Ethnic Minorities’ Paranoia and Self-Preservative Work Behaviors in Response to Perceived Ethnic Discrimination, With Collective Self-Esteem as a Buffer

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The present research examines (a) how ethnic minorities’ paranoia mediates the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and 2 forms of self-preservative work behaviors and (b) how ethnic minorities’ collective self-esteem moderates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia. Two field studies focusing on 2 ethnic minority groups (Asian and Latino/Hispanic Americans), respectively, rendered empirical support to the focal mechanisms, which appeared robust even when perceived ethnic acceptance, psychological needs satisfaction, and neuroticism were simultaneously accounted for. Specifically, paranoia mediated the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice and between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal. Collective self-esteem attenuated the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia. These key findings shed light on the emotional and behavioral implications of perceived ethnic discrimination in the workplace and highlight collective self-esteem as a critical factor that attenuates the negative emotional consequence of perceived ethnic discrimination.

Keywords: collective self-esteem, ethnic discrimination, paranoia, voice, workplace withdrawal

The U.S. workforce is becoming more ethnically diverse. This trend prompted Steve Murdock, former director of the U.S. Census Bureau and a sociology professor at Rice University, to state that “[t]he future of the United States is increasingly tied to its minority populations,” according to Knowledge@Wharton. McKinsey analysis has recently shown that “companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians” (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). Despite the efforts for promoting diversity and inclusion (Kossek & Zonia, 1993) and the dividend of ethnic diversity noted by McKinsey and others, ethnic minorities still frequently encounter discrimination because of their ethnic group memberships. They face discrimination in schools (Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005) and continue to face discrimination in the workplace (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006).

Ethnic discrimination is defined as “denying individuals equality of treatment because of their [ethnic] background” (Triana & Garcia, 2009, p. 942). It entails not only “unequal job treatment or lack of positive opportunities” because of one’s ethnicity (Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000, p. 3), but also unequal socioemotional treatment or negative relational experience because of one’s ethnicity. Perceived ethnic discrimination (subjective interpretation of ethnic discrimination) can be distinguished from actual ethnic discrimination (objective encounters with ethnic discrimination). Like a vast number of studies (see Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014), the present research focuses on perceived rather than actual ethnic discrimination, as perception of reality tends to be more powerful in eliciting psychological and behavioral reactions than actual reality (e.g., Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002).

Perceived ethnic discrimination may not be the bipolar opposite to perceived ethnic acceptance (i.e., one’s perception of being accepted by others based on one’s ethnicity membership), but rather, can be separate from or orthogonal to perceived ethnic acceptance. Perceived ethnic discrimination, which is the focus of the present research, evokes negative reactions and causes negative work attitudes and psychological and physiological problems (Goldman et al., 2006; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014; Triana, Garcia, & Collela, 2010). In contrast, perceived ethnic acceptance, which can be deemed overcorrecting or disingenuous and thus be discounted, does not necessarily elicit positive reactions or alleviate negative reactions (Mendes, Major, McCoy, & Blascovich, 2008).

The literature on perceived ethnic discrimination in the workplace has several gaps. First, how perceived ethnic discrimination translates into employee outcomes remains poorly understood. Perceived ethnic discrimination is likely to be a workplace stressor (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009) eliciting ethnic minorities’ emotional responses and driving their certain work behaviors. This is consistent with the tenet of emotion theories that emotions are proximate determinants of work behaviors (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; e.g., Rodell & Judge, 2009). Combs et al. (2006) found that perceived racism in general was a predictor of paranoia among African American college students. Paranoia is also likely to be an emotion that translates perceived ethnic discrimination in...
the workplace into ethnic minorities’ work behaviors. Second, previous research on perceived ethnic discrimination in the workplace has largely focused on attitudinal and health consequences rather than emotional and behavioral consequences of ethnic discrimination, except for a few studies (e.g., Schneider et al., 2000). Yet some behavioral consequences (e.g., expressing concerns) are critical for addressing the problem of discrimination. Third, little research has examined factors moderating the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination in the workplace and its psychological or behavioral consequences (Schmitt et al., 2014). Such research can provide guidance regarding how ethnic minorities can cope with perceived ethnic discrimination.

In bridging the above gaps, the current research addresses two important questions: (a) how does ethnic minorities’ paranoia translate perceived ethnic discrimination into self-preservative work behaviors (intended to protect one from threat) such as disengagement from voice and engagement in (temporary and physical) workplace withdrawal; and (b) how does ethnic minorities’ collective self-esteem moderate the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia? In addressing the first question, I adopt the framework of coping theory, which proposes two processes—cognitive appraisal and psychological/behavioral coping (Folkman, 1984; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Although Combs et al. (2006) found that perceived racism in general predicted African American college students’ paranoia, they did not provide a strong theoretical explanation. Each emotion has a unique or idiosyncratic set of cognitive appraisals (Frijda et al., 1989; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). As a theoretical contribution, I introduce paranoia into the work context and draw on theories of paranoid cognition and paranoia (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Kramer, 1998, 2001) to explain ethnic minority employees’ paranoia-specific appraisals and coping processes. In addressing the second question, I further draw on self-esteem theory and research and examine (private) collective self-esteem as a boundary condition for the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia. In so doing, I provide guidance regarding the improvement of ethnic minorities’ well-being and the prevention of psychological traps faced by ethnic minorities who perceive discrimination. Moreover, I consider two other plausible explanations for self-preservative work behaviors in demonstrating the potential for growth and gain); generally, harm/loss appraisals are characterized by anger and resentment, threat appraisals fear and anxiety, and challenge appraisals excitement and eagerness (Folkman, 1984). Perceived ethnic discrimination is often automatically (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) appraised as a threatening and stressful encounter that elicits ethnic minorities’ negative emotions (Schmitt et al., 2014) and particularly paranoia (Combs et al., 2006).

**The Concept of Paranoia**

The appraisals of negative events are often associated with emotional reactions (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003), and one reaction is paranoia, defined as an emotion associated with paranoid cognition in the current research. Compared with other negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, and anxiety (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999; Tiedens, 2001), the nature, triggers, and effects of paranoia are not as well understood. Chan and McAllister (2014) conceptualized paranoia as “a condition of heightened distrust . . . characterized by an activated psychological state of anxiety and fear of threat (i.e., paranoid arousal) that can only be described as aversive” (p. 46). It “encompasses an array of beliefs, including organizational members’ perceptions of being threatened, harmed, persecuted, mistreated, and so on, by malevolent others within the organization” (Kramer, 2001, p. 6). Paranoid individuals tend to believe that external factors beyond their control cause their paranoia (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992).

Although paranoia is usually deemed as a form of psychopathology, normal individuals manifest characteristics of paranoia such as assumptions of ill will or hostility and mistrust, and can have far-fetched interpretations or ideational distortions in explaining negative events in their daily life (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992). “[T]he continuum of paranoia ranges from nonpathological characteristics that occur in normal, everyday behavior to more severe levels of paranoia commonly found in psychiatric disorders” (Combs et al., 2006, p. 89). Nonclinical paranoia is mild paranoia, which is associated with one’s awareness of oneself as the target of others’ attention and perceived ethnic discrimination, whereas clinical paranoia is severe paranoia, which is unrelated to perceived ethnic discrimination (Combs et al., 2006; Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992). In the present research, I focus on nonclinical/mild paranoia.

**Perceived Ethnic Discrimination as a Determinant of Ethnic Minorities’ Paranoia**

Coping theory posits that coping is a person–situation transaction process, which begins with individuals’ cognitive appraisals of their encounter with a situation; stated otherwise, for individuals to cope with a specific situation’s demands, they first appraise whether their encounter with the situation is significant to their well-being, and if so, how this encounter affects their well-being (Folkman, 1984; Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Individuals are likely to appraise an encounter as harm/loss (existing damage), threat (potential damage), or challenge (an opportunity for growth and gain); generally, harm/loss appraisals are characterized by anger and resentment, threat appraisals fear and anxiety, and challenge appraisals excitement and eagerness (Folkman, 1984). Perceived ethnic discrimination is often automatically (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) appraised as a threatening and stressful encounter that elicits ethnic minorities’ negative emotions (Schmitt et al., 2014) and particularly paranoia (Combs et al., 2006).

Cognitive appraisals are more likely to be components (subjective experience) of emotions than to be antecedents of emotions, given that the appraisals-as-components perspective “is compatible with the idea of emotions as continuous processes, changing as appraisals are added or revised,” and blurs the boundary between cognition and emotions, claiming that emotions and cognition are often intertwined (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003, p. 575). In the current research, appraisals are deemed as components rather than antecedents of paranoia, and therefore, the experience of paranoia occurs concurrently with its cognitive appraisals.
Paranoia is associated with appraisals of social distinctiveness, evaluative threat, and stress to social status, all of which cause heightened dysphoric self-consciousness and hypervigilance (Kramer, 1998, 2001). Appraisals of social distinctiveness and threat to social status are particularly relevant to perceived ethnic discrimination. First, individuals often categorize themselves based on their distinctive attributes at work (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Those who belong to distinctive social categories (e.g., ethnic minorities) tend to be conscious of their social categorical distinctiveness. Evidenced by previous findings (e.g., Ibarra, 1995; Lin et al., 2005), ethnic minorities are “vulnerable to isolation and stigmatization (even excelling on positively valued dimensions creates social distance and potential rejection)” (Brewer, 1991, p. 478). As perceived ethnic discrimination is inherently related to perceived differences among ethnic groups, ethnic minorities are likely to automatically associate perceived ethnic discrimination with negative aspects of perceived ethnic group distinctiveness, thus feeling paranoid (Kramer, 2001).

Second, ethnic minorities may be sensitive to threats to their social status (Chan & Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). Leslie (2014) found that U.S. ethnic minorities are perceived as having significantly lower status than White Americans; the combined perceived status of Asian (.67), Black (.22), and Hispanic/Latino Americans (.00) is merely half of the perceived status of White Americans (1.77). When ethnic minorities have low status and are motivated to maintain or enhance their status in the workplace, they are vigilant and proactive in seeking diagnostic information regarding their social standing based on how others treat them (Kramer, 1998). Perceived ethnic discrimination is likely to be appraised as rejection of ethnic minorities and threat to ethnic minorities’ social status, thereby escalating their paranoia (Kramer, 2001).

Hypothesis 1: Perceived ethnic discrimination is positively related to paranoia.

Paranoia as a Mediator for the Relation Between Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and Self-Preservative Work Behaviors

When encountering a specific situation, individuals will necessarily engage in certain behaviors to cope with the situational demands. This coping process entails the primary step of appraising the encounter and experiencing corresponding emotions and the secondary step of enacting appropriate behaviors to meet the situational demands (Folkman, 1984; Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Emotions direct behaviors (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). Different emotions direct different behaviors or coping strategies (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990). Emotions can translate an encounter into a situation into coping behaviors (Folkman, 1984; Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). In other words, emotions experienced concurrently with cognitive appraisals mediate the relation between an encounter with a situation and coping behaviors. This is consistent with the tenet of Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Event Theory, that is, emotional responses mediate the relation between work events and emotion-driven behaviors (e.g., Rodell & Judge, 2009). Ethnic minorities necessarily behave in certain ways to cope with perceived ethnic discrimination (e.g., Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001). This coping process starts with the concurrent appraisals of perceived ethnic discrimination and experience of paranoia, followed by the adoption of self-preservative work behaviors to address perceived ethnic discrimination. Thus, paranoia is likely to mediate the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and self-preservative work behaviors.

Latack (1986) categorized coping strategies into control- and escape-oriented ones; control coping strategies entail “both actions and cognitive reappraisals that are proactive, take-charge in tone” (i.e., engagement) whereas escape coping strategies entail “both actions and cognitive reappraisals that suggest an escapist, avoidance mode” (i.e., withdrawal [p. 378]; also see Fugate, Kinicki, & Prussia, 2008). The current research focuses on behavioral manifestations of both control and escape coping, given “the inadequacy of simpler conceptualizations of coping as either defensive or as problem-solving or decision-centered . . . [and that] a full description of coping requires that both functions be assessed” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987, p. 152). Given its strong association with self-preservative motivation (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Kramer, 1998, 2001), paranoia is likely to reduce proactive and yet risky behaviors such as voice and increase escape behaviors (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Kramer, 1998, 2001) such as workplace withdrawal.

Paranoia as a Mediator for the Discrimination–Voice Relation

Minorities tend to refrain from speaking up or publicly expressing their opinions and concerns (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003), particularly when the issues are related to discrimination (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Thus, ethnic minorities such as Asian and Latino/Hispanic Americans are often deemed quiet and unassertive (Marin & Marin, 1991; O’Brien, 2009). Speaking up is also known as voice, defined as “promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998, p. 109). As Ng and Feldman (2012) noted, employees may engage in voice to “protect or acquire valued resources to serve their own interests” (p. 219), and therefore, whether to engage in voice or refrain from it, inherently, can be a self-interested decision.

As a behavioral manifestation of control coping, voice may change the status quo and disturb social networks/relations (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Many employees who refrain from voice are afraid of being labeled or perceived negatively (e.g., as a troublemaker, complainer, or tattletale); losing trust, acceptance, and support from others; and eliciting retaliation and punishment from others (Milliken et al., 2003). Stated otherwise, employees who disengage from voice fear that such behavior will hurt their self-interests. As Morrison (2011) argued, self-preservation motivation is detriment to voice.

Emotions have both informational and motivational functions (Clor, Gasper, & Garvin, 2001; Frijda et al., 1989). Paranoia, as a negative emotion, informs individuals about the uncertain and threatening nature of their environment and their vulnerability to potential harm/loss (Higgins, 1987). When experiencing paranoia, individuals are motivated to preserve themselves (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Frijda et al., 1989) and refrain from proactive and risky behaviors (cf. Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001) that may increase their vulnerability. Be-
cause voice is risky and can be personally costly (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison & Milliken, 2000), ethnic minorities who experience paranoia in response to perceived ethnic discrimination are likely to see their environment as threatening and thus have strong self-preservation motivation to refrain from voice, which may make them vulnerable to further discrimination or negative perceptions caused by voice (Milliken et al., 2003).

Hypothesis 2: Paranoia mediates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice.

Paranoia as a Mediator for the Discrimination–Withdrawal Relation

Ethnic minorities in the U.S. are more likely to physically withdraw from their workplace temporarily or permanently than White/Caucasian Americans (Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008; Schneider et al., 2000). Thus, workplace withdrawal is an important and appropriate variable representing employees’ escape coping. Workplace withdrawal constitutes “a set of behaviors dissatisfied individuals enact to avoid the [workplace]” or remove individuals temporarily from the workplace (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, p. 63), such as tardiness (being late for work), early departure (leaving work early), absenteeism, and taking longer breaks than authorized (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Iverson & Deery, 2001; Spector et al., 2006; Volpone & Avery, 2013; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). As a physical manifestation of escape coping (Fugate et al., 2008), workplace withdrawal is distinct from other forms of counterproductive behaviors in that it is intended to avoid or escape the workplace rather than cause harm to the workplace (Spector et al., 2006).

As noted earlier, paranoia informs individuals about the threatening nature of their environment and motivates self-preservation (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Clore et al., 2001; Frijda et al., 1989). Besides refraining from risky behaviors such as voice to preserve themselves, individuals may also choose to “escape stressors, injustice, dissatisfaction or situations that induce negative emotions” (Spector et al., 2006, p. 450). Ethnic minorities who perceive ethnic discrimination and experience paranoia in response may thus choose to physically withdraw from their negative workplace to protect themselves from their threatening environment.

Hypothesis 3: Paranoia mediates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal.

Collective Self-Esteem as a Buffer Against Perceived Ethnic Discrimination

As Lazarus and Folkman (1987) noted, the concept of threat is meaningless unless “the conjunction of an environment having certain attributes with a particular kind of person who will react with threat when exposed to those environmental attributes” is considered (p. 142). Thus, ethnic minorities’ paranoia is a joint function of perceived ethnic discrimination and their certain personal characteristics. Because paranoia in response to perceived ethnic discrimination is associated with appraised social categorical distinctiveness and threat to social status, factors related to how ethnic minorities derive personal and emotional meaning from their social groups (Brewer, 1991; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) are likely to be such a personal character-
which is positively associated with positive emotions such as satisfaction, pride, and happiness and negatively associated with negative emotions such as regret (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004), is likely to reduce negative emotions such as paranoia directly, or indirectly via the undoing effect of positive emotions.

When perceiving ethnic discrimination, which makes ethnic group differences salient, ethnic minorities who possess strong collective self-esteem in relation to their ethnic groups tend to engage in strategies such as ingroup-enhancement and ingroup-serving attributions to modify their attitudinal and emotional responses to the negative event, thereby diminishing the perceived threat to their social status as an ethnic minority member and alleviating concurrent paranoia. In other words, as a buffer against perceived ethnic discrimination, collective self-esteem attenuates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia.

Hypothesis 4: Ethnic minorities’ collective self-esteem moderates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia, such that this relation becomes weaker as collective self-esteem increases.

Two Other Explanations for Self-Preservative Work Behaviors

Besides the focal mechanisms hypothesized above, two other mechanisms may explain why ethnic minorities exhibit self-preservative work behaviors. Specifically, to demonstrate the robustness of the focal model delineated by Hypotheses 1 through 4, I consider self-determination and neuroticism explanations for self-preservative work behaviors, which will be tested empirically.

Self-Determination Explanation

Perceived discrimination, as a form of perceived social rejection, generally thwarts individuals’ needs fulfillment (Goldman, Slaughter, Schmit, Wiley, & Brooks, 2008; O’Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, & Banki, 2015). As a specific form of perceived discrimination, perceived ethnic discrimination can thwart ethnic minorities’ psychological needs satisfaction (PNS; Deci & Ryan, 2000) by making ethnic minorities perceive themselves as being evaluated negatively regarding their work competence and being not respected or included by others. In turn, PNS provides individuals with personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 2001) that facilitate voice (Ng & Feldman, 2012) and inhibit deviant behaviors (Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012) such as workplace withdrawal. As PNS is positively related to positive emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and negatively related to negative emotions (e.g., anxiety; Deci et al., 2001), the mediating effect of paranoia on the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and self-preservative work behaviors may be attributed to PNS. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses regarding PNS as another plausible mediator:

Hypothesis 5: PNS mediates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice.

Hypothesis 6: PNS mediates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal.

Neuroticism Explanation

Neuroticism, defined as the dispositional tendency to experience negative emotions such as fear and anxiety (McCrae & John, 1992), may be another factor that determines paranoia and self-preservative work behaviors. Neurotic individuals have greater exposure to negative events and more aversive perceptions of events than non-neurotic ones (Mroczek & Almeida, 2004). Therefore, one may argue that perceived ethnic discrimination is merely neurotic ethnic minorities’ misperception of their work environment. Neurotic employees tend to be apprehensive about how others perceive them and feel inadequate, and therefore they are likely to refrain from voice (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Nikolaou, Vakola, & Bourantas, 2008). Additionally, as Porter and Steers (1973) noted, neurotic employees “who are fairly unstable emotionally or exhibit high anxiety tend to withdraw” from their workplace (p. 166; also see Cooper & Payne, 1967; Martocchio & Jimeno, 2003). These behavioral implications of neuroticism may be explained by paranoia. Because neurotic individuals, in general, react more strongly to events than non-neurotic ones (Mroczek & Almeida, 2004), neurotic ethnic minorities may experience greater paranoia than non-neurotic ones, as a result of their dispositional tendency rather than perceived ethnic discrimination. Accordingly, I propose the following hypotheses regarding neuroticism as another plausible trigger of paranoia and subsequent self-preservative work behaviors:

Hypothesis 7: Paranoia mediates the relation between neuroticism and voice.

Hypothesis 8: Paranoia mediates the relation between neuroticism and workplace withdrawal.

Brief Overview of the Present Research

I conducted two field studies to test the hypotheses. Using a sample of Asian American employees, I tested Hypotheses 1 through 3 in Study 1. Using a sample of Hispanic/Latino American employees, I tested all the hypotheses in Study 2, replicating and extending the findings of Study 1. The two studies could demonstrate the generalizability of the findings across ethnic minority groups. To further increase the generalizability of the findings, participants were recruited from a nationwide online panel.

Study 1

Method

Sample and procedures. Asian American employees recruited from StudyResponse participated in the study in exchange for pecuniary compensation. StudyResponse is a nonprofit organization that recruits participants for academic research. It has thousands of registered individuals who are willing to participate in research online. Numerous published studies on workplace discrimination (e.g., Wagstaff, Triana, Kim, & Al-Riyami, 2015) and work behaviors (e.g., Kong & Ho, 2015; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010) have used data from this source. A total of 135 participants completed the survey at Time 1, and after about a month (an average of 34 days), 126 of them completed the survey at Time 2, resulting in a retention rate
of 82.4%. Nine participants indicated that they had changed their organization/ supervisor by Time 2 and one participant did not respond to most of the questions. Thus, they were excluded, leaving a final sample of 116 Asian American employees (about 49% female). This sample size is comparable with those of many previous studies on discrimination (e.g., Cornling, 2002; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Triana et al., 2010; Wagstaff et al., 2015). Their average age was 34.33 years (SD = 6.90). They had lived in the U.S. for 23.59 years on average (SD = 11.29). About 99% of them had at least some college education and 96% had full-time jobs.

Measures. Participants completed the measures of perceived ethnic discrimination and demographics at Time 1 and paranoia, voice, and workplace withdrawal at Time 2.

Perceived ethnic discrimination. Participants responded to Triana and Garcia’s (2009) six items on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree; α = .87). Sample items are “At work I am treated poorly because of my racial/ethnic group” and “I have sometimes been unfairly singled out because of racial/ethnicity group.”

Paranoia. Participants indicated their paranoia on a 4-point scale from 1 (a little of the time) to 4 (most of the time), using the six items from Derogatis and Melisaratos’s (1983) Brief Symptom Inventory (α = .91). The items are “feeling others are to blame for most your troubles,” “feeling that most people cannot be trusted,” “feeling that you are watched or talked about by others,” “others not giving you proper credit for your achievements,” “feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them,” and “feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you.”

Voice. Like the majority (71%) of studies (Ng & Feldman, 2012), participants self-reported their voice by responding to Liang, Farh, and Farh’s (2012) five promotive-voice items, which were created based on Van Dyne and LePine’s (1998) definition of voice, on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree; α = .87). Samples items are “I am proactive and make suggestions for issues that may influence the work group” and “I make constructive suggestions to improve the work group’s operation.”

Workplace withdrawal. Like previous studies (e.g., Schneider et al., 2000), participants also indicated their own workplace withdrawal because they should have the best knowledge of it. They responded to the four withdrawal items from Yang and Diefendorff’s (2009) scale of counterproductive work behaviors on a five-point scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always; α = .94). The items are “come to work late without permission,” “take an additional or a longer break than you are allowed to take,” “leave work earlier than you are allowed to,” and “call in sick when you are not.” These items are very similar to Spector et al.’s (2006) four items of withdrawal.

Demographics. Finally, like previous research on workplace relations and discrimination, participants indicated their age, gender (1 = female, 0 = male), organizational status (1 = entry level, 2 = intermediate level, 3 = middle management level, 4 = upper management level, 5 = executive), and organizational tenure.

Results

Measurement model. First, following previous research, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis in LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) to distinguish among the four state variables (perceived ethnic discrimination, paranoia, voice, and workplace withdrawal) by contrasting the proposed four-factor model with various (more parsimonious) three-factor models. Considering the small ratio of the sample size to the number of items, I followed previous research (e.g., Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014; Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2009) and used item parceling to produce a better ratio of the sample size to the parameters (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Item parceling can help address the problems associated with coarsely categorized or non-normally distributed item-level data (Bandalos, 2002). All the indicators loaded onto their respective latent variables as expected. Perceived ethnic discrimination, paranoia, voice, and workplace withdrawal all had two parcels, respectively.

Model fit was assessed with chi-square, comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR). A model typically considered as fitting the data well has a CFI value of .95 or above, a RMSEA value of .08 or less, and a SRMR value of .08 or less (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). The four-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 24.40, df = 14, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .05$), with all the indicators having significant relations with their corresponding latent variable. It also fit the data better than any of the three-factor models ($\Delta\chi^2 s \geq 17.17, df s = 3, ps < .001$). Therefore, perceived ethnic discrimination, paranoia, voice, and workplace withdrawal were distinct from one another.

Hypothesis testing. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables. I performed path analysis in SPSS Amos 22 (Arbuckle, 2013) to test the hypotheses.

Table 1

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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>1. Perceived ethnic discrimination (Time 1)</td>
<td>2.74</td>
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<td>2. Paranoia (Time 2)</td>
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<td>3. Voice (Time 2)</td>
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<td>4. Workplace withdrawal (Time 2)</td>
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<td>5. Age (Time 1)</td>
<td>34.33</td>
<td>6.90</td>
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<td>6. Gender (Time 1)</td>
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<td>7. Organizational status (Time 1)</td>
<td>2.41</td>
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<td>8. Organizational tenure (Time 1)</td>
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<td>4.09</td>
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Note. N = 116.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
As shown in Figure 1, perceived ethnic discrimination was positively related to paranoia ($\beta = .48, p < .001$, bootstrap 95% CI [.33, .61]), supporting Hypothesis 1. Consistent with Hypotheses 2 and 3, paranoia was negatively related to voice ($\beta = -.23, p < .05$, bootstrap 95% CI [−.39, −.04]) but positively related to workplace withdrawal ($\beta = .71, p < .001$, bootstrap 95% CI [.60, .80]). The direct relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice and between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal were not included to avoid model saturation, but these relations, when included in the model, were not significant.

To test the mediating effect of paranoia, I used the product-of-coefficients approach proposed by MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets (2002) in lieu of the causal-steps approach popularized by Baron and Kenny (1986), because the latter has lower statistical power than the former (MacKinnon et al., 2002). According to the product-of-coefficients approach, a significant indirect effect, when a direct effect is also included, indicates a significant mediation effect. The estimated $\zeta'$ (see MacKinnon et al., 2002, p. 85 for its formula) was not normally distributed; accordingly, I used the empirical critical value of .97 instead of 1.96 for the .05 significance level, recommended by MacKinnon et al. (2002, p. 90). Following previous research (e.g., Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata, & Rich, 2012; Kong, Dirks, & Ferrin, 2014; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009), I only considered the .05 significance level. Based on the path model presented in Figure 1, I found that paranoia mediated the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice ($\zeta' = -2.60, p < .05$) and between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal ($\zeta' = 5.07, p < .05$), thus supporting both Hypotheses 2 and 3.

**Discussion**

In Study 1, I found that among Asian American employees, ethnic minorities’ paranoia, as predicted, mediated the negative relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice and the positive relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal. The effect sizes for these relations were moderate or large.

Three methodological limitations in Study 1 are worth mentioning. First, although the variables were measured at different time points, the path model could not provide strong evidence on the causal direction from perceived ethnic discrimination to paranoia. To address this limitation, I used a two-wave, longitudinal design in Study 2 to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 and provide stronger evidence. Second, given that all the variables were self-reported (justified by theories and previous research), social desirability might cause biased estimates. To address this concern, I directly assessed social desirability and controlled for it in Study 2. Third, as noted earlier, perceived ethnic acceptance may be either bipolar-opposite or orthogonal to perceived ethnic discrimination. Thus, controlling for perceived ethnic acceptance would be important to showing that the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia identified in Study 1 was not driven by perceived ethnic acceptance. Finally, two other explanations for self-preservative work behaviors were proposed earlier and yet were not tested in Study 1, thus making it possible that Study 1 suffered from omitted variable bias and thus generated biased estimates. In Study 2, I included PNS (Hypotheses 5 and 6) and neuroticism (Hypotheses 7 and 8) to show that the findings of Study 1 were robust and not skewed by these omitted factors.

Besides these study limitations, a question that follows from Study 1 is how to intervene with the negative dynamic triggered by perceived ethnic discrimination. The second aim of the current research, as mentioned earlier, is to examine how collective self-esteem moderates the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia (Hypothesis 4). By incorporating collective self-esteem, Study 2 further extended the findings of Study 1.

![Figure 1](image-url)
Study 2

Method

Sample and procedures. Latino/Hispanic American employees recruited via StudyResponse participated in this two-wave, longitudinal study in exchange for pecuniary compensation. Eighty-three participants completed the survey at Time 1, and after an average of three weeks, 77 of them completed the survey at Time 2, resulting in a retention rate of 92.8%. Only one participant indicated that she had changed her organization and supervisor by Time 2, and thus, was excluded, leaving a final sample of 76 Latino/Hispanic American employees (about 24% female). Their average age was 37.08 years ($SD = 7.91$). They had lived in the U.S. for 28.86 years on average ($SD = 11.77$). All of them had at least some college education and almost all of them (99%) had full-time jobs.

Measures. Participants reported perceived ethnic discrimination and acceptance, collective self-esteem, paranoia, PNS, voice, workplace withdrawal, and demographics at Time 1 and paranoia, PNS, voice, workplace withdrawal, neuroticism, and social desirability at Time 2.

Perceived ethnic discrimination and acceptance. To ensure that the measures of perceived ethnic discrimination and acceptance were parallel, I adapted Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman’s (1999) scale. Specifically, participants indicated, on an 11-point scale from 0 (no __ at all) to 10 (extreme __), the extent to which they felt that other non-Hispanic colleagues at work treated them, based on a list of items created by Stephan et al. (1999), just because they were Hispanic American. The items of perceived ethnic discrimination are “hostility,” “disliking,” “disdain,” “hatred,” and “rejection” ($\alpha = .86$). The items of perceived ethnic acceptance are “admiration,” “acceptance,” “superiority,” “approval,” “sympathy,” and “warmth” ($\alpha = .88$). Stephan et al.’s (1999) original scale has been used in various discrimination/prejudice studies and has shown satisfactory validity and reliability (e.g., Stephan et al., 2002).

Collective self-esteem. Participants indicated their collective self-esteem in relation to their racial/ethnic group on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), using four items adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker’s (1992) original measure of private collective self-esteem. The items are: “I often regret that I belong to my racial/ethnic group” (reverse-scored), “I feel competent at work” (competence), and “When I’m with the people from my work environment, I feel I am a friend to them” (relatedness).

Neuroticism. Participants indicated their neuroticism by responding to the eight minimarkers developed by Saucier (1994) on a seven-point scale from 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 7 (extremely characteristic of me). The minimarkers are “unenvious” (reverse-scored), “relaxed” (reverse-scored), “moody,” “jealousy,” “temperamental,” “envious,” “touchy,” and “tireful” ($\alpha = .74$).

Results

Measurement equivalence. Like Colquitt and Rodell (2011), I tested the measurement equivalence between the two waves by imposing a factor-loading equality constraint on an item-by-item basis in the respective one-factor measurement models of voice, workplace withdrawal, paranoia, and PNS. The equivalence test was performed in SPSS Amos 22. If the change of $\chi^2$ after an equality constraint on a specific item was above 3.84, the equality constraint reduced the model fit (Kline, 2005), suggesting that the loading of the item was not equivalent between the two waves (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Four items did not satisfy the equivalence requirement and thus were dropped: (a) “feeling others are to blame for most of your troubles” (paranoia), (b) “feeling that you are watched or talked about by others” (paranoia), (c) “My work allows me to make decisions” (PNS), and (d) “You take an additional or a longer break than you are allowed to take” (workplace withdrawal; see Table 2). After dropping these items, the alphas of workplace withdrawal, paranoia, and PNS at Time 1 were .83, .86, and .90, respectively, and the alphas of workplace withdrawal, paranoia, and PNS at Time 2 were .86, .89, and .92, respectively.

Measurement model. Then I tested the measurement models for Time 1 and Time 2, respectively, to distinguish among the six state variables measured at Time 1 (perceived ethnic discrimination, perceived ethnic acceptance, paranoia, PNS, voice, and workplace withdrawal) and among the four state variables measured at Time 2 (paranoia, PNS, voice, and workplace withdrawal). Like Study 1, model fit was assessed with chi-square, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. I also used item parceling for the same reason (Little et al., 2002). All the indicators loaded onto their respective latent variables as expected. Perceived ethnic discrimination (5 items), paranoia (4 items), and voice (5 items) entailed two item parcels, from 1 (never) to 5 (always) at Time 1 ($\alpha = .88$) and Time 2 ($\alpha = .92$).
respectively, whereas perceived ethnic acceptance (7 items) and PNS (11 items) entailed three item parcels, respectively. The PNS items were parcelled based on the three facets (i.e., facet-representative parcels; Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013). The three items of workplace withdrawal were not parcelled due to the insufficient number of items for parceling.

For Time 1, the six-factor model fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 113.88$, $df = 75$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .07), with all the indicators significantly related to their corresponding latent variable. It also fit the data better than any of the five-factor models ($\Delta \chi^2 s \geq 28.15$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). Therefore, perceived ethnic discrimination, perceived ethnic acceptance, paranoia, PNS, voice, and workplace withdrawal at Time 1 were distinct from one another. For Time 2, the four-factor model also fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 46.11$, $df = 29$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06), with all the indicators significantly related to their corresponding latent variable. It also fit the data better than any of the three-factor models ($\Delta \chi^2 s \geq 18.06$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). Therefore, paranoia, PNS, voice, and workplace withdrawal at Time 2 were distinct from one another.

**Hypothesis testing.** Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables. The hypotheses were tested using longitudinal path analysis in SPSS Amos 22. Figure 2 shows the main effects path model and Figure 3 shows the final path model. None of the demographic variables, including the length of stay in the U.S., changed the result patterns, and therefore, were excluded from the final model for the sake of parsimony. Finally, the variable of social desirability did not change the result patterns either, and thus, was not included in the models. Like Study 1, I performed Monte Carlo parametric bootstrapping with 5,000 samples on the path coefficients, which provided bias-corrected 95% CIs.

As shown in Figure 2, perceived ethnic discrimination (Time 1) was positively related to paranoia (Time 2; $\beta = .21$, $p < .05$, bootstrap 95% CI [.04, .39]), thus supporting Hypothesis 1. Paranoia (Time 1) was negatively related to voice (Time 2; $\beta = -.24$, $p < .05$, bootstrap 95% CI [−.42, −.07]) but positively related to workplace withdrawal (Time 2; $\beta = .22$, $p < .05$, bootstrap 95% CI [.03, .43]). Like Study 1, in testing the mediating effect of paranoia, I used the product-of-coefficients approach (MacKinnon et al., 2002). Based on the path model presented in Figure 2, paranoia mediated the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice ($\chi^2 = 1.59$, $p < .05$) and between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal ($\chi^2 = 1.45$, $p < .05$), thus supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3 again.

As shown in Figure 3, the interaction of perceived ethnic discrimination (Time 1) and collective self-esteem (Time 1) was negatively related to paranoia (Time 2; $\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$,
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ethnic discrimination</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNS</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work place withdrawal</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational tenure</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social desirability</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 76.

Bootstrap 95% CI [-0.38, -0.14]. Figure 4 shows the interaction effect. A simple slope test (Hayes, 2013), which included paranoia (Time 1), PNS (Time 1), perceived ethnic acceptance, and neuroticism as control variables predicting paranoia (Time 2), indicated that when collective self-esteem was low (−1 SD), perceived ethnic discrimination was positively related to paranoia (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 2.99, p < .01), but when collective self-esteem was high (+1 SD), perceived ethnic discrimination was not significantly related to paranoia (b = −.06, SE = .05, t = −1.14, p = .26). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Finally, based on the path model presented in Figure 2, PNS mediated the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice (\( \gamma' = −1.29, p < .05 \)) but not the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and workplace withdrawal (\( \gamma' = .42, p > .05 \)). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported whereas Hypothesis 6 was not. Paranoia did not mediate either the relation between neuroticism and voice (\( \gamma' = −.43, p > .05 \)) or the relation between neuroticism and workplace withdrawal (\( \gamma' = .43, p > .05 \)). Therefore, neither Hypothesis 7 nor Hypothesis 8 was supported. Despite the significant mediating effect of PNS on the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and voice, the results of Study 2 replicated and extended those of Study 1.

General Discussion

The present research addresses (a) how paranoia mediates the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and two forms of self-preservative work behaviors (i.e., disengagement from voice and engagement in workplace withdrawal) and (b) how collective self-esteem moderates the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia. Two field studies focusing on two understudied ethnic minority groups (Asian and Latino/Hispanic Americans), respectively, rendered empirical support to the focal mechanisms. Paranoia translated perceived ethnic discrimination into disengagement from voice and engagement in workplace withdrawal (Studies 1 and 2), even when PNS was accounted for (Study 2). Therefore, the mediating effects of paranoia could not be attributed to PNS. The relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia was attenuated by collective self-esteem (Study 2). Furthermore, because paranoia did not mediate the relations between neuroticism and voice and between neuroticism and workplace withdrawal (Study 2), paranoia in response to perceived ethnic discrimination could not be attributed to neuroticism. The current research has significant implications for both theory and practice.

Theoretical Implications

Consequences of perceived ethnic discrimination. Previous research has focused largely on the performance and compensation implications of race/ethnicity, evidenced by several meta-analysis studies (Kraiger & Ford, 1985; McKay & McDaniels, 2006; Roth, Huffcutt, & Bobko, 2003), and the attitudinal and health consequences of (perceived) ethnic discrimination (Goldman et al., 2006; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014; Triana et al., 2010). Yet much less is known regarding the emotional and behavioral consequences of (perceived) ethnic discrimination in the workplace. The current research has shown that perceived ethnic discrimination has emo-
tional and behavioral consequences, urging for more emphasis on these consequences.

Specifically regarding ethnic minorities’ self-preservative work behaviors, disengagement from voice and engagement in workplace withdrawal are behavioral manifestations of control- and escape-oriented coping, respectively. Many studies have focused on either control or escape coping behaviors (e.g., Volpone & Avery, 2013), rather than both types of coping behaviors. Voice is an important way that ethnic minorities can use to address perceived ethnic discrimination, and yet ethnic minorities tend to refrain from voice, particularly regarding discrimination issues (Milliken et al., 2003). Moreover, despite ethnic minorities’ frequent withdrawal (Schneider et al., 2000) and quits (Hom et al., 2008), it remains poorly understood why ethnic minorities temporarily or permanently withdraw from their workplace. The present research provides insight, showing that ethnic minorities’ inner experience of paranoia in response to perceived ethnic discrimination is an important reason for their disengagement from voice and engagement in workplace withdrawal, even when their psychological needs are satisfied.

**Paranoia.** Despite theoretical work on paranoia by Kramer (1998, 2001) and Chan and McAllister (2014), there has been little traction in management research. Paranoia is a complex emotion (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983) associated with paranoid cognition and agitated arousal. Consistent with the view that emotions are proximate determinants of behaviors (Frijda et al., 1989), paranoia translates perceived ethnic discrimination into self-preservative work behaviors. This finding shows the promise of paranoia as an important variable in management research. The significance of paranoia also lies in its inherent relation to distrust, according to its definition (Chan & McAllister, 2014; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). Compared with the vast focus on the role of trust in the workplace, the focus on distrust is scarce. In this vein, the present research sheds light on the inquiry regarding distrust from the perspective of paranoia.

Figure 2. Main effects path model (Study 2), N = 76. \( \chi^2(7) = 26.38, \) GFI = .95, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, SRMR = .04. Path coefficients are standardized. Solid lines represent significant effects whereas dotted lines represent nonsignificant effects. The following were modeled but are not presented in the figure for the purpose of presentation clarity: (a) covariances among exogenous variables and (b) covariances among endogenous variables’ disturbance terms. * \( p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001. \)
Collective self-esteem. Finally, the present research is among the extremely few studies that have shown the moderating role of collective self-esteem in the context of workplace (perceived) ethnic discrimination (see Schmitt et al., 2014). The finding that perceived ethnic discrimination has no significant relation with paranoia among ethnic minorities who have strong collective self-esteem is encouraging. It suggests that ethnic minorities can use their collective self-esteem (an internal factor within their control) to maintain their psychological well-being when perceiving ethnic discrimination. Personal self-esteem has been viewed as a personal resource that gives individuals “energy” to help them buffer against negative experience (Cast & Burke, 2002). Similarly, collective self-esteem in relation to ethnic groups is also a personal resource that individuals can utilize to cope with threat to their ethnic identity.

Perceived ethnic discrimination and acceptance. As a tangential and yet interesting finding, perceived ethnic discrimination and acceptance were orthogonal to one another. In Study 2, perceived ethnic discrimination significantly predicted paranoia but not PNS whereas perceived ethnic acceptance significantly predicted PNS but not paranoia. Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, and Koch (2013) maintained that positive work events can “directly build psychological resources by fulfilling basic human needs, including belongingness and autonomy” (p. 1604). Perceived ethnic acceptance increased PNS, suggesting that perceived ethnic acceptance is a positive work event. In addition, previous research has claimed that the effects of negative events on psychological states tend to be stronger than those of positive events (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Bono et al., 2013). The current findings seem to suggest that this claim may be overgeneralized. Rather, negative events such as perceived ethnic discrimination may have stronger relations with negative psychological states, whereas positive events such as perceived ethnic acceptance may have stronger relations with positive psychological states. These insights pertain to not only the feasible solutions to ethnic minorities’ sociopsychological problems but also the feasible ways to promote their well-being.
minorities by number in their respective organizations. 

that being said, future research may explicitly discriminate and paranoia, thus making the current analyses if present, should attenuate the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination. In other words, this circumstance, these ethnic minorities might be less paranoid in response to perceived ethnic discrimination as well as collective self-esteem as a buffer against (perceived) workplace discrimination.

Second, to enrich the understanding of the role that paranoia plays in the workplace, researchers can investigate other behavioral consequences of paranoia. Paranoia motivates employees to protect themselves and stay away from threatening and uncertain situations. Therefore, this emotion is likely to inhibit employees’ other proactive and yet risky behaviors, such as creative (George & Zhou, 2001) and taking-charge behaviors (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) that can benefit organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, as noted earlier, paranoia is associated with appraisals of social distinctiveness, evaluative scrutiny, and threat to social status (Kramer, 1998, 2001). Many negative work events (e.g., abusive supervision; Chan & McAllister, 2014) other than perceived ethnic discrimination are related to appraisals of social distinctiveness, evaluative scrutiny, and threat to social status. Future research should identify these work events, delineate how they elicit paranoia, and examine factors that moderate these effects.

Third, just like anxiety, which can be conceptualized either as a trait factor or as a state factor (Nelson, Purdon, Quigley, Carriere, & Smilek, 2015), paranoia can be a trait factor or a state factor (Chan & McAllister, 2014). Trait paranoia may strengthen the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and state paranoia. That is, dispositionally paranoid ethnic minorities may experience greater paranoia and thus exhibit greater self-preservative work behaviors in response to perceived ethnic discrimination than dispositionally nonparanoid individuals. Given the interpretation biases associated with trait paranoia (Savulich, Freeman, Shergill, & Yiend, 2015), ethnic minorities who have high trait paranoia are likely to interpret ambiguous social information negatively as ethnic discrimination and thus overreact to ambiguous social information. Future research may incorporate both trait and state paranoia and understand their differential effects on ethnic minorities’ emotions and behaviors.

Finally, the current research identified collective self-esteem as a factor attenuating the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia. Yet it did not examine any moderating factor for the relation between paranoia and self-preservative work behaviors. What personal and situational factors can attenuate this relation? Answers to this question can shed light on how ethnic minorities can help themselves regulate their behaviors as well as what organizations can do to promote ethnic minorities’ behavioral regulation.

Practical Implications

To cope with perceived ethnic discrimination in a healthy manner, ethnic minorities should keep themselves from falling into psychological traps by ameliorating their inner experience of paranoia and breaking the self-sustaining and escalatory dynamic of paranoia (Kramer, 1998, 2001). Besides seeking social support in response to perceived discrimination, ethnic minorities may con-

Figure 4. Collective self-esteem as a moderator for the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination and paranoia (Study 2).
sider increasing their positive emotions (Fredrickson et al., 2000), reappraising their work environment in a more positive light (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987), and boosting collective self-esteem. For example, Lincoln, Hohenhaus, and Hartmann (2013) found that even a brief compassion-focused intervention (e.g., one’s creation of an image that conveys compassion, care, and warmth for oneself) was effective for reducing paranoid thoughts and negative feelings and increasing personal self-esteem. Therefore, ethnic minorities can ameliorate their paranoia by focusing on others’ compassion, care, and warmth for them.

One important feature of collective self-esteem is that unlike other aspects of the collective self, collective self-esteem can be altered. For instance, individuals can boost their collective self-esteem by enhancing their ingroup favoritism relative to other groups (Marmarosh & Corazzini, 1997), particularly when individuals perceive themselves as a prototypical rather than peripheral group member (Jetten, Branscombe, & Spears, 2002; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). Additionally, increasing group cohesive ness (e.g., individuals’ perception of a group’s attractiveness and group members’ acceptance of them) is also likely to boost collective self-esteem (Marmarosh, Holtz, & Schottenbauer, 2005). Although it would be challenging for ethnic minorities to increase the cohesiveness of their ethnic groups by themselves, they can boost their collective self-esteem in relation to their ethnic groups by improving their perception of the members of their ethnic groups and viewing themselves as a prototypical member of their ethnic groups.

In the meantime, managers should improve ethnic minorities’ PNS, given that PNS has numerous benefits for work performance, behaviors, cognition, and emotions (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Kovjjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Van Quaquebeke, & van Dick, 2012) and organizational competitive advantage (Hallowell, 1996). In the current research, PNS facilitated ethnic minority employees’ voice, which may help managers understand and address the concerns expressed by these employees. Although perceived ethnic acceptance does not alleviate ethnic minorities’ paranoia, it appears effective in improving their PNS. Thus, managers should develop supportive and caring leadership and foster an accepting, supportive, and compassionate culture, both of which promote not only employee PNS but also employee well-being and work effectiveness (Baard et al., 2004; Barsade & O’Neill, 2014; Deci et al., 2001).

References


Received March 15, 2015
Revision received August 4, 2015
Accepted August 10, 2015

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