

ETHNIC IDENTITY, PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL
MICROAGGRESSIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF
UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT AS PREDICTORS
OF COPING AMONG LATINA/O
GRADUATE STUDENTS

By

ENEDELIA SAUCEDA

Bachelor of Science in Psychology
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas
2004

Master of Science in Educational Psychology
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. John S.C. Romans

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Sue C. Jacobs

Dr. Barbara Carlozzi

Dr. Katy Perry

Dr. A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Graduate school is a culture within itself, a culture comprised of faculty and student dynamics, program-specific lingo, norms for interaction, and generations of students who have shaped the programs' history and future directions. As students go through the graduate school cultural process, they begin to transform; they are scholars who are transitioning into professionals and academics. While most students go through the graduate school growing pains feeling overwhelmed, academically challenged, stressed and exhausted; racial/ethnic minority students, specifically Latinos, also feel the wobbly dance as they negotiate two worlds: the academic world and the Latino world. The process of graduate school has been called a "game"; a game with lots of rules. For Latino students, in particular first-generation scholars, these rules were never explained to them and they've never seen anyone play; the game was not built for them. (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001).

With this metamorphosis happening with all students, what about the other components of the individuals' identity? Latino graduate students have the additional task of incorporating their scholar identity with their ethnic identity as they are immersed in this

graduate school culture. The development and management of an identity can be taxing on the individual. Understanding this process and the experiences of these Latino students could improve graduate program recruitment and retention of Latino scholars and the relationships between students and faculty. Latino students from a collectivist culture are stepping into an individualistic culture and hoping to find a sense of community with their faculty and peers.

The concept of ethnic identity is of particular interest to this study because of its capacity to influence an individual's perception of self, others, and environment (Castillo et al., 2006). Ethnic identity has the potential to take new form and complexity when explored in the context of higher education. Torres (2006) agrees that while Latino college graduates tend to be more acculturated, their sense of pride in their ethnicity can be maintained. Therefore, while these students learn to play the academic game and succeed academically, cultural conflict and resistance to marginality still exists because of their adherence to a Latino ethnic identity (Torres, 2006; Watford, Rivas, Burciaga, & Solórzano, 2006).

The college campus has the potential to be the home away from home for all its enrollees; the graduate program faculty and peers are like a family and community. However, this potential often falls short in many universities. While the administrators, faculty, and other academic leaders may feel accomplished in increasing their minority statistics, they can fail to recognize the rigidity of the institution and the struggles of their students. The increase in diversity changes the complexion in the student population and while the structures of educational norms remain constant or are slow to change, students are the ones who are expected to quickly change and adapt. The expectation of conformity is perceived as unwelcoming, isolating, and even hostile by minority students (Castillo et al., 2006). Latino students are keenly aware of the inequities and feelings of inferiority.

However, the problem remains that these students and their experiences have yet to be adequately explored in this context. This study attempts to provide insight and understanding into the Latino scholar experience by exploring the development of ethnic identity, investigating racial microaggressions in academic relationships, identifying the perceptions of university culture, and examining coping styles.

Ethnic identity is a component of an individual's complete identity defined as an individual's feelings of belonging, a mutual sense of group membership, and positive attitudes in regards to the individual's ethnic group (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity is closely intertwined with an individual's self-concept and plays a factor in an individual's choices and forming a unique perspective. Racial microaggressions are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solórzano, 2000, pg. 60).

The process of ethnic identity and the experience of racial microaggressions are two constructs that take place within academic settings and can consequently impact the racial/ethnic minority students who enter a university environment. "The campus environment is influenced by a historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion of groups, by the structural diversity or numerical representation of diverse people, the nature of interactions among diverse groups, and individual perceptions of the environment" (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005, pg. 236). Considering the potential negative influence that this combination of factors can have on a minority students, researchers are searching for means to protect the scholar's psychological well-being by exploring student coping sources and practices (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Schneider & Ward, 2003; Solórzano et al., 2000).

Latinos in Academia

For the purposes of this study, the term “Latino” is used to describe descendants of Latin America, Central American, and Spanish-speaking origin. Other literature uses the term “Hispanic” which may be reflected in this study. The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” were interpreted equally as they have been used interchangeably throughout much of the literature.

Latinos in the United States continue to be one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country. Meanwhile, their under representation in higher education remains an issue of concern for the community. According to the Digest of Education Statistics 2003, an estimated 10.1% of Hispanic high school graduates were enrolled in college in 2002. Yet, only about 16% of those who were enrolled will successfully complete a bachelor’s degree (Fry, 2003).

In the fall of 2005, 1,882,000 Latinos were enrolled in college, 130,700 of them were graduate students. In 2006, a Census Bureau report stated that 2.4% of these graduate students attained their Master’s degree while only .4 % got their Doctorate. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007)

Latinas in particular, have the lowest ranking of degree attainment at every stage of the “educational pipeline”, according to the 2000 Bureau of Census (Watford et al., 2006). Out of 100 Latinas who enter elementary school, about half will graduate high school, 11 will graduate college, 4 will graduate from graduate school, and 0.3 out of the 100 will end up with a doctorate degree (Watford et al., 2006); which is equal to African American women and less than the White, Asian American, and Native American counterparts. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in a 2003 statistical

projection, it was estimated that by the year 2050 Latinas/os will represent one quarter of the U.S. population (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005). If education trends continue, a large part of the U.S. population will be considerably undereducated (Gloria et al., 2005 & Watford et al., 2006).

These disheartening facts bring up issues at the political, economic, and social level (Gloria et al., 2005). This study explored the social aspect of this problem and also potential solutions as relationships and environment are investigated. Gonzales (2003) stated that those in higher education, who felt that their ethnic group was acknowledged and valued by the institution, were more involved academically. Perceptions of the school's curriculum, social climate, and peer relations determined their attitudes about education and affected their thoughts about themselves and the culture in which they belong. The academic culture in itself contributes to the changing perceptions about other members of their racial/ethnic group and their role as a member of that group. Self-doubt, survivor's guilt, and impostor syndrome, as mentioned by Solórzano and Yosso (2001), seem to be commonplace feelings among Latinos at the university level.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is an intricate cognitive and emotional process that involves the "sense of peoplehood within a group, a culture, and a particular setting" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, pg. 271). In regards to the role that ethnic identity plays in an individual's psychological functioning, ethnic identity can determine behavior, preference, personality, and self esteem. Charlesworth (2000) claims that the process of developing an ethnic identity is fundamental

in satisfying the need of belonging and acceptance from a group. The purpose for understanding ethnic identity is to help comprehend the individual's entire identity.

Ethnic identity is a construct which is considered a form of ethnic awareness that is developed linearly. The opinion that this construct is linear implies that an individual can ascend and descend on the ethnic identity line and arrive at different stages of development or respond in context. However, there is still debate over this view, whether or not the construct of ethnic identity can be represented linearly, categorically, or from a constructivist approach (Smith, Stratton, Stones, & Naidoo, 2003; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999).

Phinney and Ong (2007) maintain that ethnic identity is formed over time through experience and the actions and choices that the individual makes in response. Ethnic identity development is a fluid process that needs to be viewed in context. Some suggest that one of the contextual factors that influence ethnic identity is the individual's perception of racism and discrimination. Amado Padilla (2003) suggests that discrimination also plays a role in the identification process. He states that if an individual experiences "perceived discrimination"; the person is more likely to identify with that ethnic group.

The possible backlash of experienced discrimination or prejudice is that during initial ethnic identity development, an individual can become ashamed of his or her own ethnicity and may try to conceal their ethnicity. The embarrassed feeling is a product of and contributes to ethnocentrism, the idea that cultural superiority and prejudice of other ethnic groups. It is also a belief that it can be damaging to the development of an ethnic identity. (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003)

Sociological perspectives have added to the developmental arguments of ethnic identity. The word “function” has been another term used to explain the development of an individual’s ethnic identity. In *The Functions of Ethnic Identity: A New Mexico Hispanic Example* (Doan & Stephan, 2005), the researchers argue that we consciously choose an ethnic identity label that provides us with the least cost and/or most rewards.

Racial Microaggressions

The experiences of Latinos in graduate school can consist of both overt and covert marginality (Watford et al., 2006). Other literature has called this overt and covert discrimination. More contemporary researchers would call these marginalities *racial microaggressions*. “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, pg. 271). Those who perform racial microaggressions are likely unaware of their insults and would argue that the actions are done automatically or unconsciously, regardless of hurtful intentions. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Sue et al., 2007).

Recent literature has focused on microaggressions’ covert expressions and their negative consequences (Constantine & Sue, 2007). In particular, much of the hurtful impacts of these racial undertone exchanges are due to the vagueness of microaggressions and the relationship with the “perpetrator” (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions at the higher education level add a specific context to the experience and confrontation of these perceived microaggressions. Constantine (2007) specifically discusses the power dynamics in her study with cross-racial supervision. Professors maintain multiple roles with their students (i.e.

advisor, instructor, supervisor), all of which serve as “educational and evaluative powers” over the student. The inherent power hierarchy of academia has the potential to impact the perceptions of racial microaggressions and confronting the perpetrator(s).

Beyond the students’ experience of these forms of marginality, researchers are beginning to look at the students’ reactions to those experiences, i.e. emotional responses, coping strategies, and resistance (Watford et al., 2006). For example, in a 2009 study by Sue and his colleagues, they identified and classified classroom microaggressions and potential strategies for teachers. A focus group of 14 students of color determined 3 domains: 1) Racial microaggressions as precipitators of difficult dialogues, 2) Reactions to difficult dialogues (cognitive, behavioral, and emotional), and 3) Instructor strategies for facilitating difficult dialogues. The students remarked on how they feel the internal conflict to speak out against racial microaggressions in class; they weigh out consequences before speaking and were more likely to speak if they perceived their classroom environment as supportive. Additionally, the students feel like they have to monitor and restrict their emotions as they spoke for fear of being perceived negatively by their peers, i.e. “the angry minority”. In regards to helpful strategies by instructors, the students appreciated when difficult dialogues were legitimized, when feelings were validated, and when different racial realities were accepted. Students felt that passive, dismissive and avoidant approaches by teachers were unhelpful.

In an effort to explore and identify students’ strengths during ethnic identity negotiation and racial microaggression exchanges, this study examined the coping strategies of Latino graduate students within the academic context.

Academic Environment

The university environment has less to do with the institutions' structures and layout, but more so with the observations of the people that walk the campus. The observation of the environment will determine students' perceptions of the "climate" which can in turn predict students' overall satisfaction with their institution (Reid & Radhakrishan, 2003). Studies suggest that students of color, especially African Americans and Latinos, report more negative perceptions of their campus climates. These negative perceptions and low levels of institutional satisfaction may be the contributing factor to attrition rates in that these factors are shown to be related to students' persistence behaviors (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996).

"The higher education system provides one of the best opportunities for ameliorating the social and economic inequalities experienced by Latinos in this country" (Schneider & Ward, 2003, pg. 539). In an institution like a university, there is a gathering of thousands of educated minds attempting to solve real-world problems in their respective disciplines. However, these institutions are made up of fallible humans with unique perspectives. The collection of people at various hierarchies of the institution has the capacity to influence the environment's cultural climate. Almost as if the university is personified. It has the potential to have its own mood, perspectives, personality, and the capacity to be a perpetrator of racial microaggressions.

For the Latino students who successfully navigate these potentially hostile campuses and then choose to continue into graduate study, the balancing act continues. However, the understanding of the graduate student experience is less understood than the undergraduate one. The acknowledgement of those who have made it further down the educational pipeline

is lacking in the literature which continues to focus on our failures rather than our successes. It is beneficial to look at those Latinos who have already successfully attained one or more degrees.

Coping with Ethnic Identity Negotiations and Racial Microaggressions

Researchers suggest that collectivistic cultures, like Latinos, cope with problems by talking to others (Castellanos, et al., 2006; Schneider & Ward, 2003). But if few are around who understand the students' experience or if the student has a negative perception of their academic relationships and environments, who do they talk to? If the student is the first generation to attend graduate school, do they still feel like they can talk to their family? Does the Latinos' number one coping strategy become compromised?

In a study by Schneider and Ward (2003), results suggested that if Latino students perceived less support from the academy, they would be more likely to seek support from other Latino students. The authors go on to acknowledge, that while this mode of operation would be effective, if the student attends an underrepresented university, their Latino peers may not be enough to provide a buffer for their lack of support in their respective department or campus (Schneider & Ward, 2003). In addition to the compromised strategy of support - seeking, there is the additional collectivistic coping style of *forbearance*, in which students may minimize or conceal their problems because the fear of burdening others (Moore & Constantine, 2005). With the lack of immediate buffers and the practice of forbearance, not many of the concerns of Latino students are being voiced. If this is true, the problems experienced by Latino graduate students are going unnoticed and those around them may be clueless that any concerns exist.

Still, little literature exists about the coping methods and sources of graduate students. The topic of coping remains vague when discussing students' experiences. For graduate students who have been in the higher education "game" longer than their undergraduate counterparts, the ambiguity could overlook differences in coping between the two levels of education. In addition, coping responses may differ for a population of students that are in a less concentrated setting; there are less Latinos in graduate school than there are in undergraduate study.

In regards to racial microaggressions, the impact can be damaging to students, yet research on the coping strategies for racial microaggression survivors is minimal. Much of the more well-known studies are still focusing on understanding of the definition and its effects. Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) would refer to it as an "invisibility syndrome", an effect of racism found with African American males. It is the invisibility of the racial slight which makes it hard to combat and resolve. Racial microaggression repair can occur when it is made visible; when we are made visible. After experiencing an act of racism, an individual will seek safety within the group where they feel the most acceptance; the group offers "sanity checks" (validation) and the individual can feel "visible" again (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000).

Intent of the Study

This study explored the experiences of undergraduates and implicates that although the coping techniques are utilized, they are not effective enough. However, this study intends to address coping strategies among Latinos in the context of graduate study. For Latino graduate students, the multi-faceted factors of identity, perception and environment can

influence the choices that students make in regards to how they “repair” themselves amidst the straining process of negotiating two worlds. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, students’ coping styles are said to be predicted by the combination of these cultural and environmental factors which are perceived by the student, specifically ethnic identity, perception of racial microaggressions, and perceptions of university environment. The exploration of coping style (i.e. social support seeking vs. forbearance) could give insight in to how Latino graduate students deal with the invisibility and silence that is experienced during graduate study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Latina/o

Defining “Latino”

For the purposes of this study, the term “Latino” was used to describe descendants of Latin America, Central American, and Spanish-speaking origin. Other literature uses the term “Hispanic” which may be reflected in this study. The terms was interpreted equally as they were used interchangeably throughout the literature.

The use of the term “Latino” by the researcher is based on age, generational status, geographical upbringing, education, and experience. Example studies in this review of literature may also use identifiers that are nation specific, i.e. Cuban, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, etc. Sarita Brown (2003) states that these interchangeable terms refer to “a group of Americans who share language and common cultural origins but who come from diverse nations and background with distinctive histories and socio-economic and political experiences” (pg.8).

Latinos are the largest, youngest, and fastest growing minority group in the United States (Castellanos et al., 2006 and Zalaquett, 2005). However, the numbers reflected in the educational pipeline are not representational of these facts. Before we can begin to look at the future of the Latino population in higher education we need to respectfully look back to where we have been.

Although the literature does tend to focus on the progression of Mexicans and Chicanos, it is important to see how barriers were scaled, broken, and demolished. It is the first step in understanding the experiences of our current and future generations of Latino scholars; understanding the generations before. To understand me, is to understand the path my father trail blazed, the path my mother endured, and the path grandmother stomped.

Latinos in Academia: La Historia

In 1954 *Brown vs. The Board of Education* was a historical case which prompted desegregation in schools. However, in regards to the desegregation movement, Latinos are often deemphasized in the history books. Beyond the *Brown* verdict, there were other cases which helped to desegregate and call attention to the discrimination of Latinos and the reprimanding consequences for students using Spanish in the classroom. (Castellanos et al., 2006) While this is not a complete review of the history of Hispanics/Chicanos/Latinos in education, it is however, important to note a relevant timeline of events that lead up to the current discussions:

1932--*Alvarez vs. Lemon Grove School District* (California) was the first successful court case to challenge segregation of Latino children. The organized participation of families and

community members facilitated the triumph, yet the progression was considered a localized event.

1932--The father of Chicano Psychology, George I. Sanchez emerged as a community leader. He was an advocate for equality and a voice for misunderstood children. He challenged educational testing on Chicano children and was a believer in bilingualism as a valuable strength in the community.

1954--*Brown vs. The Board of Education* was the catalyst case for desegregation.

1964--The Civil Rights Act was passed which prompted dialogue about educational equality.

1968--The Bilingual Education Act prompted special programs for Spanish-speaking children.

1969--The rapid increase of Latino student organizations prompted the formation of an umbrella organization— MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). MEChA would go on to develop college programs for Chicanos. However, the members' Chicano identities were questioned because of their middle-class status and education.

1974--The case of *Lau vs. Nichols* ruled that schools must provide programs to meet the language needs of its students or be in violation of the Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment. Federal funding for these programs increased by nearly \$1 million within the span of a decade.

1975--LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) establishes a national scholarship fund for Latino students.

1980s--Funding for bilingual education began to diminish, while parent involvement in education issues was on the rise.

1994—Proposition 187 was a barrier for providing equal public services (including schooling) to those who could not adequately prove their legal immigration or nationality status. This anti-Latino proposition prompted school walk-outs in California (Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

1997—States with large Latino student populations begin using “percent” plans which allows high school students that fall into the top percentages in their class to be granted automatic admission into that state’s universities (Brown, 2003).

1998---Proposition 227 attempts to dismantle bilingual education programs in California impacting the equal education for limited English proficiency students (Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

In many of these historical markers for Latinos, the families and community members formed unified organizations to communicate an active movement for educational equality. There has been a collective voice that was prompting change. These examples refute the assumption that Latino students are unsupported by their *familia*. It is a negative stereotype that directly impacts the experiences to the students. There is an assumption that Latino parents do not value education. When discussing the actual root of this misconception, Sarita Brown (2003) states, “what we encounter at the familial level is an information gap, not a value gap” (pg. 2).

Family may not understand or relate to what first generation college students are going through but, they instill positive values that are encouraging of the pursuit of education

(Zalaquett, 2005). There are conflicting reports about the impact that family plays in the success of Latino scholars; perhaps reflecting the double-edged sword of familial relationships. The student's closeness with one's family can be a factor in higher education adjustment; however, this "barrier" can be misleading to those unfamiliar with the Latino culture. Many if not most scholars report that family members are supportive of their pursuit. It could be an assumption to say that the Latino culture does not value education just because they greatly value family; both can be important values of the student and of the culture.

It is also important to mention that much of the literature that reports the history of Latinos in the educational system tends to focus on the Mexican-American or Chicano struggles and perspective. Much focus still lends itself to Texas and California due to the statistics which suggest that fifty percent of all Hispanics enrolled in higher education are from these two states. The explanation is due in part to Mexico-U.S. history that took place over the past 150 years. Miguel and Valencia (1998) mark The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as the conquest which began "decades of persistent, pervasive prejudice and discrimination against people of Mexican origin who reside in the United States" (pg.353). The authors note that Mexican-Americans have been struggling for educational equality ever since then. The history extends beyond the marker of *Brown* and still excludes discussion on other Latino groups who have equal plights.

First Generation of First Generations

The current literature on Latinos in higher education fails to fully explore the history of this population and their journey through the "pipeline". Castellanos et al. (2006) give a brief history of the journey of Latinos, in particular Chicanos, through higher education. However

other research articles leave the impression that the preceding generation's trailblazing voyage was less significant. They were the first generation of first generation college students. Unfortunately the first step in the advancement of Latinos in higher education was only a generation or so ago. Luckily, these leaders are still active in the continuing progression and can offer first-hand perspectives and guidance. They are the ones conducting our current research studies; they are the ones who are publishing our stories; they are the ones who have seen a glimpse of the solutions. Tell us how you all did it.

Latinos in Academia: The Academy

“Although higher education likes to think of itself as being more progressive and liberal minded about societal issues, it is filled with conservative thought and mirrors societal norms and circumstances” (Valverde, 2004, pg. 297). The perspective of the author of this quote is hardly considered rare or unique in the world of educated Latinos.

College campuses have the potential to be an embracing community for its uprooted enrollees who are experiencing a new world. Graduate students in particular, can have an even more tightly knit relationship with their program peers and professors. Their close quarters and consistent interactions set the stage for meaningful connections and safe haven for its Latino students. However, this potential often falls short at many universities. Administrators and faculty may feel confident in the increase of their university's Hispanic statistics or their diversity programs however, they fail to be aware of their students' experiences as they bend to the rigidity of the program or institution. Latino students are expected to compromise their culture while the university culture sacrifices little. The

expectation to conform is perceived by the students as unwelcoming, isolating, and even hostile (Castillo et al., 2006).

Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) expand on the discussion of academic climate by citing a framework in which we can view these institutions. They go on to state that “the campus environment is influenced by a historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion of groups, by the structural diversity or numerical representation of diverse people, the nature of interactions among diverse groups, and individual perceptions of the environment” (pg.236). Academic relationships are at the core what drive perceptions and student success.

The focus on “barriers” rather than strengths and solutions is a noteworthy pattern in the literature regarding Latinos and education. I don’t know how many times one can hear that they are part of a group that has the largest dropout rate in the nation before they begin to feel the frustrations of inaction. Literature is riddled with barrier-type language: “educational disparity”, “dropout”, “push out”, “lag behind”, “lack of”, etc. While this language represents truth in the statistics, the facts are discouraging to an audience who is seeking concrete solutions. Surely, this study brings its own focus to additional roadblocks in the Latinos’ path. But perhaps the frustrations by the disheartening facts and observations are acting as catalysts for action and positive change; “Students who perceive hostile environments are also the most critical of their educational institutions and seek ways to change it” (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005, pg. 273); “Latinas and Chicanas use knowledge gained from their position within the margin to challenge structures that negate their existence in the academy” (Watford et al., 2006, pg. 128); “...within the university setting, anger is necessary and good. It is often our anger that fuels our spirit and gives voice and direction to silence, and provides the energy to go on” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, pg. 483).

While these thoughts of empowerment and activism are encouraging, it is still unclear when and how. The perceived hostility is a contributing factor to Latino college dropout rates but for others or for others further down the pipeline it is motivation for change. Where is the threshold? Is this the difference in experience and perceptions between undergraduates and graduates? The students' resiliency and positive redirection of injustices are valuable tools for success. These positive attributes need to be explored further to begin identifying solutions in the face of marginality.

Ethnic Identity

I am.../Soy...

There are several factors which distinguish one group from another; factors to help guide an individual to determine which group he/she belongs to. In regards to racial/ethnic groups, it can be factors such as: skin color, facial features, hair texture, language, behaviors, beliefs, etc. Most of these distinguishing characteristics have been centered on physical attributes yet; the concept of ethnic identity adds another component to group distinction.

Ethnic identity is an intricate cognitive and emotional process that involves the "feelings of ethnic belonging and pride, a secure sense of group membership, and positive attitudes toward one's ethnic group" (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996, in Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi, & Saya, 1992). The factors encompassed in the construct of ethnic identity include "perceptions, cognitions, and emotions" (Ponterotto et al., 2003, p.503) which relate to the individual's understanding of an ethnic group. In regards to the role that ethnic identity plays in an individual's psychological functioning, it can determine behavior, preference, personality, and self esteem. Rosalind Charlesworth (2000) claims that the process of

developing an ethnic identity is fundamental in satisfying the need of belonging and acceptance from a group. The purpose for understanding ethnic identity is to help fully comprehend the individual's entire identity. It has been called "subjective" and "unstable"; created by a collaborative process by which the individual/group and related outsiders jointly establish ethnic identity.

This construct is considered a form of ethnic awareness that is developed linearly. The opinion that this construct is linear implies that an individual can ascend and descend on the ethnic identity line and arrive at different stages of development or respond in context. However, there is still debate over this view, whether or not the construct of ethnic identity can be represented linearly and/or categorically (Smith et al., 2003).

Development of an Ethnic Identity

Identity can also be viewed as a point in which someone accepts the concept that they belong and have membership to a specific ethnic group. Bernal et al. describes five components of ethnicity as well as their corresponding behaviors at preschool and early school levels. The five components include: 1) Ethnic self-identification, 2) ethnic consistency, 3) use of ethnic role behaviors, 4) ethnic knowledge, 5) ethnic preferences and feelings. The ethnic identity develops a noticeable shift between the two school ages. The preschool levels show simple ethnic "labels"; they display little feelings, consistency, or understanding. Any connection or demonstration of cultural behaviors is associated with their parents and has little to do with their understanding of an ethnic identity. The early school label children expressed the opposite, showing acceptance and preference for "ethnic role behaviors", (Bernal et al., 1990)

The researchers also look at the perspective of gender identity as a possible insight to the development of ethnic identity. Just like “ethnic roles”, gender roles are also determined more by the parent than the child. He states that children, by the age of 2 or 3, will have already classified their own gender but the case is not the same when it comes to categorizing their own ethnicity. Bernal conveys this process with the conclusion that ethnic self-identification occurs later because the physical and social markers for ethnicity are less apparent to the child than those for gender. Children lack the cognitive development to classify their ethnic affiliation and therefore it is estimated that children will ethnically categorize themselves by 8-10 years of age (Bernal et al., 1990). However, it could be argued that children could develop and experience the components of ethnic identity yet lack the language development to claim their membership.

Quintana et al.’s (2000) exploration of the development of ethnic perception-taking ability in Latino children supported Bernal’s initial findings. Quintana also empirically linked ethnic knowledge to social-cognitive development. It was agreed by both research articles that the development of ethnic knowledge is strongly associated with the development of ethnic identity and that ethnic knowledge is acquired through natural maturation. Therefore, the combined findings suggest that ethnic identity can develop as early as 6 years old.

Related Concepts

Racial Identity. The concept of racial identity can be easily mistaken for and used interchangeably with ethnic identity; however, these concepts have their distinctive components. Race is defined in more biological and physical terms: “phenotypic appearances, such as skin color, hair type (straight or curly), skin hue, eye color, stature,

body size, nose, eyes, and head shape” (pg. 128, Robinson, 2005). The concept of a racial identity is primarily determined by these phenotypes. However, racial identities can be a social concept in which an individual is given a race label based on predetermined categories and is assigned based on the observed phenotypes. Race and ethnicity are at times used interchangeably or presented in tandem (i.e. racial/ethnic). This has become more common in literature because of the overlap in identities, in particular within the Latino community. “The U.S. government classifies Hispanics as members of an ethnic group that can be of any race” (pg. 375, Vaquera & Kao, 2006). A light-skinned, blonde Cubana may racially identify as White while at the same time Cubana with African roots, who has dark skin, and coarse hair may identify as Black (Robinson, 2005). However, they may both *ethnically* identify themselves as Latina.

Acculturation. Acculturation refers to the process in which an individual acquires a new culture without necessarily denying his/her ethnic background. However, regardless of the level of acculturation, the individual is never fully accepted by the host culture. Researchers also state that “there is no neat correlation between acculturation and ethnic identity, which seem to vary somewhat independently” (Keefe & Padilla 1987, p.55). Preferences and behaviors have been the staple methods in measuring acculturation, such as the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA; Cuellar, Harris, and Jasso, 1980). Language use, food preference, and time in the U.S. are often indicators used to determine acculturation level. Only recently have researchers found these methods to be limited. Acculturation researchers are starting to focus more on beliefs, identity, and motivations for acculturation. With the change in how acculturation is measured, the constructs of acculturation and ethnic identity have become more difficult to distinguish.

Biculturalism. Biculturalism is an aspect that many children face but it does not necessarily mean that they have conflict or difficulty in developing an ethnic identity. Individuals who “acquire the norms, attitudes, and behavior patterns of their own and another, or perhaps several other, ethnic groups” are described as being “bicultural” (Rotheram & Phinney, p. 24). In a study which helps describe the development of ethnic identity, Manuel Ramirez III (1984) noted that elementary school-aged who are bicultural performed successfully and with ease in both Mexican American and Anglo cultures. He also concluded that because these children can identify with both cultures, this provides them with “personality-building” fundamentals that make them more adaptable and accepting of others from different backgrounds. This element of “personality-building” also contributes to the child’s self-esteem. Valentine (2001) sites that devaluation of one’s culture leads to evasion of interaction as well as low self esteem.

Assimilation. Assimilation has been described as individuals who deny their ethnic identity and are accepted by the mainstream culture as assimilated. Assimilation is a “one-way street”, a one dimensional, linear scale that can be explained by today’s terms as “selling-out”. As compared to those who are acculturated, those who are assimilated have a better chance at “moving up” the social class ladder. When it comes to explaining the process of acculturation, there are many concepts that make the definition hard to express. Furthermore, there are no clear boundaries that separate the meaning of acculturation from these other concepts. This confusion over ideas and definition has the potential to create discrepancies in measurement scale and subsequent results. There are many sources to this misunderstanding such as, jargon and backgrounds from multiple disciplines, history, and time.

Cultural Pluralism. Ethnic identity can be retained; however, it is not a result of the strict regulations, but because of the interaction with other cultures and the adaptation to the new socioeconomic circumstances. This concept has been a basis for multicultural education, which would place emphasis on ethnic identity among school children. (Ovando et al., 2003)

The Graduate Student Identity: Integrated

The graduate school experience is an identity development process in itself. Whether you are a 22-year-old Chicana finding adulthood or a 60-year-old Cubano grandmother of two, your professional identity is developed during graduate study. Graduate students begin to take form as experts in their specialized fields as faculty help to mold and shape an identity that is grounded in the philosophies of the profession.

Individuals have multiple identities, not in the clinical sense, but in regards to social and self-identified categories: man, woman, married, single, gay, straight, etc. Perhaps one reason that ethnic identity is argued to be a fluid process is that our identities are integrated and focusing on one aspect of an individual's identity is difficult. The literature reflects this complexity and researchers are searching for methods of inquiry that would be appropriate for understanding the Latino graduate student identity.

For example, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) attempt to break the typical pattern of methodology by using Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Theory as a base for Counter-Storytelling approach in their study of Chicano graduate students. They explored the racial and gender discrimination that Chicana/o graduate students experience through literature reviews and focus groups; they then reflected their results in a narrative format. The "data-

driven characters” of Professor Garcia and graduate student Esperanza told the story of the Chicana/o experience via a mentor-mentee dialogue. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) tell the story of an identity struggling to integrate into the graduate school “game”. It is a story about gender, race, visibility through storytelling and the collectivistic concept of “we”.

Racial Microaggressions

Racism and Racial Microaggressions

The term “racial microaggressions” has become the sophisticated explanation for the daily experiences of racial/ethnic minorities. Sue et al. (2007) have helps give a concise voice to the microaggression phenomenon: “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, pg.271). The perpetrators of microaggressions are typically unaware to their practice of negative, privileged, and hostile communications towards people of color. The targets of racial slights have an “inner vigilance” for microaggressions which is activated according to the individual’s interpretation of the event and their subsequent response (Franklin& Boyd-Franklin, 2000). These interpretations and responses are considered “intuitive skills” which are developed and maintained throughout the individual’s life (Franklin& Boyd-Franklin, 2000).

Sue et al. (2007) states that there three forms of microaggressions: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. While macroassaults are more deliberate and conscious racial derogatory displays, microinsults and microinvalidations are typically unintentional and unconscious. The latter two forms represent actions that convey offensiveness of a

person's racial background or that nullify the experiences of a person of color, respectively (Sue et al., 2007). The overt displays of racism and its effects continue to be actively researched; however, racism's soft-spoken insulting cousin, microaggression, has been given less attention. The modern form of racism has now become the topic of current research in attempt to "make the invisible, visible" (Sue et al., 2007).

The definition of racial microaggression gives a refined understanding of social interactions that stems from the experiences of racism; therefore, the term racism must be given context as well. Solórzano et al. (2001) provides three points to sum up the definition of racism: "1) one group beliefs itself to be superior, 2) the group that believes itself to be superior has the power to carry out the racist behavior, and 3) racism affects multiple racial and ethnic groups" (pg.61). Racism is the permission for a privileged group to assume power and reject or devalue those that do not reflect the attributes of the privileged (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). The notion of racism has even been referred to as "natural" (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). In a study which explored implicit partisanship, Pinter & Greenwald (2004) apply the Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain categorization as a condition for group identification and attraction; "...people readily use existing information (i.e. group membership) to positively distinguish their group from another group as means to enhance social identity" (pg. 284). This study implies that group preferences are inherited in our social culture and are not necessarily exclusive to racial/ethnic groups. We are multi-categorical beings with multi-categorical preferences. Along with the idea of SIT influencing our *individual* biases and behaviors, we also have a U.S. history that is riddled with hurtful examples that mirror our *social* biases.

Racism still exists. While explicit racism is by no means a thing of the past, this study focuses on its more subtle forms; as it is assumed that most graduate students are most likely to experience the latter as members of an invisible generation.

Under the Microscope: Invisible Consequences of Racial Microaggressions

The history of racism is engrained in our American culture. However, the more common overt displays of racial superiority that were once captured by *Life* magazine have been traded in for the less tangible. “Microaggression” provides an appropriate reflection of our current day experiences. They are more likely to go unnoticed, dismissed, and are invisible to the majority (Sue et al., 2007). Therefore, those that are victims and witnesses to these racial microaggressions, themselves, become invisible. “Encountering repeated racial slights can create within the individual a feeling of not being seen as a person of worth” (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000, pg. 33). Franklin & Boyd-Franklin (2000) would call the struggle of internal feelings “psychological invisibility” and “invisibility syndrome” as the personal stress of having to manage the subjective experience.

Sue et al. (2007) claims that “in some respects, people of color may find an overt and obvious racist act easier to handle than microaggressions that seem vague or disguised.” The process of trying to decode an event or an exchange is exhausting. It can leave the individual doubting themselves, “am I over reacting?” “Am I being too sensitive?” “Did that just happen?”

The self-doubt- internal-dialogue possibly occurs because these interactions and incidences take place at establishments or with people with whom we are supposed to be safe (Sue et al., 2007). For students in an academic environment, especially, these

microaggression exchanges can involve professors, supervisors, and other persons in power. It is assumed that most students don't like thinking that their colleagues and friends could be racist or believing that their graduate program is an institution of oppression.

These internal conflicts perpetuate the invisibility by placing responsibility on the recipient to decipher the implicit message and choose a response which will make them visible while still trying to gain acceptance (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). "The power of racial microaggressions lies in the invisibility to the perpetrator and, oftentimes the recipient" (Sue et al., 2007, pg. 275).

Sue et al. (2007) summarizes and categorizes these consequences of invisibility into four "dilemmas": Dilemma 1: Clash of Racial Realities suggests that there is conflicting interpretations of the world (i.e. "racism doesn't exist anymore" vs. "I am being treated poorly because of my race"); Dilemma 2: The Invisibility of Unintentional Expression of Bias, states that since microaggressions are considered automatic then it becomes harder to "prove" that the transgression occurred and the perpetrator can deny that their behaviors were guided by race ; Dilemma 3: Perceived Minimal Harm of Racial Microaggressions reiterates that "let-it-go" is the encouraged mode of operation for the victims which ultimately minimizes the impact daily slights; and Dilemma 4: The Catch-22 of Responding to Microaggressions reflects the interpretation and response impasse in which the individual faces the choice of keeping their anger silent or voicing their emotions at the risk of being invalidated or dismissed.

Interpersonal Risk for Student Survivors of Racial Microaggressions

Each of the four dilemmas has implications for interactions that graduate students encounter. Constantine and Sue (2007) are more explicit in their exploration of racial microaggressions as they relate to academic circumstances; they place Dilemma 4 in the context of relationships. In a study in which Constantine and Sue (2007) investigate the perceptions of racial microaggression among Black doctoral supervisees in their cross-racial dyads, they discuss the impact on the supervisory relationship. The inherent power differential between the supervisor and trainee (teacher and student) was discussed as a critical factor in the execution of and response to racial microaggressions. The supervisors are in control of the academic exchange and ultimately guide the discussion of race and culture based on their racial attitudes (Constantine & Sue, 2007). The investigators found that Black supervisees felt invalidated and frustrated upon believing that their White supervisors were minimizing, dismissive, and avoidant of racial issues. More so, these painful feelings were accompanied by disbelief, shock, anger and disappointment: “shock and disbelief that someone in a supervisory position, in this day and age could have such detrimental beliefs; anger at having to be exposed again to Black stereotypes; and disappointment at the realization that the supervisory relationship would be compromised and unhelpful to their own growth and development” (Constantine & Sue, 2007, pg. 148). These results help to unequivocally communicate the psychological and interpersonal damage that racial microaggressions can inflict.

Coping with Racial Microaggressions

The encounter of racial microaggressions can be damaging to students, yet research on the coping strategies for racial microaggression survivors is minimal. Much of the more

prominent studies and reviews still focus on the understanding of the microaggression process.

It is the invisibility of the microaggression insult and invalidation which makes it harder to combat and seek resolution. Despite strong results found by Constantine and Sue (2007), researchers are still left asking “what are some coping strategies that could be used to protect Black trainees and educate White supervisors?” (pg.150). Considering that microaggressions happen daily and racial/ethnic minorities continue to navigate the hostilities of the world with dignity, it would be beneficial to explore the strategies which make them so resilient (Sue et al. 2007).

In addition to the self-analysis that takes place in the aftermath of a microaggression, Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) identified other coping strategies for managing the stress of invisibility. The study explored “invisibility syndrome” as an effect of racism for African American males. Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) stated that in order to achieve visibility, the males would place themselves in environments and situations in which they felt greater acceptance. The men would reject and resist the stereotypes through self-empowerment which ultimately demonstrates their resilience. Participants also reported that they would go to other African Americans as “sanity checks”. After the experience of a racial slight (either explicit or implicit), an individual can be found sitting with friends or calling a family member to help them process the event and provide validation. In addition, authors noted that “racial identity solidifies one’s perspective about self in relation to others, and becomes a part of a protective mechanism shielding the individual from the effects of racism” (pg. 40). (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000).

The current perspectives are a starting point for understanding the effects of racial microaggressions and “microaggression repair” (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). However, for Latino graduate students, the impact is less clear. Microaggressions have been studied with African Americans and Asian Americans while Latinos have yet to be found in the literature. In addition, the extent to which the dilemmas directly influence students in the academic setting still lacks clarity. Ethnic identity is a concept that can and should be viewed as strength rather than a weakness. Our identity says a lot about how we view the world and about the choices we make. For that matter, ethnic identity may determine our perceptions of microaggressions, the degree to which we are bothered by them, and how we choose to handle them.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Researcher's Background, Experience, and Biases

The researcher for this study is a Mexican-American woman who is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology at a predominately White, rural, university. She was raised in a predominately Mexican and Mexican-American urban neighborhood in Texas. The researcher is the daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother and a Texas-born father. She is the first generation in her family to attend graduate school. Her preferred language is English.

The researcher has conducted studies in the areas of acculturation, ethnic identity, bilingual education, and minority college students. Throughout her graduate school training, she has experienced racial microaggressions at the academic level and more overt forms of discrimination in social settings.

Participants

A total of 309 Latino graduate students attending various universities across the United States volunteered for this study; 490 started the survey and 181 participants were

removed from analysis because of incomplete data. The criteria to participate were as follows: over 18 years of age, enrolled graduate student, and self-identified Latino/Hispanic.

(See Table 1).

Table 1

Demographics

AGE		
Mean	29	
Std. Deviation	6.075	
GENDER		
	N	%
Female	229	74.1
Male	80	25.9
MARITAL STATUS		
	N	%
Single (never married)	189	61.2
Married	83	26.9
Living w/partner	21	6.8
Widowed	1	0.3
Divorced	10	3.2
Separated	5	1.6
SEXUAL ORIENTATION		
	N	%
Heterosexual	272	88
Gay/Lesbian	21	6.8
Bisexual	13	4.2
Uncertain	3	1

GENERATION (COLLEGE)	N	%
1 st to attend	202	65.4
2 nd	82	26.5
3 rd	15	4.9
4 th or more	9	2.9
GENERATION (U.S.)	N	%
1 st (came to US)	76	24.6
2 nd (born in US)	155	50.2
3 rd	38	12.3
4 th or more	39	12.6
FIRST LANGUAGE	N	%
English	108	35
Spanish	183	59.2
Bilingual	16	5.2
PREFERED LANGUAGE	N	%
English	156	50.5
Spanish	20	6.5
Both equally	132	42.7

Out of the nationwide sample of 309 participants, 229 (74%) were female and 80 (26%) were male. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 62 years old, with a mean age of 29.44 (median age=28; mode age=25) and a standard deviation of 6.075. In regards to marital status, 189 (61.2%) reported being single (never married), 83 (26.9%) married, 21 (6.8%) living with partner, 1 (.3%) widowed, 10 (3.2%) divorced, and 5 (1.6%) were separated. For

sexual orientation, participants reported the following: 272 (88%) identified as heterosexual, 21 (6.8%) gay/lesbian, 13 (4.2%) bisexual, and 3 (1%) reported uncertain.

For the purposes of this study data regarding generational status and language were also gathered. 202 participants reported that they were the first generation in their family to attend college, followed by 2nd generation, (82); 3rd, (15); and 4th or more, (9). 155 were the first to be born in the U.S. (2nd generation) while 76 reported being the first to immigrate to the U.S. (1st generation). 183 reported that their first language was Spanish (English, N=108; Bilingual, N=16; 2 missing) while 156 reported that English was their preferred language; 132 preferred both languages equally and 20 preferred Spanish (1 missing). By degree, 150 were seeking their doctorate, 149 masters, and 10 professional. In regards to cultural make-up of their schools, 88% reported that they were attending a predominately White university, compared to those who reported a Latino (5.8%) or “Other” (6%) cultural majority at their school.

Procedure

This study was submitted and approved by the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Students were recruited through university and professional organizations geared towards Latino students and professionals; via email, list serves, and club meetings. They were given the consent form and directed to the online survey. The participants were then administered a battery of inventories which gathered demographic information, level of ethnic identity, students’ perceptions of university environment, and perception of program racial microaggressions (See Appendix). Data for this study were collected using four scales: *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (MEIM)

(Phinney, 1992), *Racial Microaggressions in Graduate School Scale, Professors and Peers* (modified from Constantine, 2007), *University Environment* (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996), and *Collectivistic Coping Styles Measure (CCSM)* (Moore & Constantine, 2005). A two-page demographic questionnaire was also administered. All instruments were administered in English. The distributed consent form described the costs and benefits of participation; in addition, the consent form informed the participants that upon completing the questionnaires, they were consenting to participation.

At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to write about any other thoughts or feelings they had regarding their experiences in academia. The battery of inventories had the potential to evoke strong emotion and the option for immediate expression of these experiences was to act as a protective buffer for the participants. The expressive writings were not used for qualitative data in this study. Lastly, participants were given a list of relevant referrals as options for support.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants responded to questions about their gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, school classification, program type, years in the program, generational status, and how they identify racially and ethnically. In addition, a portion of the questionnaire was dedicated to their family background such as the parents' racial and ethnic background, education, occupation and language.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). The MEIM (Phinney, 1992) is a 20 item, 4-point Likert scale which measures three aspects of ethnic identity: attitudes and sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and practices (Phinney, 1992). The measure is

comprised of two subscales: Ethnic Identity and Other-Group Orientation. However, for the purposes of this study, only the 14-item Ethnic Identity subscale was used. Sample items that reflect the three aspects of ethnic identity include: “I am happy that I am a member of the group that I belong to” (5 items; Affirmation and Belonging); “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me” (7 items; Ethnic Identity Achievement); and “I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group” (2 items; Ethnic Behaviors).

Participants report their item agreement on the 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores are obtained by reverse scoring the two negatively worded items, summing across items, and computing a mean. A low average score (1) represents a low level of ethnic identity while a high average score (4) represents a high level of ethnic identity. (Phinney, 1992)

The use of the MEIM with Latino groups has been supported by factor analysis which vouches for its construct validity (Johnson & Arbona, 2006). Cronbach alphas ranging from .80 to .89 demonstrate the scale’s reliability. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) for the MEIM Ethnic Identity subscale in this study was adequate at .85.

Racial Microaggressions in Graduate School Scale, Professors and Peers. The Racial Microaggressions in Graduate School Scale is a modified measure of Constantine’s Racial Microaggressions in Counseling Scale (2007). The original use of the scale was intended to examine African American clients’ perceived racial microaggressions in their cross-racial counseling relationships with White counselors. Constantine (2007) conducted focus groups which determined twelve racial microaggression categories. These categories were then

converted into the scale's initial 12-items. The items were discussed among a panel of experts which condensed and clarified the scale into the 10-item measure of perceptions.

The researcher received the author's permission to alter the items in order to be fitting of the academic setting. A sample item and its modified counterpart: "My counselor avoided discussing or addressing cultural issues in our session(s)" to "My professors have avoided discussing or addressing cultural issues in our classes or department meetings". In addition, the Likert rating was expanded from a 3-point to a 5-point rating to determine student's perceptions of microaggressions and the degree in which it was bothersome: 0=this never happened, 1=this happened, but it did not bother me at all, 2=this happened and I was bothered by it a little, 3=this happened and I was moderately bothered by it, and 4=this happened and I was bothered by it a lot. The point system was expanded to 5-point rating in order to more accurately measure the degree to which students were bothered by each perceived microaggression. The original scale only offered three reports: "this never happened" (0), "this happened, but did not bother me" (1), and "this happened and I was bothered by it" (2). The 5-point range of scale can help determine which microaggression themes are more bothersome to students and provide more insight to the perception and impact of the experience.

The scale of 10 items consists of statements that are intended to represent situations that may have occurred during the students' graduate school training. The participants are asked to rate each event on the 0-4 scale. The 10-item scale is then duplicated with further slight modifications to reflect situations that may have transpired with their cohorts and classmates, i.e. "My peers have avoided discussing or addressing cultural issues in out classes or other interactions". The participants are given brief definitions of the terms

“professors”, “peers”, and “culture”. Students are informed that “professors” constitutes Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Adjunct Professors or Instructors in graduate program while “peers” refers to cohorts and classmates in their graduate program. “Culture” is emphasized as racial or ethnic issues.

A panel of experts, comprised of several racial/ethnic minority graduate students and one faculty member in a counseling psychology doctoral program, reviewed the modified version of the scale. Their feedback was used to modify the scale’s content and structure for the purposes of increasing clarity of the items and directions. Some suggestions for improving the scale included word-order, typing errors, and including a writing component to the administration procedure that could off-set any emotional responses prompted by the scale. An additional section was added to the end of the survey in which participants were given the opportunity to write about their experiences.

University Environment Scale (UES). The University Environment Scale (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) is a 14 item, 7-point Likert scale which assesses the students’ perception of their university environment. Each item is answered and scored based on the 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “not at all” to (7) “very true”. Sample UES items include: “Financial aid staff has been willing to help me with financial concerns” and “The university seems like a cold, uncaring place to me”. High scores indicate a greater positive perception of his/her university environment. Five items are reversed scored and all 14 items produce a global score.

The scale was originally developed and validated for Chicano/a students from southwest universities. Gloria and Kurpius (1996) used the interviews of Baron et al. (1981)

which reported the concerns of racial minorities on their university campuses. The developers then compiled a 16-item measure based on the interview reports and a review of the literature. After a pilot study with 51 racial/ethnic minority undergraduate students, the measure was narrowed to 14 items which yielded a Cronbach alpha of .84 (M=66.63, SD=12.21). (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996)

Collectivistic Coping Styles Measure (CCSM). The Collectivistic Coping Styles Measure (CCSM) was originally developed by Moore and Constantine (2005) to assess the degree to which international students (Asian, African, and Latina American) practice social support seeking and forbearance as forms of coping with problems. Items based on a review of literature, 3 focus groups, and researchers' clinical experience. The CCSM consists of 9 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=not used, 2=used a little, 3=unsure, 4=used moderately, 5=used often). The scale is comprised of two subscales: Seeking Social Support, which measures students' tendency to seek support from their existing social network, and Forbearance which measures the students' tendency to minimize or hide their problems as not burden others (Moore & Constantine, 2005). Sample items from each scale include: "I spoke with a friend to seek support about the problem" (Seeking Social Support subscale) and "I told myself that I could overcome the problem or concern" (Forbearance subscale). The 9-item scale is prefaced with instructions for the participant to think about a stressful event which had occurred within the past 2-3 months. They are then asked to keep this problem in mind as they respond to the items. The CCSM was piloted among 15 Africa, Asian, and Latin American international students. The scale supports evidence of "good construct and concurrent validity and good internal consistency and test-retest reliability" (Moore & Constantine, 2005, pg.329).

Research Design and Statistical Procedures

This study utilized a survey design. Upon the completion of data collection, responses to research questions were analyzed using SPSS software; correlations and regressions were computed and analyzed. Specifically, the following is a list of statistical procedures and their corresponding research questions:

1) Is there a relationship between ethnic identity and racial microaggressions?

Correlations were analyzed to determine the relationship between ethnic identity and racial microaggressions.

2) To what extent do ethnic identity, perception of racial microaggressions, and perception of university environment predict the coping style of Social Support Seeking?

A multiple regression was computed to determine significant variance between the predictor and criterion variable. Ethnic identity, perception of racial microaggressions, and perception of university environment were entered as predictor variables while the coping style of *Social Support Seeking* was entered as the criterion.

3) To what extent do ethnic identity, perception of racial microaggressions, and perception of university environment predict the coping style of Forbearance?

A multiple regression was computed to determine significant variance between the predictor and criterion variable. Ethnic identity, perception of racial microaggressions, and perception of university environment were entered as predictor variables while the coping style of *Forbearance* was entered as the criterion variable.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Prior to analysis, data were reviewed and examined for data-entry errors, incomplete surveys, normal distribution, and outliers. During the data-checks, an error in administration was discovered which resulted in the omission of an item in the UES for all participants. A mean score substitution was used to compute the missing values so the full scale score could be computed. Internal-consistency was computed for the UES scale with the substitution and as a 13-item measure rather than 14-item. Each yielded adequate reliability with Cronbach alphas of .87 (with substitution) and .85 (without substitution). Preliminary data analysis included a computation of means, standard deviations, and correlations for the scales and subscales administered. (See Table 2).

Pearson's product-moment correlations were positive between perceived racial microaggressions (both peer and professor) and ethnic identity (r 's = .23 and .24, respectively, both $p < .001$). In other words, results indicate that those who demonstrated higher levels of ethnic identity perceived more racial microaggressions. Additionally, perceptions of racial microaggressions amongst peers and amongst professors were strongly correlated ($r = .67$, $p < .001$). (See Table 2).

Table 2

Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, Internal-Consistency Reliability

Scale/ Subscale	MA prof	MA peer	EI	Forbear	Support Seekin g	Univ	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>a</i>
MAprof	1	0.667* *	0.238* *	0.175* *	.116*	-.541**	1.11	1.11	.91
MApeer		1	0.232* *	0.235* *	0.154* *	-.389**	1.59	1.14	.92
EI			1	0.035	0.287* *	-.013	3.52	0.42	.85
Forbearance				1	-0.045	-.227**	2.87	1.03	.77
Support Seeking					1	0.052	3.48	1.01	.71
University						1	71.86	14.22	.87

Note: MAprof=Racial Microaggressions (Professors); MApeer= Racial Microaggressions (Peer); EI=Ethnic Identity subscale; Forbear= Forbearance, Collectivistic Coping Style subscale; Support Seeking=Collectivistic Coping Style subscale; Univ=University Environment Scale sum.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

During the next round of data analysis, two separate multiple regressions were conducted to determine the amount of variance in coping style (forbearance and support seeking) that could be accounted for by perceived racial microaggressions, ethnic identity, and perception of university environment. Forbearance and Support Seeking were each regressed on Racial Microaggressions (professor), Racial Microaggressions (peer), Ethnic

Identity, and University Environment. Examination of the predictor variables indicated that only 10% of the total variance in Support Seeking was accounted for by the predictor variables. Ethnic Identity (.25, $p < .001$) and University Environment (.13) were uniquely significant for Support Seeking while Racial Microaggressions (Professor and Peer) were not significant predictors. These results indicate that the strongest predictors of support seeking among Latino graduate students were Ethnic Identity and University Environment. Of the independent variables, Ethnic Identity and University Environment were significant positive predictors of Support Seeking. (See Table 3)

In regards to Forbearance, results indicated that 8% of the total variance was accounted for by the predictor variables. For Forbearance, Racial Microaggressions (Peer) (.21, $p < .01$) and University Environment (-.18, $p < .01$) emerged as significant predictors. In other words, the strongest predictors of forbearance among Latino graduate students are of Racial Microaggressions (Peer) and University Environment.

Note that the beta weights for the University Environment Scale in the two separate analyses yielded different directions. Racial Microaggressions (peers) and University Environment were significant predictors of Forbearance, showing a *positive* relation between Racial Microaggressions (peers) and Forbearance and a *negative* relation between University Environment and Forbearance (See Table 3).

Table 3

Multiple Regression Findings

Criterion	Predictors	B	Beta	Std. Error	F	R ²
Support Seeking					8.583	.101**
	Racial Microaggressions (Prof.)	.045	.050	.074		
	Racial Microaggressions (Peer)	.099	.111	.065		
	Ethnic Identity	.610	.251**	.138		
	University Environment	.009	.126*	.005		
Forbearance					6.487	.079**
	Racial Microaggressions (Prof.)	-.055	-.059	.077		
	Racial Microaggressions (Peer)	.186	.205**	.068		
	Ethnic Identity	-.002	.000	.143		
	University Environment	-.013	-.180**	.005		

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Results indicated that Perception of University Environment was a significant predictor of both Support Seeking and Forbearance coping styles; University Environment and Ethnic Identity were significant predictors for Support Seeking while University Environment and Racial Microaggressions (Peer) were predictors for Forbearance. In other words, students who perceived a warmer university environment and demonstrated greater levels of ethnic identity would be more likely to seek support from their primary support group.

Ethnic identity appears to be a protective factor in many respects. Literature has linked high levels of ethnic identity to increased self-esteem (Phinney, 1992) and this study has linked it to support seeking behaviors. Having a high level of ethnic identity not only means that an individual feels part of a group but as Phinney (1992) would suggest, there is also a strong value and “emotional significance” that is placed on group membership. Someone who has achieved ethnic identity would also achieve a sense of affirmation and acceptance by their group, an important step when seeking validation and safety after encountering forms of racism (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). Perhaps if a student felt like

they had a group to turn to, they would be more inclined to seek help from that group as opposed to those who feel marginalized. This could also apply to their academic community as well. If the student felt accepted by their university environment, they could be turning to safe groups like other minorities or the compassionate majority to gain visibility.

While ethnic identity can act as a protective factor, racial microaggressions can be seen as a risk factor for Latino graduate students. When comparing the two styles of coping, the construct of racial microaggressions was a predictive variable for only one coping strategy, forbearance. These findings suggest how the perception of racial microaggressions can impact the Latino students' primary strategy of racial microaggressions repair, support seeking.

Additionally, there was a positive correlation between perceived racial microaggressions amongst peers and professors. While these two constructs are related, Racial Microaggressions (Peer) was a predictive variable for Forbearance coping while Racial Microaggressions (Professor) was the only variable that was not a significant predictor of either coping style; students perceived peer microaggressions more so than from professors. How is it that participants were more bothered by or perceived more racial microaggressions from their peers rather than professors? Perhaps we are used to recognizing the slights of peers; we have a life time experience with these dynamics. Or maybe we hold our professors in higher regards; we need them to be in power because they are our models for our profession. Even Sue et al. (2009) alluded that instructors had the power to positively influence the classroom discussions and dynamics. Peers on the other hand can influence us both in and out of the classroom setting. Interactions with professors may be confined to

academic settings but with peers, students could feel the slights of their racial microaggressions in class, out at dinner, at a party, or even in their homes.

While the study was solicited to those who identified as “Latino”, the participants were given an opportunity to write out how they, themselves, identified both racially and ethnically. Some wrote one word responses: “Latino”, “Mexican”, “Cuban”, “Hispanic”. Some wrote a list of their ancestry: “Mexican, Irish, Polish, Scottish”. While a few refused to answer or commented on how they did not like the terms “race” and/or “ethnicity”. However, a majority of the participants defined their ethnicity by their country of origin(s), i.e. “Venezuelan”, “Mexican American”, “Nicaraguan”, “Puerto Rican/Columbian”, etc. Terms like “Chicano”, “Boricua”, and “Tejano” were also used by the participants to convey identity.

Lastly, it should be noted that nearly 75% of the study’s sample identified as female. This large statistic is staggering considering the reports about Latinas being an undereducated and underpaid population as mentioned earlier in the review of literature; 4 out of 100 Latinas who enter the educational pipeline will graduate from graduate school (Watford, 2006). The disproportion could be accounted for by several reasons. Perhaps they felt more inclined to participate in order to help out a fellow Latina with her study or the survey was unintentionally sent to more females than males and those in human services disciplines. Maybe the 229 female participants are an accurate representation and they valued the importance of the research because they could strongly identify with the topic. Regardless, it seems that the role of women in higher education may be grossly underestimated. It is important to explore how the large proportion of female participants impacted the results of

the study because statistics on Latinas are changing every year. There needs to be a better understanding of how these women survived each academic stage.

For example, Latinas' collectivistic values, skills and strengths could be the factors propelling them through the pipeline. Latinas have an understanding that their achievements impact the legacy not just themselves. Because of the demographic makeup of the sample, it is unclear if the support seeking strategy was due to gender socialization or if we can distinguish racial microaggressions from gender bias, or any other biases for that matter.

Perhaps these findings are a glimpse into the next wave of resilient Latinas making their way down the pipeline. If women continue to be the communicators of culture, it would be interesting to see if, collectively, they have the power to reshape the Latino culture as it relates to education.

Limitations

While this study highlighted the population of Latinos in the pursuit of advanced degrees, it was out of exploratory efforts. The quantitative method of this study could not explain the nuances of the coping strategies, their academic experiences, or how they experience their culture. This study was a beginning to an understanding about the Latino graduate school experience but perhaps the richness of their lives was not captured. Demographic and contextually related data was also neglected, such as multiple minority identity populations, the participants' religious and spiritual preferences, students' current or recent UCC treatment, and who the students considered to be a part of their primary support system.

This study did not account for students who had left (or been "pushed out") a graduate program and were basing responses on their new, more positive graduate program.

Additionally, data on those who have left their graduate school indefinitely was not gathered. It also did not distinguish the racial microaggressions experienced from professors in their program from those of a different department. Therefore perhaps the participants reflected a more resilient sample; those who continued their pursuits, those with more effective coping skills, those with a greater support system.

Lastly, the students' quality of life and degree completion data are pieces of a larger picture that are missing from the discussion. Perhaps the results produced by this study would have greater impact if we know which students ended up completing their degrees and which considered their lives to be satisfactory.

Conclusions about Coping: Support Seeking versus Forbearance

While this study examined the construct of collectivistic coping strategies (Support Seeking and Forbearance), the effectiveness of each was not measured. When it comes to repairing racial microaggression and navigating the graduate school pathway, which coping strategy is most effective? Is there a personality difference between those who forbear and those who support seek?

Several studies emphasize the importance of social support, i.e. "sanity checks" (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). In clinical practice as well, we view social support as a protective factor when assessing risk. Gloria and Rodriguez (2000, p.150) stated that social support "buffer[s] the negative influences of stressful events and depression in Latinos" and that it "facilitates psychological and physical well-being".

However, for the Latinos in graduate school, more steps may be involved in the support-seeking process. It may involve calling home long distance, having the financial

resources to visit home, reaching out across disciplines, hunting down resources in the area, or using the internet to gain access to support networks, or feeling safe to reach out in the first place. Is it just easier to keep it all to themselves? The convenience of having those who support you is limited. Attempting to create an academic family or support system may mean that the student would spend less time with their home family. Perhaps it is the comfort and safety with the environment and peers that increase the likelihood of support seeking behaviors.

However, let us not discount the purpose and implication of forbearance; forbearance is a respected form of coping in the collectivistic culture. Minimizing or concealing problems from those close to you in order not to burden them and maintain harmony is one dimension of the concept of forbearance. Given the academic context we can see greater depths of what this strategy entails. For students who have limited time talking and visiting with friends and family, the student may not want to burden the support network or monopolize that precious time explaining their graduate school struggles. The strategy to forebear may also be an outcome of racial microaggressions. Students may choose forbearance to avoid further microaggressions or invalidating comments from peers or professors. Perhaps there is a perception that the discussion about their experiences and about race make their peers and professors feel uncomfortable. Or, do the students who forbear in the face of racial microaggressions simply reject stereotypes? Lastly, a point emphasized by Moore and Constantine (2005, p.342) that while forbearance strategies can have adverse psychological effects, we must consider how this culturally rooted style of coping may also “underscore the serene acceptance of situations and an alignment with fate with regard to unpredictable life circumstances”. Acceptance. *Que sera, sera.*

When reviewing the two styles of coping in the academic contexts, this researcher would caution from drawing conclusions that would suggest that either coping strategy somehow produces a happier or more successful student. The research notes these differences but this research does not rank one better than the other or have the data to support either.

Implications and Recommendations

This study demonstrated how the experiences of Latinos in higher education need to be explored further, especially within the construct of racial microaggressions. Students are experiencing racial microaggressions but may not be seeking the support they need. This study adds to the dialogue about Latinos in academia and the budding discussion of Racial Microaggressions. Lively discussion amongst the psychology profession about the semantics and definition of “Racial Microaggressions” has also brought into question, “what exactly are we measuring, here?” Does the term imply physical aggression? Is it too “micro” to measure? How are we distinguishing race from culture? The racial microaggression debate combined with the controversial dialogue over the barriers and triumphs of Latinos in the U.S. makes for a complex topic; not to mention how these intricacies impact an individual and his/her system.

Regardless of the opinions that are taken on the constructs studied in this research, the dialogue puts a language to the variety of experiences that takes place amongst Latinos in academia. Negative or positive, these experience are made visible and given a voice: Not every participant perceived microaggressions, some expressed great satisfaction with their program an university, some told tales of how they were explicitly told that they didn't

belong in their program because of their race and culture; some expressed ethnic pride; some stated that they felt microaggressions based on gender and sexual orientation; and some were angry that such a survey was being conducted because it focused on the negative rather than the positive aspects of the Latino struggle.

By putting language to experiences by opening up the dialogue about racial microaggressions, especially in the academic setting, we can begin to understand the coping strategies used by this population of students. It is however, noteworthy that in this study, there were factors that predicted particular coping strategies and how literature that can inform us about the impact of each coping style.

Latino graduate students who have felt the invisible sting of racial microaggressions can hopefully find their experiences validated through the data and dialogue provided by this study. The strengths of the students can also be highlighted, especially fostering ethnic identity which has been linked to high self-esteem.

Colleges, universities, and graduate programs can acknowledge how these factors can impact recruitment, retention and the relationships they have with their students.

Institutions can offer culture-fostering programs, interdisciplinary support for their students, and a general mindfulness for these issues. Racial microaggressions will continue to occur at the graduate school level; however, there can be more effective ways in which the university can address them and further enrich their colleges. Monthly socials for graduate students of color, a peer mentoring system for incoming 1st year graduate students, in-services or brown bags on diversity topics, and diversity training for faculty and staff are just a few examples of how the university and respective departments can foster positive relationships and strengths

amongst their Latino graduate students. As Sue and his colleagues (2009) suggested, the classroom instructors themselves can act as leaders of difficult racial dialogue. Diversity training which helps teachers feel more comfortable and confident leading these discussions would model for the students that their perspectives and feelings are welcomed in the classroom and on the campus. Many of these examples promote dialogue and support seeking behaviors.

When University Counseling Center (UCC) clinicians are considering treatment with Latino graduate students additional factors need consideration. While we still include multicultural factors such as *personalismo*, family, generational status, acculturation, ethnic identity, language, spirituality, gender roles, etc. The student identity for this specific Latino population may also include other contextual factors: the cultural make up and size of the city, university and graduate program; the discipline of study; first-generation-low-income status; proximity to their social support system. Clinicians can also have consideration for the impact of racial microaggressions, in the daily life of the student as well as within the counselor-client dynamic. The added energy that it takes for these students to negotiate their environment and maintain bicultural fluency can manifest itself in clinically relevant presenting problems such as feelings of isolation, marginalization, disconnectedness, anger, depression, anxiety, and adjustment; just to name a few. Clinicians can offer the students support, help identify university and community resources, help identify potential mentors, highlight cultural strengths, and most importantly “make the invisible, visible”.

For non-Latino peers, the understanding that racial microaggressions impact everyone can potentially initiate healthy dialogue and foster connection in the program cohort. I often give the example of how a professor’s racial microaggression can actually impact the peer

relationship. In a classroom setting, the silence and avoidance from the witnessing peer group offers an additional sting to the original assault; adding microinsult to microinjury, so to speak.

Future Research

Because of the subtle intricacies when trying to capture an individual's "invisible" experience, a qualitative approach would help give breadth to the Latino student understanding. Information about specific coping strategies, examples of interactions with peers and professors, and quality of life could elaborate on the quantitative data that was gathered. Considering the results from this study in regards to racial microaggressions from peers versus professors, additional research would give understanding to the differences between the two and a glimpse into the interpersonal dynamics in that student's graduate program. Also, given that nearly three-quarters of the sample in this study were female, it would be worthwhile to revisit the notion of Latinas in higher education and how they ultimately impact the culture and its adherence to strict gender roles. Qualitative research could lend more solutions and would give the students a chance to tell their own story in their own voice.

The initial purpose of the research was to explore the concept of racial microaggressions, and ethnic identity, and to gain understanding of collectivistic coping strategies under the umbrella of these constructs and academic contexts. However, one of the most noteworthy facts of this study is that the 309 Latino participants are students of graduate school programs across the United States; which is a tremendous accomplishment regardless of the utilized coping strategy. They continue to tackle the educational pipeline

and refute discouraging statistics. Further research that emphasizes the strengths and resiliency of Latino students could offer directions for future scholars and highlight their pathways to higher education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent Form for Research Participation

Project Title: “Ethnic Identity, Perceptions of Racial Microaggressions, and Perceptions of University Environment as Predictors of Coping among Latina/o Graduate Students”

Investigator: Enedelia Saucedo, M.S.

You are being asked to participate in a research project called *Ethnic Identity, Perceptions of Racial Microaggressions, and Perceptions of University Environment as Predictors of Coping among Latina/o Graduate Students*. Any questions regarding the study may be addressed to Enedelia Saucedo in the Oklahoma State University Counseling Psychology Program at 817-239-7166 or enedelia.saucedo@okstate.edu.

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the degree to which students’ experiences of ethnic identity, racial microaggressions and university environment impact how they cope. If you agree to be a participant, we will ask for 30 minutes to an hour of your time to complete a demographic form and three questionnaires. These questionnaires will ask about your feelings about your identified ethnic group, your experiences with racial microaggressions (covert racism), your perception of your current university environment, and your coping style. You are highly encouraged to answer all questions of the demographic form and questionnaires; however you may stop at any time.

By completing and returning this survey you are agreeing to participate in this study. Any identifying information that may connect you to the completed questionnaires will be discarded. The records of this study will be kept private. Written results of the study will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you; any identifying information will be discarded. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

Participating in the study and completing the questionnaires is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to; you can also withdraw your consent and stop completing the questionnaires at anytime. The only risks associated with your participation in this study are ones of inconvenience and/or perhaps recalling an emotional experience. The only benefit to participating in this study is the knowledge that you are

contributing to research and that the research could bring understanding of and improvements for Latinos in the educational pipeline.

Enedelia Saucedo will answer any questions you have about the study. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Sheila Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu

This consent form is for your records only. By completing the questionnaires and returning your responses, you are consenting to participate in this study. You also are indicating that you are 18 years of age or older. Signatures are not needed.

Please email your responses to reply to sender or to the sender:
enedelia.saucedo@okstate.edu

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B

Racial Microaggressions in Graduate School Scale: Professors

The statements below are intended to represent some of the situations or events that may have transpired over the course of your graduate training. Using the scale below, please rate your graduate program *professors* with regard to the following situations or events during your graduate school training. Please note that the term “cultural” used in each of the statements refers specifically to racial or ethnic issues. In addition, the term “professors” refers to Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Adjunct Professors or Instructors in your graduate program.

0	1	2	3	4
This never happened	This happened, but it <i>did not</i> bother me at all	This happened and I was bothered by it a <i>little</i>	This happened and I was <i>moderately</i> bothered by it	This happened and I was bothered by it <i>a lot</i> .

___ 1. My professor(s) have avoided discussing or addressing cultural issues in our classes or department meetings.

___ 2. My professor(s) sometimes are insensitive about my cultural group when trying to understand (or address) my cultural concerns or issues.

___ 3. My professor(s) seem to deny having any cultural biases or stereotypes.

___ 4. My professor(s) may have thought at times that I was overly sensitive about cultural issues.

___ 5. My professor(s) at times seem to over-identify with my experiences related to my race or culture.

___ 6. My professor(s) at times seem to have stereotypes about my cultural group, even if he or she did not express them directly.

___ 7. My professor(s) sometimes seemed unaware of the realities of race and racism.

___ 8. My professor(s) at times may have either overestimated or underestimated my capabilities or strengths based on my cultural group membership.

___ 9. My professor(s) sometimes minimized the importance of cultural issues (in our classroom interactions).

___ 10. My professor(s) may have provided instruction or guidance that was inappropriate or unneeded based on my cultural group membership.

Appendix B

Racial Microaggressions in Graduate School Scale: Peers

The statements below are intended to represent some of the situations or events that may have transpired over the course of your graduate training. Using the scale below, please rate your graduate program *peers* with regard to the following situations or events during your graduate school training. Please note that the term “cultural” used in each of the statements refers specifically to racial or ethnic issues. In addition, the term “peers” refers to cohorts and classmates in your graduate program.

0	1	2	3	4
This never happened	This happened, but it <i>did not</i> bother me at all	This happened and I was bothered by it a <i>little</i>	This happened and I was <i>moderately</i> bothered by it	This happened and I was bothered by it <i>a lot</i> .

___ 1. My peer(s) have avoided discussing or addressing cultural issues in our classes or other interactions.

___ 2. My peer(s) sometimes are insensitive about my cultural group when trying to understand (or address) my cultural concerns or issues.

___ 3. My peer(s) seem to deny having any cultural biases or stereotypes.

___ 4. My peer(s) may have thought at times that I was overly sensitive about cultural issues.

___ 5. My peer(s) at times seem to over-identify with my experiences related to my race or culture.

___ 6. My peer(s) at times seem to have stereotypes about my cultural group, even if he or she did not express them directly.

___ 7. My peer(s) sometimes seemed unaware of the realities of race and racism.

___ 8. My peer(s) at times may have either overestimated or underestimated my capabilities or strengths based on my cultural group membership.

___ 9. My peer(s) sometimes minimized the importance of cultural issues (in our classroom and social interactions).

___ 10. My peer(s) may have provided support or advice that was inappropriate or unneeded based on my cultural group membership.

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

Please mark the line or fill in the blank to answer. Please answer as best you can if you are uncertain.

About Yourself:

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

3. Current Marital Status:

___ 1) Single (never married)

___ 2) Married

___ 3) Living with partner

___ 4) Widowed

___ 5) Divorced

___ 6) Separated

4. Generation (check one):

___ 1st (to go to college.) ___ 2nd ___ 3rd ___ 4th or more

5. Generation (check one):

___ 1st (to come to the U.S.) ___ 2nd (born in the U.S.) ___ 3rd ___ 4th or more

(If first generation to live in the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.? _____)

We would like to know your race and ethnicity. Race refers to a general, more inclusive category based on genetics such as Asian, Black, Native American, Caucasian, etc. Ethnicity is more specific. It refers to your family's cultural heritage such as Jewish, Cherokee, Navajo, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South Korean, Japanese, Kenyan, African-American, Italian, Irish, etc. Since people can have more than one race and/or ethnicity, list all that apply. If you do not have this information, please answer "don't know".

6. How would you describe yourself *racially* (list all):

7. How would you describe yourself *ethnically* (list all):

About Your Parents:

8. Current Marital Status:

- | <u>Father</u> | <u>Mother</u> |
|------------------|---------------|
| ___ 1) Single | ___ |
| ___ 2) Married | ___ |
| ___ 3) Widowed | ___ |
| ___ 4) Divorced | ___ |
| ___ 5) Separated | ___ |
| ___ 6) Remarried | ___ |

8. Highest Educational level:

- | <u>Father</u> | <u>Mother</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| ___ 1) Less than H.S. | ___ |
| ___ 2) H.S. or GED | ___ |
| ___ 3) Some College | ___ |
| ___ 4) College Grad. | ___ |
| ___ 5) Masters | ___ |
| ___ 6) Doctorate | ___ |
| 7) Other (specify): | |

9. Parents' Occupations (current or most recent, or "Don't Know"):

Father

Mother

10. What language do your parents prefer to speak? Mother _____ Father _____

11. What language do *you* speak to your parents? Mother _____ Father _____

12. What was your first language? English _____ Spanish _____

13. What was your second language? English _____ Spanish _____ Only know one language _____

14. What language do you prefer to speak? English _____ Spanish _____ Both equally _____

About your Higher Education History:

15. What is the predominant ethnic group at your current university?

_____ Latino/Hispanic _____ White/Caucasian _____ Other

16. What was the predominant ethnic group of your undergraduate university?

_____ Latino/Hispanic _____ White/Caucasian _____ Other

17. What was the predominant ethnic group of the neighborhood in which you grew up?

_____ Latino/Hispanic _____ White/Caucasian _____ Other

18. How would you describe the geographic location of where you grew up? (check all that apply)

_____ Urban _____ Rural _____ Suburban

19. How would you describe the geographic location of your undergraduate university? (check all that apply)

_____ Urban _____ Rural _____ Suburban

20. How would you describe the geographic location of where you pursued your Master's degree? (check all that apply)

Urban Rural Suburban

21. How would you describe the geographic location of where you are pursuing your doctoral degree? (check all that apply)

Urban Rural Suburban Not Applicable

22. Were you ever involved in a graduate school *preparatory* program (e.g. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program)? Yes No

About your current graduate program:

23. What degree are you currently pursuing?

Master's Doctorate Professional

24. How long have you been in graduate study?

25. How long have you been in your current graduate program?

26. What is your current field of study?

Appendix E

In addition to the list of referrals, the following statement will be placed at the end of each packet of inventory to give the participants the opportunity to communicate any thoughts and emotions that were evoked by the measures:

*****(Optional) Please feel free to write about any other thoughts or feelings
regarding your experiences in academia:***

VITA

Enedelia Saucedo

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: ETHNIC IDENTITY, PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS, AND
PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT AS PREDICTORS OF COPING AMONG
LATINA/O GRADUATE STUDENTS

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the
University of North Texas, Denton, Texas in May, 2004.

Completed the requirements for Master of Science in Educational Psychology at
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2007.

Completed the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology at
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2009.

Experience:

APA-accredited clinical psychology Internship at Suffolk University Counseling
Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

APA-accredited PhD in Counseling Psychology at Oklahoma State University

Professional Memberships:

American Psychological Association

National Latino/a Psychological Association

Name: Enedelia Saucedo

Date of Degree: December, 2009

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: ETHNIC IDENTITY, PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL
MICROAGGRESSIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT
AS PREDICTORS OF COPING AMONG LATINA/O GRADUATE STUDENTS

Pages in Study: 77

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Scope and Method of Study: Exploratory Survey Research

Findings and Conclusions:

In this study Forbearance and Support Seeking were each regressed on Racial Microaggressions (professor), Racial Microaggressions (peer), Ethnic Identity, and University Environment. The researcher's findings concluded that 10% of the total variance in Support Seeking was accounted for by the predictor variables and 8% of the total variance was accounted for by the predictor variables. Racial Microaggressions (Peer) (.21, $p < .01$) and University Environment (-.18, $p < .01$) emerged as significant predictors of Forbearance; showing a *positive* relation between Racial Microaggressions (peers) and Forbearance and a *negative* relation between University Environment and Forbearance. There was also a positive correlation between perceived racial microaggressions amongst peers and professors. This study demonstrated how the experiences of Latinos in higher education need to be further explored, especially within the construct of racial microaggressions. Students are experiencing racial microaggressions but may not be seeking the support they need and ethnic identity may be overlooked as a strength and protective factor on the graduate school journey.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. John S.C. Romans
