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Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem of Latino Adolescents: Distinctions Among the Latino Populations

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This article reviews 21 empirical studies in which the relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity among Latino adolescents was examined. This analysis indicates that for some conceptualizations of ethnic identity there has been a positive relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem, whereas with other conceptualizations the relationships between ethnic identity and self-esteem have been inconsistent. The methodological limitations of the existing work are also examined. Despite the differences in conceptualization and the methodological limitations, the existing research suggests a positive relationship between degree of ethnic identification and self-esteem for Latinos who live in areas where their Latino group composes the majority of the Latino population.

Latino populations in the United States are growing rapidly. Latinos are the second-largest ethnic minority in the United States (Marger, 1997), and projections are that by the year 2050, one out of every four Americans will be Latino (Shinagawa & Jang, 1998). Due to the growing representation of Latinos in the United States, researchers and practitioners will need more information about these ethnic group members to be adequately prepared to understand their development and psychological adjustment. The processes by which Latinos develop their self-concepts and the influences of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes are essential to understanding Latinos.

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Identity Development

Identity development is a critical factor in an adolescent's life. For example, one's identity can influence the course of one's life in that it guides career choices, expectations, and aspirations. Adolescence is a critical period for identity formation because it is not until this time that individuals have developed the necessary elements (i.e., physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility) to examine their identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1994). Although reformulations of one's identity are expected throughout the life cycle, it is during middle to late adolescence that the optimal conditions exist (i.e., the confluence of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes) for the initial resolution of one's identity (Marcia, 1994).

In addition, identity formation involves the integration of a number of relational contexts (Josselson, 1994). Among these, and of central importance during adolescence, is embeddedness. In this context, individuals construct their identity in relation to others and, in particular, within groups (Josselson, 1994). For Latino adolescents, one such group may be their ethnic group. Markstrom-Adams (1992) echoes this claim by suggesting that ethnic group membership is one of the social contextual environments that influences identity formation.

Ethnic Identity Development

Ethnic identity is of great importance particularly because of the direct impact that it is thought to have on identity formation (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; White-Stephan, 1992). A number of researchers suggest that the process of identity development can be more challenging for members of ethnic minority groups than for members of majority groups (Markstrom-Adams, 1992; Rotheram-Borus & Wyche, 1994; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Furthermore, ethnic identity appears to be more salient for members of ethnic minority groups than for those who are members of the majority culture, unless the majority group members are in a setting where their ethnic group is not the numerical majority (Phinney, 1992). Although identification with one's ethnic group can be a challenging task for all adolescents, adolescents from minority groups are faced with identification with a less powerful group than the majority European American culture. Along with the difficult task of ethnic identification, minority adolescents also have to confront several negative stereotypes that are associated with their ethnic group (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987; Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990).

Although development of one's ethnic identity can be a challenging task, research indicates that it is an essential process for minority adolescents'

development. Ethnic identity can affect several different aspects of an adolescent's life such as self-esteem (e.g., Phinney, DuPont, Espinosa, Revill, & Sanders, 1994; Rotheram-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate, & Lightfoot, 1996) and psychosocial adjustment (e.g., Marcia, 1980; Whaley, 1993).

Self-Esteem

Although self-esteem is just one dimension of psychological well-being, it is a primary component of an individual's self-concept (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-esteem has been shown to be extremely vulnerable during adolescence. During adolescence, individuals become increasingly alert to how others perceive them, and this translates into an increase in self-consciousness (Rosenberg, 1979). For ethnic minority adolescents, this increased self-consciousness most likely includes thoughts concerning others' perceptions of their ethnic group. Findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity, particularly for ethnic minority adolescents (Phinney, 1992). Because of its central importance to minority adolescents' well-being, in this review we focus on work that has examined self-esteem among Latino adolescents.

Because identity formation is considered one of the central tasks of adolescence and because ethnic identity is an important component of identity formation, a number of social scientists have examined Latino adolescents' ethnic identity as a way of gaining insight into the processes through which Latinos form their identities. However, many conceptual and methodological limitations restrict the ability to compare and contrast findings from studies that have been conducted in this area. In this article, we review the knowledge that has been gained from this research, the limitations of the research, and implications for future research. For the purposes of this article, we only examined investigations on ethnic identity and self-esteem in which Latino or Hispanic adolescents were studied.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

A total of 21 studies, conducted between 1969 and 1998, were reviewed for this article. We obtained these studies by (a) conducting a search in PsychINFO, SOCIOFILE, and ERIC databases using various key words (i.e., ethnic identity, minority identity, Latinos, Hispanics, self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, self-evaluation, well-being, adjustment, identity) and by (b) using cross-references from the articles that we obtained from our database search. To be included in our review, each study had to meet the fol-

lowing basic standards for methodological quality: (a) it used standardized measures to assess self-esteem or its correlates and (b) it used valid statistical procedures to analyze the quantitative analyses (e.g., comparison of mean differences).

The studies obtained differed substantially theoretically and methodologically. We identified three primary theoretical perspectives that had guided the research (i.e., social identity theory, ego identity perspective, and acculturation perspective). Furthermore, we were able to group the studies into four categories based on the ways that ethnic identity was operationally defined (i.e., ethnic identity as group membership, ethnic identity as "importance of Hispanic identity," ethnic identity as search and commitment, and ethnic identity as biculturalism). Although we obtained a substantial number of studies, we were not able to conduct a meta-analysis of the data due to conceptualization and methodological limitations that are described in detail below.

Theoretical Perspectives

As mentioned earlier, researchers have used a number of theoretical perspectives to guide their work on ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latino adolescents. Scholars interested in ethnic identity draw from sociology, psychology, and anthropology, among other areas, to develop their theoretical frameworks. The primary perspectives that researchers have alluded to are social identity, ego identity, and acculturation.

Social identity theory. According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), individuals' self-concepts derive from knowing that they are members of particular social groups. Individuals attempt to maintain a positive social identity, but the social groups of which they are members can be associated with positive or negative values and this will affect the individual's choice of membership in the group (Ethier & Deaux, 1990). Thus, in studying ethnic identity, some researchers have focused on the perceptions that people in society have of ethnic groups to which individuals belong and how those perceptions influence individuals' decisions to identify with their ethnic group. Researchers working from this theoretical perspective tend to focus on self-identification of ethnic group membership when studying ethnic identity, for instance, whether individuals self-identify as Latino or Hispanic (these two terms, albeit carrying different nuances in meaning, are often used interchangeably in the literature). Furthermore, the research tends to be limited to ethnic minority groups who have been disadvantaged in the United States.

Ego identity perspective. Another theoretical perspective that has been implemented in studying ethnic identity and self-esteem is Erikson's (1968) theory of ego identity formation. In particular, Marcia's (1994) conceptualization of Erikson's theoretical notions of identity has guided a large part of the research in which ethnic identity has been examined (see Marcia for an overview). The general premise of this theory is that individuals will achieve a secure identity if they explore their values, goals, and beliefs and make commitments in the domains of occupation, ideologies, and interpersonal values (Marcia, 1994). Generally, the idea that through exploration and commitment to a personal identity one achieves a secure identity has been extended to ethnic identity. Ethnic identity researchers working from this perspective have examined the hypothesis that individuals will attain an achieved ethnic identity only after they have explored their ethnicity and what it means to them (exploration) and have accepted and internalized their ethnicity (commitment). Exploration may involve asking questions, reading books, or talking with friends, and commitment could be reflected in a clear, confident attachment to one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1993).

Acculturation perspective. A third theoretical perspective that has been used to study ethnic identity is based on acculturation. Researchers working from this perspective believe that ethnic identity changes as a function of acculturation processes and influences. Acculturation is thought to occur when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact with each other that results in changes in either or both groups (Cuellar, Nyberg, Maldonado, & Roberts, 1997). In the United States, a Latina learning to speak the English language, gaining an appreciation for and incorporating into her life certain traditions (such as the celebration of the Fourth of July), and learning certain values that are specific to the mainstream culture is an example of acculturation. Researchers working from this perspective focus on the interactions between members of different cultures and on minority individuals' coexistence in two cultures (Bautista de Domanico, Crawford, & DeWolfe, 1994).

From this perspective, the focus has been on studying ethnic identity by examining the degree to which individuals adopted the values of the mainstream culture (in this case, the United States) while at the same time maintaining the values of their own ethnic group. Researchers working from this perspective view a bicultural identity (i.e., identifying with both one's own ethnic group and the mainstream group) as the healthiest form of ethnic identity. One of the main supporting arguments is that having a bicultural identity is related to greater flexibility and this, in turn, facilitates adaptation (Bautista

de Domanico et al., 1994). Generally, it is believed that individuals with a bicultural identity can relate effectively to both their native and the U.S. cultures and that they feel less isolated from either culture (Bautista de Domanico et al., 1994).

The differing conceptualizations of ethnic identity have a direct influence on the empirical work conducted in this area. The methods by which ethnic identity is examined depend ultimately on the conceptualization of ethnic identity. The empirical research in this area can be classified into four general categories based on how ethnic identity is measured. Below we describe how the findings from each of these different groups of studies vary. Table 1 presents a detailed description of the studies.

Empirical Work

Group membership as ethnic identity. Prior to the mid-1980s, a majority of researchers examined ethnic identity by studying self-identification of group membership. For the most part, this research was guided by social identity theory. The expectation was that members of groups who were viewed negatively (e.g., Latinos) by people in society would, in turn, have a lower self-esteem than those who were members of groups that were viewed positively (i.e., European Americans) (Rosenberg, 1979). Thus, the research examining the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latinos was initially limited to comparisons between the self-esteem of adolescent Latinos and the self-esteem of members of other ethnic groups. Findings from this research have been mixed; some researchers found that Latinos had lower self-esteem than majority group members (Fu, Hinkle, & Korslund, 1983; Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985; Hishiki, 1969; Petersen & Ramirez, 1971; Zirkel & Moses, 1971), but in some studies there were no significant differences in self-esteem among the ethnic groups (Cooper, 1971; Healy & DeBlassie, 1974; Martinez & Dukes, 1991).

One possible explanation for this inconsistency is that the findings are dependent on the way that self-esteem has been measured. Some researchers have relied on their own measurement of self-esteem in which a set of adjectives are rated (see Cooper, 1971); other researchers have used established self-esteem measures such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (see Grossman et al., 1985) and still others have focused on self-esteem in relation to particular aspects of the self such as perceived intelligence and satisfaction with self (see Martinez & Dukes, 1991).

(text continues on p. 312)

TABLE 1: Overview of Empirical Studies in Which Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem Were Examined, Grouped by Conceptualization (N = 21)

	<i>Findings Regarding Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem Among Latinos</i>	<i>Latino Populations Examined</i>	<i>Geographical Region Where Data Were Collected</i>
Group membership as ethnic identity			
Cooper (1971) ^{a b c}	No significant differences in self-perceptions between Chicanos and Anglos.	MA	Southwest
Fu, Hinkle, & Korslund (1983) ^{a b c}	Mexican Americans had significantly lower self-concepts than Blacks and Whites.	MA	South
Grossman, Wirt, & Davids (1985) ^{a b c}	Anglos scored significantly higher on self-esteem than Chicanos.	Chicanos	South
Healy & DeBlassie (1974)	No significant differences between Anglos, Hispanics, or Blacks on an overall measure of self-esteem.	NS	Southwest
Hishiki (1969) ^{a b c}	White 6th-grade girls had significantly higher self-concept scores than Mexican American 6th-grade girls.	MA	Southwest
Martinez & Dukes (1991)	No significant differences in global self-esteem between minorities and majority groups members.	NS	Southwest
Petersen & Ramirez (1971) ^{a b}	Mexican American children showed a significantly greater disparity between their real and ideal selves than did Anglo children.	MA	NS
Zirkel & Moses (1971) ^{a b c}	Puerto Ricans had significantly lower self-concepts than Blacks or Whites.	PR	Northeast

(continued)

TABLE 1: Continued

	<i>Findings Regarding Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem Among Latinos</i>	<i>Latino Populations Examined</i>	<i>Geographical Region Where Data Were Collected</i>
Importance of Hispanic identity Ethier & Deaux (1990, 1994) ^a	There was a significant positive relationship between collective self-esteem and Importance of Hispanic Identity rating.	MA, PR, M, SA	NS
Ethnic identity as search and commitment Chavira & Phinney (1991)	Participants with high ethnic identity had significantly higher self-esteem than those with low ethnic identity.	NS	NS
Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette (1998) ^{a b c}	Ethnic identity positively correlated with self-esteem for Dominicans and for Puerto Ricans.	D, PR	Northeast
Martinez & Dukes (1997)	Ethnic identity was significantly positively related to self-esteem.	NS	Southwest
Phinney (1989) ^{a c}	Minority adolescents who had explored and were clear about the meaning of their ethnicity showed significantly higher scores on self-evaluation than those who had not explored and were not clear about their ethnicity.	MA, CA	Southwest
Phinney (1992); Phinney & Chavira (1995)	For minority high school and college students, ethnic identity and self-esteem were significantly positively correlated.	NS	NS
Phinney & Alipuria (1990) ^{a b c}	Ethnic identity search was significantly positively related to self-esteem for Mexican Americans.	MA	Southwest
Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz (1997) ^{a b c}	Ethnic identity significantly predicted self-esteem for Latinos.	MA, CA, SA	Southwest

Phinney & Chavira (1992) (new data from Phinney, 1989, respondents)	Ethnic identity stage was significantly correlated with self-esteem; ethnic identity stage predicted self-esteem over a 3-year period, and self-esteem predicted ethnic identity stage over a 3-year period.	MA, CA	Southwest
Phinney, Chavira, & Tate (1993)	Self-esteem and ethnic identity were significantly positively correlated.	NS	Southwest
Phinney, DuPont, Espinosa, Reville, & Sanders (1994)	Self-esteem was significantly positively correlate with ethnic identity among Latino high school and college students.	NS	NS
Ethnic identity as biculturalism			
Bautista de Domanico, Crawford, & De Wolfe (1994) ^{a b c}	Biculturals had significantly higher self-esteem than monoculturals.	MA	Midwest
Der-Karabetian & Ruiz (1997) ^{a b c}	No significant differences in self-esteem among biculturals, assimilated, separated, or marginalized groups.	M, MA	Southwest
Rotheram-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate, & Lightfoot (1996) ^d	Students who rated themselves as strongly ethnically identified had significantly higher self-esteem than those who self-identified as mainstream or bicultural.	NS	Northeast

NOTE: C = Cuban, CA = Central American, D = Dominican, M = Mexican, MA = Mexican American, PR = Puerto Rican, SA = South American, NS = not specified.

a. Described the different Latino populations in their sample.

b. Studied distinct Latino groups (i.e., did not combine Latinos into one group).

c. Described the Latino populations studied as well as where the data were collected.

d. This study conceptualized ethnic identity as search and commitment and as biculturalism but examined self-esteem only in relation to biculturalism.

Aside from the differing methods used for measuring self-esteem across studies, sample characteristics may have influenced the findings. One possibility is that school demographics may play an important role in self-esteem among ethnic minorities. Children are thought to develop their self-esteem by comparing themselves to the people around them (Rosenberg, 1979). In schools where minority youth are in the majority population, their self-esteem may not be lower than mainstream adolescents' self-esteem because their social comparison group is composed of adolescents who are members of the same ethnic minority group. The sample characteristics are not described explicitly in many of the studies, and it is difficult to reconcile these divergent findings without more information about the participants.

Nevertheless, a number of researchers have reached the conclusion that it is not minority group membership per se that is related to self-esteem; other factors, such as socioeconomic status, play a more significant role (Crockett, 1997; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). As a result, the research in this area has moved from comparing groups to examining degree of identification with or salience of group membership for individuals.

Ethnic identity as "importance of Hispanic identity." Another instance in which social identity theory has been used to conceptualize ethnic identity is in Ethier and Deaux's (1990, 1994) work. They focused on a more detailed aspect of group membership—the importance that one assigns to one's particular ethnic group membership. To our knowledge, only one study has examined ethnic identity in this manner. Ethier and Deaux found that the higher individuals rated the importance of their Hispanic identity, the higher was their self-esteem. Although these researchers were assessing an aspect of ethnic identity (i.e., the importance one places on it), it is questionable whether this method of measuring ethnic identity assessed the concept completely. Other important aspects of ethnic identity, such as exploration, may have been overlooked with this method. For example, some may have assigned a high degree of importance to their Hispanic identity because their parents taught them that it was an important part of their identity, not because they explored this aspect of their identity for themselves.

Ethnic identity as search and commitment. Since the early 1990s, the majority of the studies that have examined the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latino adolescents have conceptualized ethnic identity using the ego identity formation perspective (see Table 1). In these studies, ethnic identity was no longer viewed as a dichotomous concept. Rather, researchers examined degree of ethnic identity, and, for the most part,

ethnic identity was assessed using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) or through interviews examining exploration and commitment to an ethnic group. All of these studies reported a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity. The higher individuals scored on indices of search and commitment, the higher was their self-esteem. The consistency in findings across these studies may be partially due to the fact that Phinney and her colleagues conducted the majority of this research using the same standardized measures (e.g., Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, MEIM) and conceptualization of ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity as biculturalism. A fourth group of studies on ethnic identity and self-esteem has been guided by an acculturation perspective. Typically, researchers working from this framework have grouped individuals into categories such as biculturally identified (i.e., adopting mainstream values and maintaining own values), ethnically identified (i.e., not adopting mainstream values but only maintaining own ethnic group values) and mainstream identified (i.e., adopting mainstream values and not maintaining ethnic group values). Following these classifications, researchers have compared the self-esteem of individuals in the different groups. Findings from these studies are mixed. In one study, researchers found that individuals who were biculturally identified had higher self-esteem than individuals in the other two groups (Bautista de Domanico et al., 1994). In a second study, those who rated themselves as strongly ethnically identified scored significantly higher on a measure of self-esteem than individuals in the other two groups (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1996). And in a third study, researchers found that there were no significant differences between the groups (Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997).

These differing findings could be due to different conceptualizations of bicultural identity. In the three studies that we found that examined ethnic identity as biculturalism, different methods were used to assess bicultural identity. In one study (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1996), bicultural identity was determined by asking individuals to rate their reference group in the following manner: *strongly ethnically identified*, *somewhat ethnically identified*, *more bicultural* (similar to both the mainstream and their own ethnic group), *somewhat more mainstream*, and *very mainstream*. Individuals were asked this question on two separate occasions and the responses to the two questions were summed to determine whether they would be classified as strongly ethnically identified, bicultural, or mainstream. In a second study, however, individuals were asked questions about their attitudes pertaining to their ethnic group and to mainstream culture to determine their bicultural identity (e.g., Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997). For example, individuals were asked to

indicate their degree of agreement with a statement such as, "If I were to be born again, I would wish to be born a Latino." In a third study (Bautista de Domanico et al., 1994), more behavioral and kinship aspects of ethnic identity were examined. For example, individuals were asked about issues such as their familiarity with the Spanish language, their usage of the language, and their generational proximity to Mexico.

One main difference among these studies is that in determining bicultural identity some studies have focused on perceived behaviors, whereas other studies have focused on attitudes or values. What individuals report about their ethnic identity (e.g., whether or not they believe they are strongly ethnically identified) may not necessarily represent their behavior (e.g., their participation in cultural events). Thus, although we found three studies in which ethnic identity was conceptualized as biculturalism, the differing findings, as well as the differing operationalizations of the construct, make it difficult to draw any general conclusions.

Summary of Findings

Although the studies we described focused on ethnic identity in conceptually different ways, the conclusions drawn in all of the studies concerned the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem. Despite the different conceptualizations, by grouping the studies into the four categories (described earlier) and summarizing the findings, we can draw some conclusions. First, the research that examined differences in self-esteem among ethnic groups is dated, and, for the most part, social scientists have concluded that it is more informative to examine degree of ethnic identity as opposed to ethnic group membership (for a review, see Phinney, 1991). Second, when degree of ethnic identity and when importance of a Hispanic identity are examined, there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity. Finally, the findings on biculturalism are mixed, at times indicating differences in self-esteem among individuals who identify as mainstream, bicultural, or ethnically, and at times indicating no differences among these groups. Thus, the literature provides some information regarding the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem, but readers should pay careful attention to the conceptualization of ethnic identity in each study. In addition, several methodological limitations should be acknowledged when examining this research. We now turn to a detailed discussion of the conceptual and methodological limitations of the existing literature.

LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING LITERATURE

Conceptualization of Ethnic Identity

As mentioned earlier, researchers who have studied ethnic identity among Latinos have conceptualized ethnic identity differently. Because scientists from different areas, trained in different schools of thought, are exploring the topic of ethnic identity, perhaps it should not be surprising that there is little agreement concerning from which theoretical perspective to explore this concept. Although exploring this issue from a variety of theoretical perspectives can be beneficial to researchers because of the unique insights that can be gained from the different perspectives, this makes it extremely difficult to draw conclusions across studies (as illustrated earlier).

The primary limitation concerning the conceptualization of ethnic identity is that the different theoretical perspectives from which the researchers work lead to differing conceptual and operational definitions of ethnic identity, and these differing definitions make it difficult to compare findings across studies. Furthermore, the differing conceptualizations pose a considerable problem when researchers are interested in drawing conclusions about ethnic identity and how it relates to other psychological constructs such as self-esteem. As a result of these different conceptualizations, the findings on ethnic identity and self-esteem cannot be aggregated across studies.

An equally serious problem involves comparisons made across studies without acknowledging the differing conceptualizations of ethnic identity. Although recently there has been a tendency in studies of ethnic identity among Latino adolescents for researchers to employ the ego identity conceptualization of ethnic identity, not all recent studies have been based on this theoretical conceptualization.

It is difficult to determine whether one of the conceptualizations is "correct" or more valuable than the others. The authors' position is that this judgment will ultimately depend on the goals of the research study. For the relationships examined in this review, the ego identity conceptualization seems to be the most appropriate. The ego identity perspective is more comprehensive in that it takes into account group membership, degree of identification with that group, and the developmental nature of the identification. The combination of these three factors is likely to tell us more about the impact on self-esteem than if we were to examine only one of these factors. As it has been found with empirical work based on the social identity perspective, group membership in and of itself is not related to self-esteem; rather, aspects

of group membership (e.g., degree of identification) are what seem to influence this relationship.

In sum, scholars interested in drawing conclusions from the literature on ethnic identity and self-esteem should pay special attention to the conceptualization of the construct in each study. Aside from the conceptual differences of this work, there are also some methodological limitations to consider.

Methodological Limitations

Grouping all Latinos together. One methodological limitation that is prevalent in this work concerns the grouping of all Latinos into one assumed homogeneous group. Latinos in the United States comprise mainly Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, and South Americans. However, researchers studying Latinos rarely make these distinctions among nationalities. A majority of researchers who have studied ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latino adolescents have overlooked the distinctions among the different populations, have limited their samples to the majority Latino population (i.e., Mexican origin), and/or have failed to specify in their research reports which populations are included in their Latino or Hispanic sample. Of the 21 empirical studies that examined ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latino adolescents, only 10 focused on discrete Latino populations (Bautista de Domanico et al., 1994; Cooper, 1971; Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997; Fu et al., 1983; Grossman et al., 1985; Hishiki, 1969; Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Petersen & Ramirez, 1971; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Zirkel & Moses, 1971).

When studying Latino populations, the specific nationality of group members is important for many reasons. First, Latino groups have different histories concerning immigration into the United States. For Mexican-origin Latinos, it is questionable whether the word *immigration* is even applicable. This Latino population shares a long history with the United States in that their land was taken over by what is now the United States and, therefore, they became 'foreigners' due to boundary changes. Latinos of Mexican origin have been in the United States longer than any other Latino group, and they have suffered a great deal of discrimination in the United States (Kavanaugh & Retish, 1993). Other Latino groups, such as Cubans and Nicaraguans, have experienced involuntary migration for different reasons. These Latino groups can be considered political refugees, because most migrated to the United States to escape political conditions in their native country. Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, are similar to Mexican-origin Latinos because their land was also acquired by the United States. Other Latino groups, how-

ever, have experienced voluntary migration. For example, the majority of South Americans chose to migrate to the United States to better their educational or occupational opportunities.

Reasons for migration to the United States or history in the United States may have a direct impact on the experiences of groups of people. For example, because Latinos of Mexican origin have had a long history of being in the United States, they may be more likely to have family in the area and, thus, may be more likely to have familial social support. For adolescents this could translate into an increased likelihood that they would have role models to emulate. Other Latino adolescents may not have role models, which in some ways could affect their ethnic identity. Thus, Latino adolescents who may not have strong familial support systems may fare worse, in terms of ethnic identity, than Latino adolescents who have access to these resources.

Second, several demographic differences exist among the various groups. For example, Puerto Ricans have the highest incidence of poverty and the lowest level of education, whereas Cubans have the highest median income and the lowest unemployment (Porter & Washington, 1993). Furthermore, while 63% of Central and South Americans have graduated from high school, only 46% of Mexican Americans have high school diplomas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). Numerous other distinctions could be made among Latino groups; however, the point is that Latino groups are by no means homogeneous and should not be grouped into one category.

There are many possible reasons why researchers may have combined different Latino populations into one group. First, it is challenging to obtain large numbers of Latinos for participation in research studies due to a number of factors, such as lack of trust and language barriers. Therefore, researchers may not limit their studies to one Latino population for fear of limiting the size of their samples. In addition, researchers may assume that because racism, discrimination, and prejudice exist for most minority groups that there really is no reason to separate Latinos based on nationality. This assumption, however, may be inaccurate considering the findings of studies that suggest that discrimination varies depending on the skin color of Latinos, with darker Latinos experiencing more discrimination (see Vazquez & Garcia-Vazquez, 1997). Finally, there are many misconceptions about Latinos sharing a common culture and a common language. It should be noted that although most Latinos do share Spanish as a common language, there are many variations in the way that Spanish is spoken (i.e., accent and intonation) as well as in the vocabularies of the different Latino nationalities, which reflect different cultural norms, influences, and beliefs.

Restricted range of Latinos studied. Another limitation pertains to the lack of research on Latinos who are not of Mexican origin. The majority of the research that has focused on one Latino group has been conducted on Latinos of Mexican origin. Of the 10 studies in which specific Latino groups were examined, 8 focused on Mexican-origin Latinos (see Table 1). We could only find 2 studies that did not focus exclusively on Mexican Americans and did not group Latinos of different nationalities (Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Zirkel & Moses, 1971). Although 64.3% of the Latino population in the United States is of Mexican origin (Montgomery, 1994), research should not be limited to majority populations. In fact, the experience of other Latino populations that are in the minority within the larger Latino population could be more adverse because in a sense they are a double minority. Not only are these individuals part of an ethnic minority group in the United States, but within their own ethnic group they are also a minority, and their double minority status may have a deleterious impact on ethnic identity development (see discussion below).

Regional location in which the research was conducted. The region of the country in which the data are collected can have an effect on the findings. For example, the largest Latino population in the South, the West, and the Midwest is of Mexican origin (see Table 2). Individuals who are of Mexican origin and grow up in these areas are likely to have a different experience than individuals of Mexican origin who grow up in the northeastern part of the United States, where the majority of the Latino population is Puerto Rican. For example, in the West, Latinos of Mexican origin are more likely to encounter communities of Mexican-origin people because this group makes up a larger portion of the Latino population. In the West, if Hispanic Heritage month is celebrated, the activities are likely to center around the Mexican culture. Adolescents who live in areas where their ethnic group is less visible may have a more difficult time dealing with issues of ethnic identity and this, in turn, may influence their self-esteem more adversely than their Latino counterparts whose nationality is in the majority. In fact, comparisons of ethnic group members who live in majority settings (i.e., own ethnic group is highly visible) with their counterparts who live in minority settings (i.e., own ethnic group is not as visible) indicate that social context is associated with ethnic identity (e.g., Markstrom, Berman, & Bruschi, 1998; Marshall & Markstrom-Adams, 1995). Jewish adolescents who lived in a majority setting scored significantly higher on a measure of ethnic identity (as conceptualized by the ego identity formation perspective) than did Jewish adolescents living in a minority setting (Markstrom et al., 1998). Thus, social context has

TABLE 2: Population of Persons of Hispanic Origin by Region of the United States

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Region of the United States</i>			
	<i>Northeast</i>	<i>Midwest</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
Mexican	165,607	1,128,563	4,331,949	7,767,089
Puerto Rican	1,798,772	256,495	399,561	196,987
Cuban	187,662	34,690	738,567	92,278
Dominican	458,819	5,067	47,591	8,674
Guatemalan	42,911	19,138	40,806	165,924
Honduran	39,576	5,822	52,638	33,030
Nicaraguan	17,486	3,671	103,174	78,327
Panamanian	33,016	6,125	33,605	19,267
Salvadoran	76,765	9,590	129,424	349,302
Other Central American	18,623	3,903	17,235	24,472
Colombian	187,451	19,097	122,497	49,681
Ecuadorian	124,528	11,058	26,663	28,949
Peruvian	65,815	8,483	48,217	52,520
Other South American	90,212	19,041	98,821	82,569

SOURCE: Montgomery (1994)

been shown to be an important factor for ethnic identity formation among Jewish ethnic minority adolescents and should be considered when examining Latino populations in the United States.

Researchers who do focus on a specific Latino population understandably tend to conduct their research in areas where that population is in the majority within the Latino populations. Good examples of this are studies conducted with Mexican Americans living in the South or on Puerto Ricans living in the Northeast (see Table 1). Generally, researchers have not taken into account the characteristics of the geographical region in which they are conducting their research. For example, of the 21 studies that we reviewed, only 11 specified the Latino population that was studied *and* the geographical region where the data were gathered (Bautista de Domanico et al., 1994; Cooper, 1971; Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997; Fu et al., 1983; Grossman et al., 1985; Hishiki, 1969; Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Zirkel & Moses, 1971). Future research should examine specific Latino populations and take into account the Latino composition of the geographical area in which they live to determine if this contextual factor may be influencing the development of their ethnic identity. For example, researchers could sample a group of Latinos who live in an area where their Latino group is in the majority as well as a

group of Latinos in that same area who are not in the majority of the Latino population. The experiences of these two groups could then be compared to determine differences and similarities. Although we recognize that sampling Latino populations can be a challenge because of the disproportionate geographic representation of certain nationalities within different areas of the United States, we feel that it is necessary for understanding the various Latino populations in the United States.

Generalizability of the research. The generalizability of the findings from these studies has been compromised for several reasons. First, we are unable to generalize from the studies in which the Latino population examined was not specified. In 8 of the 21 studies that we reviewed, the researchers did not specify the Latino populations that were included in their samples (Chavira & Phinney, 1991; Healy & DeBlassie, 1974; Martinez & Dukes, 1991, 1997; Phinney, 1992; Phinney, Chavira, & Tate, 1993; Phinney et al., 1994; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1996). Also, the majority of researchers who have focused on one Latino population have examined Mexican-origin adolescents living in an area where they are the majority of the Latino population (for examples see Cooper, 1971; Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997; Grossman et al., 1985; Hishiki, 1969; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). The findings from these different studies cannot be generalized to Mexican-origin Latinos living in areas where Mexican-origin Latinos are not in the majority (i.e., the Northeast). Finally, many of the researchers who included other Latino adolescents in their studies (i.e., not only those of Mexican origin) did not examine the individual Latino groups separately. Instead, they grouped many Latino adolescents together into one "Latino" or "Hispanic" group (for examples, Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994; Phinney, 1989; Phinney et al., 1993, 1997; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1996). Ideally, more research should be conducted in which researchers not only expand the Latino populations that are examined but also clearly indicate the populations being studied.

Moving From Examining Correlational Relationships to Examining Processes

Aside from the conceptual and methodological limitations discussed earlier, there are some complex issues regarding this topic that have been unexplored. For example, scholars have written about how the development of an ethnic identity is influenced by an individual's family, community, and societal experiences (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994; Phinney, 1996), but researchers have not empirically examined how these experiences influence

ethnic identity. The empirical research has focused exclusively on ethnic identity at one time period in individuals' lives (e.g., adolescence) as opposed to the development of one's ethnic identity over the lifespan. One process that has been relatively unexamined among Latinos is that of the influence of stereotypes and discrimination on ethnic identity and self-esteem.

Theoretically, Phinney (1996) has suggested that children (a) internalize negative images and stereotypes about their group from the wider society (e.g., mainstream institutions and the media) or (b) internalize a strong positive image of their group from their family and their community. Theorists have also suggested that if adolescents believe in the stereotypes about their group, this can lead to a poor self-concept (Phinney, Lochner, & Murphy, 1990). However, it is also thought that they may reject the stereotypes and redefine themselves and their groups in positive terms (Tajfel, 1978). Reasonably, it seems that children probably encounter both positive and negative images about their group but that one of the two would more strongly influence their self-concepts.

Crocker and Major (1989) have described some possible self-protective strategies that minority group members may use to deal with negative images of their group. They explained that members of stigmatized or oppressed minority groups may not have low self-esteem because they attribute negative comments that they receive to prejudiced attitudes of others. To our knowledge, these self-protective strategies have not been examined in relation to Latino adolescents' ethnic identity and self-esteem.

Crocker and Major's idea of self-protective strategies may help explain why researchers have found a positive relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity among Latino adolescents. One possibility is that individuals who have a strong ethnic identity are aware of discrimination and oppression toward their group, and when they are confronted with negative remarks, they attribute those remarks to prejudiced attitudes of others as opposed to some internal characteristic of themselves. Thus, this does not negatively affect their self-esteem. On the other hand, individuals with a weak ethnic identity (e.g., unexplored and uncommitted), when faced with a negative remark may take it personally and believe that it is some internal quality of theirs that justifies the negative remarks. Their self-esteem may be negatively affected by what could be thought of as ignorance or prejudice toward their own ethnic group.

Although this area has been relatively unexamined, Phinney and her colleagues have attempted to examine a closely related topic. Phinney et al. (1993) found that threat to one's ethnicity differentiated those who had a low ethnic identity and those who had a strong ethnic identity. For instance, when individuals received negative information about their ethnic group, those

with a strong sense of ethnic identity were more likely to report positive feelings about their ethnic group membership than those with a weak ethnic identity. Similarly, Phinney and Chavira (1995) found that certain styles of coping with stereotypes and discrimination were positively associated with self-esteem. For instance, individuals who adopted a proactive style of coping with stereotypes and discrimination had higher levels of self-esteem. In addition, they found that an aggressive style of coping was associated with weaker ethnic identities. This research does help shed some light on the possible relationships among these constructs. However, a longitudinal approach is needed to decipher the direction of these relationships. For instance, does one's ethnic identity determine the coping strategies one will use, and will those strategies influence one's self-esteem? Or does one's self-esteem determine both one's ethnic identity and the strategies that one will employ?

Although there has been little research into these processes related to ethnic identity development, they are important issues with which Latino adolescents have to deal as they experiment with identity. Spencer and Dornbusch (1990), for instance, suggested that awareness of negative appraisals of one's group can affect life choices and adolescents' strategies for negotiating a life course. Research has not yet examined the interrelationships among adolescents' knowledge of stereotypes about their group, their ethnic identity, and their self-esteem. There are several possible relations among these constructs. For example, a strong ethnic identity could serve as a buffer against negative stereotypes, minimizing the negative influence of the stereotypes on a person's self-esteem. On the other hand, self-esteem could be a buffer against negative stereotypes and thus lessen the negative effects of stereotypes on a person's ethnic identity. This will be a complex issue to examine; however, we believe that this is the next step for research on ethnic identity. We need to move beyond examining the correlational relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity and focus on the processes by which ethnic identity develops, is influenced by (or influences) negative stereotypes associated with one's group, and whether the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem is influenced by the stereotypes one may encounter.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We have several suggestions for future research in this area. First, researchers should clearly indicate the theoretical perspective from which they are conducting their research. Knowing the theoretical perspective from which the study has been grounded can aid researchers across disciplines. Second, researchers should be more precise when describing their Latino

samples. Specific Latino populations examined and geographical region in which the studies were conducted should be reported to allow appropriate generalizations.

Third, research on ethnic identity and self-esteem among Latino adolescents should move beyond examining the correlational relationship between the two constructs and more toward an examination of processes underlying the observed associations. In this effort, the first author is in the process of testing a model that examines ethnic identity development among Latino adolescents using an ecological perspective. This model (Umaña-Taylor, 1999) examines how proximal and distal ecological factors (e.g., society, community, family, peers) as well as adolescents' social and cognitive development influence the formation of an ethnic identity. Furthermore, even after gaining a more complete understanding of ethnic identity formation, it may be only through the use of longitudinal studies that the field may begin to understand the causal relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem.

Finally, future research in this area should examine adolescents' knowledge of stereotypes, the extent to which they internalize or externalize the stereotypes, the extent to which they cognitively accept the negative images about their group, and how ethnic identity and/or self-esteem may influence these processes. Although many Latinos may experience discrimination or prejudice, there is variability among Latinos in these experiences. All Latinos do not have dark skin or a foreign accent by which they can be physically identified, and, therefore, some Latinos may be less likely to be targets of discrimination. Furthermore, ethnic identity may not be as salient for some Latinos because of their social class or the neighborhood in which they live. Socioeconomic status may buffer many of the effects of ethnic minority status through a privileged economic situation.

The existing research provides us with information about a select group of Latinos in the United States (primarily Mexican-origin adolescents living in areas where Latinos of Mexican origin make up the majority of the Latino population). For individuals who are sensitive to the diversity within Latino populations, the existing research provides little information. For those who are unaware of the diversity, the existing research may serve to further perpetuate the inaccurate inference that Latinos are one homogeneous population.

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