

# Navigating a Hispanic-American Ethnic Identity at a Predominantly White University

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to gain greater insight as to how Hispanic/Latino Americans understand their ethnic identity in a predominantly white institution. Previous literature has revealed various factors that contribute to the formation of a Hispanic ethnic identity, as well as how this identity shifts throughout various periods of life. The present study utilizes an inductive analysis of interviews with eight self-identified Hispanic/Latino undergraduates at a predominantly white university. Findings revealed two dominant pathways participants took upon entrance to the University of Colorado Boulder. Along with each pathway were polarized attitudes and subsequent behaviors demonstrating the effects of being submerged within a predominantly white institution as a racial and ethnic minority. This preliminary study contributes to literature on Hispanic/ Latino racial and ethnic identity, and the navigation of such identity, within the United States.

## INTRODUCTION

Inherently knowing that I am different, but not understanding how and the degree of its relevance has created a perpetual state of self-ambiguity throughout my life. In the summers as a child, my skin would darken significantly more than my friends, and my hair and eyes resembled deep hues of brown rather than blonde and blue.

Yet, besides these phenotypical components, there existed few differences between myself and my white friends. Socio-economic status, political affiliation, religious participation, and general interests and activities were similar between myself, my family, and those around us from as young as I can remember. However, the perception that there was no difference between a Hispanic American and a white American did not come into question until entering college in Boulder, Colorado. During the Conference on World Affairs last spring, I attended a panel titled “Let’s Talk about Race,” that ignited a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions.

As an ethnic minority student focusing on race and inequality within sociology, I have become increasingly exposed to the forces at play within our society that consistently create unequal opportunity for, and greater hostility toward, people of color. Up until attending the CWA panel, I failed to consider my own role in racial and ethnic inequality and perhaps whether I was part of the problem. I was born in a white neighborhood, I went to school with white students, and I built relationships with mostly white individuals. I do not speak Spanish, I knew little about my ethnic history prior to college, and I have little

diversity within the people that surround me each day; therefore, how authentically Hispanic am I really? Should I be concerned with the disconnection from my ethnic culture, and has this led me to become just as oppressive as the white majority?

After the panel ended and I walked home from campus, I erupted in tears of confusion. My mind spun with questions about my authenticity, the guilt felt for experiencing so many privileges, and if – and how -- I might be able to help mend societal inequalities. Though I have experienced my fair share of microaggressions and subtle racism, never have I felt endangerment or restricted freedom or opportunity on the basis of my race. As a result, I fully submerged myself within an egocentric culture that left me out of touch with fellow Hispanics who may not have experienced such privileges and luxuries.

This powerful epiphany gave way to a newly cultivated curiosity about this limbo I found myself in, and whether other Latino Americans feel this way as well. After days of contemplation, I decided to take action towards my new found curiosity and conduct research on how young Hispanic Americans negotiate their ethnic identity as a minority. In many ways, the city of Boulder reflected my attitudes and behaviors towards equality – proactive, optimistic, and headstrong in theory but with little to physically show for it. It being a fairly liberal, although overwhelmingly white and wealthy city, Boulder creates a thought-provoking setting begging to be explored. Furthermore, The University of Colorado Boulder occupies a major sector of the city, creating an excellent setting from which to sample for my research. To that end, the present study explores the formation and deployment of a Hispanic American ethnic identity among college students, as well as the

effects such identities have on subsequent attitudes and behaviors related to racial and ethnicity equality.

The University of Colorado Boulder's racial/ethnic demographic has grown more diverse each year; nevertheless, the general population of Boulder remains predominantly white. Hispanic/Latinos presence at the university has nearly doubled within the last ten years; however, the overall city of Boulder has only about a one to nine ratio of Hispanics/Latinos to whites (Suburban Stats 2018; University of Colorado 2017). When taking into account the general prevalence of Hispanics in Colorado, the lack of diversity within Boulder alone becomes even more apparent.

Maneuvering through college as an ethnic minority in an overwhelmingly white city can be a daunting and complex experience as you attempt to round out your idea of self. How one perceives their own self, those around them, and the dynamics between the two is a product of individual and social processes within specific environments. Therefore, the awareness, or lack of awareness, a minority has of their ethnic identity influences the amount to which they may be susceptible to creating their ethnic identity on the basis of the majority surrounding them. More specifically, Latinos who are more aware of their ethnic identity, and find themselves overwhelmingly surrounded by a white demographic, have less chance of being persuaded by this majority in terms of their development of attitudes and beliefs. These two distinctions, having an awareness of one's ethnic identity and having a lack of awareness, create fascinating behaviors as Hispanic Americans enter college in predominantly white Boulder. In the thesis that follows, I first provide a brief literature review of the main components that contribute to the development

of a Hispanic ethnic identity, the attitudes cultivated from such identities, and the subsequent behaviors that ensue. Following a brief literature review is a detailed explanation of the methods utilized within my study, as well as the primary findings from my sample. Finally, a discussion on the findings, how these findings contribute to the greater body of ethnic identity literature, and what comes next will be presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The formation and comprehension of a Hispanic identity involves a multitude of factors at both macro and micro levels. Given the present study's focus, the following section briefly reviews previous literature on how Latinos develop their ethnic identity, the psychological repercussions of certain identities, and the sociological implications of such attitudes.

### *Identity Formation*

#### *Family*

Family is one of the most prevalent influences for Hispanic Americans in discovering their racial and ethnic identity. There exist two prominent mechanisms utilized by the family unit that create a typically confident racial identity. As the individual matures and becomes self-aware, kinship networks inform them of who they are at a micro level as well as who they are in relation to others, or at a macro level. Older family members present this information through storytelling and modeling so as to exemplify the strength necessary to resist oppressive forces in society (White 2009). For example, witnessing a

family member standing up for themselves in the face of discrimination can spur feelings of respect and pride for their relative, as well as an idealistic demonstration of how an ethnic minority can resist societal oppression. These experiences aid in the development of one's ethnic identity by presenting not only the struggles that may be anticipated in the future, but also how to handle such situations.

The strength of one's parents' ethnic identity also plays a role in how their children develop their personal ethnic self. The degree to which parents participate in cultural-specific behaviors based on their ethnicity serves as a predictive of their children's actions. Within the Mexican subgroup specifically, research has shown that mothers with high levels of comfort in their own ethnic culture increases the likelihood that their children will take on ethnic labels and participate in ethnic behaviors and customs.(Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, and Cota 1993). Moreover, a positive correlation exists between the parents' use of Spanish in the home and the frequencies at which their children speak Spanish. When minority children actively practice their ethnic language, they too develop more accurate ethnic labels, engage in more ethnic behaviors, have a greater sense of ethnic knowledge, and have more frequent ethnic preferences (Bernal et al. 1993). Creating and maintaining a relationship with one's cultural roots as a minority is a core component in understanding one's ethnic identity.

The importance of familial teachings on younger adolescents is pivotal to the formation of a positive and healthy ethnic identity. This influence becomes even more important as the individual matures to venture out of the home and begins to interact with

others who may have a less positive impact on not only their sense of self, but their ethnic self as well.

### *Peers/ School*

As individuals transition from childhood into adolescence, they begin their personal exploration of ethnic identity, often on the basis of interactions with friends and peers. The school system provides an environment in which adolescents are likely to regularly encounter other young adults of various ethnicities (Phinney, Romero, Nava, Huang 2001). This exploration of ethnic identity becomes intensified in an atmosphere in which the individual is an ethnic minority in relation to his/her fellow peers. Ontai-Grzebik and Raffaelli (2004:572) theorize that “individuals confronted with a contrast group are forced to explore what their ethnicity means to them.” When adolescent Hispanics see peers with lighter skin and hair, or different colored eyes, they attempt to comprehend the meaning of such discrepancy through comparison (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli 2004).

During adolescence, the inability to be part of a community that contains peers of the same ethnicity can lead to a falsified ethnic identity. Instead of feeling pride in one’s uniqueness, adolescent Hispanics may feel confusion, insecurity, and even shame in being different from the majority. When young Hispanics are given the opportunity to interact with others minorities, they have a greater chance in developing a more positive, confident attitude towards their identity and ethnic group as a whole.

Greater amounts of social interaction with peers of the same ethnicity has been linked to more positive feelings toward one’s ethnic group (Phinney et al. 2001).



Moreover, those who had their first romantic relationship with a fellow Latino exhibited higher levels of positive ethnic identity. Similarly, positive feelings are also higher among those who regularly speak Spanish with their friends (Onati-Grzebik and Raffaelli 2004). A common language is imperative in ethnic identity for it “provides a link to the culture in which their parents were raised,” encouraging adolescents to remember their family origins (Phinney et. al 2001:149). In general, growing up within an ethnically diverse community allows youth an ability to connect with peers who share a similar ethnicity, enabling a potentially more well-rounded and optimistic ethnic identity.

### *Higher Education*

Along with the influence of peers and family, college experience has demonstrated to be one of the greatest influences on identity for Latino individuals in the United States. Those with higher levels of education are more likely to choose a Hispanic or Latino identity (Monforti 2014). The positive correlation between age and ethnic identity has only recently been touched on; however, there exists a shift in ethnic identity potency from middle school to high school, lending to the presumption that as individuals age, their sense of ethnic identity heightens.

The transition from high school to college in terms of minority groups’ ethnic identity can enhance feelings of connection with one’s ethnicity. Students in middle and high school exhibit a greater interest in discovering their ethnic identity; however, only around fifty percent of minority tenth graders have yet to actually explore it (Phinney 1989). In comparison, around seventy percent of Mexican American undergraduate college

students express that their ethnic identity is of utmost importance to their overall sense of self (Phinney 1990). Hispanic American college students exhibited a “greater ethnic identity search” than their white counterparts, demonstrating a heightened importance of an ethnic identity to more mature minority individuals (Phinney 1990:180). The increase in interest regarding one’s ethnic self from late adolescence to early adulthood leads to the connection previously theorized – as minority individuals age and advance their education, they tend to experience a greater desire to understand their ethnic background. Therefore, pursuing advanced education beyond high school increases the likelihood that Hispanic Americans will create a heightened awareness of their ethnic identity.

### *Othering Within Group*

As noted in the prior sections, the formation of a wholesome and well-rounded ethnic identity is a production of familial influence, peer interaction, especially within the school institution, and achieving higher education. A constructive ethnic identity increases Hispanic Americans’ ability to navigate through a society that offers their group minimal support.

Though understanding and feeling pride for one’s ethnic identity is achievable, the journey to this solidified sense of self can be strenuous and confusing. Previous literature on the effects of Hispanic-American identity formation within America’s hegemonic society has uncovered the debilitating phenomena of “othering” within the ethnic group. As adolescent minorities strive to comprehend their place in an overwhelmingly white society, many individuals begin to trade their ethnic roots for inclusion within the

dominant white culture. The following will address previous literature regarding how “othering” within the Hispanic-American group manifests during the search for an ethnic identity, and how this manifestation can pose harmful effects on the individual and group as a whole.

### *Appearance*

Friends and peers are particularly influential during adolescent identity development, especially in terms of ethnic identity. As young adults attempt to understand their self in relation to the world, they do so through comparison with those who they most often encounter. For Hispanic American adolescents, this tendency can be detrimental if within a predominantly non-diverse setting.

Consider body image. In one study, when inquiring as to Mexican American adolescents’ self-esteem, at least half of teenagers wished that their bodies resembled those of their white friends. Furthermore, the teenagers discussed the influence of mainstream media’s presentation of the ideal woman as white, slender, and tall (Romo, Mireles-Rios, Hurtado 2015). Striving for this idealization of beauty turns into an almost physically impossible feat, for the BMI of Hispanics has historically been higher than those of European descent (Romo et al. 2015). This dilemma between idealization and reality has been dubbed as “‘beauty ambivalence,’ in that young Hispanic women may desire to have the thin physique valued in Western culture” (Romo et al. 2015:489). As Hispanic American adolescents strive to look as “Americanized” as possible, they inevitably create a

dissonance between their ethnic roots, running the risk of “othering” within their overall ethnic group as they attempt to be less Hispanic and more white.

Maintaining a desire to conform to the dominant narrative in society poses a threat to a strong ethnic identity and, therefore, a unified ethnic group. This aspiration has the potential to limit feelings of connectedness to the Hispanic community, further isolating certain minorities who may not have the ability to so easily assimilate into mainstream culture. Daniel Delgado (2016) unveils this mindset within an interview with a Latina who was raised in American culture. When discussing appearance and how she understood others to perceive her, she noted that she did not look like the average Latina since “average” is often portrayed as “dark or colored skin tone, a littler darker hair, brown eyes” – unlike herself (Delgado 2016:685). The interviewee created a distinct disconnect between herself and the “average” Latina on the basis of stereotypical concepts.

Perceptions by others – especially white individuals -- plays a large role in understanding oneself as white American or Hispanic American. While some Latinos are born with more traditionally white features, others are born with ethnically distinct characteristics. Those with more distinct features may encounter greater difficulties in being perceived as less ethnic; however, there are tools to signal ethnicity other than physical appearance. Clothing is one such tool that can aid in aligning with the white narrative. In dressing a particular way, people are more able to distinguish themselves from other Hispanics. The typical stereotype of Mexicans, for example, is baggy, “gangster type” clothing; therefore, when people opt for a more “American-style,” such as “nice jeans, nice shirts,” they feel less Mexican and more white (Delgado 2016:685). Such a

mindset is a manifestation of internalized stereotypes and the wielding of racist narratives. The individual attempts to assimilate into a culture unwilling to negotiate ethnic diversity which inevitably leads to a disconnect through “othering” within the minority group.

Deciding how to present yourself to those around you can be a troubling task for youth; however, when ethnic identity and being of a racial minority comes into play, the process may have a much broader effect on not only the individual, but on the larger ethnic group, and even society, as a whole. Losing the connection to one’s ethnic roots can cause the individual to assimilate to hegemonic narratives of society. As previous literature has demonstrated, this manifests into “othering” within the ethnic group (Delgado 2016). The examples previously mentioned touch on the distancing that occurs when individuals opt to identify with a less distinctive shade of Hispanic that adheres more with white culture. The following literature continues to expand on this distancing within the Hispanic group as labeling takes on greater weight within certain contexts.

#### *‘Not that kind’*

The desire to appear less Hispanic and more white originates from a mindset of wanting to be set apart from the traditional narrative of an ethnic minority. Through appearances, Latinos attempt to distance themselves from the often negative idea of what it means to be Hispanic by utilizing an “identity not” approach when discussing their racial and ethnic makeup (Delgado 2016). One study revealed an intriguing pattern when Latinos were asked to describe how they ethnically and racially identified. As opposed to explicitly stating who they are, respondents often either stated, “I’m not that kind of Latina/o,” or

“I’m not your typical Latina/o” (Delgado 2016:684). Use of an “identity not” approach is due to an awareness of how Latinos are typically perceived in our racialized society. Because of this, certain Hispanics attempt to separate themselves from the larger group in order to avoid negative stereotypes and potentially achieve a higher rank on the racial and social hierarchy. When the individual finds themselves in this position of being Latino, but “not that kind of Latino,” they transform into a “racialized abstraction” (Delgado 2016:686). This disconnect is especially seen when discussing citizenship as documented Hispanics want to ensure to their white counterparts that they are “not like those people.” Documented Hispanics do not want to be associated with the negative stereotypes concerning immigrants, so they make evident their disdain for immigration, despite their ethnic commonality with the group (Vasquez 2010). The negative repercussions that occur when people take on an “identity not” approach when discussing ethnic identity threaten the larger ethnic group by reproducing racist beliefs.

The process of “othering” can become so concentrated that sub-groups within the Hispanic/ Latino ethnicity can become aggravated and even hostile at the presumption of an inaccurate identity. During an interview conducted by Feagin and Cobas (2014:98), a Puerto Rican woman exposed her disdain towards Chicanos. The woman explained that she would never label her husband, a Mexican American, as Chicano, for they are “a different class and they treat people differently.” The woman proceeds to articulate why this Hispanic subgroup is so different from Mexican, stating that Chicanos “speak with slang like they’re dragging their tongues. They’re not that educated. They don’t care what they look like” (Feagin and Cobas 2014:98). The racial stereotypes within her statements

are powerful and poignant, for it becomes quite clear that she has internalized notions of societal oppression and is now reproducing such prejudices. The behavior of “othering” may initially seem minimal; however, the consequences of this kind of interaction with other individuals within one’s own ethnic group may spur an alternate, less favorable view of minorities.

### *Spatial Assimilation*

As Hispanic Americans manipulate their appearance to resemble the majority, and intentionally disassociate themselves from ideas of what it means to be Latino, they often also transition to a geographical form of othering that places them in predominantly white environments. Spatial assimilation is a crucial turning point in the greater assimilation process that precedes all other acculturating attitudes and behaviors to follow (South, Crowder, Chavez 2005). Where people decide to live fundamentally influences other major factors in life, such as the kinds of jobs available, what schools your children can attend, and most importantly who you will interact with on a daily basis. Once primary group ties are developed with mostly white people, the individual becomes more comfortable in a white setting and is subsequently more likely to move to, and stay in, communities that are predominantly white (South et al. 2005). As a result, Latinos may be less likely to interact with fellow Hispanic people, creating a wider gap within the ethnic group and heightening the chances of reproducing inequalities.

### *Reproduction of Inequalities*

Thus far I have discussed some of the most prominent mechanisms used during ethnic identity formation as well as how certain identities can manifest into negative attitudes and behaviors that can produce othering towards fellow ethnic individuals and groups. The previous section investigated how Latinos participate in within-group distancing on an interpersonal level. Now I will discuss how these othering behaviors transform into macro level inequalities. An internalization of oppression towards one's own group through the process of othering creates detrimental discrepancies within class, political opinion, and attitudes towards activism.

### *Class Drift*

There has been a recent shift in social status throughout the United States. The richer are becoming richer and the poorer are becoming poorer as the middle class has slowly dissipated (Urban Institute 2017). Though all demographic groups have been affected by this socio-economic shift, some groups have been more effected than others and these groups are experiencing the negative consequences of a class drift. As time goes on, it is anticipated that social class will soon override race as the basis for stratification in the United States (Murguia and Saenz 2002). The racial hierarchy has transformed from a two-tiered black-white system to a three-tiered white, white-honorary, collective-black system (Bonilla-Silva 2006); however, recent class differences are now altering this hierarchy once more.

The three tiered system now relies on an accumulation of wealth in determining who is in the top, middle, and bottom tiers. It has been proposed that European whites will



continually occupy the top tier; however, the middle tier is now made available to middle and upper class Asian and Hispanic Americans, while the bottom tier is left for working and lower class people of color (Murguía and Saenz 2002). This middle tier, or “the honorary white buffer zone,” allows certain well-off Latinos the ability to access racial privileges usually given to whites (Delgado 2014; Bonilla-Silva 2006). In creating a “honorary white buffer zone,” class can be used to renegotiate racial hierarchies. Some Latinos attempt to avoid racial stereotypes by achieving greater wealth, enabling class to “act as a proxy for racial privilege” (Delgado 2014:682).

The course one takes to join this buffer zone is through middle class mitigation. When engaging in this behavior, the individual intentionally deflects racist narratives of Latinos that depict them as poor, dangerous, or immigrants. They buy luxury cars, move into high-end, white neighborhoods, and socialize with mostly white groups in attempts to disassociate themselves with those on the lowest plane of society (Delgado 2014). This phenomenon can be interpreted as one of the finalizing moments of detachment from one’s own ethnic group and potentially all other ethnic groups as well.

Class drift within ethnic groups effects the solidarity and community of Latinos altogether, as well as the individual in terms of their perception of personal power. Though middle and upper class Hispanics are able to access some white privileges in society, they remain only “honorary whites,” and are thereby partially stripped of respectability and autonomy. The amount of privilege one is allotted is dependent on social context and how those in the dominant group perceive you. Therefore, there is no guarantee that you will be allowed these privileges, and if you are, there remains great uncertainty for how long and

how far such privileges will last (Delgado 2014). For example, as a wealthier Latino, you may be able to live in an upper-class, white neighborhood; however, your white neighbor may still mistake you for a gardener when tending to your own lawn, for those are the stereotypes commonly attached to Latinos (Delgado 2014). As a result, Latinos who achieve great wealth will continue to be placed below the white group, despite their level of success. This illusion of power and privilege creates even greater dissonance within the Hispanic group. As Latinos attempt to separate themselves from racial stereotypes and oppression, they may eventually reiterate those same racist notions (Delgado 2014).

One of the greatest dangers in a widening class gap within the Hispanic group is the potential for privileged Latinos to “feel little to no compunction to speak up politically and socially for a lower and working class agenda which would assist their fellow ethnics” (Murguia and Saenz 2002:87). Minorities who have found themselves in positions of social and political power may fail to utilize it in order to help others. On a more psychological level, upper-class Latinos may lose any remaining attachment to their ethnic roots and identity. Given acceptance into the mid-tier, honorary-white space requires a substantial amount of assimilation (Murguia and Saenz 2002), Latinos who have achieved increased economic success are less likely to identify as Latino (Tienda and Mitchell 2006). Detachment from one’s ethnic roots and communities may cause individuals to completely rebrand themselves and leave their ethnic identity behind.

#### *Social and Political Attitudes*

One of the most effective ways of diminishing inequality in a democratic society is through policy reform, and the political attitudes of Hispanics hold great weight in the struggle for racial equality in the United States. The Latino group is not yet cemented to a particular political party, making them susceptible to persuasive tactics attempting to sway them either right or left (Cisneros 2017). Despite not being fully associated with a party, Latinos are generally supportive of liberal attitudes, such as government spending on education, health care, and reducing inequality overall (Cisneros 2017; Tienda and Mitchell 2006). The greatest discrepancy within this generalization depends on the length of residency in the United States as well as generational status. The longer one resides in the U.S., and the higher the generation, the less likely the individual is to support federal spending on welfare, health care, and education (Cisneros 2017). This may be because over time, the amount of exposure and assimilation to American culture can transform individuals' attitudes towards certain aspects of societal change.

Another irregularity within the impression that Latinos hold largely liberal attitudes arises when dealing with immigration. Those born in the U.S. are less likely to support immigration than those born elsewhere; however, the stronger one's Latino identity, the greater support one tends to have toward immigration (Cisneros 2017). Ethnic identity is an undeniable force for Latinos in terms of their political thought and behavior. The less connected with Hispanic ethnic identity, the less supportive Hispanics may be of policy reform that would benefit ethnic minorities.

Although Latinos have generally demonstrated low political participation, it is anticipated that they will have an increase in political influence in the future. However, this

anticipation is dependent on the idea that Latino youths are educated not only on political issues, but their ethnic identity as well. It then becomes a necessity that Latinos cultivate a strong, fruitful ethnic identity or else they risk the possibility of conforming to attitudes that fail to support ethnic minorities and aim to reduce inequalities.

Crafting a solid ethnic identity holds great weight within one's sense of self, especially as an ethnic minority in the United States. Familial teachings, ethnic makeup of peers and social groups, and the attainment of higher education are only a few of the many vital components that build an ethnic identity. Depending on the strength of one's identity, a multitude of behaviors can arise. The process of "othering within one's ethnic group is a result of shame towards ethnically distinctive physical traits, the detachment of oneself from a stereotyped label, and enhanced assimilation to the dominant group. The behaviors influence attitudes concerning racial and economic inequality that cause the individual to lose sympathy for those less privileged. Therefore, the importance of developing and maintaining an authentic ethnic identity as a minority cannot be overstated, for the welfare and success of fellow minorities may depend on it.

The present study seeks to unveil and comprehend the ways in which Hispanic Americans negotiate their minority status on a predominately white and affluent college campus. Given the many factors that contribute to the formation of identity alone, the following will focus on how these identities are presented once attending college as well as the effects said decisions have on fellow minorities and society overall. Through multiple interviews with undergraduates at the University of Colorado Boulder, I expand on many

aspects touched upon by previous literature but with a greater focus on the personal narratives of individuals on a predominantly white campus.

## METHODS

### *Participants*

The methodology utilized to collect data on Hispanic Americans experiences in a predominantly white university setting consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Recruitment involved the distribution of flyers throughout various buildings on the University of Colorado Boulder's campus, mass emails with an attached flyer sent by myself and my thesis advisors to classes, a post on my personal Facebook account paraphrasing the flyer, and word-of-mouth discussions through interpersonal connections. The conditions required for involvement was being of Hispanic or Latino descent, being between the ages of 20 and 25 and having lived in Boulder County for at least the past year so that the individual was able to become fairly accustomed to local culture. The projected number of participants for my sample was around 10 people; however, due to schedule confictions, resource restraints, and a lower response rate than anticipated, the analytical sample presented consists of 8 participants. The gender breakdown of participants consists of six women and two men.

The decision to use the labels "Hispanic" and "Latino" both for recruitment and throughout the study overall came from a desire to reach a wider range of individuals as well as influence from previous literature. The majority of literature reviewed for this study

used the two terms interchangeably and used the labels as umbrellas for specific racial and cultural identities, such as Mexican and Panamanian. As a result of using these two overarching terms, I was able to reach to a broader audience during recruitment that aimed to include as many self-identified Hispanic and Latino individuals as possible.

### *Data Collection*

The interview guide was developed to cover three major topics: 1) major influences on ethnic identity formation, 2) processes of “othering” fellow ethnic minorities, and 3) inequalities within the broader ethnic group. Prior to the questions regarding these themes, introductory demographic-related questions were asked such as age, educational interests, and family. These preliminary questions also allowed for the development of rapport. All questions were approved by the University of Colorado Boulder’s IRB department in October (Protocol #17-0539). Before beginning the interview, participants were required to read and sign a consent form that explained their rights and resources as a research participant.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and the setting was dependent on the participants’ desires and where they felt the most comfortable. For instance, many participants had breaks between classes, so accommodations were made to meet in a private space on campus to conduct the interview, such as on a bench in a vacant courtyard or in an open room in Norlin Library. The interviews were recorded on a personal, password-protected laptop and were labeled with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. As previously mentioned, the interviews were semi-structured in order to allow participants to

speak as freely as they felt comfortable. The overall process was fairly casual as I wanted the participant to feel relaxed and expressive. After completing the interview, and as noted in the consent form, participants were reminded that they could contact the myself, and/or my advising team with any questions or concerns.

### *Data Analysis*

All interviews were transcribed by myself in order to enhance familiarity with the dialogue. The audio of each interview was meticulously listened to and typed in a document on the same private, password-protected laptop as previously mentioned. Upon completing transcriptions, an in-depth, critical examination of each interview was conducted where major themes were revealed through an inductive analysis. A number of common themes were discovered within each interview and led to two overarching revelations concerning the Latino experience on a primarily white college campus. The following sections describe and interpret these findings and connect them to the literature previously mentioned.

## RESULTS

### *Two Distinct Pathways Once at CU*

The University of Colorado Boulder is a predominantly white, wealthy institution that lacks a substantial amount of ethnic and racial diversity. For the majority of CU students, this poses little to no issue; however, for Hispanic Americans, coming to a predominantly white institution creates interesting dynamics. The personal narratives

revealed in the following sections demonstrate two distinct pathways that the Hispanic respondents have followed while at CU Boulder and how each pathway has led to certain mindsets and subsequent behaviors that effect the individual as well as the broader Hispanic group as a whole.

### *Lack of Awareness and Individual Thinking*

One of the two pathways created upon entrance to CU Boulder is derived from a lack of awareness of one's ethnic identity and minority status in relation to the majority. For these individuals, prior life experiences have led them to understand their ethnic identity as authentically un-Hispanic and more Americanized, enabling them to feel more included within the predominantly white institution. As a result, these individuals do not seek diversity within a hegemonic university. Failing to seek diversity at a white university leads to an individualistic mindset in terms of equality and opportunity. Personal narratives demonstrate that when a Hispanic does not seek diversity and support from other ethnic minorities on a college campus, they may be at greater risk of fuller assimilation into American culture, creating a disconnect and withdrawal from their ethnic group, as well as adopting negative stereotypes towards their own group, subsequently leading to a reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities.

### *Defining Hispanic Authenticity*

People who enter the environment at CU and do not seek engagement with their own ethnic group are more likely to fully assimilate into white American culture. Falling into social groups that consist primarily of white students, Hispanic individuals may lose



sight of cultural components that tie them to their ethnic roots. This process begins small, perhaps by speaking Spanish less given your friends don't speak it, or listening to certain genres of music more frequently because it is in your presence most often. However, before long, and often unnoticed, individuals begin to retain beliefs and values towards their own ethnic group that reflect an Americanized, hegemonic mindset. This advanced assimilation leads to feelings of disconnect within one's ethnic group as well as confusion on the authenticity of their own identity. Daniel grapples with articulating his own definition of Hispanic authenticity:

*I feel like I would need to be way more Mexican to know that, just because I am Mexican but it's not like people see me walking down the street and are like 'okay that dude's like hardcore Mexican.'*

Daniel does not feel he is in the position to define Hispanic authenticity given his unfamiliarity with his ethnic group altogether. He is unable to pull from personal experiences of being Mexican for his definition because he does not view himself as a member of the authentic Hispanic group. Moreover, Daniel reinstates stereotypes that Hispanics can be identified by physical traits alone, and that those markers do not relate to him. He is aware of the profiles attached to Mexicans and aims to reassure me that he does not fit this profile. As a result of not fitting this profile, Daniel is not Mexican enough to speak on what it really means to be authentically Hispanic. Daniel has been so thoroughly assimilated into hegemonic culture that he regurgitates stereotypical notions of his own ethnic group as a result of feelings of complete disconnect with the Hispanic ethnicity.

*Individualistic Thinking & Group Disconnect*

Failing to seek ethnic diversity on campus can lead to an individualized mindset that further disconnects the individual from their ethnic group. When someone is submerged in an environment that does not resemble their own identity, they may assimilate into that environment, experience a disconnect from others in their ethnic group, and perhaps lose the ability to empathize with others less privileged. Individuals more familiar with white settings may have gained access to white privilege through class or social networking and have become accustomed to this way of life. This adaption leads to an enhanced disconnect from their ethnic group and an individualized mindset.

Julianna, a half-Mexican half-Irish student, explains her feelings towards being recruited into a diversity program at the beginning of college:

*I was kind of forced into this Diverse Scholars Program. In high school they recruited me... I felt in a sense that was going backwards in what we were trying to – what I was trying to do... I just remember I was like, ‘oh my god I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to be here. This makes me like wish I was white, like fully white.*

Julianna explicitly expresses an intense desire not to be a part of a group intended to create feelings of encouragement among ethnic minorities. Instead of viewing this opportunity as a way of making friends and gaining experience that may otherwise be inaccessible at an overwhelmingly white university, Julianna resists the attempt altogether. Her personal goals and expectations were not in accordance with what she believed the program was attempting to do, thereby detaching herself from a group mentality in order to focus solely on her own aspirations. Julianna demonstrates the potential negative effects of an individualistic mindset and disconnect from her ethnic group with her final statement. Instead of aspiring goals as a group or encouraging others to pursue more,

Julianna seeks to abandon her ethnic group in exchange for inclusion in a white social group that already has opportunities and resources available. It is evident that the level of assimilation obtained from her life experiences have seeped into her college interactions and induced complete withdrawal from her ethnic group.

### *Disconnect from Group & Reproduction of Inequalities*

Developing an individualistic mindset may cause an individual to feel a lack of empathy for fellow minorities, thereby posing detrimental effects for the social and political progression of equality. This subconscious decision to not promote equality given one's own position is often unintentional and the consequences frequently go unnoticed. When discussing political affiliation, Daniel exhibits this individualistic way of thinking:

*Especially with this whole Trump thing a lot of people ask me about it and how I feel and I pretty much give them the same answers I give you. I know it's there but it doesn't affect me.*

Given various experiences Daniel has and has not been personally exposed to throughout his life, current political tensions regarding his own ethnic group appear to have little influence on him. When taking Daniel's background into consideration, this response becomes less surprising. Daniel grew up in a white, wealthy neighborhood that exposed him to little adversity. Because of this, he is less able to empathize with others that may be experiencing the negative effects produced by current politics. As a result, Daniel refrains from engaging in political conversations given he, and no one he affiliates with, is directly affected. As an educated, economically stable man, Daniel has a substantial amount of privilege that allows him to initiate real societal change for the

better. Yet, Daniel's extreme disconnect from his own group, and the challenges that they may face, has resulted in an individualized way of thinking that fails to take others' experiences into consideration. The broader consequences of this individualistic mindset is further solidified by the statements Daniel followed up with:

*I just try to look at everything and figure out what's best for me. Not to be selfish or anything, but my vote isn't going to change much. It's not like if I decide to vote for the good of somebody else like... that's not going to help anything.*

Similar thoughts are expressed by Daniel when discussing his political affiliation more generally. As seen in previous literature, the Latino group has yet to solely cement themselves within a particular political party and, as a result, are susceptible to persuasion and more likely to take a neutral stance. Daniel's indecisive opinions towards politics coupled with underexposure to discrimination transforms into a passive reproduction of inequality by abstaining from participation.

### *Reinforcing Stereotypes*

Cultural assimilation does not only involve the adoption of customs and routines, but also the adapting, and subsequent reproduction, of many beliefs and attitudes. The psychological elements of assimilation are inherently more difficult to detect and are thereby less likely to be addressed and dealt with. This becomes problematic when minorities become accustomed to the discriminatory aspects of American culture and unknowingly reproduce prejudice onto themselves and others.

Previous literature has uncovered the process of othering within the Latino group and the negative effects it can have on fellow minorities. Julianna reflects fondly on an

interaction with other Hispanics students that brought her feelings of relatability not felt with white peers:

*It was so funny because we were talking about drug cartels at some point and I was like, 'Am I the only one that knows an unusual amount about the drug cartel?' and then these kids were just like—I don't know it was just great like that Professor was Hispanic... it was just a nice break.*

Julianna reminisces on how nice it was to be able to relate with other Hispanics in her class; however, within what she perceives to be a positive experience are really stereotypical notions of Hispanic's connectivity with the drug industry. The assumption that one will have an inherently greater amount of knowledge on drug cartels as a result of being Hispanic is incredibly problematic. Not only does Julianna reproduce the stereotype that Mexicans are dangerous criminals, but she does so in a way that frames the racial notion as a positive, common ground where Hispanics can bond. She has internalized a common racist stereotype of American culture that damages the Latino group image and endorses hostility and discrimination. Though Julianna reflects on this experience as a positive interaction with fellow Latinos, the reality is much darker in that the only level on which she feels the ability relate to other Hispanics is through a racist stereotype placed upon them.

Julianna's story demonstrates the consequences of internalizing negative attitudes about one's group; however, adopting beliefs concerning the majority group and its associations can be problematic as well. The assumption that being white equates to success and power constructs unattainable requirements for people of color in being successful. Cecilia illustrates this internalization when discussing her family:

*My parents just bought their first house and I kind of joked and was like, 'oh mom you're going to change and like start speaking with an American accent.'*

Through Cecilia's joke about her mother's newly bought house, her comments reveal a subliminal belief that to be successful in America requires complete assimilation to the culture and abandonment of origins. Her seemingly innocent joke uncovers deeper significance that Hispanics cannot maintain their authentic cultural aspects while also achieving success in America. In other words, American accents largely associated with the white, dominant group parallels economic stability, while maintaining an ethnic accent, in this case Spanish, equates to a lack of wealth. This unintentional assumption creates challenges for ethnic minorities when understanding their identity and what groups they belong in.

The underlying mechanisms at work demonstrated through the personal understanding of Hispanic Americans' college experiences indicate general feelings of disconnect between the self and their ethnic group. The personal narratives of interviewees revealed certain attitudes that come from failing to seek diversity on a predominantly white college campus. An enhanced fixation on one's personal advantage lent to more negative notions towards one's ethnic group, as well as less proactive behaviors for reducing inequality. As a result, minorities themselves begin to perpetuate inequalities that disadvantage their own group, and themselves, with minimal conscious awareness.

### *Enhanced Awareness of Latino Identity*

An enhanced awareness and more solidified understanding of one's ethnic identity when entering a predominantly white institution leads to a mindset more focused on the advantages of the group as a whole. This holistic thinking encourages individuals to seek diversity on campus as a means of gaining support and unity as a minority. As a result, more proactive attitudes and behaviors are exhibited that promote equality for all minorities.

### *Seek Diversity at CU*

Submerging oneself into an unfamiliar environment is intimidating within itself, therefore doing so as an ethnic minority heightens feelings of insecurity and confusion even more so. Being unable to find a space of comfort at a pivotal point in life can lead to decisions that have long lasting effects. Daniella discusses her experience with this upon entrance to college:

*Definitely my first year it was kind of scary. I was used to it because most of the schools I had gone to were white but then I think once you get on a bigger scale and you really have to find your place on campus then it makes it a lot harder because no one knows you and can connect you to other people or anything like that so yeah I'd definitely say it was harder. I think it was good that I decided to stay on campus instead of commuting because one of my cousins who was going to CU for a bit was just commuting and it was just a really shitty experience because she couldn't find anyone to connect with or anything like that so she ended up dropping out. So I think it was hard at first to find your place but then I think when you put yourself out there a little more it happens.*

Daniella expresses anxiety when initially coming to college despite her familiarity with the school's demographic. Realizing that she did not resemble the majority group caused her to reconsider her career path out of fear she would be marginalized indefinitely.

Daniella acknowledges the importance of inclusion by recounting her cousins similar experience that led to her withdrawal from school altogether. Her inability to find allies on campus held great weight within her subsequent decisions. Knowing this, Daniella persevered through the initial discomfort and sought out people who helped her feel greater confidence. Seeking out minorities that can identify with oneself has a vital influence on the individuals perceived abilities and potential.

Daniella touched on how creating social groups can influence whether or not one decides to continue pursuing an education. In addition, connecting with others in the same ethnic group can serve as a demonstration of how to best maneuver through a predominantly white university. Lorena exhibits feelings of relief and inspiration upon finding other minorities like herself:

*I joined a multicultural sorority called Sigma Lambda Gamma. Because all the people – they looked like me, and were like me. I think that was the first time I felt I kind of belonged. I pledged my first semester of college. That shaped me a lot, because then I had all these people, they would tell me what to do where to go what I should use, how to use it.*

Lorena actively sought out diversity on campus through a multicultural sorority where she finally found a place of comfort. Having this support group facilitated Lorena to continue on with school in Boulder, as well as serving as a guide for how to negotiate her identity on campus. The members, all women of color, informed Lorena of additional groups and areas on campus where she could meet others who may be more relatable. The group became her family away from home by giving her a place she felt secure at a university that was otherwise rather unwelcoming. Furthermore, the sorority's main focus on social justice contributed to Lorena's decision to study race, ethnicity, and queer groups



who have been marginalized in society. Lorena's determination in finding groups focused on diversity and inclusion enabled her to create meaningful relationships while also enriching her primary focus towards equality for multiple minority groups.

### *Holistic Thinking and Group Connection*

Being able to connect with marginalized groups of people allows for a heightened understanding of a variety of inequalities in society. Inhabiting feelings of understanding and empathy facilitates a mindset more concerned on the good of many and decreasing discrimination for all minorities, not only their self or their group. As a result, those individuals who inhibit this holistic way of thinking feel a personal responsibility to do all they can for the good of all ostracized individuals. Lorena portrays this mindset when explaining her attitudes towards gaining an education:

*It's like I'm learning all these things because I want to give back to my community. I want to help because if my knowledge of all these things ends here, then I have gone to school for nothing... If I learned all these things and the only person that benefits from that is me, then that's not even – no.*

The holistic mindset that arises from the integration of diversity into one's life is apparent within Lorena's statements. Her passion for social justice and political activism not just for herself, but for others like her, can be traced back to her previous exposure with other minorities. The idea that her alone will be of benefit at the end of her scholastic career is inconceivable. Lorena is less concerned with her personal amount of success and power and instead more focused on how her actions will affect fellow groups of people who are given less opportunity. This broader focus on benefiting the group rather than

oneself may come from deeper feelings of connectivity with other minorities. Seeking diversity on a generally white campus employs greater feelings of empathy for marginalized groups. This initiates attitudes and subsequent behaviors more dedicated to overall equality rather than personal gain.

Exposure to fellow minorities often inhibits feelings of unity and compassion between individuals; yet, there exist occasions when this seems to produce negative consequences. The manifestation of othering within one's ethnic group has been previously touched on; however, othering between differing ethnic groups has been given little attention. Natalia reviews this notion when reflecting on her feelings following the 2016 Presidential Election:

*One thing that as people of color we struggle with is the oppression Olympics like 'no I'm more oppressed because this or I'm more oppressed because of this'... it's like we don't even need anyone to oppress us because we do it on our own like you're looking and picking at each other like we're not going anywhere.*

Through feelings of frustration, Natalia illustrates the dangers of failing to empathize with and relate to other minorities. This variation of othering resembles within-group othering in that it creates a further disconnect between groups of people and contributes only to the oppression of minority groups overall. Natalia's final statement illuminates the trap people may fall into that halts mobility in terms of social justice and equality. When marginalized groups are preoccupied with who is better and worse off, they inevitably contribute to oppressive forces aiming to keep those same groups in positions of less power.

The “oppression Olympics” described by Natalia further illuminate the importance of creating cohesion between minority groups for the sake of the general good. Abby exemplifies this holistic mindset not only towards her own ethnic group, but towards all minorities as well. Abby portrays this mindset when examining how her political opinions are related to her ethnic identity:

*Yeah I definitely think it has an influence when certain candidates make remarks toward certain ethnic groups or certain racial groups and just who is actually trying to improve conditions for everyone, not just on social group or racial group, and looking at what they’re doing for the communities – like if they are hurting or not.*

When voting for political candidates, Abby demonstrates similar behavior seen in previous literature in that she is less swayed by political party and more influenced by individual candidate behavior. Gaining her vote is dependent on the candidates’ intention of benefiting all groups rather than her group, or herself, alone. Abby’s attitudes may be attributed to her exposure to diversity at CU that has created a group-oriented mindset versus an individualistic mindset.

Participants demonstrated two distinct pathways of negotiating their ethnic self on a generally white college campus. The first pathway held less of an awareness of an ethnic identity, led them not to seek diversity, and created an individualistic mindset towards societal inequalities. These components produced greater feelings of disconnect from one’s ethnic group through enhanced assimilation and the perpetuation of inequalities through stereotypical notions. The second pathway demonstrated a greater sense of awareness for their ethnic identity, an enhanced desire to seek diversity, and a subsequent mindset more

focused on the benefit of the group as a whole. These individuals expressed greater passion towards political and societal change and demonstrated greater feelings of importance towards connecting with their ethnic group. Which path each individual found themselves going down upon entrance to CU seems to be connected to a variety of past experiences. The following section will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how all of these components connect and reveal the two pathways previously presented.

## DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, CONNCLUSION

### *Discussion*

Throughout the personal narratives presented by eight undergraduate students attending the University of Colorado Boulder, multiple relationships were discovered that interlink attitudes and behaviors from past experience with current behaviors. Various demographics when growing up were discussed that became indicative of certain behaviors once submerged in a predominantly white institution. Likewise, the implementation of such behaviors was observed that aligned with the two pathways and subsequent mindsets chosen upon entrance to college.

### *Indicators of Behavior*

The socioeconomic demographics growing up demonstrated to be a prevalent factor on which pathway each person went down upon entrance to college. All interviewees that had a greater awareness of their ethnic identity, sought diversity at CU, and maintained a group-oriented mindset came from lower, working class families. Furthermore, the

majority of those in their surrounding community consisted of middle to upper class families. Being of lower socioeconomic status within a fairly affluent environment when growing up may have contributed to the ways in which these students chose to navigate their identity at CU. On the contrary, those participants who revealed a lack of awareness of their identity, failed to seek diversity at CU, and consequently employed an individualistic mindset came from either middle or upper class socioeconomic statuses. Likewise, this groups' surrounding when growing up were predominantly wealthy and privileged. Growing up having, or having not, directly experienced economic strain, both within one's own family as well as those surrounding them, seems to have a direct correlation with how one approaches an overwhelmingly white, affluent environment as a minority. Being unable to understand socioeconomic struggles fellow minorities deal with may explain why these individuals fail to empathize with other minorities in college.

Another indicator of behavior, like socioeconomic status when growing up, is the amount of ethnic and racial diversity, or lack of, during childhood and adolescence. All but one participant in the group who held an enhanced amount of ethnic identity awareness upon entrance to college had socialized mostly with other ethnic minorities. Each person exhibited strong social ties with other Hispanics as well as many African American peers. As with socioeconomic status, this diversity was absent for the group that held a lack of awareness and more individualized mindset. This group expressed having only interacted with white peers throughout their life. The lack of diversity experienced prior to college is a probable explanation for why this same group of people fails to seek diversity once in college. Having never known any different, these individuals continue to pay less attention

to adversity surrounding them for they are personally well off. Those that had diversity within their social circles prior to college felt a stronger desire for this same environment once in a generally white college; therefore, they had to actively seek out diverse groups in order to feel a greater sense of belonging. The importance of experiencing socioeconomic and racial/ethnic diversity when growing up is crucial when choosing how to approach a new, pivotal point in one's life. The implementation of such behaviors cultivated prior to college is examined in the following section, as well as the more specific consequences of each behavior pathway.

### *Implementation of Behavior*

The same correlations between past experience and current behavior are understood when analyzing the actions of each group once attending college. The group with a heightened awareness of their identity, and deeper desire to seek diversity on campus, also chose certain areas of study that derive from a more humanistic approach to education. These individuals opted for degrees in ethnic studies, sociology, women and gender studies, and psychology, exhibiting greater appeal towards careers that aim to help many disregarded groups. These disciplines focus on individual and social issues within our society and what one can do to address these discrepancies and improve the greater good. On the other hand, those participants within the group who had a less solidified sense of ethnic identity, and were therefore less apt to seek diversity, also exhibited a pattern in terms of their chosen area of study. This group sought degrees more focused on future personal gain and prosperity rather than concern with others in society. Areas of study were more business oriented such as marketing and economics. Though these career paths

do involve the benefit of others, this group of individuals expressed an overwhelming purpose of gaining wealth and status through their degree, rather than utilizing it to help others. These two distinctions in degree choice are indicative of the attitudes they have towards political and societal change in terms of reducing inequality.

A combination of factors experienced prior to college are determinant of which path one will take once attending school at CU. Greater exposure to socioeconomic and racial/ethnic diversity when growing up influences the degree to which one understands their ethnic identity, as well as if they feel a need to seek diversity, and whether they hold a holistic or individualized mindset. These three components lead to specific degree choices that reflect their attitudes towards their own ethnic group as well as equality overall. As a result, certain individuals may participate in the reproduction of inequality through reinforcement of stereotypical notions due to an enhanced level of assimilation. This complex relationship reveals that there should be greater attention given to the formation of ethnic identity as well as the consequences that such identities may have on the individual and broader ethnic group as a whole.

### *Limitations*

This preliminary study sought to create a deeper understanding of how Hispanic Americans negotiate their ethnic identity within a predominantly white society. Though the personal experience once entering a university setting was analyzed, the creation of one's ethnic identity was lent less of a focus. As previously stated, given the vast amount of substance within identity formation alone, and so as not to discredit this vital area of study,

I thought it best to focus primarily on the negotiation of identity in college rather than only briefly touch on identity formation as it pertains to my sample. Future studies should more directly address how certain ethnic identities are formulated that lead the individual to either seek or not seek diversity on campus. This additional research may also further aid in explaining the individualized versus group mindsets that were presented within this study.

Given the lack of resources and time restriction on the present study, the sample consisted of only eight interviewees. Follow-up studies should employ a greater sample so as to more accurately represent the Hispanic population on a given college campus. This improvement may reveal more distinct patterns supported by a wider data set. Furthermore, the implementation of a more gender-balanced sample may allow for further understanding of ethnic identity as it pertains to possible gendered aspects.

The decision to use the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” during recruitment may have caused potential participants to view themselves as unqualified in terms of inclusion criteria. Including Chicano, another major ethnic label, may have increased the number of people responding to recruitment. Likewise, using specific racial and cultural labels may have struck a more personalized chord within potential participants that initiated their response to recruitment. Follow-up studies should take greater consideration it’s choice of racial and ethnic labels, especially during recruitment.

Finally, concentrating on a more specified aspect of Latino identity may facilitate an overall stronger argument in terms of the effect of ethnic identity on future attitudes and



behaviors. An enhanced focus point will produce a more specified interview guide that can further encourage participants to think critically about their experiences and relationships. This preliminary study sets the stage for a multitude of follow-up investigations in many areas by providing a rough overview of the negotiation of a Hispanic American identity within a predominantly white institution.

### *Conclusion*

Developing and comprehending one's ethnic identity as a minority in the United States can be daunting and unfeasible. In a place that considers themselves a melting pot, American society can often be unwelcoming for anyone who does not fit the dominant narrative. Latinos are one of the largest ethnic groups in the U.S., and their presence does not seem to be slowing; therefore, greater consideration must be given to this group in terms of how their identity is created and what these identities mean for fellow minority groups. Through personal narratives of multiple Hispanic American's, the present study has revealed elaborate and complex relationships between identity and behavior on a predominantly white college campus. This preliminary study has set the stage for a vast body of exploration and would greatly benefit from further investigation on specific components of the research presented. With further investigation on the complex and unique experiences of Hispanic Americans, we can build a greater understanding towards how to diminish racial and ethnic inequalities and improve our society overall for future generations.



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