with national identification in classes with fewer minority peers; whereas in classes with more minority peers ethnic and national identification were more compatible (but still dissociated). There could be several ways in which the relative presence of minority peers affords more compatible dual identities. One indirect way could be through reducing assimilationist peer pressures from (less present) majority peers (Celeste et al., 2016). Another more direct way could be through increased peer support from minority classmates, as a more supportive ERS context. As minority peers are more likely to see national and ethnic identification as compatible, minority peers would sooner support the simultaneous performance of dual ethnic and national identities by minority adolescents (Celeste et al., 2016; Hillekens et al., 2019; Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011). These results also align with previous findings showing that youth feel less vulnerable in more diverse classrooms as diversity allows for different available norms in the peer group (Agirdag et al., 2011; Graham, 2006). Thus, these results shed new light on the understudied role of peers in ERS. They also add to previous studies on the peer socialization of ethnic-racial identity by studying dual identities, with a novel focus on the compatibility of ethnic and national identities (Priest et al., 2014; Ruck et al., 2022).

Finally, our analysis showed that collective discrimination experiences of minority peers are only related to less dual identity compatibility in the presence of few minority peers, but not in the presence of many minority peers, as indicated by a significant three-way interaction between ethnic identity, school discrimination, and minority presence. At relatively low minority peer presence, ethnic identity was negatively associated with national identity when minority adolescents collectively perceived high discrimination. Therefore, we replicated earlier findings associating dual identity incompatibility with individual experiences of discrimination among adults, in our study with collective experiences of discrimination among adolescents (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Apparently, at high minority presence however, the dual identities of minority adolescents were buffered from such discrimination effects, that is, discrimination had no effects on the association of ethnic and national identifications. This finding suggests a possible protective role of minority peer groups in a discriminatory environment, in line with other findings of a buffer effect of minority peers against negative effects of discrimination experiences on minority outcomes (Baysu et al., 2014; Benner & Wang, 2017; Brown & Chu, 2012; Way et al., 2008). The results add to previous research on ERS by considering simultaneously the role of discrimination and peer groups that had hitherto been mainly studied separately (Hughes et al., 2016; Ruck et al., 2022).

The current study employed novel measures but also has methodological limitations. Interestingly, we replicated and extended previous evidence of discrimination effects on dual identity compatibility at low levels of minority presence by using a more contextual – hence more external – measure of discrimination in multi-level analysis. The contextual nature of our discrimination measure at the classroom level captures a shared social reality within local minority peer groups,

which appears to impact minority identification over and above their individual experiences of discrimination (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016). Using this contextual measure also allows us to draw firmer conclusions on the direction of causality, as our predictor is external to the individual adolescents surveyed. Such a setup partly overcomes the limitations of cross-sectional research and also addresses the challenges associated with studying the bidirectional link between ERS and discrimination. However, our conclusions are still limited by the cross-sectional nature of our data and future studies should investigate the interplay of discrimination, minority peer presence and identity compatibility longitudinally (Leszczensky et al., 2019). Furthermore, we measured ethnic and national identity with one item each. Though one-item measures can be reliable overall (Postmes et al., 2013), further studies should investigate these questions with more fine-grained identity measures as well.

Despite its limitations, our study also has wider policy and practical implications. First, it should be acknowledged that minority peer presence also correlates with other school-level characteristics which could enhance dual identification among minority students. Some ethnically diverse schools implement positive diversity policies and teaching practices which support the construction and enactment of dual ethnic and national identities in the school context (Andreouli & Howarth, 2013; Verkuyten & Fleischmann, 2017). For instance, Belgian schools with a low proportion of minority students (10%–30% minority) were less likely to develop positive diversity policies, such as allowing Muslim girls to wear the headscarf (Celeste et al., 2019). Future research may thus investigate the interplay of minority peer presence with the policies of the schools as institutional settings.

Furthermore, in a world turning more hostile to dual identities, our research has several practical and policy implications globally. Reality constraints on identity construction and enactment such as discrimination are conceived as generic underlying processes that connect the socialization or broader intergroup context to minority identifications. However, the empirical evidence is mostly restricted to Muslim minorities in Western Europe as a relatively tense and often overtly hostile intergroup context (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Looking beyond Western Europe, recent increases in salient anti-Muslim rhetoric in other parts of the world, for example, in the United States, might spur comparable narratives on the incompatibility of Islamic and American values (Balkaya et al., 2019). Looking beyond Muslim minorities, other ethnic-racial minorities worldwide have also been represented as outsiders to their countries. Against this background, the experience of dual identity compatibility may well generalize to minority adolescents growing up in other societies outside Europe. In support of this presumption, a recent study among bicultural university students in the United States found that identity denial was related to lower dual identity compatibility (Albuja et al., 2018). At the same time, societies differ in the ways they represent, implement and justify intergroup boundaries between minority and majority citizens and minority group members across different societies have developed a range of different (individual and collective) identity strategies in response to discrimination (Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012). Therefore, future research should investigate what makes ethnic/religious and national identities less compatible among Muslim minorities outside Western Europe and among other “outsider” minorities more generally.

All in all, our results imply that there is no inherent conflict between strong ethnic and national identification among immigrant-origin adolescents. As dual identifiers are more likely to do well at work and in school, feel better, participate more politically in normative ways and can act as a bridge between immigrant and native communities, it is essential to understand better what conditions facilitate the construction and enactment of dual identities (Wiley et al., 2019). Our results show that when immigrant-origin adolescents partake in a supportive ERS context, then

higher ethnic identification will not come at the price of a lower national identification or vice versa. In contrast, the findings show that when immigrant-origin adolescents are not supported by the presence of their minority peers, school discrimination constrains the construction and enactment of national and dual identities. Ethnically segregated schooling usually means that immigrant-origin adolescents partake in worse quality education and it certainly translates into lack of intergroup contact and its potential benefits, therefore we would not advocate for segregation to buffer discrimination effects on identification. Instead, we urge policymakers to read our results implying that it is essential that schools strive to treat all their students equally.

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