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THE PROCESS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION FOR SECOND-GENERATION MEXICAN-
AMERICAN FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS: EXPLORING PEERS' ROLE IN ETHNIC
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Ethnic identity development is an important task that can be particularly complex for adolescents with immigrant parents. Ethnic identity stage theory suggests there are three stages of ethnic identity development and the bioecological model indicates that an individual's context influences change or stability over time. In adolescence, peers become a more prominent socializing agent in adolescents' ethnic identity development. However, there is limited research on how peer ethnic socialization influences adolescents' ethnic identity development over time. The current study examined peers' role in second-generation Mexican American adolescents' ethnic identity development in high school and during their first year of college. A longitudinal qualitative research design with grounded theory was used. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 second-generation Mexican American first-year college students during the fall and spring semester. Participants were asked to describe the messages they received from their peers about their ethnicity and if they felt the messages differed between their high school peers and college peers. Grounded theory analyses examined the content and impact of peer ethnic socialization messages; distinctions in ethnic socialization messages from same-ethnic peers and different-ethnic peers emerged from the data. Based on this analysis, I identified three constructs of peer ethnic socialization messages: influencing ethnic identity exploration, informing ethnic identity resolution and salience, and promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. Additionally, I identified three patterns of ethnic identity development over time: ethnic identity normative development trajectories, revisiting ethnic identity search, and diffused unexamined ethnic identity. Overall, peers (especially same-ethnic peers) appear to be a key socializing agent in adolescence and in the college context, which influences different trajectories of ethnic identity development over time. This study adds to a limited body of work examining ethnic identity development in college longitudinally, as well as the limited work on peer ethnic socialization and distinction by ethnicity of peer group. The study also addresses critiques of stage theory, by taking into account social interactions and situational influences impacting ethnic identity development and identifying different patterns and sub-patterns of ethnic identity stage development over time beyond the normative progressive linear trajectory.

In honor of my parents, Lorena Munoz and Jose D. Munoz and my aunt, Maria O. Zavala, sister of my mother.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Identity formation is a fundamental developmental task for adolescents (Erikson, 1968). Identity formation can be particularly complex for adolescents who grow up in the United States but have parents from another country (Rumbaut, 2005). Children of immigrant parents growing up in the U.S. have the difficult task of navigating two different cultures and at the same time establishing who they are as an individual, as well as determining what their ethnicity means to them. Ethnic identity refers to the aspect of an individual's self-concept based on their knowledge and value in being part of a specific ethnic social group (Phinney, 1990). There is ample theoretical and empirical support for the notion that ethnic identity formation is critical for healthy outcomes among ethnically diverse youth (Williams et al., 2012).

Previous studies have typically focused on middle school and high school-aged children, treated Latinos as one homogenous group, and used quantitative methods to examine dimensions of ethnic identity. The current qualitative study specifically focused on second-generation Mexican American¹ college students. Mexican Americans represent a large and growing segment of the U.S. population. Nearly one-fifth (18.5%) of the population in the United States is of Hispanic origin (United States Census Bureau, 2020), with the majority being of Mexican origin or descent (61.4%) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2021). Two-thirds (65%) of Hispanics of Mexican origin were born in the U.S. and half (52%) have at least one immigrant parent (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). Previous studies have found that aspects of ethnic identity development for Mexican American adolescents were positively linked to self-esteem, social competence with peers, and academic self-efficacy (Berkel et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor, O'Donnell et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2015). Additionally, these aspects of ethnic identity development were associated with a lower risk of negative mental health symptoms (e.g., depressive symptoms) and fewer externalizing issues, as well as offsetting the negative effects of discrimination on academic and internalizing outcomes (Berkel et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor, O'Donnell et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2015). Thus, great pertinence lies in the understanding of how second-generation Mexican Americans develop their ethnic identity over time and what contexts influence their ethnic identity development.

Ethnic socialization is the process by which ethnic minorities gain knowledge of their ethnic history, values, and traditions, as well as their place within society at large (Hughes et al., 2006). Socialization agents such as parents and peers can act separately or together in informing the developing individual, which impacts the content and nature of children's ethnic identity (Knight et al., 1993). Ethnic socialization literature has mainly focused on examining family ethnic socialization and the impact it has on Mexican American adolescents' ethnic identity development (e.g. Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015;

¹ Second-generation Mexican American refers to children that are born in the United States to one or two foreign-born Mexican parents (Tovar & Faliciano, 2009).

Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). However, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) suggest that as children get older, other persons such as peers also play a role in the developing individual's development (p. 798). During adolescence, youth tend to spend more of their time with their peers, and as a result, peers become more salient in influencing adolescents' beliefs, behaviors, and values (Brown & Larson, 2009). Therefore, although parents supply an adolescent's first exposure to ethnic identity, adolescents will go on to interact with other people from outside the home, including peers.

Peer ethnic socialization plays a significant role in how adolescents develop their ethnic identity. Previous research indicates that neighborhood and high school peer ethnic composition impact adolescents' ethnic identity development (Supple et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; White et al., 2018). Specifically, peer messages and social support during high school have been shown to influence aspects of adolescents' ethnic identity development (Kiang et al., 2010; Medina et al., 2020; Phinney et al., 2001; Yip & Douglass, 2011). Traditionally scholars have focused on the process of ethnic identity formation during early and middle adolescence, but there is an emerging body of work that suggests that peers in the college context may prompt/stimulate individuals to revisit that process.

The transition to college provides Latino adolescents a new context and inspires a reexamination of ethnicity due to new peer groups, experiences, and situations (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Phinney, 2006). Prior research suggests that peers play a key role in supporting Latino college students in maintaining their ethnic identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Saylor & Aries, 1999; Torres, 2003), as well as providing them with opportunities to reconceptualize and reexamine their ethnic identity (Syed et al., 2007). Furthermore, enrollment in a predominately White institution may promote Latino college students' engagement and connection with aspects of ethnic identity development (Torres, 2003).

Building on this work, the current study was designed to examine the role of peers in ethnic identity formation during high school and the transition to college in a sample of U.S.-born children of Mexican parents. To address the gaps in the ethnic identity literature, I specifically focused on the content and impact of peer ethnic socialization messages on second-generation Mexican American first-year college students' ethnic identity development over time.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I first introduce the two theoretical frameworks that guided my thinking: Phinney's (1989) Ethnic Identity Three-Stage Model and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Then I discuss the empirical research on the process of ethnic identity development.

Theoretical Frameworks

Stage Theory. Phinney (1989) built on prior identity research (Cross, 1978; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980) to describe three stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. The first stage, known as unexamined ethnic identity, is described as an absence of exploration of ethnicity and is further broken down into two possible subtypes. The first subtype concerns diffusion, which involves a lack of interest or concern with ethnicity. The second subtype consists of foreclosure, which involves views of ethnicity constructed by others' opinions, and may be positive or negative depending on socialization experience. The second stage, ethnic identity search (moratorium), is described as participation in exploring and looking for meaning of one's ethnicity (e.g. Mexican American female). The third and last stage is achieved ethnic identity, which is described as a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989; 1990; 1993).

Phinney's model has been highly influential and inspired many ethnic identity studies. Nevertheless, there are two main criticisms of stage theory highlighted in the literature. One of the main criticisms of stage theory concerns the conceptualization of a linear developmental process (Torres et al., 2009; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). This indicates the stages occur in a prescribed order. The issue with this conceptualization is the suggestion that ethnic identity only progresses throughout development linearly, which does not take into account that stages may be revisited over time. However, scholars have expanded on this theory to demonstrate identity formation as a fluid process that shifts throughout life. For example, Syed, Azmitia, and Phinney (2007) found that 14 of 128 first-year college students reported a regressive shift (e.g., achieved to moratorium, achieved to unexamined, and moratorium to unexamined) from fall to spring semester. Although prior studies demonstrate the possibility for an individual to revisit a status after progressing in identity formation, no such addition exists in the stage theory model. Furthermore, stage theory emphasizes a normative developmental process for ethnic identity formation (Umaña-Taylor, Quintana et al., 2014; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). Hence, non-normative aspects of development are not taken into account, indicating that only ideal ethnic identity development is reflected. The current study expands on the ethnic identity stage theory model to reflect the possible variability during ethnic identity formation. A second major critique of stage theory concerns the narrow view and lack of accounting for context (Torres et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor, Quintana et al., 2014; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). According to Yi and Shorter-Gooden (1999), stage theory does not consider social

interactions and situational influences impacting ethnic identity formation. Additionally, stage theory does not consider the numerous aspects of identity impacting ethnic minorities (e.g., gender) (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). Evidently, it is important to consider different contextual factors in order to obtain a more holistic understanding of how ethnic identity develops. The current study drew on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to conceptualize the role of context in ethnic identity development.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model. The current study uses the mature version of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, which reflects advances in his thinking over the years (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1989; for review see Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) described the Bioecological Model as a Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. The model suggests a person with distinctive characteristics experiences change and stability established on bidirectional processes in embedded yet intersecting contexts that change over time. Bronfenbrenner's more recent works refined and elaborated on definitions, such as the addition of time as an important context for development, as well as emphasizing the importance of proximal processes, in which the developing individual experiences reciprocal interactions with objects, people, and symbols (Bronfenbrenner 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Furthermore, the current study utilizes the lens of ethnic socialization, to guide my understanding of the role of context in ethnic identity development. As such, I use Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, exosystem, and macrosystem conceptualizations to discuss the influence ethnic socialization has on ethnic identity formation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The Bioecological Model (PPCT model) proposes that "characteristics of the person are distinguished as most influential in shaping the course of future development through their capacity to affect the direction and power of proximal processes through the life course" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 795). Therefore, characteristics of the person (e.g., gender, ethnicity) are essential in influencing the developmental impact of the microsystem. The microsystem is useful for gaining a better understanding of social influences on the developing individual's ethnic identity formation. The microsystem is defined as:

The pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006 citing Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 814)

In the current study, the influencing microsystem of interest is peers and the role they play in adolescents' ethnic identity development process.

The exosystem is useful in better understanding the indirect effect of surrounding contexts on the developing individual's ethnic identity formation. An exosystem is defined as "one or more settings that

do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). In the current study, the exosystems that play an indirect role in adolescents’ ethnic identity development are the neighborhoods they grew up in and the college context. Additionally, society at large shapes and influences how a developing individual perceives themselves and others. The main feature of the macrosystem is its overarching ideology experienced by the developing individual in everyday occurrences and interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) described a more refined conceptualization of the macrosystem in which “linked lives, asserts that lives are lived interdependently and social and historical influences are expressed through the network of shared relationships” (p. 822). In the current study, elements of the macrosystem that influence peer ethnic socialization messages are discrimination and political views.

Empirical Research on the Process of Ethnic Identity Development

The process of ethnic identity development has multiple dimensions including exploration of ethnicity, resolution and importance, and affirmation/commitment. Therefore, the developing individual experiencing these dimensions of ethnic identity would ultimately be developing a secure and achieved ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992).

Exploration. The process of exploration is defined as a developing individual making an effort to seek information and learn about their ethnic group (e.g. history and culture). The individual also interacts with other ethnic group members to gain knowledge of group customs, values, and norms (Phinney 1989; 1990; Phinney et al., 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Through this process of exploration, individuals intentionally choose to understand and engage in their ethnicity in multiple ways to advance and/or enhance their ethnic identity development. For example, Mexican American adolescents and young adults strengthen and form their ethnic identity through participation in political organizations, ethnic clubs, and/or cultural events, as well as taking Latino/Chicano ethnic studies classes, going to museums, reading, and/or talking to people from their ethnic group (Phinney et al., 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Tovar & Feliciano, 2009).

The exploration of ethnicity mainly takes place during adolescence and emerging adulthood. However, the process may remain potentially continuous throughout the lifespan. As the developing individual experiences “ethnically-charged” events and/or situations, they may feel even more encouraged to understand the meaning of their ethnicity within society at large (Phinney, 2006). As a result, exploration stands as an essential aspect of the ethnic identity process, as a lack of exploration can potentially decrease the developing individual’s sense of security. This deprivation may then make their ethnic identity more susceptible to change with new experiences (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Resolution and Importance. Resolution refers to the developing individual having a clear understanding of what their ethnic group and ethnicity means to them (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). For this dimension of ethnic identity, individuals have already explored their ethnic identity. They then reflect on those experiences, build a sense of meaning, and determine the importance of their ethnic identity. In the ethnic identity literature, the importance ascribed to ethnicity receives much less examination in comparison to exploration, resolution, and affirmation/commitment. However, this vital facet encourages ethnic identity exploration and commitment among college students (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Therefore, individuals who consider their ethnicity to be important have most likely explored their ethnic identity.

Affirmation/Commitment. Ethnic identity affirmation/commitment concerns the developing individual's sense of belonging to their ethnic group and attitudes towards their ethnic group (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1990; Phinney, 1992; Phinney et al., 2007). Additionally, the developing individual evaluates their ethnic group, which could result in negative or positive feelings and/or attitudes about their ethnic group (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1990; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Some studies have emphasized ethnic identity affirmation/commitment as the most crucial component of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Furthermore, studies suggest that positive affirmation, such as ethnic pride, is an aspect of an achieved ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 1997; Roberts et al., 1999). However, it is possible for the developing individual to be committed to their ethnic identity and still have negative feelings about their ethnic group, as well as a desire to be a part of another ethnic group (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Way et al., 2008). Thus, commitment on its own does not mean that the developing individual has securely achieved identity (Phinney, 1989, 1993). In order for a developing individual to securely reach an achieved identity, they must clearly understand what their ethnicity means to them.

Contextual Influences on Ethnic Identity Development

A relevant body of literature examines the influence of ethnic socialization on adolescents' ethnic identity development. The main contextual influence I will focus on in this section is peer ethnic socialization. Other contributing contextual influences include gender, the neighborhood, and the larger culture.

Peers. Peers play a key role in Latino adolescents' and young adults' ethnic identity development. As individuals get older and spend more time with their peers, peers become a more prominent socializing agent in their ethnic and cultural development (Brown & Larson, 2009). Updegraff and colleagues (2006) found that Mexican American adolescents spent a significant amount of time with peers and more time was positively associated with adolescents' cultural orientations. Furthermore, previous studies indicate that in high school, positive peer messages promoting ethnic identity affirmation

and interest in ethnic identity exploration may be associated with having a greater proportion of same-ethnic peer friendships (Kiang et al., 2010; Phinney et al., 2001). Similarly, first-year Latino college students described their Latino/a peer group as promoting a feeling of comfort and a sense of pride in being Latino/a (Case & Hernandez, 2013). On the other hand, Mendoza-Denton and Page-Gould (2008) indicate that cross-ethnic friendships promote positive intergroup attitudes in college. Additionally, peers in college were described as a primary source of learning about their ethnic group by underrepresented students of color at a predominately White University (Maramba & Velasquez, 2012). According to Rambaran and colleagues (2022), same-ethnic friendships appear to play a bigger role in understanding how students develop their sense of belonging within a diverse school context than cross-ethnic friendships.

Other studies relevant to peer ethnic socialization focus on the role of ethnic composition of the school on Latino adolescents' and young adults' ethnic identity development. Umaña-Taylor (2004) suggests that Mexican-origin adolescents' ethnic identity seems to be more salient when their ethnic group is the minority because adolescents who attended a predominately Latino high school reported the lowest scores on ethnic identity. Previous research on minority college students similarly indicates that being in a culturally diverse context where their ethnic group is no longer the majority, such as college, makes their ethnic identity become more salient (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Phinney, 2006; Saylor & Aries, 1999; Tovar & Feliciano, 2009).

Since few studies have examined the influence of peer socialization on Latino adolescents' ethnic identity development, I drew on studies of peer socialization in other ethnic/racial groups. This literature suggests that peer socialization takes place during a time adolescents are developing their views on their own ethnic/racial groups, and both same-race and cross-race peer groups influence adolescents' ethnic/racial identity development (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Yip et al., 2010). For example, having more same-ethnic friendships is associated with the tendency to explore their ethnic group (Kiang et al., 2007) and increase their knowledge of their ethnicity (Kao & Joyner, 2004). Previous studies examining African American and Asian American adolescents indicate that peer socialization may occur explicitly (e.g., messages on how to interact with other ethnic/racial groups and encouraging culturally appropriate mainstream behavior) (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005; Pyke & Dang, 2003), or implicitly (e.g., feeling pressure to interact with same-race individuals instead of cross-race individuals) (Wade & Okesola, 2002). Both explicit and implicit peer socialization influence adolescents' endorsement of the mainstream and heritage cultures. Furthermore, Wang (2021) found that adolescents who reported peer ethnic/racial processes as negative also reported lower levels of private regard (i.e., adolescents' positive evaluations of their feelings about their ethnic group). On the other hand, adolescents who reported peer ethnic/racial processes as positive demonstrated higher levels of private

regard, public regard (i.e., adolescents' perceptions of other peoples' positive evaluations of their ethnic group), and centrality (i.e., the importance adolescents place on ethnic group membership as part of their overall identity) (Wang, 2021).

According to Kiang and Fuligni (2009), peer cultural socialization in ethnically/racially diverse schools provides more interaction with cross-race peers, which tends to lead to more mainstream cultural socialization rather than heritage culture socialization. However, ethnic/racial peer socialization that provides positive messages is likely to help adolescents develop a positive sense of self and positive attitudes toward their racial/ethnic groups (Hughes et al., 2011; Yip & Douglass, 2011). Qualitative studies indicate that ethnic-racial stereotypes are prevalent in peer groups and that adolescents describe resistance to these stereotypes (Awokoya, 2012; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Way et al., 2013). Additionally, there are some peer contexts in which ethnic-racial teasing is expected and accepted (Douglass et al., 2015), while in other peer contexts, adolescents avoid discussing ethnicity and race (Hughes et al., 2016). Nelson and colleagues (2018) examined different types of peer ethnic socialization in college. They found that peer preparation for bias was linked to greater exploration but not commitment. They also found a slight negative link between peer promotion of mistrust and commitment (Nelson et al., 2018).

Taken together, these studies indicate that peers influence adolescents' ethnic identity development and highlight the need for research to further examine the content of peer ethnic socialization messages. To fill the current gap in the literature, the current study will explore the content and impact of peer ethnic socialization messages that second-generation Mexican American first-year college students receive from their peers in high school and during their first year of college.

Gender. Research that examines gender distinctions relevant to peer ethnic socialization and ethnic identity development is limited. Ethnic socialization research tends to examine gender differences among Latino adolescents' family ethnic socialization and components of ethnic identity (e.g. exploration and resolution) (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). However, one study found that females reported more similar norms to their peers from the same ethnic group than males, and males reported more sensitivity to cross-ethnic peers' behavior patterns than females (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1998). A more recent study suggested that when adolescent Mexican-origin girls' best friends have a strong orientation towards their Mexican culture, they have a higher likelihood of exploring or feeling resolved about their ethnic identity (Kim et al., 2017).

Since few studies have examined gender distinctions relevant to peer ethnic socialization and ethnic identity development, I drew on family ethnic socialization literature that examines gender distinctions relevant to ethnic identity development. Ethnic socialization research suggests girls experience more influence via family ethnic socialization and more advancements in ethnic identity

development than boys. Previous family ethnic socialization literature suggests females are more likely to have higher levels of exploration and resolution than males (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015), as well as report higher levels of family ethnic socialization than males (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Similarly, Umaña-Taylor and Guimond (2012) found familial ethnic socialization predicts ethnic identity exploration and resolution for both female and male adolescents. However, the noted association was stronger for females than males. According to Ochoa (2000), previous findings consider women more likely to carry on ethnic tradition and cultural indicators than men because women are in charge of teaching their children cultural values. One study found mothers' cultural socialization predicted adolescent girls' cultural socialization more so than boys' (Hughes et al., 2009).

However, some previous literature does not support the finding that girls were more influenced by familial ethnic socialization and more advanced in their ethnic identity development than boys. Umaña-Taylor and Guimond (2012) unexpectedly found that "familial ethnic socialization predicts the rate of growth in ethnic identity resolution for male adolescents, but not for female adolescents" (p. 27). In contrast, Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2013) suggest that women and men responded similarly to family ethnic socialization during developmental transitions. The mixed-gender findings in the family literature support the need for gender distinctions to be further examined in ethnic socialization research. The current study examined gender distinctions relevant to peer ethnic socialization and dimensions of ethnic identity development.

Neighborhoods. The ethnic socialization literature supports the influence of neighborhood context on Latino adolescents' ethnic identity development (Supple et al., 2006; White et al., 2018). In terms of peer socialization, Updegraff and colleagues (2006) found that when Mexican American adolescents lived in neighborhoods with a high percentage of Latinos, they would spend more time with Mexican peers. On the other hand, Mexican American adolescents who lived in neighborhoods with lower percentages of Latinos spent more time with non-Mexican peers (Updegraff et al., 2006). Moreover, Mexican college students, especially those from predominately Latino neighborhoods, tend to establish friendships with other Latino students as a base of support for their ethnic identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Saylor & Aries, 1999). Thus, where college students grow up can influence the impact exposure to new contexts will have on their ethnic identity development. For example, Torres (2003) suggests that college students who lived in a predominately Latino environment did not perceive themselves as the minority until they experienced being at a predominately White college; this shift in environment encouraged a stronger connection to their ethnicity. Additionally, White and colleagues (2018) indicate that Mexican-origin youth from neighborhoods with higher co-ethnic concentration were more likely to explore their ethnicity beyond what they learned from their parents and be less likely to perceive peer discrimination. Overall, these findings suggest that in the current study there may be

distinctions in peer ethnic socialization in predominately Latino neighborhoods of origin and peer ethnic socialization in the move to a predominately White University.

Larger Culture. Within the context of adolescents' ethnic identity process, accounting for the impact of societal exchanges and events on peer socialization and ethnic identity development are important. Ethnic identity research indicates a relationship between exposure to discrimination and ethnic identity development (for review, see Quintana, 2007). For example, if youth feel they are not accepted by the host culture (United States), they might feel prouder of their parents' country of origin (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Umaña-Taylor and Guimond (2012) found that Latino adolescents' increased perceived discrimination significantly predicted increased ethnic identity exploration and decreased ethnic identity affirmation.

However, Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2015) found that for Latino adolescents, more perceived peer discrimination was associated with low ethnic identity resolution. Additionally, a study with predominately Dominican and Puerto Rican Latino adolescents found that perceived discrimination by peers was not associated with affirmation or its advancement over time but did predict a decrease in exploration over time (Pahl & Way, 2006). Pahl and Way (2006) attribute the decrease in exploration over time and maintaining high levels of affirmation to the Latino adolescents being the majority in their school. Thus, same-ethnic peers seem to provide social support for maintaining affirmation but do not motivate ethnic exploration. Although Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are distinct from Mexicans due to different social and political histories in the United States, they still share some similar experiences. Furthermore, ethnic socialization research indicates that cross-race friendships serve as a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination minority youth experience and contribute to integration into the majority culture (for review, see Mushonga & Henneberger, 2019).

Along with perceived discrimination, political climate also shapes second-generation college students' ethnic identity. Tovar and Feliciano (2009) found that political climate mattered in relation to the importance of students' ethnic identity and self-identifying as Chicano/a or Mexican. In this case, a negative political context played a key role in influencing a sense of solidarity and importance in identifying as Mexican. Taken together, this literature indicates that peer ethnic socialization matters in promoting positive ethnic identity development, and the larger culture will most likely influence peer ethnic socialization messages and how they are perceived.

Current Study

The current study explores peer ethnic socialization across the transition to college. A longitudinal qualitative research design with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) was used as the primary methodological approach. This approach is appropriate, given the aim of exploring the influence of peers on ethnic identity development. A longitudinal design was used to investigate the processes second-

generation Mexican American adolescents experience while forming their ethnic identity during high school and their first year of college. This qualitative longitudinal study was designed to address critical gaps in the theoretical and empirical literature regarding ethnic socialization and the shifts that occur in ethnic identity development over time. Accordingly, the goal of the current analysis was to explore the content and impact of messages about ethnic identity that second-generation Mexican American first-year college students receive from their peers in high school and during their first year of college. The current study asks two questions:

1. What messages do Mexican American adolescents receive from their peers about their ethnic identity?
2. What impact do these messages from their peers have on their ethnic identity development?

Chapter Three: Methods

Participants

The analytic sample consisted of 20 second-generation Mexican American first-year college students, including 11 female and 9 male participants. The adolescents in the sample were 18-19 years old ($M = 18.3$). They were all born in the United States. Fifty-five percent of the sample reported being born in a large urban Midwestern city, and 45% of the sample reported being born in the suburbs of this large urban Midwestern city. A majority (65%) of participants reported that the neighborhood they grew up in was the majority or almost all people from their racial/ethnic group. All participants' parents were born in Mexico and had been living in the United States for about 26 years.

Recruitment and Sample Selection

Purposive and convenience sampling were used to recruit a sample of Mexican American first-year college students at a large, predominately White public university in a nonmetropolitan Midwestern county (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). Recruitment included: emails to listservs (e.g., Latino/Latina Studies department, cultural houses); fliers posted on social media (e.g., Facebook) and around campus; verbal announcements and face-to-face recruitment (e.g., new student events, classes); and distribution through personal networks. Interested students were directed to a short online screening survey hosted on Qualtrics (see Appendix A). Students who completed the screening survey but were not invited to participate in the study were entered into a drawing for a \$20 gift card. Forty-one of the 74 students who completed the screening survey met the study's established eligibility criteria (i.e., first year of college, 18-19 years old, born in the United States, two foreign-born Mexican parents). Potential participants were selected from this pool of eligible students. According to Jager and colleagues (2017), an advantage of homogenous convenience samples is that they offer clearer generalizability. Furthermore, purposely limiting the sample frame reduces the chance of sampling bias (Jager et al., 2017).

Although the study used an ethnically homogeneous design, the approach to sample selection attempted to represent diversity within the population of interest (Roosa et al., 2008). Using information from the online screening survey, I based my selections on reported gender, birthplace (city), parents' birthplace (state in Mexico), high school attended, and chosen major in college. Twenty-six eligible respondents were invited to participate in the study (14 female students and 12 male students). Five individuals either did not respond to the invitation or follow-up attempts ($n = 4$) or accepted the invitation but did not respond to efforts to schedule an interview ($n = 1$). Twenty-one students (11 females and 10 males) completed the first interview, and all but one male participant also completed the second interview. The current analysis focuses on the 20 participants (11 females, 9 males) who completed both interviews (see Appendix B).

Procedures

The campus Institutional Review Board approved study procedures. Data collection took place in a private office with only the interviewer and participant present. I conducted all interviews, and all interviews were done in person. At the first interview (Fall semester of 2018; Time 1), participants provided written consent. A demographic questionnaire was administered, followed by a semi-structured in-depth interview lasting 25 – 60 minutes. Participants were informed that the first interview would be about experiences that may have affected their ethnic identity in high school (e.g., family, peers). The second interview took place about six months later, during the Spring semester of 2019 (Time 2), and focused on experiences since coming to college (e.g., peers, campus experience). Second interviews lasted 43 minutes to 2 hours. Participants received a \$10 gift card for completing the first interview and a \$20 gift card for completing the second interview. Both interviews were audiotaped then transcribed and checked by four trained undergraduate research assistants. To ensure confidentiality, each participant's data was identified with a unique ID number and pseudonym.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that collected demographic information such as age; gender; neighborhood characteristics; family characteristics; high school characteristics; and ZIP code (see Appendix C).

Semi-Structured Interviews. Interviews had structured open-ended questions, which were based on prior studies and the literature on ethnic identity development. Questions were piloted with a couple of second-generation Mexican American college students to ensure wording made sense and they elicited the intended information. Based on pilot testing and suggestions from dissertation committee members, questions were reworded, reordered, condensed, collapsed, added, or taken out completely. These changes were designed to facilitate the interview process, decrease respondent burden, and ensure that relevant information was prioritized. No topic areas were added to the interview protocols. The interview protocol used at Time 1 is provided in Appendix D and the interview protocol used at Time 2 is provided in Appendix E. The current study draws on a subset of data collected during the first and second interview, when relevant questions were administered.

Participants were asked about the messages they received from their peers about their ethnicity and if they felt the messages differed between their high school peers and college peers. For example, participants were asked at Time 1 and Time 2: “what messages did you get from your friends about your [term selected] background?” Participants were only asked at Time 2: “what is new about what you are learning from your college friends than what you learned from your high school friends about being [term selected]?” The interviewer probed and followed up on experiences described by the participants to ensure that in-depth responses were obtained.

Data Analysis

The main goal of the analyses was to understand how peers influence ethnic identity development of second-generation Mexican American first-year college students in high school and during their first year of college. Constructivist Grounded Theory methods (Charmaz, 2014) were used because they are appropriate for exploring the ethnic identity development process within the context of peer ethnic socialization. In this study, the unit of analysis was the second-generation Mexican American first-year college students' descriptions of messages they received from their peers about their ethnicity. The analytic process contained elements of both inductive (e.g., *in vivo* codes, constant comparison) and deductive (e.g., sensitizing concepts, theoretical analysis) approaches (Miles et al., 2018; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To address the first research question, I utilized initial (open) and focused coding to analyze the first-year college students' descriptions of the messages they received from their peers about their ethnicity. Through this process, I categorized the content of peer ethnic socialization messages into three overarching constructs that coincided with the three dimensions of ethnic identity development. To address the second research question of how these messages from their peers influence their ethnic identity development, I used theory-building to analyze the connection between the identified peer ethnic socialization constructs and the shift in stages of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). I used NVivo 10, which is a qualitative data management program, to facilitate the coding process (QSR International, 2014).

During the initial stage of coding, one Latina bilingual and bicultural undergraduate research assistant and I read the peer ethnic socialization section of the first (Time 1) interview for all participants and initially coded independently. The goal of this initial coding was to get a sense of the content of peer ethnic socialization. As described by Charmaz (2014), my first coder and I stayed close to the data and attempted to code with words that reflected action (e.g., maintaining, reinforcing, and exploring), which limits making theoretical and conceptual leaps. There were sensitizing concepts that helped start the analysis, but as Charmaz (2014) describes they did not determine the analytic content. As I coded across interviews, I used constant comparison to identify commonalities and distinctions among how first-year college students' described their peer ethnic socialization experiences. Once my first coder and I completed an initial round of coding and memoing throughout the process, we created an initial codebook.

After the Time 2 interviews were transcribed, a second Latina bilingual and bicultural undergraduate research assistant went through the initial coding process for this second round of data. This second coder went through the initial coding process using the initial codebook I had established with the first coder. However, this time we focused on coding two interview questions (3 and 7) that specifically addressed peer ethnic socialization messages. We each coded the Time 2 data independently,

focusing on three to five interviews at a time and meeting once a week to discuss discrepancies. Through constant comparison and memoing, my second coder and I identified similarities and differences between the first and second round of initial coding, as well as across interviews. At the end of this round of initial coding, we updated the codebook.

In the second stage of coding, we began the process of focused coding, which allowed us to sort, synthesize, refine, and determine how suitable the initial codes were for categorizing the data (Charmaz, 2014). I started the focused coding process with my second coder; through constant comparison and discussing discrepancies, we elevated codes and started to evaluate fit. Additionally, through this process we were able to start creating categories for the different peer ethnic socialization messages and identify some distinctions within the categories (e.g., messages from same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers). This entailed comparing codes at both time points and memoing. At this point, we refined and updated the codebook. Then my senior advisor continued this focused coding process, as a third coder using the established codebook. Coding focused on interview segments representing the questions of interest relating to peer ethnic socialization messages (Time 1 – questions 2 & 7, Time 2 – questions 3 & 7). My senior advisor and I coded five participants at a time independently and met biweekly to compare our codes and resolve discrepancies. We also further refined and evaluated fit of codes and added exclusion coding criteria, which resulted in updating the codebook. We coded the next set of interviews independently and assessed interrater reliability. According to Landis and Koch (1977), interrater reliabilities revealed substantial consistency between coders ($Kappa = 0.92$). Discrepancies were resolved by discussion and final codes assigned.

I further explored the peer ethnic socialization data by drawing on sensitizing concepts from dimensions of ethnic identity development. This led me to conduct additional focused coding and determine the conceptual strength and meaning of the codes and categories. I identified three constructs of peer ethnic socialization messages that coincided with three dimensions of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989; 1990; 1992). Then my advisor (third coder) and I further refined the codes by consolidating codes and further evaluating fit within the data and significance among other codes (Charmaz, 2014). Through the focused coding process, I established three constructs of peer ethnic socialization messages, as well as categories and sub-categories within the constructs. The three constructs were labeled to reflect dimensions of ethnic identity theory (exploration, resolution, and affirmation) (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004) that emerged from the data (See Figures 1-3).

Figure 1. Influencing Ethnic Identity Exploration

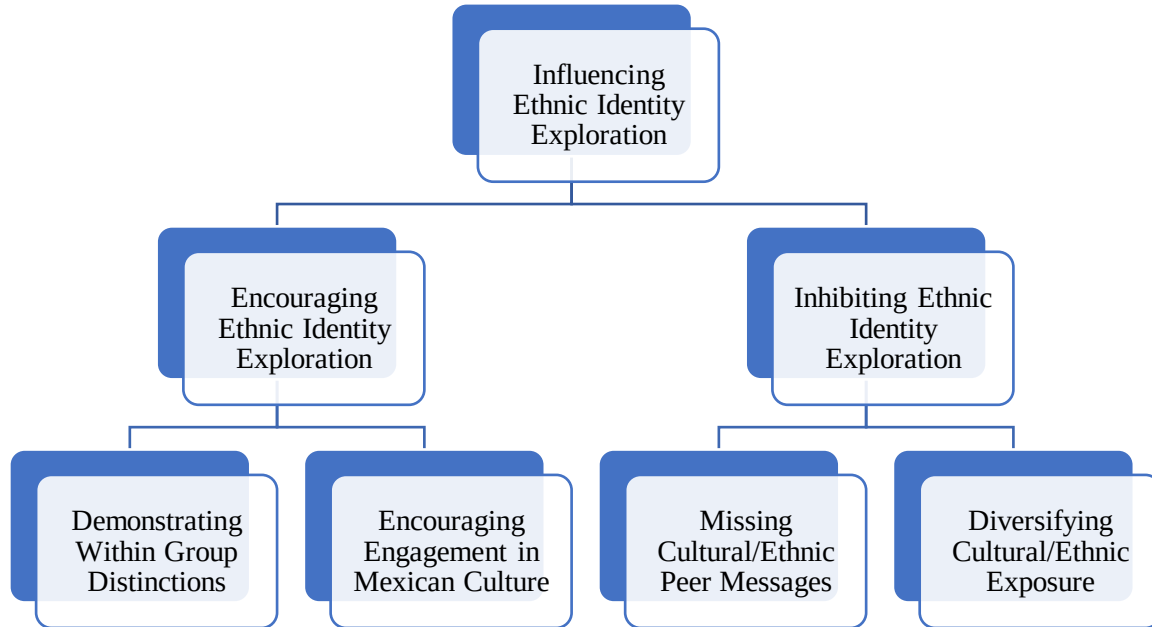


Figure 2. Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience

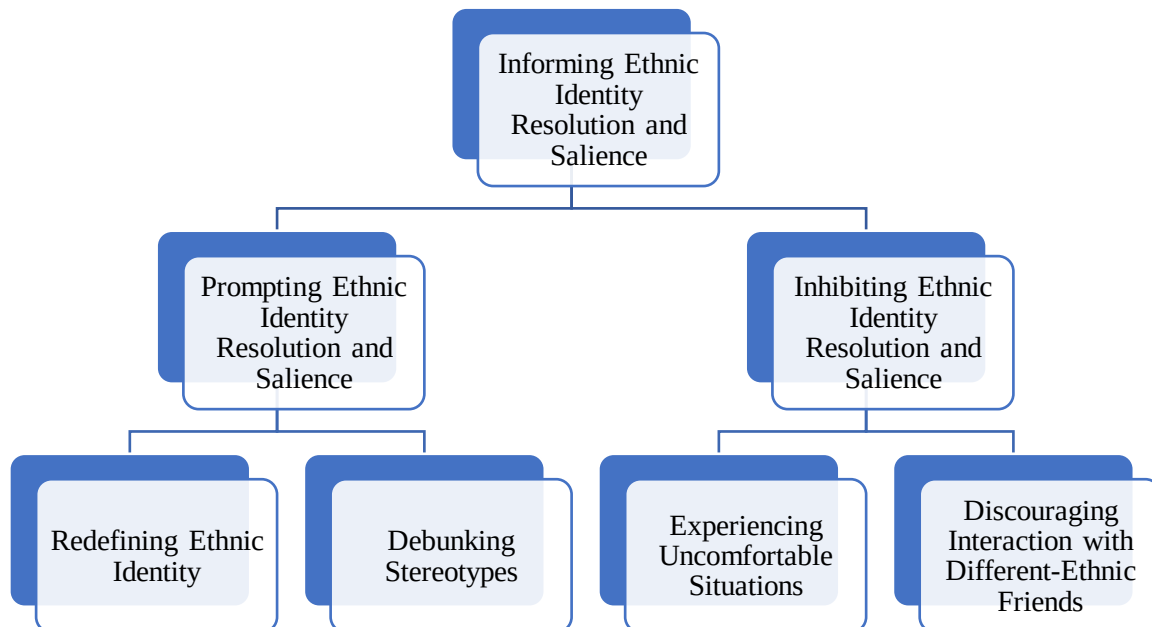
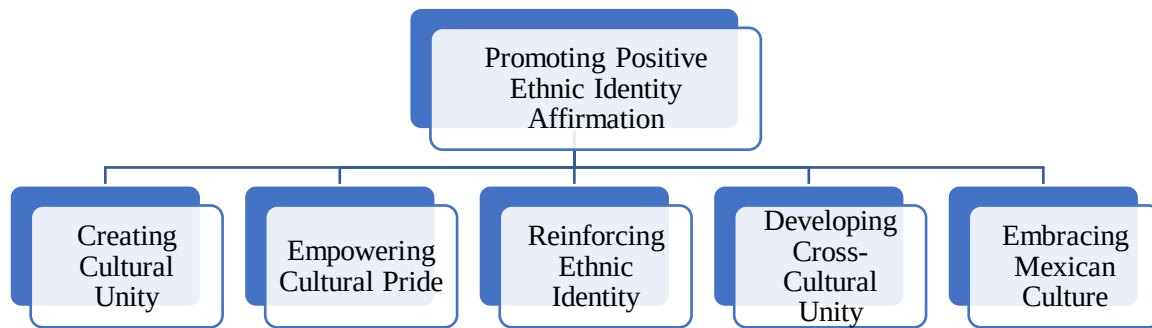
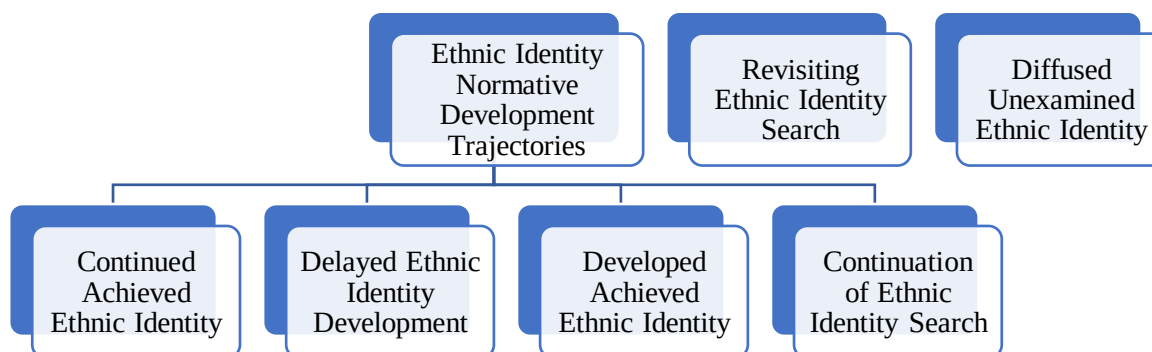


Figure 3. Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation



Through the theory-building analyses, I was able to conceptualize how peer ethnic socialization messages influenced shifts in stages of ethnic identity development over time. I theorized and elaborated on the connection between the emerging dimensions of ethnic identity development constructs and categories, which were elevated to theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2014). I theoretically coded the established constructs and categories by identifying how they related to stages of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). Constant comparison and memoing occurred throughout the theory-building analyses. According to Charmaz (2014), “theoretical codes not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also may move your analytic story in a theoretical direction” (p. 150). To further my understanding of the connection between the peer ethnic socialization messages and stages of ethnic identity development, I examined how each participant described the direct or indirect influence that peer messages had on their ethnic identity development and how it shifted over time. Through these analyses, I originally identified four overarching patterns of ethnic identity development over time. However, during the writing stage, I continued reviewing coded documents and memos, which led me to further sharpen the identified patterns of ethnic identity development over time. Through this process, I identified the fourth pattern as a sub-pattern of one of the three overarching patterns. Accordingly, I determined there were three overarching patterns of ethnic identity development over time (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Identified Ethnic Identity Development Patterns Over Time



Researcher Positionality

According to Holmes (2020), positionality “can be seen to affect the totality of the research process” (p. 3). Reflexivity enlightens positionality, which requires the researcher to explicitly self-assess and be self-conscious about their positions and views and how it influences the research process (Holmes, 2020). As part of this reflexive approach, in this section I will disclose and acknowledge my positionality in this research.

I am a second-generation Mexican American bilingual and bicultural female. My mother and father were both born in Mexico and at the time that I was conducting my data collection they had been living in the U.S. for 53 and 34 years, respectively. I grew up in Chicago in a predominately Polish neighborhood. I grew up in a working-class family; however, the majority of my family is currently considered middle to upper-middle class. I attended a Chicago suburb all-girl Catholic private high school with some ethnic diversity. I am 5’10 with light skin and green eyes; in the eyes of others these features make me “White passing and/or phenotypically light-skinned and white-looking” (Gomez, 2021, p. 84). This leads many people to perceive me as White and/or of European decent. I am the first in my family to attend and graduate from college. I also attended the same predominately White university as my study participants for my undergraduate (and graduate) studies.

As a second-generation Mexican American college-educated Latina, I share some things in common with my participants. As a way to keep my own experiences separate from those of my participants, I attempted to set aside my preconceived notions about these second-generation Mexican American first-year college students during my interactions with them. I discussed my opinions and feelings about my participants and our interactions in memos and in my meetings with my advisor and research assistants. Before starting the interviewing process, I did some reflecting on how I would respond to the questions in the interview protocol. As a “White-passing” Latina who grew up in a predominately Polish neighborhood and attended a diverse private high school, I may not be able to relate and/or fully understand these college students’ experiences growing up and during their first year of college. Although I have the same ethnic background, my parents were also born in Mexico, and I am the first in my family to attend college, I acknowledge that my experience was privileged because of my appearance, the neighborhood I grew up in, and the high school I attended. Although I cannot remove the unbalanced relationship between myself and my participants, I used several strategies to counterbalance this. These included emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation at multiple points in the study process, compensating participants for their time as a way of showing I valued their contributions, and giving participants the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own words as well as time to reflect before they responded.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter will first present findings addressing the first research question: *What messages do Mexican American adolescents receive from their peers about their ethnic identity?* To examine this question, I analyzed the content of messages about ethnic identity that second-generation Mexican American first-year college students receive from their peers in high school and during their first year of college. Through these analyses, I identified three constructs of peer ethnic socialization messages: influencing ethnic identity exploration, informing ethnic identity resolution and salience, and promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. Then this chapter will present the findings addressing the second research question: *What impact do these messages from their peers have on their ethnic identity development?* To examine this question, I analyzed the impact these peer messages had on second-generation Mexican American first-year college students' ethnic identity development in high school and during their first year of college. Through these analyses, I identified three patterns of ethnic identity development over time: ethnic identity normative development trajectories, revisiting ethnic identity search, and diffused unexamined ethnic identity. I will present case studies to illustrate these three patterns of ethnic identity development over time.

Messages Received from Peers

Analyses of the data addressing the first research question revealed three constructs relating to peer ethnic socialization that showcase different aspects of ethnic identity development. I will describe the three constructs and illustrate each construct using participant quotes. Results are presented separately for the two time periods examined in the study - high school (covered in the first interview) and college (covered in the second interview). The results are broken down by same-ethnic versus different-ethnic peers because that distinction emerged during analyses. Gender patterns were examined but few distinctions emerged; these will be briefly described but will not be a major focus. I will focus on the overall pattern of results in the text; refer to Tables 1-3 for frequency displays of categories by time point, peer ethnicity, and gender.

Influencing Ethnic Identity Exploration

This first construct reflects exploration, one of the dimensions of ethnic identity stage theory. This construct involves peers having a role in whether or not the participant described learning about their ethnic group and/or participating in their Mexican culture. Two categories of influencing ethnic identity exploration were identified: *encouraging ethnic identity exploration* and *inhibiting ethnic identity exploration*. See Table 1 for frequencies of categories and subcategories.

Table 1. Influencing Ethnic Identity Exploration

Categories and Sub-Categories	Overall Sample	Peer Ethnicity		Participant Gender	
		Same	Different	Female	Male
High School	17	16	5	10	7
Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration	13	13	0	8	5
Demonstrating within group distinctions	9	9	0	5	4
Encouraging engagement in Mexican culture	5	5	0	3	2
Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration	9	4	5	6	3
Missing cultural/ethnic peer messages	6	4	2	4	2
Diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure	3	2	1	2	1
College	16	14	10	9	7
Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration	13	12	1	7	6
Demonstrating within group distinctions	10	10	0	5	5
Encouraging engagement in Mexican culture	9	8	1	6	3
Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration	10	5	9	6	4
Missing cultural/ethnic peer messages	8	3	6	5	3
Diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure	5	3	4	3	2

Note. Numbers in this table represent the number of participants in each category and sub-category. Individuals were coded for more than one category and/or sub-category. The numbers in the peer ethnicity column do not always match the overall total because in some cases individuals' peer messages were coded as being from both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers.

Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration included peer messages that promote participants' learning about differences within their ethnic group and/or motivate their involvement in different aspects of their Mexican culture. Two sub-categories were identified. The first, *demonstrating within-group distinctions*, entailed participants learning from friends about differences within the Mexican population (e.g., regional variations in food preparation, phenotypic differences). Additionally, participants described realizing that their friends were less involved in their Mexican culture than they were (e.g., interest in learning about Mexican history, willingness or ability to speak Spanish, and listening to Spanish music). In some cases, friends were more involved in Mexican culture than the participants. The second, *encouraging engagement in Mexican culture*, involved friends fostering the participants' involvement in Mexican culture (e.g., listening to Spanish music, eating Mexican food, speaking Spanish). In some cases, participants encouraged their friends to get more involved in Mexican culture.

Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration included peer messages that did not add to what participants know about their ethnicity and/or deterred their interest in learning about their ethnicity. Two sub-categories were identified. *Missing cultural/ethnic peer messages* involved participants reporting that their friends had not provided any messages that contributed to their knowledge or understanding of their ethnicity. *Diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure* described the participants' friends prompting interaction with people from different cultural and ethnic groups than their own, as well as participation in different cultural events and introducing/discussing different cultural food. These peer messages stimulate participants' desire to learn more about other cultures beyond their own, which delays or diverts them from expanding their knowledge on their ethnicity.

High School Peer Ethnic Socialization

Seventeen participants said their high school friends influenced their ethnic identity exploration. Most of these participants described their high school friends as *Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration*. Most commonly, they described high school friends as *demonstrating within-group distinctions* in cultural traditions, practices, and engagement. For example, participants learned that their friends' families either prepared different traditional Mexican dishes or prepared the same dishes differently depending on the state or region in Mexico they were from. Lucia mentioned being introduced to a previously unfamiliar Mexican dish by a friend who had a food stand:

I never knew what *bombazos* were and apparently that's a very traditional food ... that's the first time I ever had a *bombazo* and that was so good. I mentioned it to my friends and they're like "oh yeah my mom made that last month" and I was just like "what? This is the first time I ever heard about *bombazos*."

Other within-group distinctions learned from friends were generational distinctions and variations in religious practices. Some participants described their high school friends as being raised with more of an emphasis on cultural engagement than they were. For instance, Isabel described becoming friends with individuals who grew up in a [predominately Mexican] neighborhood with parents who emphasized the importance of being Latina through community cultural events. She recognized the distinction in upbringing and the importance of being Mexican. Other examples of within-group distinctions included friends preferring Mexican media or, conversely, being more Americanized.

Some participants described their high school friends as *encouraging engagement in Mexican culture*. These participants felt encouraged by friends to practice/maintain the Spanish language, wear cultural clothing/accessories, and learn about and participate in Mexican media, music, dancing, and events. Catalina illustrated how her Mexican friends supported her Spanish language maintenance, "[we] kept talking in Spanish ... not only at home but outside of home with my friends so that kept my conversations fluent."

On the other hand, about half of participants said their high school friends *Inhibited their Ethnic Identity Exploration*. In the case of *missing cultural/ethnic peer messages*, participants reported that their friends did not contribute to learning anything about Mexican culture, did not bring up cultural discussions, were unaware of cultural/ethnic issues, or were unable to form an ethnic/cultural connection. For instance, when asked what she learned from her friends, Sofia shared that her friends did not acknowledge cultural, ethnic, and/or racial distinctions:

My [close Latina] friends ... wouldn't talk about the importance of remembering where you come from. They wouldn't talk about any deeper, emotional struggles. For example, what their parents have gone through. They wouldn't talk about that. Whereas my family would reinforce the idea of remembering where you come from, and continuing to practice cultural values.

A few participants said that high school friends *Inhibited their Ethnic Identity Exploration* by *diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure*. This involved friends prompting or encouraging an interest in interacting with people from different cultural and ethnic groups than their own. In a couple of cases, participants felt their friends were discouraging cultural involvement. In one case, Ximena described her friends as wanting to branch out and meet people outside their ethnic group, "many people in my culture just wanna stay in their own ethnic group and my friends were more diverse. They wanted to reach out to other people, rather than just people like themselves." Thus, these participants described having friends who made them recognize they have been around people from their same ethnic group most of their life and that there are more cultures and ethnicities to explore outside their own. Additionally, Ximena shared that her friends wanted to "diversify more" because they wanted "to be more American" and were "trying to abandon their roots." These peer messages of desired assimilation do not promote ethnic identity exploration.

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. Only same-ethnic peer messages were described as *Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration* in high school. Same-ethnic friends contributed to participants learning about and getting more involved in their Mexican culture. Sarah described not participating in her Mexican culture before moving to a predominately Latino neighborhood:

I didn't listen to Hispanic music. Because my friends from, from the other school were mostly white. So, I started listening – they brought me into the Mexican music. I started going to *bailes [dances]* with them or like *Quinceañeras* that we would go to. They kind of gave me a better appreciation for my culture.

These messages were important to Sarah because "I realized what I was missing out on, for so long, like – it opened up a whole new, a whole new door." Sarah provided a specific example:

When I was really little, my grandma gave me some gold hoops earrings but being in the neighborhood I was in, I didn't like them. So, I took them off because every other girl had the

diamond studs, but then when I went to high school and made these Hispanic friends, they all wore hoop earrings and I really liked hooped earrings, but I just never wore them. So, then I started wearing hoop earrings all the time.

Both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers gave messages *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration* in high school. There were instances of same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends not contributing any messages in relation to being Mexican (*missing cultural/ethnic peer messages*). For example, Hector acknowledged that his same-ethnic friends did not recognize nor discuss cultural, ethnic, and/or racial distinctions, “it did not really look like that came up pretty much, not that they didn’t care, but it just didn’t really come up ... No, it just never really come up.” Ruby mentioned that it was difficult to connect and find commonalities with her high school friends with different backgrounds, “I was different from like my other friends whose whole family comes from here.” Thus, while same-ethnic friends encouraged participants’ ethnic identity exploration through prompting increased engagement in Mexican culture; different-ethnic friends did not contribute to their learning or engaging with their ethnicity or culture.

Growing up with primarily same-ethnic friends prompted a few participants to want to learn about people from different cultures and from different parts of the world (*diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure*), as Lucia illustrated:

What it means to me like that we’re all from the same place and – I don’t know it’s just, it’s kind of upsetting cause I wanna meet other people...It’s – it’s very – it’s upsetting that where I live it’s mostly everybody is mostly from the same place.

The messages Lucia received from her same-ethnic peers prompted her to recognize the benefits of learning more about other cultures so that people are less likely to exclude “the people that are different from them.” These participants all mentioned that most of their same-ethnic friends only wanted to associate with people from their same ethnic background, which prompted them to want to learn about and be exposed to people of different backgrounds. For example, Mauricio described enjoying the opportunity to learn about different cultures’ customs and traditions from his different-ethnic high school friends:

I was eager to learn about their culture because they are not just White, they are also German, French, or whatever. A lot of places in Europe. Polish. So it was nice to learn about that, learn about their dishes.

Mauricio shared that the positive messages from his different ethnic peers, “helped me become more accepting because I used to not be.” Thus, the longing to learn about other cultures beyond their own also stemmed from same-ethnic peers avoiding interaction with other ethnic and racial groups, which will be discussed further in the next section. Thus, both different-ethnic and same-ethnic friends could elicit an

interest or opportunity to learn about different cultures beyond the participants' own, which delays and/or distracts from interest in exploring their own ethnic identity and what it meant to them.

Gender Nuances. There were subtle differences in frequency and content between how female and male participants described their friends *Influencing their Ethnic Identity Exploration*. More female than male participants described their friends as *inhibiting ethnic identity exploration*, either by stimulating exploration of other cultures or not contributing to their knowledge of Mexican culture.

Although the frequencies in the category of *encouraging ethnic identity exploration* were more similar across genders, male and female participants emphasized different aspects. For example, female participants tended to describe learning from friends about within-group distinctions in cultural engagement (e.g., parental emphasis on engaging in Mexican culture and visiting Mexico frequently) whereas male participants learned about within-group distinctions based on where in Mexico their friends' families were from (e.g., cultural-religious traditions, Spanish slang, and how traditional Mexican dishes are prepared). Additionally, when describing how high school friends encouraged engagement in Mexican culture, only female participants specifically mentioned cultural clothes and accessories; male participants were more likely to describe friends as encouraging Spanish language maintenance.

College Peer Ethnic Socialization

In the college context, which was more diverse than the predominately Mexican neighborhoods where most participants grew up, there were new opportunities for identity exploration and learning about other Latino subgroups, racial, and ethnic groups. Sixteen participants said their college friends influenced their ethnic identity exploration.

Most of these participants described their college friends *Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration* by making participants aware of within-group distinctions in beliefs, ideologies, experiences, backgrounds, as well as Spanish speaking fluency/ability and cultural knowledge and involvement. These participants described their friends *demonstrating within-group distinctions* by sharing their upbringing and their level of interest in Mexican culture. For instance, Mateo explained that in college he started to notice group distinctions after meeting other Mexicans and Latinos from different subgroups (e.g., Colombians and Peruvians), "it made me realize not everyone has the same upbringing or like engagement ... with being cultural or just being in Mexico learning about Mexico and stuff like that. Everyone is like different across the board." Sarah described a college friend who was not brought up to be engaged and familiar with his Mexican culture:

He just stays away from the music, speaking Spanish, but we do speak Spanish ... I don't think he's interested in learning more about it. He's half Mexican, and half Ecuadorian, so he lived with his mother who was Ecuadorian, so I feel like he never got a chance to be exposed to Mexican culture.

Thus, in college participants were meeting new people from the same or similar ethnic background as them, which led them to identify within-group distinctions. Learning about these distinctions, especially distinctions in level of engagement in Mexican culture, made participants appreciate their upbringing. These distinctions also motivated them to maintain and explore their ethnic identity in a new context.

Additionally, participants described their college friends *encouraging engagement in Mexican culture* by promoting cultural maintenance and involvement. Friends prompted participants to invest time and energy in discovering what their ethnicity meant to them in this new predominately White context. Valentina illustrated this when she explained what she had learned from college friends that was different from what she learned from high school friends:

I think in high school, talking about being Mexican doesn't really come up that often, just because you know you're Mexican ... and most of them are Latinos so it's like you don't really recognize it as much, and here you do recognize it right away ... so now you do have more conversations about race and ethnicity, and I feel like that is more prominent in my conversations now with my friends, and especially how you feel about it and stuff, so yeah I feel like there is a difference between high school and college.

On the other hand, a few participants noticed that their college friends were less culturally engaged than they were, which prompted them to try to get friends more involved in maintaining their culture. Catalina illustrated this dynamic:

It makes me want to talk more in Spanish, because I don't know. They just make me see how much they, the people from my background, they're Mexican American, but they weren't raised talking in Spanish, or as much Mexican traditions and values, it makes me feel like they kind of ... feel a little jealous at times because I am able to show that more fluently ... but they also appreciate it because I'm able to enlighten more of what they are. So that's kind of cool. And it makes me feel like ... I'm just pushing everyone to value where they come from. And I really like it.

Conversely, half of the participants described their college friends *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration* by not discussing culture, ethnicity, and related issues and/or by stimulating an interest in wanting to learn about other ethnic groups and their cultures. Most of these participants reported *missing cultural/ethnic peer messages*, where friends were unable to provide cultural/ethnic messages due to these topics and issues not being brought up, cultural/ethnic disconnect, and/or lacking knowledge on these topics and issues. For example, Sofia's college friends did not acknowledge ethnicity at all:

There isn't exactly a message that I get about my ethnicity, because it's not something that we really emphasize or pay attention to. It's just kind of there, or natural ... Not really, It's not something we talk about, that even comes up, even subliminally.

Some participants said their college friends' messages emphasized *diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure*, prompting the participants to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. A few of these participants mentioned getting the opportunity to learn about another culture by attending cultural events or trying authentic cultural food. Others mentioned receiving messages from their college friends about diversity and acceptance, as well as meeting people from different cultures and backgrounds. For example, Santiago said:

So, coming in here, it's a nice breath of fresh air, to see all of these different communities and ethnicities and understanding their culture ... it's just so much nicer being in a place where you can see everything for what it truly is, and not just the close-minded community that I grew up in.

In Santiago's case, after experiencing acceptance from his new diverse friend group in college he began to realize "how closed the Mexican community is" and how "hostile" they were to everyone who was not Mexican. The experience of positive diverse peer interactions prompted Santiago to recognize the negative aspects of his culture and ethnic group. Thus, these participants who grew up in a culturally similar community found their new, diverse environment appealing and appreciated the opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds. However, this inspiration to explore other cultures could deter participants from further exploring their own ethnic identity in a new context.

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. Most peer messages *Encouraging Ethnic Identity Exploration* in college were from same-ethnic friends, except for one case that involved different-ethnic friends encouraging ethnic identity exploration. Sofia illustrated learning about within-group distinctions from her same-ethnic college friends:

Just that all Mexicans are a mix. All of my Latina friends, we all look completely different. Some of us have really light skin, and medium-dark skin, and really dark skin. There's some cultural differences based on region, or where we're from in Mexico. Sometimes we jokingly argue about what way to make certain food. Like *bombazos* ... we make food differently depending on region, and that's really interesting to me.

Thus, in college the opportunity to meet other Latinos with distinct physical features and cultural distinctions based on region creates intrigue, which promotes exploration. Ruby shared the only example where different-ethnic college friends inspired ethnic identity exploration by making her want to explore her ethnic identity and what it meant to her. She noted, "It's good for me to take the time to like explore my identity a little bit more or invest in it a little bit more. Just so I don't feel like I'm losing any sense of it." Additionally, Ruby described her different-ethnic friends demonstrating an appreciation for her culture (e.g., food and Mexican music) and she realized that she has not been doing anything to maintain or explore her ethnic identity in college. Thus, her different ethnic friends' positive messages encouraged her to want to spend more time exploring and maintaining her ethnic identity.

Participants received peer messages *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Exploration* from both same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends in college. For instance, Sarah shared that her same-ethnic college friends did not contribute to her knowledge or understanding of Mexican culture compared to her same-ethnic high school friends (*missing cultural/ethnic peer messages*):

I feel like I'm not really learning a lot about being Mexican from my friends ... I felt like I learned more with my high school friends because we spoke Spanish more often and listened to the music too. And being in their house was the same as being in my house, culturally.

Ximena mentioned that culturally relevant topics did not come up when talking to different-ethnic friends ("and then with like let's say my Asian friends, I don't think race really comes up"). Thus, both same-ethnic and different-ethnic friend groups could be disinterested or unaware of how to contribute to conversations relevant to potentially sensitive topics on race, ethnicity, and cultural salience and engagement.

Both same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends prompted participants' interest in spending time with people of different ethnic backgrounds and learning more about other cultures (*diversifying cultural/ethnic exposure*). For example, Eva described wanting to make new friends and date outside her ethnic group:

I don't think there's anything wrong with me broadening my horizons and meeting different people and leaving my [Latino] high school friends to the side. I also don't think it's enough for me to stop dating the guy I am with just because it's frowned upon because he's not Mexican.

Eva explained the messages of disapproval she received from her same-ethnic college friends (Latino high school friends that attended the same college as her and friends from the Latino organization) about spending time with people outside their ethnic group made her not want to spend as much time with them anymore. Thus, she became more invested in spending time with her different friends and learning about their cultures, which hindered her from further exploring her ethnic identity in college. Lucia described realizing the importance of learning from people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds about what is considered authentic to them:

It's a learning experience because in your head you're like this is exactly how they act and these restaurants have it down to a T but they really don't so. I think it's like you need to surround yourself with people that are different from you because then you can actually experience what it actually is like not the washed-out version that they present here.

In college, Lucia realized she wanted to learn more about other cultures beyond the "washed-out version" that she was usually exposed to. This interest in these opportunities to learn more about other cultures stemmed from different ethnic peers assuming they know what is culturally authentic, "they don't have the right idea of it." Lucia came to the realization that she did not know what is considered culturally

authentic for other cultures outside of her own. For now, she wanted to focus and spend her time learning about cultures rather than her own.

Gender Nuances. There were subtle differences in frequency and content identified between how female and male participants described their friends *Influencing their Ethnic Identity Exploration*. In the sub-category *encouraging engagement in Mexican culture*, more female than male participants described their college friends as encouraging their participation in Mexican culture. These female participants typically described bidirectional encouragement, where friends were not as culturally engaged as the participant, which in turn inspired participants to want to work more on their cultural maintenance and encourage their friends to participate more in their culture. In terms of distinctions in content, only female participants described their college friends as encouraging participation in religious-cultural traditions, as well as having more conversations about race and ethnicity.

There were differences in emphasis within the sub-category *demonstrating within-group distinctions*. Male participants said their same-ethnic friends were less involved in their Mexican culture than they were (e.g., interest in learning about Mexican history or willingness or ability to speak Spanish). Female participants also described their college friends as less involved in their Mexican culture; however, they also described distinctions in level of engagement related to friends' Spanish speaking fluency, as well as in bi-ethnic friends' upbringings and experiences.

Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience

This second construct reflected another dimension of ethnic identity, resolution and salience. This construct involved peers having an impact on the participants' understanding of what their ethnic group and ethnicity meant to them, as well as how important their ethnic group and ethnicity was to them. Two categories of *Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* were identified: *prompting ethnic identity resolution and salience* and *inhibiting ethnic identity resolution and salience* (see Table 2).

Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution included peer messages that assisted participants in forming their own understanding of what their ethnicity means to them and prompted them to determine the importance of their ethnic identity. Two sub-categories were identified. *Redefining ethnic identity* referred to friends helping participants reconceptualize traditional Mexican beliefs and what being Mexican means to them by helping them establish their Mexican authenticity and/or challenging their Mexican authenticity. *Debunking stereotypes* typically involved friends sharing the same motivation to disprove Mexican stereotypes and demonstrate what they were capable of accomplishing. However, some participants described friends reinforcing Mexican stereotypes, which motivated the participant to work towards proving these stereotypes inaccurate.

Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience included peer messages that discouraged establishing a clear understanding what ethnicity means to them and made participants hesitant to

determine how important their ethnicity is to their overall identity. Two sub-categories were identified. *Experiencing uncomfortable situations* involved participants encountering awkward or upsetting situations relating to their ethnicity. In these situations, peers indirectly or directly demonstrated intolerance towards their ethnic group and/or made participants feel out of place or singled out. *Discouraging interaction with different-ethnic friends* was when same-ethnic friends discouraged or disapproved of interactions with friends of a different ethnic and/or racial background.

Table 2. Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience

Categories and Sub-Categories	Overall Sample	Peer Ethnicity		Participant Gender	
		Same	Different	Female	Male
High School	14	14	2	8	6
Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience	14	14	1	8	6
Redefining ethnic identity	11	11	1	5	6
Debunking stereotypes	3	3	0	3	0
Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience	3	1	2	2	1
Experiencing uncomfortable situations	2	0	2	1	1
Discouraging interaction with different-ethnic friends	1	1	0	1	0
College	8	8	3	4	4
Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience	7	7	0	4	3
Redefining ethnic identity	3	3	0	1	2
Debunking stereotypes	4	4	0	3	1
Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience	4	2	3	2	2
Experiencing uncomfortable situations	3	0	3	2	1
Discouraging interaction with different-ethnic friends	2	2	0	1	1

Note. Numbers in this table represent the number of participants in each category and sub-category. Individuals were coded for more than one category and/or sub-category. The numbers in the peer ethnicity column do not always match the overall total because in some cases, individuals' peer messages were coded as being from both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers.

High School Peer Ethnic Socialization

Fourteen participants described their high school friends *Informing their Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. The majority of these participants described their friends as *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* by helping them redefine what their ethnicity meant to them and debunking ethnicity/culturally related stereotypes. *Redefining ethnic identity* involved friends demonstrating and informing participants of non-traditional, modern, and more inclusive ways of being Mexican. Many of these participants described their high school friends helping them redefine their ethnic identity when recounting what they learned from their high school friends and how it differed from what

they learned from their family. For example, Alejandro's father instilled a traditional sense of what it means to be a man in Mexican culture, and his high school friends helped him redefine what that meant to him:

There's this thing like an older Mexican culture it's called "Machismo" like the men have to be strong and the breadwinners of the family. That type of thing. I guess that's, my father would be more like that because he's more of a traditional Mexican. Because that's how he was when he came to the U.S. Like he did the turn to support his family. But then, here the newer generation, like friends they're more like it's okay to show emotion. That type of thing.

A few participants described their high school friends as playing a role in *debunking stereotypes* related to their ethnicity and culture. In these cases, participants described their friends as either supporting or inspiring their motivation to prove that the stigmas and stereotypes around being Mexican were inaccurate. For instance, Valentina described her high school friends as being aware of these stigmas/stereotypes and the importance of discrediting them:

...so we kind of felt like we had to like push the stigmas away from us so we kind of wanted to set a different example of like you know what Mexicans could actually do ... cause we just wanted to show that it's not something that should be generalized upon everyone ... we wanted to show a different outcome, wanted to show that we're not all like how people – perceive us to be.

In contrast, a few participants described their high school friends as *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*, with friends indirectly making them feel they did not belong or making them feel uncomfortable by associating their ethnic background with negative depictions. Mateo illustrated this dynamic by describing his experience with some of his friends from high school who believed many of the negative portrayals of Mexicans in the media, "at first it was a little awkward because like I had to explain not everything they see in the media is true." Moreover, one participant (Ruby) explained that her friends were against hanging out with White classmates, as will be discussed in the next section.

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. Almost all peer messages *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* were from same-ethnic high school friends, except one case in the sub-category *redefining ethnic identity* where the participant was referring to both different-ethnic and same-ethnic friends.

Over half of participants described same-ethnic high school friends as *redefining ethnic identity* by stimulating participants to determine what it means to be Mexican and its importance. Ruby exemplified this when she explained that her same-ethnic high school friends helped her establish that there were different ways of being Mexican:

I have friends whose parents came here when they were young and they all still feel Mexican. Even though I can feel like there's a difference – so there's not one way to be Mexican. Like you

don't have to be like 100% born in Mexico, you could be born here and as long as ... you have the culture around you, you're still Mexican.

Other examples included participants' same-ethnic friends emphasizing being Mexican more than their family did, as well as redefining cultural beliefs of Machismo and what it means to be a Mexican man. Analía shared that both her same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends made her feel more authentically Mexican than her family did because she knew more about the Mexican culture than her friends did whereas her Mexican-born parents made her feel she was more Americanized. Receiving these messages from high school friends helped participants reevaluate and redefine what being Mexican means to them.

Both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers conveyed messages *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* in high school. The sub-category *experiencing uncomfortable situations* was unique to different-ethnic peer messages and the sub-category *discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends* was unique to one same-ethnic peer message. In an instance where different-ethnic peers made the participant feel like they did not belong, Isabel recalled feeling belittled by classmates her freshmen year in a predominately white high school:

When – one of the teachers was like “oh do you guys know what Cornell notes are” and then everyone raised their hands and I was kind of just like “oh I have no idea.” And it kind of just felt like it was because of the education that I got because of where I was. And it's also like, I don't know if it was just me being paranoid or scared, but I kind of felt like they looked at me a weird way. Like if I told them where I'm from they'd be like “oh, you're from there?”

Participants in this sub-category felt their different-ethnic classmates thought less of them because of their ethnic and/or educational background. On the other hand, as noted previously, Ruby's same-ethnic high school friends disliked interacting with White peers: “there was like some sort of prejudice like no one wanted to hang out with the gringos.” She explained that this stemmed from not being able to establish commonalities, as well as the sense that these White peers felt prejudice towards them.

Gender Nuances. There were subtle differences in frequency and content identified between how female and male participants described their high school friends *Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. The most notable differences based on gender were in the category *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. Within the sub-category *debunking stereotypes*, only female participants describe their friends as motivating them to discredit stereotypes and stigmas about being Mexican.

In terms of distinctions in content, in the sub-category *redefining ethnic identity*, only male participants described their friends as redefining their cultural beliefs, specifically gendered beliefs of masculinity in Mexican culture. These participants described being raised in Mexican households that supported the traditional cultural beliefs that men should be the breadwinners, strong, and head of household; however, their friends supported that it is acceptable for men to express emotion, reject a

household hierarchy, and believe in equal respect within the family unit. In contrast, female participants said their friends showed there is more than one way to be “authentically Mexican” beyond being born in Mexico, when their parents immigrated from Mexico, or how engaged they were with their culture.

College Peer Ethnic Socialization

Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience was less prevalent in college than in high school. Eight participants described peer messages that contributed to their understanding of their ethnic group, what their ethnicity means to them, and its importance. As was true in high school, most of these participants described their friends as *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. Some participants described peer messages that focused on *debunking stereotypes* by highlighting the importance of showing the positive aspects of being Mexican and demonstrating they are capable of being successful despite others believing otherwise. For instance, Ximena mentioned the distinction she noticed between messages from high school and college peers:

I think my high school friends like accepted kind of like the bad stereotypes that went along with being Mexican. But ... my college friends don't do that, I guess. Maybe it's like the way of thinking is different because they're here ... they try to always better themselves, trying to find stuff to do around campus.

Similarly, other participants said that their college friends were more aware of how people in their new context might view them due to their ethnic background. This made them focus on proving they were more than the negative stereotypes they were being portrayed as.

Only a few participants described peer messages on *redefining ethnic identity* in college. These messages changed participants' understanding of what it meant and looked like to be Mexican in a new, diverse context that included people from different cultures, ethnicities, Latino sub-groups, and Mexican backgrounds. Mateo illustrated how participation in a Latino based student organization helped him redefine what Mexicans are capable of accomplishing:

We had presentations and like we have a lot of companies come in and usually like a Latino, so I'm like okay wow is this Latino working for this company or this firm. That I really didn't expect so okay like there's actually people like me doing those sort of jobs.

Other examples included friends representing how diverse Latinos are (e.g., phenotype) and different ways they can openly embrace being Latino in a new context (e.g., protesting), as well as friends challenging the participants' understanding of what it means to be Mexican.

Also rare in college were peer messages aimed at *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. A few participants described *experiencing uncomfortable situations*, where peers demonstrated intolerance towards their ethnic group or indirectly made participants feel out of place. A couple of participants mentioned experiencing these uncomfortable situations based on college peer messages that

felt isolating and/or insensitive. For example, Elias described his experience with one of his conservative frat brothers who brought up opposing political beliefs on immigration laws:

[My Frat brother] was talking about immigration laws and stuff like that. I told him “oh yeah, cool.” I didn’t really want to get into the whole debate ... I just told him “I am Mexican, but I really don’t care.” I mean I am not going to share my personal political beliefs with a stranger ... It just reminded me oh shoot, there’s still some people who have this thing against my group, or my ethnic background.

Additionally, a couple of participants shared college peer messages *discouraging interaction with different-ethnic friends*. In these cases, it was clear that being in a new context where their ethnic group was no longer the majority made some of the participants’ friend groups feel that as Latinos they should stick together. These college peer group messages were against the participant spending time with or discussing certain topics with friends or peers from different ethnic groups. Eva and Mauricio will be further discussed later on in the case study analysis section of this results chapter.

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. All peer messages *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* were from same-ethnic college friends, thus both sub-categories (*redefining ethnic identity* and *debunking stereotypes*) were unique to same-ethnic peer messages. As described earlier, participants described same-ethnic college friends as challenging, demonstrating, inspiring, and supporting participants to redefine and represent what being Mexican means to them in their new context and experiences. In one instance, Elias mentioned that his college friends helped redefine what being Mexican looks like by demonstrating different ways they can openly embrace being Mexican in a new context and representing Mexican phenotype diversity.

Tony illustrated how his same-ethnic friends shared his view on showing everyone that they do not fit the Mexican stereotypes and are capable of achieving their goals like anyone else, “they wanna show the world that they’re not what they’re made out to be. And they wanna just show that they can do things that others can as well.” Furthermore, these same-ethnic college peers were very focused on proving that they belong in this new predominately White college context and can attain their goals despite the system being against them. Valentina explained, “it’s important to show that - it’s not always what they put us out to be, and that everything is happening systemically, but you just have to find a way to beat the system.”

Both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers conveyed messages *Inhibiting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience* in college. However, the sub-category *experiencing uncomfortable situations* was unique to different-ethnic peer messages and the sub-category *discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends* was unique to same-ethnic peer messages. A few participants described *experiencing uncomfortable situations* with different-ethnic peers. Eva (discussed in the case study

section) shared an episode where her roommate's conservative White friend kept mentioning opposing political views. She described the emotional/mental toll this conversation had on her and her disappointment that her roommate did not mediate the situation. Valentina recounted that she and her same-ethnic friends shared the awkward experience of trying to participate in discussion and/or exist in a classroom filled with predominately White peers when issues of racism were raised:

You feel like weird or uncomfortable trying to speak up because there's other people that could have experienced other things, but you come from a Chicago public school and you go through most of these things so it's kind of different like "should I raise my hand and share my experience like that?" Do I not say anything?

Finally, a couple of participants described their same-ethnic friends as *discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends*. In one case, same-ethnic peers criticized a participant for spending time with different-ethnic friends (Eva), and in another case, they shut down conversations with White peers because they are not interested in hearing their opinions on certain issues (Mauricio). These messages made participants cautious in determining how important their ethnicity is to their overall identity. These participants will be discussed in the case analysis.

Gender Nuances. There were no differences in category frequency by gender. However, there was one subtle difference in content within the category *Prompting Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience*. In the sub-category *redefining ethnic identity*, the male participants described their same-ethnic college friends as demonstrating and motivating them to shift their perception of what it means and looks like to be Mexican, as well as what Mexican people are capable of accomplishing. The female participant's same-ethnic college friends also played a role in her establishing what being Mexican meant to her but this process involved same-ethnic friends challenging her Mexican authenticity.

Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation

This third construct reflected the final dimension of ethnic identity, affirmation, which involved peers promoting a sense of belonging to, and positive attitudes towards, participants' ethnic group. Five categories of *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation* were identified (see Table 3).

Creating cultural unity was defined as participants sharing a cultural connection with their peers, which established a sense of belonging, such as engaging in the same cultural traditions and sharing the same cultural beliefs the participant was raised with. *Empowering cultural pride* involved participants' peers inspiring or encouraging them to embrace their culture/ethnicity and reinforcing positive feelings towards their ethnic group and ethnicity. In some cases, participants attempted to encourage their peers to have positive feelings towards their ethnic group and ethnicity. *Reinforcing ethnic identity* was described as peers supporting how participants were raised and helping them feel secure about their ethnic identity. *Developing cross-cultural unity* entailed peers from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds bonding with

the participant by discussing similar values, beliefs, and/or struggles. In some cases, these peers helped create a sense of belonging. *Embracing Mexican culture* involved peers showing an interest in learning about the participants' Mexican culture and what is considered to be authentic.

Table 3. Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation

Categories	Overall Sample	Peer Ethnicity		Participant Gender	
		Same	Different	Female	Male
High School	16	12	6	9	7
Creating cultural unity	10	10	0	4	6
Empowering cultural pride	9	6	3	5	4
Reinforcing ethnic identity	3	3	0	2	1
Developing cross-cultural unity	3	0	3	2	1
Embracing Mexican culture	5	0	5	3	2
College	18	15	9	10	8
Creating cultural unity	8	8	0	5	3
Empowering cultural pride	13	12	2	6	7
Reinforcing ethnic identity	8	7	2	6	2
Developing cross-cultural unity	3	0	3	1	2
Embracing Mexican culture	7	0	7	5	2

Note. Numbers in this table represent the number of participants in each category. Individuals were coded for more than one category. The numbers in the peer ethnicity column do not always match the overall total because in some cases, individuals' peer messages were coded as being from both same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers.

High School Peer Ethnic Socialization

Sixteen participants described their high school friends as *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation*. The majority of these participants described their high school friends as *creating cultural unity* and *empowering cultural pride*. High school friends *created cultural unity* through spending time together and sharing similar culturally relevant experiences, hardships, and traditions. Additionally, this category encompassed sharing the same cultural beliefs the participant was raised with that people outside of their ethnic group might not fully understand or relate to. For instance, Santiago described how this cultural bonding created a sense of closeness among his Latino high school friends:

It revolves around the whole, I guess important factor of Latino culture which is Unity, so the whole unifying factor of being able to talk about certain things that no one else can relate to, was a fact that made it so comforting. Someone had the same experiences as me, someone knows the struggles and finds stuff that you can do with this culture, so it's that reaffirming factor that there's a commonality between two people.

Many participants described their high school friends as *empowering cultural pride* by embracing their culture and/or sharing and encouraging positive feelings towards their ethnicity. Isabel illustrated how her high school friends' messages empowered her to have pride in her cultural/ethnic identity:

It just helped me be more proud of who I am ... especially starting high school – I don't want to say I was ashamed, but ... I kind of felt like – I felt belittled because I was different. And just being friends with them, like the messages that they gave me or what I learned from them kind of just like “oh there's nothing wrong with me like, you know, I need to be proud of who I am and just embrace it and not be scared of being different.”

A few participants described their high school friends as *reinforcing ethnic identity* by strengthening how secure they feel about their ethnic identity. In some instances, friends supported participants' parental ethnic socialization messages. For example, Noah described his high school friends' messages as being important to him because they justify the way he was raised: “if my parents are telling me this but they're [best friend's parents] also telling my best friend the same thing, I guess it's something that I should listen to.” Other examples included participants feeling their friends gave them a better appreciation and acceptance of their culture and ethnic identity.

A few participants described *developing cross-cultural unity* with their friends by discussing commonalities, distinct struggles, and different cultures/ethnicities. Analia described developing a sense of unity with her friends by talking with them about their different cultures and identifying similarities among their distinct cultures and bonding over them. Moreover, some friends were described as *embracing Mexican culture* by expressing interest in learning about and displaying an accepting attitude towards Mexican culture. This is illustrated by Mateo when he shared his experience with his White and Asian friends, “they talk about their family vacations to Mexico ... they are fascinated by the culture, the music and they think it's interesting ... So I thought it was positive.”

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. The majority of peer messages *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation* in high school were from same-ethnic friends. Two categories were unique to same-ethnic peer messages: *creating cultural unity* and *reinforcing ethnic identity*. These categories illustrated how same-ethnic peers instill a positive sense of belonging to participants' ethnic group through bonding over cultural similarities and struggles, as well as reinforcing parental ethnic socialization messages and cultural upbringing. A few participants mentioned sharing a common struggle with same-ethnic friends of feeling stuck between two cultures. Hector exemplified this by describing that he learned about being Mexican from his parents, but they did not share his experience of being born and raised in the United States. His friends did:

But for my friends it would be more like, it would be kind of the same thing... [W]hen I go to Mexico, you're too American to be Mexican, and here you're too Mexican to be American. So, we were kind of like, we like share that middle ground experience...

These peer ethnic socialization messages on ethnic identity struggles help participants remain connected to their ethnic group through this shared experience. Although the experience of not feeling they fully

belong to either culture could be perceived as negative, their friends sharing their experience with the same struggle creates a sense of connection and belonging.

Furthermore, in the category *empowering cultural pride* almost all peer ethnic socialization messages were from same-ethnic friends, except for a couple of cases. For example, Ruby described her different-ethnic friends making her indirectly feel that it was a good thing to have a culture distinct from theirs, as it was something that made her unique. More commonly, participants described same-ethnic friends overtly encouraging them to feel proud of their ethnic identity. Tony illustrated this sentiment, “they gave like more an incentive to feel empowered because of who you are.” Therefore, same-ethnic friends empowering cultural pride was not only described more often, it was also more evident and direct to the participant.

Two categories were unique to different-ethnic peer messages: *developing cross-cultural unity* and *embracing Mexican culture*. These two categories reflected peers being accepting and interested in forming cross-cultural connections and learning about the Mexican culture. For instance, Sofia described how she and her different-ethnic friends shared common struggles related to their ethnicities:

We would all kind of talk about our own difficulties that we’ve had, regarding our own ethnicities, and in that way, we kind of all related with each other. Any sort of discrimination or stereotypes that were placed on us, because of our own ethnicities.

Participants also described their different-ethnic friends as being eager to learn about their Mexican culture by traveling to Mexico, listening to the music, as well as trying and learning about authentic Mexican food. Overall, receiving these accepting and relatable ethnic socialization messages from their different-ethnic peers provided participants with a positive feeling towards their ethnicity.

Gender Nuances. There were two minor distinctions in emphasis between female and male participants’ descriptions of their friends *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation*. First, in the category of *empowering cultural pride*, female participants tended to describe feeling embarrassed or reluctant to fully embrace being Mexican, but their same-ethnic friends helped elevate their sense of pride by emphasizing the importance of being Latina and demonstrating how to embrace their ethnicity. Male participants also described same-ethnic friends empowering pride in culture/ethnicity. However, they mostly shared that their same-ethnic friends supported their already established pride through sayings or chants, and encouraged them to maintain and further enhance their sense of pride. Second, in the category of *embracing Mexican culture*, female participants described their different-ethnic friends as mainly being interested in trying and learning about authentic Mexican food. In contrast, male participants described friends from different ethnic backgrounds showing an interest in embracing participants’ Mexican culture by visiting Mexico and listening to music in Spanish.

College Peer Ethnic Socialization

Eighteen participants described their college friends as *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation*. The majority of these participants described their college friends as *empowering cultural pride*. In college, participants' peer messages emphasized unapologetically embracing and accepting their Mexican culture, especially in a new context where their ethnic group is now the minority. Tony illustrated this when describing how his college friends' ethnic socialization messages encouraged him to embrace his ethnic identity and demonstrate his pride:

I learned that I shouldn't be afraid to show who I am and being more prideful. And showing that – the farther I get, the more better I get to represent who I am. And that's just the thing I have learned from my college friends here ... because I wasn't in a diverse environment back in high school, I just don't feel like everyone was like so prideful I think or didn't show an interest in wanting to demonstrate that ... I feel like here that's like such a big thing.

Two other common categories were *creating cultural unity* and *reinforcing ethnic identity*. In college, participants described their friends as *creating cultural unity* through speaking Spanish, listening to music in Spanish, and sharing similar values and goals. For instance, Valentina and her friends were working towards a similar goal, "we want to show people who we are, and not be afraid to show people who we are. It's really inspiring, to see them, themselves do what they want to do without shame." Compared to high school friends, college friends were more often described as *reinforcing ethnic identity* by encouraging participants to maintain their ethnic identity and Mexican culture, as well as reinforcing their upbringing. This led to a positive sense of ethnic identity among participants. Isabel exemplified this sentiment when she shared how her friends' affirming messages made her feel:

It makes me feel good about who I am, good about where I come from, about my family ... I feel like if I didn't get them, I'd feel kind of insecure about who I was. But since I do get these messages, I feel really confident being a Latina.

Like in high school, college friends provided messages about *embracing Mexican culture* by being interested in participants' culture, wanting to try Mexican food, and making them feel welcomed and accepted. Ruby described how her friends' interest in her descriptions of her mother's home cooking made her feel about her ethnic identity, "it's just nice to have positive feedback or vibes I can sense they're interested in what I'm talking about." A few participants described college peers as *developing cross-cultural unity* by bonding over commonalities between two different cultures or experiencing similar issues. In one case, Lucia described a discussion she had with her roommate's Chinese friend about their similar issues with cultural food authenticity; essentially, that most people believe the basic fast-food version of their cultural food is authentic and that most people do not really know what authentic Mexican and Chinese cuisine is.

Same-Ethnic vs. Different-Ethnic Peers. The majority of peer messages *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation* in college were from same-ethnic friends, although only one category was unique to same-ethnic peer messages (*creating cultural unity*). Peer ethnic socialization messages creating cultural unity seemed to hold more significance in college compared to high school because they helped the participants feel connected to their ethnic group, culture, and home, and provided a sense of comfort and belonging in a new context. For instance, Maribel described the unifying power of her same-ethnic college friends sharing similar cultural values and appreciation for their culture:

I feel like they also value their background too. So, for them like similar things that are important to me are also important to them like their family. Just like their background ... It's just nice to see how family is also important to them because we're able to connect more, it's just the same.

These same-ethnic peer messages provided participants with a way to remain connected to their Mexican culture and develop new friendships in college.

Most instances of *empowering cultural pride* and *reinforcing ethnic identity* involved same-ethnic peer messages, although both categories had a few cases of different-ethnic peer messages. Participants typically described their same-ethnic friends as *empowering cultural pride* through demonstrating their pride, embracing their culture, and encouraging acceptance. Noah exemplified this dynamic:

It's empowering, very prideful. I guess an example that I thought of, whenever we go on car rides, one of us starts playing Banda music, and we all sing along to it because we all know, and it's something that makes you feel prideful about who you are because there are people who are also prideful, and it just resonates in the whole room so it's very empowering to have people with the same background as you.

A couple of participants described different-ethnic friends empowering cultural pride by indirectly demonstrating distinctions in background and being supportive of them being unapologetically Mexican. Santiago shared that spending time with his different-ethnic friends in college has made him realize how different his background is and that he needs to show it to everyone so they are more aware of their background. This has made him more prideful of this ethnic background.

Same-ethnic friends also validated the participants' cultural upbringing and supported cultural maintenance (*reinforcing ethnic identity*). For instance, Catalina's same-ethnic friends admired the way she was raised to speak Spanish fluently, most notably when they studied abroad:

They were like "I wish I was raised speaking Spanish first." So that was nice. So, they think that also the fact that I'm also very loud and comfortable with who I am, as a Mexican, is because I was raised that way ... they were forced to talk in English. Or their parents weren't home as much to teach them Spanish, or they went to predominantly white schools where there weren't a lot of Mexicans.

Similarly, a couple of participants described different-ethnic peers as praising them for how they maintained and practiced their culture in college. Thus, both same-ethnic and different-ethnic college friends played a role in reinforcing ethnic identity.

As was the case in high school, two categories were unique to different-ethnic peer messages: *embracing Mexican culture* and *developing cross-cultural unity*. These two categories reflected peers who were accepting and interested in learning about the Mexican culture and forming cross-cultural connections. Some participants described their friends from different ethnic backgrounds showing an interest in learning about Mexican culture. Analía illustrated this dynamic: “it was mostly ‘oh you’re from this culture like that’s pretty cool and like teach me more about that’ or ‘take me to some restaurants’ and like all that. It was just, they were all very welcoming of the culture.”

Gender Nuances. There were subtle differences in frequency and content identified between how female and male participants described their friends *Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation*. Instances of *reinforcing ethnic identity* and *embracing Mexican culture* were mostly described by female participants. Over half of female participants described how the messages they received from their college friends reinforced how they felt about their ethnic identity (compared to only a couple of male participants). Moreover, about half of female participants described friends from different ethnic backgrounds who embraced the participants’ Mexican culture (vs. two male participants).

In college, there were some cases in the category *empowering cultural pride* where the participant described a distinction in their level of pride in their Mexican culture compared to their same-ethnic friends. Most of these cases involved male participants; only a couple of female participants emphasized this distinction. These participants shared that they noticed that their same-ethnic peers were not as prideful about their Mexican culture as they were, which in some cases encouraged participants to empower their same-ethnic friends to develop a stronger sense of pride in their Mexican culture.

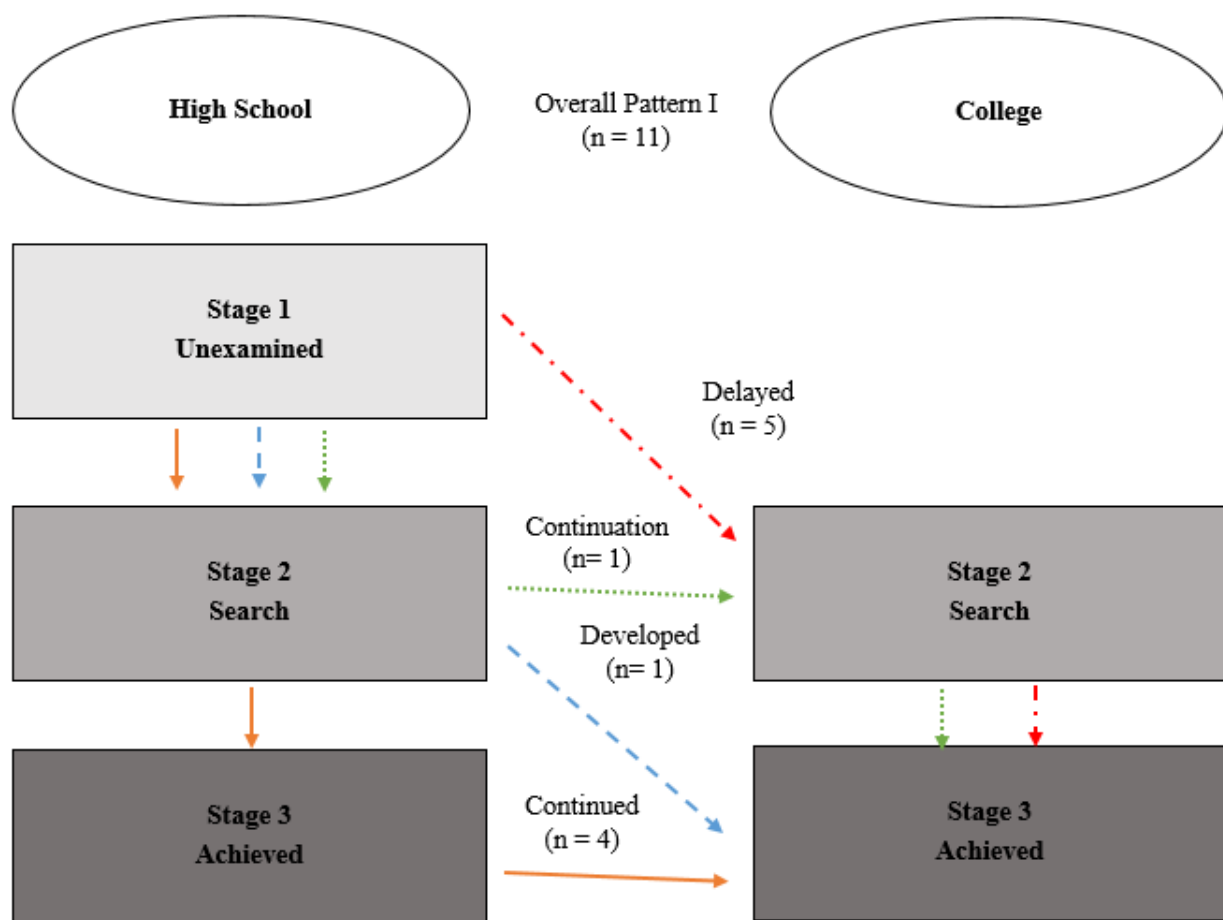
Ethnic Identity Development Over Time Patterns and Case Studies

The second research question asked about the impact of ethnic socialization messages from peers on ethnic identity development. The previous section illustrated reoccurring themes for each dimension of stage theory and illustrated the content of peer messages. This section will illustrate the impact of these peer messages on ethnic identity development over time. Based on the dimensions of stage theory identified within each participant’s data corpus, different patterns that reflected movement through the three stages of ethnic identity (i.e., unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, achieved ethnic identity) across high school and college were identified. I will describe the three patterns of ethnic identity development over time and present case studies to illustrate each identified pattern. The selected case studies represent the most prevalent ethnic identity stage patterns.

Ethnic Identity Normative Development Trajectories

The defining feature of the first pattern is that it represents a linear ethnic identity development trajectory, which means that the ethnic identity stages are experienced and developed in the theoretically expected order. Eleven participants fit into this first overarching stage pattern. Four sub-patterns were identified that reflected normative developmental trajectories: *continued achieved ethnic identity*, *delayed ethnic identity development*, *developed achieved ethnic identity*, and *continuation of ethnic identity search* (See Figure 5). What differentiates each sub-pattern is when stages were developed (high school or college) and the progression of stage development over time (continued, delayed, or developed).

Figure 5. Ethnic Identity Normative Development Trajectories (Pattern I)



Continued Achieved Ethnic Identity. One of the most prevalent sub-patterns consisted of individuals who had an unexamined foreclosed ethnic identity (first stage) before high school, mainly based on the foundation constructed by their family. High school peers then encouraged them to engage with their culture, which is an aspect of the second stage ethnic identity search. High school peers also played a role in their movement to the third stage (ethnic identity achievement) by helping them establish

a clear understanding and commitment to their ethnic identity by either informing their ethnic identity resolution/salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. In college, these participants described their college peers as helping them further establish their already committed achieved ethnic identity. They did this by informing their ethnic identity resolution/salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. Four participants fit into this sub-pattern. The following case study illustrates how participants with an achieved ethnic identity were prompted to further establish their ethnic identity during their first year of college.

Before high school, Eva was at the first stage of ethnic identity development. She had an unexamined ethnic identity of the foreclosure subtype, meaning her views of ethnicity were constructed by others' opinions. For example, Eva shared that her extended family in Mexico made her feel like she is not Mexican enough, "I get looked down on, because 'oh you're too Americanized' which is not the case, but I can see why someone would make such assumptions." Furthermore, Eva mentioned that her nuclear family did not visit Mexico often and would tend to say, "we're not going to Mexico this year." Eva's mother had lived in the U.S. for 28 years and her father for 32 years. They were both from the state of Jalisco in Mexico. English and Spanish were both spoken in Eva's household.

Eva grew up in Chicago where a majority of the people in her neighborhood were Mexican and attended a high school where almost everyone was Mexican. Eva described her same-ethnic high school friends as prompting her to move to the second stage of ethnic identity (ethnic identity search) by emphasizing visiting Mexico more than her family did. According to Eva, "it was kind of a thing that our high school did, especially when everyone's Mexican, and they're all going to their trips to Durango, Zacatecas, different places." Specifically, Eva mentioned her friend's parents emphasizing going back to Mexico every year, while Eva's parents did not. This emphasis from her peers on the importance of going back to Mexico to reconnect with family and their roots encouraged Eva to reflect on why her family did not put as much emphasis on going to Mexico. This also played a role in Eva exploring how meaningful this was to her Mexican identity, which is an aspect of the second stage ethnic identity search. Eva felt the messages she received from her same-ethnic friends were important to her because:

Here, they are also first-generation students - their parents are from Mexico but they don't feel at home when they go to Mexico. So, we all reminded each other of "You're just as Mexican as someone else born in Mexico" so I think that was really important.

Eva's same-ethnic friends supported her in redefining what it means to be Mexican, which made her feel more authentic about her Mexican identity. Therefore, Eva's same-ethnic peers encouraged ethnic identity exploration and prompted ethnic identity resolution and salience.

Eva also described her same-ethnic friends promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation through cultural unity. Eva explained that because she and her friends were all Mexican and all went to the same high school they shared similar cultural traditions and experiences:

We all understood when it was like “oh we can’t hang out because we had to go to Mass on Sundays, or we can’t do that group project on Sunday morning because my mom doesn’t let me miss Mass.” It was like everyone knows, because they relate to it too. So, it was like whatever you have going on, I most likely have it going on too.

Eva shared that bonding over cultural connections with same-ethnic friends created a sense of unity during a time that can feel isolating, which promoted a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of her ethnic identity. These peer messages helped Eva reach the third stage, an achieved ethnic identity. Eva’s achieved ethnic identity provided a strong basis for dealing with the challenges she faced during her first year of college; without that base, “I wouldn’t have the core of my being. That sounds a little dramatic, but I don’t think I would’ve been strong enough to withstand like everything that I’m going through now in college in regards to my identity.”

In college, Eva was eager to socialize with people from a range of cultural backgrounds, which resulted in a diversity of peer messages relating to her ethnic identity. She described messages from same-ethnic and different-ethnic peers that inhibited ethnic identity exploration, prompted ethnic identity resolution and salience, and promoted positive ethnic identity affirmation. Although not all peer messages were considered positive, they challenged Eva to reflect on her ethnic identity and what it meant to her, which ultimately strengthened her achieved ethnic identity.

First, Eva shared that her same-ethnic college friends would make negative comments about spending time with different-ethnic friends, which will be further discussed later on. Eva described what these messages meant to her:

I just wanna tell them that I’m more than just Mexican. I’m also a person aside from that if you remove that identity. I’m just someone who is new to college and is trying to meet people, and if that means going out of my comfort zone and going to like Indian student association game night with my Indian friend to meet more people, I’m gonna do that. And I’m not going as her Mexican friend I’m going as just a friend.

These opportunities for diverse cultural exposure inhibited Eva from further exploring her ethnic identity in a new context. Moreover, Eva described not receiving messages from her different-ethnic college friends about her ethnicity because there was a lack of cultural and ethnic connection. The lack of messages also inhibited ethnic identity exploration.

Additionally, Eva described the messages she received from her different-ethnic college friends as experiencing uncomfortable situations. For example, her White roommate posted pictures of herself

and Eva with the caption “I’m with my Spanish Barbie.” Eva did not feel her different-ethnic friends were using her as a token friend; however, there were a few times when they introduced her as “my Hispanic friend.” Another specific example involved her roommate’s friend who was visiting from another university:

[H]e said something about Trump and like apparently he’s very conservative. He liked to say that he was playing devil’s advocate – and my roommate knows how I feel about this – whether you’re playing devil’s advocate or not I don’t have the mental and emotional capacity to entertain you or amuse you. I don’t want to waste my time with that, and in that instance I kind of wish my roommate would’ve been like “let’s switch the topic” or “let’s not talk about this”, but for someone who says “oh your feelings are valid I feel your struggle I feel it” but then won’t intervene or use her privilege to stop those conversations? I’m just like are you really an ally or are you just saying that you have a Mexican friend?

At the same time, Eva described her same-ethnic friends as discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends in college:

My business org, they said something the other day. They were like “oh she’s just always hanging out at those White frat parties” and I was like, “Oh what? Just because I don’t go with you guys to Latin night at Joe’s every Thursday doesn’t mean I’m always hanging out with White people,” because to me, it was like they were coming at me sideways for thinking I am White because my roommate is White and I hang out with White people.

Eva felt her same-ethnic friends were trying to say that she was turning her back on the Latino community. However, Eva did not agree:

That’s not the case. I volunteer with you guys and I do a lot of things and it’s just like when it’s my time to relax and hang out and if like I do want to go out and I do want to go with my friends, they are obviously not – Indian or Colombian and a White girl aren’t going to want to go to Latin night at Joe’s and listen to Mexican music all night – so it’s just like they’re my closest friends so I’m gonna do what they want to do sometimes.

In the examples above, Eva described her different-ethnic and same-ethnic friends as discouraging ethnic identity resolution and salience. These discouraging negative experiences prompted her to reflect on what her ethnic identity meant to her:

I think it’s made it stronger I think I’m just redefining what it means to me. Like I can be Mexican and still hang out with other people or I can still be Mexican and no one is going to discredit me or revoke my Mexican card ... I think it’s giving me the opportunity to really look back and be like, “what does it mean to me” kind of thing, and to me it means being connected to my roots, being connected to my parents, being connected to my community, and even if my

community wants to be like, “Oh you are less Mexican because of XY and Z,” I know that in my heart that’s not the case...

Thus, these discouraging peer experiences initiated a reevaluation of what it means to be Mexican, and this process strengthened Eva’s ethnic identity development.

Furthermore, Eva shared that her different-ethnic college friends promoted positive ethnic identity affirmation by reinforcing her ethnic identity, “I get praise for it with my college friends for sure ... it’s like they kind of praise me for being so close to my culture and my roots.” For example, Eva’s White roommate expresses admiration for Eva for knowing how to speak Spanish and teaching her about authentic Mexican food. It is evident that despite the challenges Eva faced during her first year in college with her ethnic identity, she was able to establish a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of her ethnic identity. Thus, having a strong positive ethnic identity developed early on with her family and same-ethnic high school friends, as well as receiving positive affirmation from her different-ethnic college friends, contributed to her continuing to establish the third stage an achieved ethnic identity.

Delayed Ethnic Identity Development. Another prevalent sub-pattern included five participants who initially had an unexamined foreclosed ethnic identity (first stage) mainly based on the foundation constructed by their family. Then, high school peers played a role in participants starting to move towards ethnic identity search (second stage), by informing participants’ ethnic identity resolution and salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. However, they were not prompted to explore their ethnic identity beyond what they learned from their family. Thus, they remained in the first stage of ethnic identity in high school. In college, college peers encouraged these participants to engage in their ethnic culture, which is an aspect of the second stage ethnic identity search. After engaging in the search process, most participants progressed to the third stage of establishing a committed achieved ethnic identity with peers informing their ethnic identity resolution and salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. (There was one case in which the participant described her college peers playing a role in her progressing to the second stage of ethnic identity development by encouraging participation in her ethnic culture; but she did not describe her college peers playing a role in establishing the third stage an achieved ethnic identity.) The following case study illustrates that ethnic identity development is still in progress beyond high school.

Before and during high school, Analía had an unexamined/foreclosed ethnic identity informed by others’ opinions. For example, she described her family’s views of her:

My family saw me kind of like – well especially in the way I would speak English with them – they saw me kind of like “oh like you’re part of this culture but you’re not, you know you’re still kind of – you’re kind of brainwashed by all these White – this White culture.”

Analia's mother had lived in the U.S. for 32 years and her father for 28 years. Both parents were from the state of Jalisco in Mexico. English and Spanish were both spoken in Analia's household. Analia explained that her parents grew up in Mexico and had their set views of what it means to be authentically Mexican. Her parents viewed her as adapting to the majority culture in the United States, and they perceived her as not being authentically Mexican. Accepting these views played a role in Analia's remaining in the foreclosed stage of ethnic identity throughout high school.

On the other hand, Analia's different-ethnic and same-ethnic high school friends saw her as more authentically Mexican than her family did:

My friends didn't really know about like the Mexican culture or the Latino culture, and so they saw me as kind of more authentic, like I knew more things or like I was part of it more than my parents saw me.

Analia's high school friends played a role in redefining what it means to be authentically Mexican, which prompted ethnic identity resolution. This encouraged her to start establishing what being Mexican meant to her beyond her parents' views of what it means to be authentically Mexican. Analia grew up in a suburb of Chicago where there was about an equal mix of Latinos and people from other ethnic groups in her neighborhood. She also attended a high school where a majority of the people were from a different racial/ethnic group from her.

Additionally, Analia described her different-ethnic friends as promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. For instance, Analia and her different-ethnic friends would bond over similarities between their different cultures: "Oh in my culture like I do this" and like "oh we do that the same thing" like "we do the same thing in ours." Analia described these friends as being very accepting of her Mexican background and open to learning about it. Analia shared that these messages of interest and acceptance of her culture were meaningful to her:

They were important to me because they taught me that people are open too ... not everyone's racist and not everyone's gonna shun you or think differently of you because you come from a different culture, and people are like open to accept. And they like learning about it, and I think that's why it was so important to me cause I found people who like learning about my culture and accept my culture.

Thus, Analia's positive ethnic socialization experiences with her high school friends prepared her to be open to start progressing to the second stage of ethnic identity development (ethnic identity search) in her new college context.

In college, Analia's friends prompted her to explore her ethnic identity, which assisted her in progressing to the second stage of ethnic identity development (ethnic identity search). She was

encouraged by her same-ethnic friends to engage in Mexican culture. For example, her same-ethnic friends encouraged her to be unapologetically Mexican in public spaces:

I noticed that my college friends, we embrace that part of ourselves when we play Spanish music. Even though not everyone in the room understands Spanish, they still like the music and we still play it, we don't care or anything.

Analia's father noticed a change in her cultural engagement:

He said, "You're eating more Mexican food, you never used to want tacos, you used to always want food with your friends like sandwiches, Jimmy Johns, and now you actually want to eat our food," and so my dad is impressed with that.

Analia further progressed in her ethnic identity search by being prompted by same-ethnic friends to reflect on her involvement in Mexican culture comparing her high school experience to her college experience. Analia mentioned that she did not have many Hispanic friends in high school; therefore, things pertaining to being Mexican did not come up. In college, she had more same-ethnic friends. With her college friends, Analia mentioned eating Mexican food and listening to Spanish music. However, she realized during the interview that her high school friends never played Spanish music, which she found odd. Analia further explained that her close friend group in high school included one Hispanic friend. What she found interesting was that the group would celebrate and engage in their Egyptian friend's heritage (e.g., by going to Egyptian celebrations, eating at Egyptian restaurants, and listening to Egyptian popular music). For Analia's and her Hispanic friend's celebrations, they would go to American restaurants and never really talked about why they did not engage in their culture more. Her college friends brought up their culture and ethnicity more through food, music, and discussing similarities in cultural upbringing. These socialization experiences with her same-ethnic peers in college prompted Analia to experience the stage of ethnic identity search where she had been encouraged to participate more in her Mexican culture and reflect on her previous lack of participation in Mexican culture in high school.

Analia then described how her same-ethnic friends promoted positive ethnic identity affirmation. She mentioned feeling comfortable sharing what she and her family did, as well as having a similar background and growing up in a similar way. For instance:

One time my friend had this Spotify playlist on, and we were in the room and a song came on and I was like "Oh I love this song! I used to listen to it all the time in my childhood," and she said, "Me too," so I feel more connected because they bring it up more.

Moreover, Analia described her same-ethnic friends as feeling proud of their background:

Yeah, just sometimes we're in a lounge in the building, by ourselves, just chilling, and then they play music, like Hispanic, Spanish music, it's a subtle thing, but I feel like you wouldn't be playing it if you didn't feel proud of that.

Analia also described how her different-ethnic friends promoted positive ethnic identity affirmation. One specific example Analia provided:

I have a friend, he's part of my main group. He's Indian, he loves Hispanic music, and we took him to this Mexican restaurant, and then we made him try all these different things and he loves it. He gives out a positive message about it.

Analia shared what these messages meant to her:

I feel like they just give me comfort. I don't have to - what's going on right now, and this whole thing with politics and everything. It just gives me comfort that this feeling of welcomeness, that they accepted me for who I am and everything.

These messages from both same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends were also important because they reinforced how Analia felt about her ethnic identity: "It makes me feel welcomed, and comfortable, and I can be who I am without hiding anything or without restraining any part of myself." Thus, Analia's college friends helped her establish the third stage of ethnic identity development, an achieved ethnic identity with a secure understanding and acceptance of her ethnic identity.

Developed Achieved Ethnic Identity. In this sub-pattern, the participant engaged in ethnic identity search (second stage) by the end of high school but did not develop an achieved ethnic identity (third stage) until the end of their first year in college. This sub-pattern was exemplified by one participant who before high school had an unexamined foreclosed ethnic identity mainly based on the foundation constructed by her family (first stage). In high school, her peers encouraged her to engage with her ethnic culture, which is an aspect of ethnic identity search (second stage). In college, peers then helped the participant reach the third stage of ethnic identity achievement. They did this by informing ethnic identity resolution/salience, promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation, and (similarly to Eva) inhibiting ethnic identity exploration.

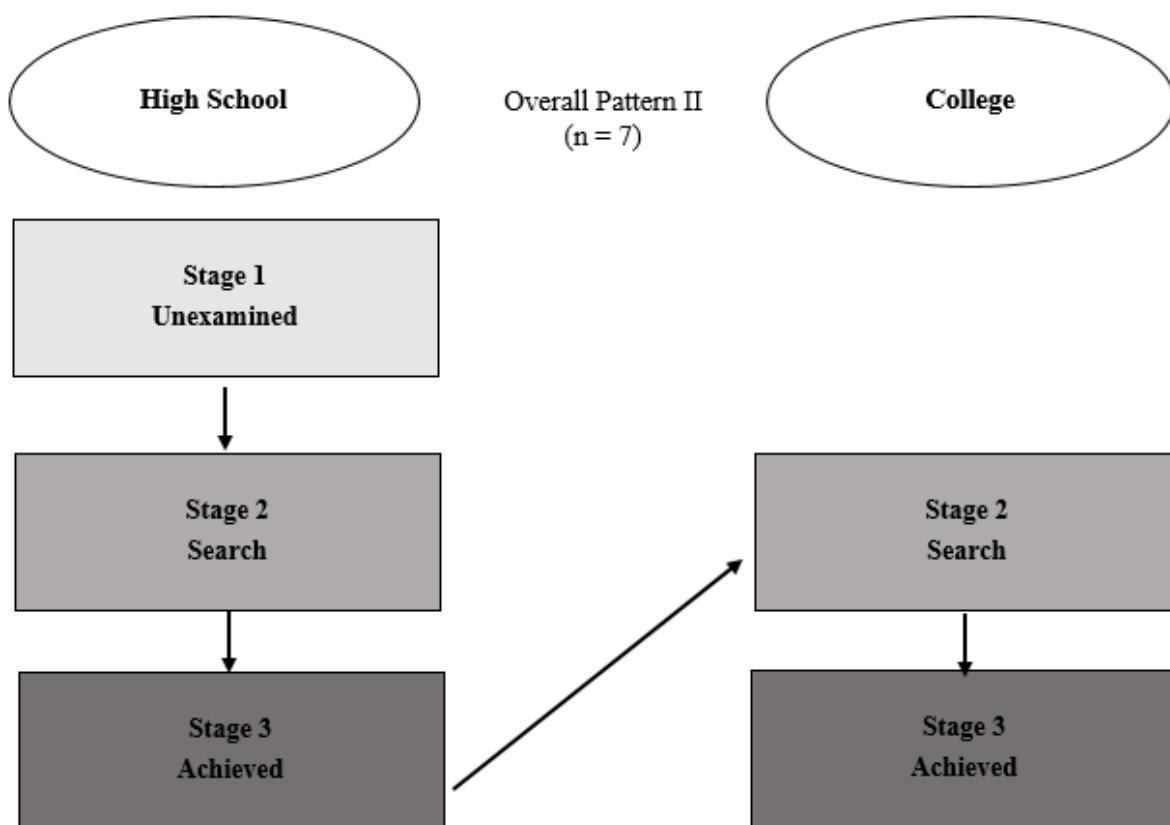
Continuation of Ethnic Identity Search. Another participant who began with an unexamined foreclosed ethnic identity (first stage) also described how high school peers encouraged her to engage with her ethnic culture, initiating her ethnic identity search (second stage). The distinction in this sub-pattern is that the participant continued to engage in ethnic identity search (second stage) in college and then developed an achieved ethnic identity (third stage) by the end of their first year in college. In college, peers prompted a continuation of her ethnic identity search by further encouraging participation in her ethnic culture. College peers then played a role in the participant moving to the third stage of ethnic

identity achievement by helping her establish a committed achieved ethnic identity by promoting her positive ethnic identity affirmation.

Revisiting Ethnic Identity Search

The defining feature of this pattern is that it represents some deviation from the linear ethnic identity development trajectory. In this case, the three ethnic identity stages are experienced and developed in order initially, but then the search stage is revisited and further developed, prompting individuals to recommit to an achieved ethnic identity (See Figure 6). Seven participants fit into this stage pattern.

Figure 6. Revisiting Ethnic Identity Search (Pattern II)



Participants in this pattern initially developed an unexamined foreclosed ethnic identity mainly based on the foundation constructed by their family (first stage). In high school, peers encouraged them to engage with their ethnic culture, which is an aspect of the ethnic identity search (second stage). High school peers also played a role in participants reaching the third stage of ethnic identity achievement by helping them establish a clear understanding and commitment to their ethnic identity by either informing their ethnic identity resolution/salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. In college, friends prompted a revisiting of the second stage (ethnic identity search) by encouraging participants to

engage with their ethnic culture. These college peers then helped the participants reestablish a committed achieved ethnic identity by informing their ethnic identity resolution and salience and/or promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation.

Within this overall pattern, there were two ways participants were prompted by their peers to reexamine their ethnic identity. A couple of participants described their same-ethnic college peers as prompting their revisiting of the second stage ethnic identity search by not being as engaged in their Mexican culture, which inspired participants to seek out cultural engagement. One way they would do this was by trying to encourage their same-ethnic peers to participate in, and learn more about, their culture. More commonly, participants emphasized that their college peers encouraged them to engage with their Mexican culture. Mauricio's case illustrates the vital role peers played in prompting this type of revisiting of ethnic identity search.

Mauricio's mother and father were both from the state of Michoacán in Mexico. They had lived in the U.S. for 20 years, and both English and Spanish were spoken in the home. Before high school, Mauricio developed an unexamined/foreclosed ethnic identity with his views of ethnicity constructed by his parents' opinions. For example, Mauricio shared that there was a sense of Machismo in his household growing up. Although Mauricio's father was respectful to Mauricio's mother and would tell him to respect her as well, Mauricio felt his father's behavior towards Mauricio's mother expressed something else. He further explained that his father established that he was the head of the household and that his wife was beneath him. Thus, Mauricio described being raised in a culturally patriarchal household. Additionally, he felt his parents obligated him to believe and participate in religion. The constructed views of ethnicity by Mauricio's parents, which he felt he had no choice other than to accept those views, led to an initial foreclosed ethnic identity. However, Mauricio's same-ethnic friends supported him in challenging these views and redefining what his ethnicity means to him. Mauricio shared that his same-ethnic friends did not believe in the cultural patriarchal hierarchy within the household and forced participation in religion. For instance, Mauricio said, "I think they [my friends] rejected it. There's no hierarchy. There is just living together, and if you have kids, then you have a kid – they're not beneath you either. Treat your kid with respect too." Thus, his same-ethnic friends were redefining the traditional cultural beliefs he was raised with, into more modern egalitarian beliefs and bidirectional respect. It appears his same-ethnic friends prompted Mauricio to learn more about his ethnicity and redefine what being Mexican meant to him. Mauricio grew up in Chicago where a majority of the people in his neighborhood were Mexican. However, he attended a high school where there was about an equal mix of Latinos and people from other ethnic groups.

In high school, Mauricio's different-ethnic friends played a role in potentially inhibiting ethnic identity exploration, while his same-ethnic friends prompted his progression to the second stage ethnic

identity search. Mauricio and his different-ethnic friends would talk about their cultures. Mauricio explained that this was an opportunity to learn about his friends' different cultures since they were from various European cultures, and he enjoyed learning about their food. This opportunity to learn about different cultures beyond his own peaked his interest in wanting to learn more about other cultures beyond his own hindering his interest in further exploring his own ethnic identity. However, he also noticed distinctions between himself and his same-ethnic friends. Mauricio mentioned that his same-ethnic friends ate different foods depending on the villages they were from in Mexico; therefore, he recognized that there is some diversity within his own ethnic group, in this case, food recipes and preparation distinctions based on region. Learning about within-group differences from his same-ethnic friends encouraged the second stage ethnic identity search.

Furthermore, Mauricio described his same-ethnic and different-ethnic friends in high school as promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. He noted that it was easier to connect with his same-ethnic friends because they shared various commonalities. However, he also mentioned being able to establish a connection with different-ethnic friends. For example, Mauricio mentioned that they would discuss commonalities between their two cultures (e.g., customs and food). Additionally, he described his different-ethnic peers as embracing his Mexican culture, "the friends that I had that weren't Mexican were usually eager to learn." These peer messages prompting resolution/salience and promoting affirmation had an impact on Mauricio reaching the third stage and developing an achieved ethnic identity by the end of his high school years.

In college, Mauricio's same-ethnic friends inspired him to revisit the second stage ethnic identity search by encouraging engagement in the Mexican culture. He mentioned embracing his ethnicity more in public spaces. For example, in high school, Mauricio never spoke Spanish outside his home because his same-ethnic friends either were not very good at Spanish or did not speak it in public. But in college, Mauricio's same-ethnic friends spoke Spanish no matter where they were. Mauricio shared the impact this had on his ethnic identity development, "I guess I'm learning to embrace my culture a little more, speak Spanish more openly, and it is happening just randomly use a Spanish word or make a whole sentence." His same-ethnic friends also influenced the foods he ate: "They went to more Mexican restaurants than I ever did, so I get to experience that again." Therefore, Mauricio recognized that there was a distinction in the level of cultural engagement between him and his same-ethnic college friends, with his same-ethnic college friends being more engaged than he was. At the same time, his more culturally engaged friends encouraged him to embrace his culture and engage in it more often now and in the future. For instance, Mauricio said:

I think that I should embrace [Mexican culture] a little more... I guess my parents would also enjoy me speaking Spanish a little bit out of the house more too. So, if I ever have a family, you

know, I could pass on our traditions and our culture, and they also want me to share it with my girlfriend like have her learn Spanish. You know, just in order for them to communicate with her easier.

It is evident that Mauricio's same-ethnic college friends' messages played a role in him revisiting the second stage ethnic identity search. However, although Mauricio's same-ethnic friends encouraged ethnic identity exploration, they also played a role in inhibiting ethnic identity resolution and salience by discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends.

Mauricio expressed that his same-ethnic friends' discouraging interactions with different-ethnic friends were problematic. He said they would exclude different-ethnic peers from conversations or not be open to what they had to say on social issues. This sentiment made Mauricio want to interact with other people no matter their race, "in a civil manner and a peaceful way." He also mentioned that his same-ethnic friends' ethnic identity salience was concerning to him. Mauricio shared that he did think his ethnic identity and being engaged in culture was important, but he also felt, "it can be a little dangerous to like make it a huge part of my identity cause it can result in – the alienation of others." Then, Mauricio explained that his same-ethnic college friends see their ethnic identity as more important than he does:

It's kind of like what defines them as a whole. And I just kind of see it as like one piece of my identity, and that if it was the only thing about my identity, I wouldn't really have an identity. I feel like there's a lot more to me than that.

It seems that Mauricio's same-ethnic college friends were discouraging ethnic identity resolution and salience. However, these experiences made him realize that while his ethnic identity was important to him it was not an all-encompassing aspect of his identity. It also made him more cognizant of how he expressed the importance of his ethnic identity and helped him recognize dismissive aspects of excessive ethnic identity salience.

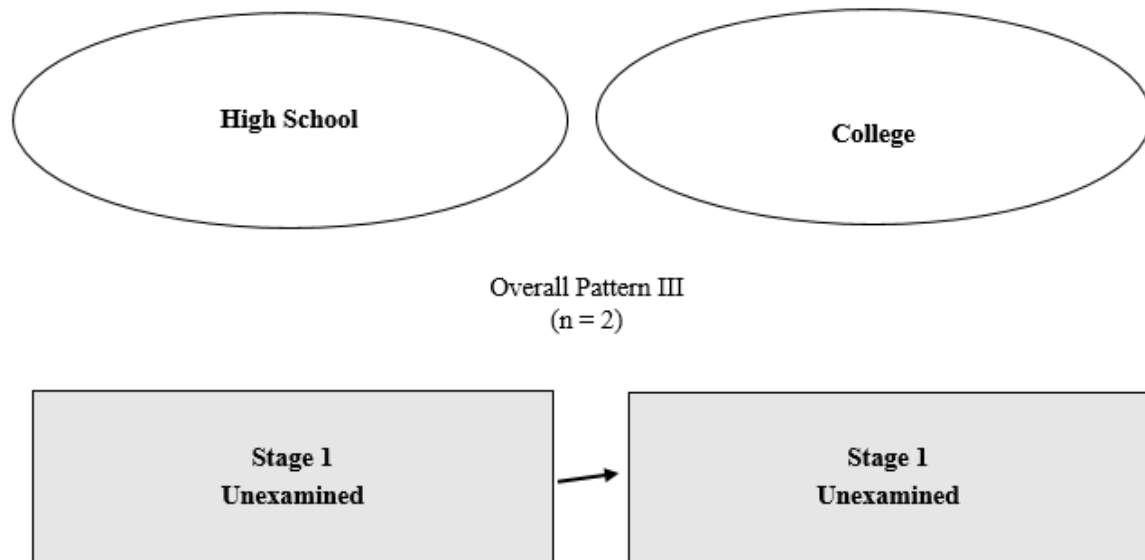
Nonetheless, Mauricio described his same-ethnic college friends as promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation by embracing their Mexican background, and expressing that it was a good thing to embrace your ethnicity. Thus, his same-ethnic friends were trying to empower his pride in his ethnicity, which contributed to him establishing a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of his ethnic identity. These ethnic identity messages prompting ethnic identity resolution/salience and promoting ethnic identity affirmation from Mauricio's college friends appear to have played a role in him solidifying the third stage of an achieved ethnic identity.

Diffused Unexamined Ethnic Identity

The defining feature of the third stage pattern is that it represents no movement or advancement in the ethnic identity development trajectory. This pattern characterized two participants who remained at

the first stage of ethnic identity with an unexamined diffused ethnic identity, which reflected a lack of interest or concern with their ethnicity (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Diffused Unexamined Ethnic Identity (Pattern III)



These participants described their ethnic identity search as being inhibited by their peers in high school for both participants and in college for one participant. Additionally, both participants described their college peers as promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. However, they were still indifferent about their ethnicity. The case study of Marco illustrates this pattern.

Marco was at the first stage of ethnic identity development with an unexamined ethnic identity of the diffusion subtype, as demonstrated by a lack of interest or concern with his ethnicity. He mentioned that everything he learned about being Mexican was learned from his family. Marco's mother had lived in the U.S. for 45 years and his father for 36 years. Both parents were from the state of Durango in Mexico. Only English was spoken in Marco's household. Marco grew up in a suburb of Chicago where there was about an equal mix of Latinos and people from other ethnic groups in his neighborhood, as well as in the high school he attended. Marco said that he did not learn anything from his high school friends about his ethnicity: "I wouldn't say they taught me anything about being Mexican." Marco's lack of interest and missing cultural ethnic peer messages played a role in inhibiting his ethnic identity exploration in high school.

Similarly, in college, Marco said, "I don't think my friends really contributed to how I see myself through a Mexican lens." Marco explained that his friends did not acknowledge him as being Mexican, for instance:

I guess they don't recognize me too much as Mexican. Or I'm pretty sure it doesn't cross their mind. I felt like it's in the back of their mind. If they ask, "is Marco Mexican?" "Yeah he is," but other than that, I don't think they think of it.

Although Marco appeared indifferent about his ethnic identity and did not receive peer messages that encouraged ethnic identity search, he did receive some peer messages in college aimed at promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation. Specifically, he described his different-ethnic friends as embracing his Mexican culture through expressing interest and asking questions: "Well, I know one of my friends, the Korean friend, a couple of times he might ask me questions. Sometimes I knew the answer, and sometimes I don't necessarily know the answer."

Marco further explained that his ethnicity was not a defining aspect of his identity and that he felt his friends would also reflect that sentiment:

If someone were to ask my friends, "How was ... what's Marco like?" They wouldn't say, "Oh, he's Mexican." That doesn't give them anything at all, and I don't think I would have anyone start off with that either way. They'd say, "Oh, he's this, he likes this, this is what he does, or this is his topic of interest." I think that's much more accurate, so I don't think that really does affect - I guess I've been pretty fortunate because I hear sometimes people oftentimes get stereotyped a lot by their ethnicity, but I haven't had that experience really. I guess in the summer when I had a lot more of my Hispanic friends, I guess they haven't really changed. I guess because my group of friends now is pretty good. I am not sure if that stands as a testament to the friends that I've made, or who I see as my friends usually, but there hasn't really been that distinction. I guess that's why I don't see myself too much as what I am, because I guess if I were to tell you that, it tells you nothing about me.

Thus, without having an interest or receiving peer messages that encouraged ethnic identity exploration and prompted ethnic identity resolution and salience, Marco was unable to progress to the second (ethnic identity search) or third stage (achieved ethnic identity) of ethnic identity development. This means he remained in the first stage consistently (unexamined ethnic identity) throughout high school and during his first year of college.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore the content and impact of messages about ethnic identity that Mexican American youth receive from their peers in high school and during their first year of college. I conducted a longitudinal qualitative study and used grounded theory methods to examine second-generation Mexican American first-year college students' recollections of the ethnic socialization messages they received from their high school and college friends. Based on these participants' descriptions of their experiences with their peers and the direct and indirect ethnic socialization messages they received from those peers, I identified three overarching constructs that coincided with the three dimensions of ethnic identity development described by Phinney (1989): exploration, resolution/salience, and affirmation/commitment. I also identified four overarching patterns of ethnic identity development over time. I determined that these dimensions of ethnic identity development reflect the peer-influenced shifts in stages of ethnic identity development and expand on Phinney's ethnic identity stage model.

In this chapter, I will discuss key findings for the content of peer ethnic socialization messages and how they reflect the three dimensions of ethnic identity development. Then I will discuss the different ethnic identity development stage patterns over time that reflect the participants' ethnic identity development process and how peer messages influenced this process. Finally, I will discuss the study's implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Ethnic Socialization Messages Received from Peers

The first research question was, *What messages do Mexican American adolescents receive from their peers about their ethnic identity?* Findings clearly indicate that peers influence all dimensions of ethnic identity development in high school and during their first year of college. Peer ethnicity emerged as salient during the analyses, but few gender distinctions were found. In this section, I will review the three overarching constructs of ethnic identity development and discuss how peer ethnic socialization messages reflect the three dimensions of ethnic identity development.

Influencing Ethnic Identity Exploration. Most of the participants described their peers as *influencing their ethnic identity exploration*. Two main categories were identified. The category *encouraging ethnic identity exploration* was the most prevalent, and the second category *inhibiting ethnic identity exploration* was not as prevalent in high school and college.

The majority of participants described their same-ethnic peers as *encouraging ethnic identity exploration* in high school and college. In high school, most peer ethnic socialization messages encouraging ethnic identity exploration were about within-group distinctions in cultural traditions, practices, engagement, and generational distinctions. According to Phinney (2006) high school is a time when adolescents explore their ethnicity through learning about the customs and history of their ethnic group, reading, and talking to people from their ethnic group, which sets the foundation for a secure

ethnic identity. Furthermore, increases in the number of same-ethnic peers are linked to the inclination to explore their ethnic group (Kiang et al., 2007; Phinney et al., 2001) and can help adolescents extend their knowledge on their ethnicity (Kao & Joyner, 2004). Most participants grew up in predominately Latino neighborhoods and attended high schools with a majority of Latino students. The current study highlights that peer messages about within group distinction is one way same-ethnic peers support adolescents' learning about their ethnicity in high school.

College has been viewed as a time where young people have the opportunity to explore their identity before making commitments to domains of identity, such as ethnic identity (Phinney, 2006). In college, many participants continued to socialize with same-ethnic peers despite being in a new, more diverse environment. Previous ethnic identity research has similarly found that Mexican college students, especially those from predominately Latino neighborhoods, tend to establish friendships with other Latino students as a base of support for their ethnic identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Saylor & Aries, 1999). However, many participants noted that in their new context there were more opportunities to explore and learn about same-ethnic peers with different upbringings and backgrounds and about other Latino subgroups. This is consistent with Phinney's (2006) suggestion that minority young people become more aware of distinctions within their own group, as well as other groups, which can influence an interest in continuing ethnic identity exploration. Furthermore, I found that in college, same-ethnic peer messages emphasized exploring their ethnic identity by learning more about their ethnic group and engaging in and maintaining their culture. Maramba and Velasquez (2012) found that underrepresented students of color at a predominately White University similarly described peers as a prime source of learning about their ethnic group in college. Thus, there are various ways same-ethnic peer messages can inform and prompt ethnic identity exploration in college. Same-ethnic peer ethnic socialization messages in college appear to highlight the importance of maintaining and further exploring ethnic identity, especially in a context where they are no longer the majority.

Although most same-ethnic peer messages in high school and college were described as encouraging ethnic identity exploration, most different-ethnic peer messages were described as inhibiting ethnic identity exploration. This was even more common in college. Similarly, Rambaran and colleagues (2022) suggest that cross-ethnic friendships compared to same-ethnic friendships do not play as big of a role in adolescents' developing their sense of belonging in a diverse school context. Moreover, most participants in the current study described their different-ethnic peers' messages as not contributing to their knowledge or understanding of their ethnicity. This is consistent with previous literature that suggests cross-ethnic peer cultural socialization in the context of an ethnically/racially diverse school tends to lead to more mainstream cultural socialization rather than heritage culture (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). In a diverse peer context, youth may avoid discussing ethnicity and race (Hughes et al., 2016). The

current study expands on these findings by identifying the distinctions in messages college students receive from different-ethnic and same-ethnic peers that inhibit ethnic identity exploration.

Informing Ethnic Identity Resolution and Salience. More of the participants described their friends as *informing their ethnic identity resolution and salience* in high school (about three-quarters of respondents) than in college (less than half). For this construct, two main categories were also identified. Most peer ethnic socialization messages in high school and college were described as the first category *prompting ethnic identity resolution and salience*, and only a few cases fell into the second category *inhibiting ethnic identity resolution and salience*.

The majority of the participants described their friends as *prompting ethnic identity resolution and salience*. Specifically, in high school, most same-ethnic peer messages prompted participants to define the meaning of their ethnic identity for themselves. Adolescence is a period in identity development where Latino adolescents are establishing what their ethnic identity means to them (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009), and peers seem to play an important role in that process (Medina et al., 2020). The current study sheds light on the content of same-ethnic peer messages that help adolescents go beyond what they have been taught about their ethnicity and redefine what their ethnicity means to them.

In college, peer ethnic socialization messages were not as prevalent as they were in high school; however, they were salient in the new context. In a new, predominately White context, these peer messages prompt Latino college students to recognize that their ethnic identity is more salient. Additionally, students recognize that conversations about ethnicity are more common in college. Prior research on minority college students indicates that ethnic identity becomes more salient in a culturally diverse setting where students' ethnic group is no longer dominant (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Phinney, 2006; Saylor & Aries, 1999; Tovar & Feliciano, 2009). Moreover, I found that peer messages in college showed that same-ethnic peers were more aware of how people in their new context might view them due to their ethnic background, which prompted participants to focus on disproving negative stereotypes. Similarly, in previous qualitative studies Mexican college students have expressed that in college, it became important to them to educate people on who they are, where they come from, and their Mexican culture (Torres, 2003; Tovar & Feliciano, 2009), as well as to prove assumptions about them are inaccurate (Case & Hernandez, 2013). It seems that peer ethnic socialization messages play a significant role in ethnic identity salience in college.

All peer ethnic socialization messages described as *prompting ethnic identity resolution and salience* were from same-ethnic peers. Although there were only a few cases in high school and college, most messages described as *inhibiting ethnic identity resolution and salience* were from different-ethnic peers. These cases of different-ethnic peer messages were described by participants as experiencing uncomfortable situations (e.g., negative stereotypes and intolerance). Previous research has found that

White peers express and/or demonstrate ethnic/racial microaggressions towards Latino adolescents through negative ethnic stereotypes and microinvalidation encounters (e.g., the individual perceives they are being judged based on their ethnicity) (Lin et al., 2016) and towards Latino college students through interpersonal microaggressions and racial jokes (Yosso et al., 2009). This research is in line with the current study's findings, but the current study further expands on this research by describing how Mexican college students experiencing these uncomfortable situations through their different-ethnic peer messages could be a barrier to ethnic identity resolution development. Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2015) found that Latino adolescents who reported more perceived peer discrimination were likely to have more externalizing issues and low ethnic identity resolution.

Promoting Positive Ethnic Identity Affirmation. Most of the participants described their friends as *promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation*. For this third construct, five categories were identified. Two of these categories (*creating cultural unity* and *empowering cultural pride*) were most prevalent, and two categories were the least prevalent (*developing cross-cultural unity* and *embracing Mexican culture*) in high school and college.

In high school, participants described the role their same-ethnic peer messages played in establishing the foundation of their ethnic identity and ethnic group through bonding over commonalities and encouraging positive feelings towards their ethnicity. Previous work indicates that ethnic/racial peer socialization involving positive messages is likely to contribute to adolescents' positive sense of self and positive attitudes toward their racial/ethnic groups (Medina et al., 2020; Yip & Douglass, 2011). Furthermore, these positive peer messages promoting ethnic identity affirmation in high school may be associated with having a greater proportion of same-ethnic peer friendships (Kiang et al., 2010; Phinney et al., 2001).

Same-ethnic peers play an important role in promoting ethnic identity affirmation in college (Case & Hernandez, 2013). Specifically, I found that same-ethnic peer messages in college emphasized unapologetically embracing and accepting participants' Mexican culture, especially in a new context where their ethnic group is now the minority. Case and Hernandez (2013) found that first-year college students conveyed feeling comfortable within their Latino/a peer group and a sense of pride in being Latino/a. Additionally, they found that Latino/a college students begin to value their ethnic identity more in college because in a new diverse environment, they become more aware of their ethnic identity and how it contributes to campus diversity (Case & Hernandez, 2013). I found that peer ethnic socialization messages that promote affirmation seem to hold more significance in college compared to high school because these messages of affirmation contributed to participants appreciating their ethnic identity more and provided a sense of comfort and belonging in a new context. Thus, same-ethnic peer messages of ethnic identity affirmation promote ethnic pride and a sense of belonging in college.

Most different-ethnic peer messages promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation in high school and college tended to focus on embracing and affirming respondents' culture (*embracing Mexican culture*), as well as forging connections across cultures (*developing cross-cultural unity*). These positive peer messages promoting ethnic identity affirmation from different-ethnic peers are consistent with research that suggests that cross-ethnic friendships promote positive intergroup attitudes (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008). Receiving accepting and relatable ethnic socialization messages from their different-ethnic peers in the current study provided participants with a positive feeling toward their ethnicity. Previous research indicates that cross-race friendships contribute to integration into the majority culture, support healthy youth development, and serve as a buffer against the negative impact of discrimination minority adolescents experience (Mushonga & Henneberger, 2019). The current study provides the context for how different-ethnic peers promote positive intergroup attitudes through positive and affirming peer ethnic socialization messages.

Patterns of Ethnic Identity Development Over Time

The second research question examined the impact of peer ethnic socialization messages on respondents' ethnic identity development. Findings demonstrate the influence peers have on dimensions of ethnic identity and the role they play in distinct patterns of ethnic identity development over time. The three patterns of ethnic identity development I identified support the notion that there are more trajectories and variations of ethnic identity development beyond one normative trajectory. I will describe each of the patterns and discuss how they are consistent with and/or expand on theory.

Ethnic Identity Normative Development Trajectories. The first pattern represents a linear ethnic identity development trajectory, which means that the ethnic identity stages are experienced and developed in the theoretically expected order. More than half of participants reflected this overall pattern. Previous ethnic identity stage theory research suggests that ethnic identity development occurs in a prescribed order; initially, individuals have an unexamined ethnic identity, which is followed by ethnic identity exploration and then acceptance/commitment (Phinney, 1989; 1990; 1993). Although the overall pattern is consistent with theory, I found variations of this pattern, which are reflected in the four distinct sub-patterns identified (continued achieved ethnic identity, delayed ethnic identity development, developed achieved ethnic identity, and continuation of ethnic identity search). The two most prevalent sub-patterns were continued achieved ethnic identity and delayed ethnic identity development.

A continued, achieved ethnic identity reflects the individual developing an achieved ethnic identity in high school and college solidifying their achieved ethnic identity. This ethnic identity development pattern is consistent with the idea that same-ethnic peers play a significant role in second-generation Mexican American adolescents' establishing an achieved ethnic identity in high school. Same-ethnic peers provide social support to Latino adolescents that encourages and creates a safe space during

their adolescent development to secure/affirm a strong foundation for their ethnic identity development in high school (Kiang et al., 2010; Medina et al., 2020; Phinney et al., 2001). In college, these youth continue to have same-ethnic friendships and also develop friendships with peers from different ethnic backgrounds. The majority of their ethnic socialization messages are still from same-ethnic peers; however, they are also receiving messages from different-ethnic peers that reinforce and/or challenge their ethnic identity. Ultimately, these peer messages play a role in strengthening their commitment to their ethnic identity. In a new more diverse context, these emerging adults with a strong achieved ethnic identity from high school find ways to maintain their strong ethnic identity in college by establishing a new support system for that identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Saylor & Aries, 1999; Torres, 2003). Furthermore, when Latino college students experience situations that challenge their ethnic identity development, their strong sense of ethnic identity acts as a buffer. This allows students to overcome these challenges and maintain their strong ethnic identity (Torres, 2003).

On the other hand, a delayed ethnic identity development reflects the individual having an unexamined, foreclosed ethnic identity throughout high school. In college, they are encouraged to explore and establish an achieved ethnic identity. This pattern indicates that peer ethnic socialization messages do not prompt ethnic identity exploration and commitment for some second-generation Mexican American students until college. In a couple of cases in the current study, the participants attended predominately White high schools and did not have many opportunities to explore their ethnic identity. According to Saylor and Aries (1999), one of the first-year Hispanic college students in their study described feeling culturally deprived growing up in a predominately White community. In contrast, in the current study, there were also a couple of participants who did attend predominately Latino high schools and indicated not being prompted to explore or acknowledge their ethnicity because it was a part of their everyday life being constantly surrounded by their ethnic group. This is consistent with previous research (Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Pahl & Way, 2006; Torres, 2003). In college, these participants described peer ethnic socialization messages as contributing to their ethnic identity exploration and commitment. The transition to college provides opportunities and experiences that raise consciousness, which inspires ethnic identity exploration and ultimately commitment to their ethnic identity (Phinney, 2006; Syed & Azmitia, 2009).

Taken together, these patterns are consistent with prior longitudinal ethnic identity research that has found similar shifts in identity stages during the first year of college (i.e., progressive ethnic identity shifts, moving toward an achieved ethnic identity) (Saylor & Aries, 1999; Syed et al., 2007). However, these previously identified patterns only reflect the shifts in ethnic identity stages during college. The current study demonstrates the significant role peer ethnic socialization messages play in stages of ethnic identity development in high school and during their first year of college.

Revisiting Ethnic Identity Search. The second pattern represents some deviation from the linear ethnic identity development trajectory. Less than half of participants reflected this overall pattern. In this case, the three ethnic identity stages are experienced and developed in order initially, but then the search stage is revisited and further developed, prompting individuals to recommit to an achieved ethnic identity. Previous identity stage theory research indicates that identity formation is a fluid process that shifts throughout life (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Sneed et al., 2006; Torres et al., 2009). Consistent with this work, I found that peer ethnic socialization messages in college prompted participants with an achieved ethnic identity to revisit ethnic identity search by influencing ethnic identity exploration in a new context. Longitudinal studies examining ethnic identity development in college found cases where participants reported a regressive shift in their ethnic identity status (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Syed et al., 2007) or a reexamination of the exploration/search status followed by a return to an achieved status (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). Thus, even if a secure achieved ethnic identity is established during adolescence, it is possible that a change in context, such as college or new experiences, could stimulate a reexamination of ethnic identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Phinney, 2006).

Moreover, Syed and colleagues (2007) suggest that the transition to college produces exposure to a new peer group and other ethnicity-related experiences, which provides Latino college students with opportunities to reconceptualize and reexamine their ethnic identity. In the current study, I identified two ways participants were prompted by their peers to revisit their ethnic identity. Most commonly, college peers stimulated participants to revisit their ethnic identity search by encouraging them to maintain and/or further engage with their Mexican culture. But in a few cases, low cultural involvement among same-ethnic college peers inspired participants to seek out cultural engagement and encourage their peers to participate more in their culture.

The pattern of revisiting ethnic identity search is in line with previous ethnic identity development studies, which indicate that even among individuals with an achieved ethnic identity, contexts that provide new experiences and exposure to new people could trigger intrigue in revisiting the stage ethnic identity search. However, these studies have not discussed how revisiting is prompted. I found that in their new, more diverse context, Mexican American first-year college students became more aware of distinctions in level of cultural engagement through the peer ethnic socialization messages they received from their college peers. Becoming more aware of this made participants recognize the importance of continuing to maintain and/or further explore their ethnic identity in their new context, which prompted revisiting the stage ethnic identity search.

Diffused Unexamined Ethnic Identity. The third pattern represents no movement or advancement in the ethnic identity development trajectory. The two participants who fit this pattern described peer ethnic socialization messages as inhibiting ethnic identity exploration in high school and in

one college case as well. Both respondents reported peer messages promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation in college but were still indifferent towards learning more about their ethnic identity. Neither described being influenced at any time by peer ethnic socialization messages to resolve/establish a clear understanding of what their ethnic group and ethnicity meant to them. According to Phinney and Alipuria (1990), the ethnic identity dimension resolution is an important aspect of ethnic identity development because it encourages exploration and commitment among college students.

This lack of movement through the ethnic identity trajectory, where a few individuals remain in the unexamined stage during college, has also been found in previous studies (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Syed et al., 2007). This could be attributed to the participants not having opportunities or interest in exploring their ethnic identity and establishing what their ethnicity means to them. In the current study, it was not clear if these participants were committed to their ethnic identity. However, it was evident that they expressed no interest in learning more about their ethnicity and what it means to them. Phinney and Alipuria (1990) found that even if college students are clear about what their ethnicity means to them, this alone does not imply an achieved ethnic identity (requires proof of ethnic identity exploration). Furthermore, commitment to ethnic identity on its own also does not indicate that the developing individual has secured an achieved ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989, 1993). In the current study, these participants' indifference to their ethnic identity and lack of ethnic identity progression despite peer messages promoting positive ethnic identity affirmation could also be attributed to the participants feeling that their ethnicity is not a salient aspect of their identity.

Implications

The current study has substantive, theoretical, and applied implications. Substantively, the study adds to the literature on Mexican Americans, who represent a growing population in the U.S. (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013) with their own unique social and political history (Grebler et al., 1970). Specifically, it contributes to the limited research on the impact of peer ethnic socialization on Latino adolescents' ethnic identity development (Phinney et al., 2001; Updegraff et al., 2006). This study also adds to a limited body of work examining ethnic identity development in college longitudinally (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Syed et al., 2007; Torres, 2003; Tovar & Feliciano, 2009), as most ethnic identity development research has focused on middle school and high school. Furthermore, distinctions in ethnic socialization messages from same-ethnic peers and different-ethnic peers emerged from the data. Previous studies have found that same-ethnic peers' messages and interactions seem to influence aspects of ethnic identity more than cross-ethnic peers (Kiang, et al., 2010; Phinney et al., 2001; Rambaran et al., 2022). However, these studies do not closely examine the distinction in the content of peer ethnic socialization messages for same-ethnic and cross-ethnic peers. The distinction and impact of peer ethnic socialization messages on ethnic identity development by ethnicity of peer group need further study.

Theoretically, the current study expands on prior work by examining contextual factors (e.g., transition to college and peer ethnic socialization messages) that influence the ethnic identity stage development process for second-generation Mexican American college students. The study thus addresses one critique of stage theory, which is that it does not take into account social interactions and situational influences impacting ethnic identity formation (Torres et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor, Quintana et al., 2014; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model provided a valuable lens for exploring contextual influences on individuals' ethnic identity development over time. Additionally, there were some instances of bidirectional ethnic socialization between adolescents and their peers. This finding is in line with the PPCT model that suggests the development is the outgrowth of reciprocal social interactions (Bronfenbrenner 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Previous research on ethnic socialization has mainly focused on the bidirectional process of parental ethnic socialization (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015; Hughes et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2020). There is evidence that peer socialization during adolescence tends to be reciprocal (e.g., for review, see Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011), but little is known about the bidirectional process of ethnic socialization between adolescents and their peers. Another way this study expands on ethnic identity research is by identifying different patterns and sub-patterns of ethnic identity stage development over time beyond the normative progressive linear trajectory. This addresses another critique of stage theory – that it typically depicts a linear developmental process that occurs in a prescribed order that progresses forward (Torres et al., 2009; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999), which does not account for the possibility of individuals revisiting stages of ethnic identity development over time (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Syed et al., 2007). The current study expands on the notion that ethnic identity is an ongoing process. It should be noted that the use of terms like “resolution” or “achieved” is not intended to imply that ethnic identity development stops at a particular point in time rather, these terms were selected to be consistent with previous theory and scholarship (e.g., Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004).

In terms of application, this research could be utilized to develop college academic support and retention programs for Latino students, such as a same-ethnic peer mentoring program with successful Latino upperclassmen mentoring first-year Latino students. As stated earlier, the current study found that in college same-ethnic peer messages of ethnic identity affirmation promoted ethnic pride and a sense of belonging in this new context. Case and Hernandez (2013) examined a four-year leadership program that was designed to be ethnically rooted, promote ethnic identity exploration, and foster student development in areas that are related to student success, degree completion, and retention among Latino students at a predominately White college. The program played an important role in promoting students' ethnic identity development. Specifically, the program aided students in developing confidence in their ethnic identity, which better prepared them to advance toward their college education goals (Case & Hernandez,

2013). Additionally, my findings could be used to create a more inclusive campus environment by involving different-ethnic peers in events and programming. Prior research suggests that cross-race friendships serve as a buffer against the negative effects of the discrimination minority youth experience and contribute to integration into the majority culture (for review, see Mushonga & Henneberger, 2019). This is important because these adolescents are developing their ethnic identity in a new context. Thus, the messages they are receiving during this time of transition will be pertinent.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The current study has strengths, limitations, and suggestions for future research. In terms of the study's sampling, there were both strengths and limitations. A strength of my recruitment sampling procedure is that I strategically selected participants to ensure they met the eligibility criteria (i.e., first year of college, 18-19 years old, born in the United States, two foreign-born Mexican parents). I also ensured that there was participant variability (e.g., gender, neighborhood, high school, major, organizations) by having interested students complete a short online screening survey. Homogeneous sampling allows for clearer generalizability than other convenience sampling approaches (Jager et al., 2017); however, because I focused on one specific ethnic group and generational status, I was not able to examine ethnic variations or generational differences. Future research could examine the impact of peer ethnic socialization on college students' ethnic identity development process over time with demographically distinct participants. Generational distinctions could also be examined, specifically differences between Mexican, Mexican American, and Latinx culture. There are studies that suggest that adolescents' generational status does influence distinctions in their ethnic identity development process (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Supple et al., 2006; Torres, 2003; Tovar & Faliciano, 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013). Additionally, I used convenience sampling to make the population of interest more accessible. Data collected from one university may not correspond to all second-generation Mexican American first-year college students, which limits transferability. However, the goal of the study is to further our understanding of the influence peer ethnic socialization messages have on the processes of ethnic identity formation over time, not to make generalized claims about all second-generation Mexican American first-year college students. Another limitation of only collecting data from one university was not being able to capture the diverse social interactions, opportunities, and resources afforded to first year Latino college students based on college context. There is evidence that institutional characteristics like school size and the demographic profile of the student body (e.g., ethnic composition) matter because "different characteristics produce different outcomes" (Reyes, 2018, p. 159). Thus, future research could examine how institutional characteristics are linked to ethnic identity processes.

There were strengths and limitations to the study design. A strength of my approach is that it is a longitudinal study with a short interval between time points. The first interview (focused on experiences

that impacted ethnic identity development in high school) took place early in the fall semester of students' first year in college, and the second interview (focused on experiences since coming to college) took place about six months later, during the spring semester. This short interval between time points was beneficial because participants were able to efficiently recollect their experiences. A limitation, however, is that there were only two time points. Additional data collection might have demonstrated more fluctuation in ethnic identity stage patterns over time, indicating a continued back and forth process from ethnic identity search to an achieved ethnic identity (Syed et al., 2007). Additionally, Syed and Azmitia (2009) suggest that levels of exploration increased in the second year of college for Latino students and continued to increase into their senior year, which reflects an ongoing engagement with their ethnicity. During the first year of college, Latino students are mainly taking general education courses and are consumed with figuring out how to balance academics and a social life, which limits their opportunities to learn about their ethnic background in a new context (Syed & Azmitia, 2009). Future longitudinal studies should consider multiple time points to capture the fluidity of the ethnic identity process during college (e.g., once every semester).

Conclusion

Identity formation is a fundamental developmental task for adolescents (Erikson, 1968), which can be particularly complex for children of immigrant parents (Rumbaut, 2005). The current study found that ethnic socialization messages from same-ethnic peers play a key role in second-generation Mexican American college students' ethnic identity development before and during their first year of college. Different-ethnic peers also influence these students' ethnic identity development, but they mainly inhibit key aspects of ethnic identity development. This study provides a better understanding of how ethnic socialization messages reflect dimensions of ethnic identity, which influence ethnic identity development in a new context over time. This indicates the importance of taking into account the impact context has on individual's ethnic identity development process. The findings also expand on ethnic identity stage theory by identifying distinct sub-patterns of normative ethnic identity development, as well as stage patterns that deviate from the expected order and progression of ethnic identity stages. These stage patterns illustrate the possibility of revisiting stages of ethnic identity over time, as well as the possibility that there is no progression in ethnic identity development due to lack of interest, exploration, and/or resolution/salience. Overall, peers (especially same-ethnic peers) appear to be a key socializing agent in adolescence and in the college context, which influences different trajectories of ethnic identity development over time.

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Appendix A: Screening Survey

Thank you for your interest in the study on “The Process of Ethnic Identity Formation for Second-Generation Mexican American First-Year College Students.” Ethnic identity refers to the aspect of an individual’s self-concept based on their knowledge and feelings about being part of a certain ethnic social group. Specifically, this study will examine how different contexts and experiences influence ethnic identity formation across the first year of college. The study involves two data collection sessions, one in the Fall and one in the spring. In the Fall, participants will complete a questionnaire and an individual interview; a second interview will take place in the Spring. Participants will be compensated after each data collection session.

As a first step, we would like you to complete a short screening survey. The information you provide will help us determine your eligibility and ensure the study sample includes students from a range of backgrounds. We cannot offer you payment for the screening survey but if selected you will be paid for interview completion. If you are not selected after the screening process is complete, you will be entered into a lottery for one \$20 Amazon gift card. The odds of winning will depend on the number of people who complete the screening survey. The data collected from the screener from participants not selected to participate in the study will be destroyed after all those participants are entered into a lottery and the winner is selected. We will also use the screening survey to describe the people who were screened but not interviewed. This will let us see how well the study sample represents the pool of eligible students. No individual information will be examined or reported, just aggregated characteristics (e.g., age range, different majors).

1. How old are you? (enter only the number in years, e.g. if you are 27 years old, enter 27)

2. Do you identify as?: 1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Other (please use comment box to indicate your preference) _____
3. Where were you born?
City: _____ State: _____ Country: _____
4. What country did you grow up in?

The next few questions ask about your parent(s). When we say "parent" we mean a person who raised you and who you consider a parent figure. This could be a birth or adoptive parent, guardian, other parent figure. The questions ask about two parents (Parent 1 and Parent 2) - if you grew up with only one parent, skip the questions for Parent 2.

5. Where was parent 1 born?
State: _____ Country: _____
6. Where was parent 2 born? (leave blank if not applicable)
State: _____ Country: _____
7. What high school did you graduate from?
City: _____ State: _____ Country: _____

School Name: _____

8. How many years of school have you completed? (pick one and indicate the number of years of education completed)

1 = High School/GED (9, 10, 11, 12) _____

2 = College/Technical School (13, 14, 15, 16) _____

3 = Graduate/Professional (17 + years) _____

9. How far do you expect to pursue your education? (pick the highest level)

1 = 4-year degree (e.g., BA, BS)

2 = Master's degree

3 = Advanced degree (e.g., MD, Ph.D.)^[1]_{SEP}

10. What is your major? _____

11. If you participate in any registered student organizations at UIUC, please list their names:

12. How many times have you been home since the semester began?

13. How did you find out about this study?

1 = Via email

Which listserv? _____

2 = Flier

Where did you find the flier? _____

3 = Other (e.g. word of mouth)

Please describe: _____

14. Are you willing to be audio-recorded during the interviews? 1 = Yes, 2 = No

15. Are you available to participate in the interviews this Fall 2018 and Spring 2019?

1 = Yes, 2 = No

16. What is your name? (please provide your full name) _____

17. What is your email? (please provide your university email, e.g. @illinois.edu)

18. What is your phone number? _____

19. Elaborate on or explain any of your answers. (OPTIONAL)

Thank you! We will be in touch!

Appendix B: Participant Background Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Parents' Birthplace (State in Mexico) ^a	Mothers' Years in the U.S.	Fathers' Years in the U.S.	Language Spoken at Home	Neighborhood Characteristics ^b	High School Characteristics ^b	College Major ^c
Catalina	Female	18	Chicago	Gerrero (M, F)	28	41	English and Spanish	4	4	ACES
Lucia	Female	18	Chicago	Guanajuato (M) & Zacatecas (F)	40	30	English and Spanish	5	5	ACES
Alejandro	Male	18	Chicago	Guanajuato (M, F)	25	26	Spanish only	3	5	ACES
Elias	Male	19	Chicago	Jalisco (M, F)	15	14	Spanish only	4	2	Division of General Studies LAS
Analia	Female	18	Suburb of Chicago	Jalisco (M, F)	32	28	English and Spanish	3	2	
Mateo	Male	19	Suburb of Chicago	Oaxaca (M, F)	19	15	English and Spanish	3	2	Division of General Studies LAS
Ruby	Female	18	Suburb of Chicago	Zacatecas (M, F)	20	20	English and Spanish	3	2	
Isabel	Female	19	Chicago	Michoacán (M) & Zacatecas (F)	28	30	English and Spanish	5	2	Division of General Studies LAS
Noah	Male	19	Suburb of Chicago	Guanajuato (M, F)	19	20	Spanish only	4	4	
Valentina	Female	18	Chicago	Michoacán (M, F)	39	36	English and Spanish	3	4	College of Education
Sarah	Female	18	Suburb of Chicago	Durango (M) & Jalisco (F)	22	20	English and Spanish	4	4	Division of General Studies

Santiago	Male	18	Suburb of Chicago	Michoacán (M) & State of Mexico (F)	20	20	Spanish only	4	4	College of Fine & Applied Arts
Tony	Male	18	Suburb of Chicago	Zacatecas (M) & Michoacán (F)	25	25	Spanish only	4	5	Division of General Studies
Hector	Male	18	Chicago	Guanajuato (M) & State of Mexico (F)	25	25	Spanish only	4	5	Division of General Studies
Eva	Female	18	Chicago	Jalisco (M, F)	28	32	English and Spanish	4	5	LAS
Ximena	Female	19	Chicago	Mexico City (M, F)	28	30	Spanish only	5	1	College of Fine & Applied Arts
Mauricio	Male	18	Chicago	Michoacán (M, F)	20	20	English and Spanish	4	3	Grainger College of Engineering
Maribel	Female	18	Chicago	Jalisco (M, F)	30	30	Spanish only	5	2	LAS
Sofia	Female	18	Suburb of Chicago	Guanajuato (M, F)	21	23	Spanish only	3	3	College of Fine & Applied Arts
Marco	Male	19	Suburb of Chicago	Durango (M, F)	45	36	English only	3	3	Grainger College of Engineering

^a (M, F) indicates both parents are from that state in Mexico, (M) indicates that only the mother is from that state in Mexico and (F) indicates only the father is from that state in Mexico. ^b 1 = Almost all people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine, 2 = A majority of the people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine, 3 = There is about an equal mix of people from my racial/ethnic group and other groups, 4 = A majority of the people are from my racial/ethnic group, and 5 = Almost all people are from my racial/ethnic group. ^c ACES = College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences and LAS = College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Background Information

1. How old are you? _____
2. Do you identify as?: 1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other: _____
3. Where were you born?
City: _____ State/Country: _____
4. What is the ZIP code where you lived with your family?
5. Which statement is most true about the neighborhood you grew up in?
1 = Almost all people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine
2 = A majority of the people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine.
3 = There is about an equal mix of people from my racial/ethnic group and other groups.
4 = A majority of the people are from my racial/ethnic group
5 = Almost all people are from my racial/ethnic group.
6. Which statement is most true about the high school you attended?
1 = Almost all people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine
2 = A majority of the people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine.
3 = There is about an equal mix of people from my racial/ethnic group and other groups.
4 = A majority of the people are from my racial/ethnic group
5 = Almost all people are from my racial/ethnic group.
7. How far do you expect to pursue your education? (Pick the highest level)
1 = 4-year degree (e.g., BA, BS)
2 = Master's degree
3 = Advanced degree (e.g., MD, Ph.D.)
8. Do you work for pay?
1 = No 2 = Yes (What is your occupation? _____)
9. Where do you currently live on campus?
1 = Dorm
2 = Sorority or fraternity house
3 = Apartment or house, alone
4 = Apartment or house, with partner/spouse
5 = Apartment or house, with roommates or friends
6 = With one or both parents
7 = With relatives
8 = Other (Describe: _____)
10. What is your religious affiliation?
1 = None
2 = Catholic
3 = Jewish
4 = Christian (Describe: _____)
5 = Other (Describe: _____)

11. How important is religion (or spirituality) in your life?
- 1 = Not at all important
 - 2 = A little important
 - 3 = Somewhat important
 - 4 = Quite important
 - 5 = Very important
12. How often do you go to religious services?
- 1 = Never
 - 2 = Less than once a month (e.g., on holidays)
 - 3 = At least once a month but less than once a week
 - 4 = Once a week
 - 5 = More than once a week
13. Which statement is most true about your place of worship when you lived at home with your family? (Skip this question if you do not attend religious services.)
- 1 = Almost all people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine
 - 2 = A majority of the people are from a different racial/ethnic group than mine.
 - 3 = There is about an equal mix of people from my racial/ethnic group and other groups.
 - 4 = A majority of the people are from my racial/ethnic group
 - 5 = Almost all people are from my racial/ethnic group.
14. Where was your father born?
- State: _____ Country: _____
15. If your father was born outside U.S., how long has he lived in the United States? _____ years
16. Where were your father's parents (your grandparents) born?
- Grandfather: _____ (Country)
- Grandmother: _____ (Country)
17. What is the highest grade your father completed in school?
- 1 = No Formal Schooling
 - 2 = Primary/Elementary
 - 3 = Junior High
 - 4 = High School/GED
 - 5 = College/Technical School
 - 6 = Graduate/Professional
18. What did your father do for a living while you were in high school? (Please include job title)
- _____
19. Where was your mother born?

State: _____

Country: _____

20. If your mother was born outside U.S., how long has she lived in the United States? _____ years

21. Where were your mother's parents (your grandparents) born?

Grandfather: _____ (Country)

Grandmother: _____ (Country)

22. What is the highest grade your mother completed in school?

1 = No Formal Schooling

2 = Primary/Elementary

3 = Junior High

4 = High School/GED

5 = College/Technical School

6 = Graduate/Professional

23. What did your mother do for a living while you were in high school? (Please include job title)

24. When you were in high school, did any of the following people live with your family
(not including yourself)?

If yes, how many? Ages relative to

you

a. Older brothers (full/step/half) No Yes _____

b. Younger brothers (full/step/half) No Yes _____

c. Older sisters (full/step/half) No Yes _____

d. Younger sisters (full/step/half) No Yes _____

e. Mother/stepmother No Yes

f. Father/stepfather No Yes

g. Anyone else? No Yes _____ (describe
_____)

25. While you were growing up, what language was spoken in your home?

1 = English only

2 = Spanish only

3 = English and Spanish

3 = Other language(s) (specify language _____)

Please indicate your language use in each situation listed below using the following scale:

SPANISH ONLY	SPANISH MORE THAN ENGLISH	BOTH THE SAME	ENGLISH MORE THAN SPANISH	ENGLISH ONLY
1	2	3	4	5

While you were growing up, which language(s) did you use when ...

26.	Talking with your father	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Talking with your mother	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Talking with your brothers/sisters	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Talking with your relatives	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Talking with your friends	1	2	3	4	5

While your were growing up, which language(s) did your parents speak when ...

31.	Talking to each other	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Talking to relatives (e.g., grandparents)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: Interview 1 Protocol

This is such great information! Thank you for sharing about your family and where you grew up. Now, we are going to talk about your friends and high school.

1. Describe the friends that you spent most of your time with in high school. What was it like being around these friends?
Probe: What was the ethnic make-up of your friends in high school?
Probe: What was the ethnic make-up of the high school you attended?
2. What messages did you get from your friends about your [term selected] background?
Probe: What did these messages mean to you?
Probe: Were they important to you?
3. Did you do any activities with your friends that got you involved in learning about your [term selected] background?
[If yes]
What activities were they?
Probe: What did you learn from these activities with your friends that was important about being [term selected]?
[If no, move on to next question]
4. Did you feel your friends shared your involvement and interest in your [term selected] background (e.g. cultural values and beliefs, celebrate holidays, music, events, and people)? Tell me about it.
5. Did you face any tensions with your friends about your [term selected] background?
Alternative wording: Did your friends make any discriminatory jokes about your [term selected] background?
Probe: How did you receive these jokes? Was it a norm, was it offensive?
Probe: How did it make you feel?
6. Was there ever a time your friends made you feel you wanted to be more or less [term selected]?
Alternative wording: Did your friends ever make you feel inauthentic?
7. What did you learn from your friends that is different from what you learned from your family about being [term selected]?
8. Did you speak Spanish with your friends?
Probe: When did you switch to speaking Spanish with your friends?
Probe: How was Spanish used with your friends?
Probe: How confident did you feel about your Spanish?
9. Have you ever tried to improve your Spanish by taking Spanish classes in high school?
Probe: Who decided you should take Spanish classes?
Probe: How did taking Spanish classes make you feel about your ability to speak Spanish?
Probe: Since high school, do you plan to take Spanish classes? Explain.
10. Did you feel speaking Spanish was encouraged in your school?
11. Did you ever feel you were singled out, treated unfairly, and/or differently by adults at your high school because of your [term selected] background?
Probe: How did that make you feel?
12. Did you participate in anything when you were in high school that allowed you to engage with your [term selected] background? Explain.
[If yes]
How did your participation make you feel about being [term selected]?
(a) Who decided you should participate in these activities?

(b) Were you ever discouraged from participating in any activities that weren't deemed [term selected]?

Appendix E: Interview 2 Protocol

Great, thank you for sharing that information with me. Now, we are going to talk about your experiences at the university so far.

1. How have things been going in terms of making friends here at university?
Probe: Was it easy for you to make friends?
Probe: What made it easy for you to make friends? Tell me about it.
2. Tell me about your friends or acquaintances that you have made here at the university?
Alternative wording: Who are your close friends here on campus? Tell me about them.
Probe: How did you meet them?
Probe: What is the ethnic make-up of your friends in college?
Probe: How are your college friends similar or different from your high school friends?
3. What messages do you get from your college friends about your [term selected] background?
Probe: What do these messages mean to you?
Probe: Are they important to you?
4. Do you feel your college friends share your involvement and interest in your [term selected] background (e.g. cultural values and beliefs, celebrate holidays, music, events, and people)? Tell me about it.
5. Do you face any tensions with your college friends about your [term selected] background?
Alternative wording: Do your college friends make any discriminatory jokes about your [term selected] background?
Probe: How does it make you feel?
6. Has there been a time your college friends made you feel you wanted to be more or less [term selected]?
Alternative wording: Do your college friends ever make you feel inauthentic?
7. What is new about what you are learning from your college friends than what you learned from your high school friends about being [term selected]?
8. Do you speak Spanish with your college friends?
Probe: When do you switch to speaking Spanish with your college friends?
Probe: How is Spanish used with your college friends?
Probe: How confident do you feel currently about your Spanish?
9. Do you feel people accept you here?
Probe: How has your [term selected] background been received here?
10. Have you experienced any issues or concerns related to you [term selected] background or have your experiences been welcoming?
Alternative wording: Have there ever been moments that being [term selected] has made you feel uncomfortable or comfortable?