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PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND MEANING IN LIFE AMONG MEXICAN-ORIGIN ADULTS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The current study sought to investigate the relationship between ethnic-related stressors, ethnic identity, and meaning in life. First, the study aimed to determine whether intragroup marginalization and intergroup perceived discrimination predicts ethnic identity in a sample of Mexican-origin adults. Second, the study examined if ethnic-related stressors (i.e., intragroup marginalization and intergroup perceived discrimination) interact with ethnic identity to predict participant meaning in life (i.e., presence and search). A total of 135 Mexican-origin adults completed an online or paper survey that asked about: demographic information, ethnic identity, acculturation, intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, meaning in life presence and meaning in life search. Using hierarchical linear regression analyses, the study found that perceived discrimination significantly predicted ethnic identity exploration, and that intragroup marginalization significantly predicted meaning in life presence. Further, the study found that ethnic identity commitment and perceived discrimination interacted to predict meaning in life presence, while ethnic identity exploration and intragroup marginalization interacted to predict meaning in life search. Overall, the results suggest that ethnic identity is a source of life meaning that buffers the negative association between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence. Given ethnic identity's positive associated with well-being in Mexican-origin adults; clinicians should consider incorporating ethnic identity interventions with Mexican-origin clients.

Chapter 1: The problem

Statement of the Problem

According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an estimated 33.5 million people of Mexican-origin resided in the United States in 2011 (Brown & Patten, 2013). Mexicans make up the largest portion of Latino-origin people living in the United States and account for roughly two-thirds of the U.S. Latina/o population (Brown & Patten, 2013). Of the Mexicans living in the United States, about one-third are foreign born and two-in-three immigrants from Mexico arrived to the United States in 1990 or later. Twenty-four percent of Mexican immigrants are United States citizens (Brown & Patten, 2013).

In the United States, people of Mexican-origin face a number of financial and educational hardships related to racial/ethnic inequality. A recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report (2014) revealed that in 2013, Latino men made 67.2% of white men's median annual salary. Latina women made even less, as Latina women made 54.0% of white men's median annual earnings (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2014). For people of Mexican-origin specifically, Mexicans ages 16 and older report annual earnings of $20,000, which is a significantly lower amount relative to the U.S. population median of $29,000 (Brown & Patten, 2013). In line, 28% of Mexicans are classified as living in poverty. This rate is markedly higher than that of the general U.S. population, which falls at 16%. In terms of educational attainment, Mexicans have lower levels of education relative to the general U.S. population, with about 10% of Mexicans and 29% of the entire U.S. population ages 25 and older having attained a bachelor's degree (Brown & Patten, 2013).

In addition to these income and educational disparities, people of Mexican-origin living in the United States, like other Latinas/os of different nationalities, face a variety of ethnic-related stressors (French & Chavez, 2010). These stressors range from discrimination, family hardship, exposure to violence to language spoken, stereotype confirmation concern, and own-group conformity pressure (French & Chavez, 2010; Williams, Aiyer, Durkee, & Tolan, 2014). Yet, despite the plethora of ethnic-related stressors faced by Mexicans in U.S., a paucity of literature exists examining psychological constructs and interventions specific to this group. This gap in the literature becomes even more critical when analyzing the existing psychological literature on Mexican-origin people. That is, the limited amount of literature examining Latina/o and/or Mexican mental health has demonstrated increased rates of mental health issues relative other groups living in the United States (e.g., González, Tarraf, Whitfield &Vega, 2010).

Research has begun to more extensively examine the link between ethnic related stressors and mental health in people of Mexican-origin (e.g., Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000). Within this literature, perceived discrimination has emerged as an experience that robustly is associated with well-being (Finch et al., 2000). While some research has demonstrated that certain experiences of discrimination can lead to increased well-being (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009), most of the literature on perceived discrimination has found an inverse relationship between discrimination and positive mental health outcomes in people of Mexican-origin living in the US (Finch, Hummer, Kolody, & Vega, 2001; Finch et al., 2000). It thus appears that like other people of color, perceived

discrimination has a negative effect on mental health in Mexican-origin adults (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014).

Given the relationship between perceived discrimination and mental health outcomes in people of Mexican-origin, finding meaningful avenues and/or constructs to ameliorate the negative effects of discrimination experiences is critical towards achieving ethical practice with clients of Mexican-origin. Ethnic identity has emerged as a construct that could negate the effects of discrimination, as the literature has demonstrated that ethnic identity acts as a buffer between experiences of discrimination and mental health outcomes in people of color generally, and people of Mexican-origin specifically (Torres & Ong, 2010). In addition to ethnic identity's buffering effect, research is also demonstrating that ethnic identity is related to more positive mental health outcomes in people of color, including Latinas/os (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Smith & Silva, 2011). However, most of these studies have focused on the effects of intergroup experiences of discrimination (i.e., discrimination from someone from an outside group, usually from dominant culture), including how intergroup perceived discrimination affects ethnic identity. Therefore, the effect of within-group marginalization remains largely unexplored and the effect of intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity appears unknown. Thus, in order to continue to better serve people of Mexican-origin in clinical work, better understanding different types of discrimination and/or marginalization remains an important area of research that can inform clinical work.

Ultimately, Mexican-origin people face a variety of ethnic-related stressors that negatively affect mental health (Córdova & Cervantes, 2010). Yet, there is a dearth of

literature examining the fit between traditional or emerging psychological interventions and minority populations, including those of Mexican-origin. Given the effect of ethnic-related stressors and the lack of literature examining psychological interventions, there remains a need for research that continues to examine whether ethnic identity can serve as a buffer to negative experiences. This research is critical toward furthering appropriate and promising clinical interventions among people of color generally, and people of Mexican-descent specifically.

Background of the Problem

The psychological literature has robustly revealed a negative effect of perceived discrimination on a variety of well-being indicators among people of color (Schmitt et al., 2014). While under-researched, it appears this negative relationship applies to Mexican-origin adults (Finch et al., 2000; Finch et al., 2001; Flores, Tschann, Dimas, Bachen, & Pasch, 2008). For example, among Mexican-origin adults, experiences of discrimination are related to increased symptoms of depression (Finch et al., 2000; Flores et al., 2008) and poorer physical health outcomes (Finch et al., 2001). In addition to perceived discrimination from an outside group, researchers have begun to examine the effect of intragroup marginalization that occurs within Mexican American and other ethnic minority groups in the United States (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007). Initial studies suggest that interpersonal separation from one's own ethnic group due to adherence to dominant culture norms adversely affects bicultural individuals (e.g., Castillo et al., 2007). While a new line of literature, the existing psychological studies suggest that intragroup marginalization is inversely related to well-being (Castillo et al., 2007).

Given the negative effects of perceived discrimination and marginalization on well-being, research exploring potential buffers and protective factors is important to ameliorate discrimination/marginalization's effects. Ethnic identity has emerged as a potential buffer between negative discrimination experiences and well-being (e.g., Kiang, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006). One main reason ethnic identity may serve as a protective factor is due to ethnic identities' association with well-being (Smith & Silva, 2011). While still in a nascent stage, the literature examining ethnic identity, discrimination, and marginalization on Mexican-origin adults has highlighted a need for continued investigations into the complexity of these relationships. Particularly, most studies examining discrimination, marginalization, and ethnic identity have done so within a traditional, "what's going wrong" psychological framework. Positive psychology has compelled researchers to re-conceptualize psychological models when examining well-being, particularly by the inclusion of concepts grounded in psychological flourishing (Seligman 1998). Given this paradigmatic shift, examining the effect of discrimination and marginalization on positive psychology based variables is an important initial step toward understanding the complexities regarding the psychological effect of discrimination/marginalization on Mexican-origin adults.

Positive psychology researchers have identified meaning in life as a key component to well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010). While conceptualized in different ways, Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler's (2006) conceptualization of meaning in life highlights two important areas in regards to life meaning: presence and search. Meaning in life presence refers to the degree to which an individual feels a purpose or mission in their life, while meaning in life search refers to the degree by which one is

looking for meaning in their life (Steger, 2009; Steger, Kawabata, Shimai, & Otake, 2008). Meaning in life presence has been strongly related to traditional measures of well-being (e.g., Steger & Frazier, 2005), while meaning in life search appears related to poorer affect and increased anxiety and depression (Steger et al., 2006). In one of the few studies to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and meaning in life, Kiang and Fuligni (2009) found that meaning in life mediated the relationship between ethnic identity and adjustment among adolescents from a variety of backgrounds, including a Latin America background. That is, meaning in life presence explained a portion of ethnic identity's positive effect on psychological adjustment (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). In addition, these authors found that the meaning in life presence was positively associated with ethnic belonging and exploration (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009).

For people of Mexican-origin living in the United States, acculturation, or the change in cultural patterns associated with continuous contact with different cultures, is an important concept that affects a variety of psychological factors (Yoon, Chang, Kim, Clawson, Cleary, et al., 2013). That is, for Latinas/os, including Mexican-origin adults, adherence to Anglo and/or Mexican culture appears to have differential effects on mental health (Torres, 2010). Given acculturation's effect, any examination of the effects of perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity and meaning in life should incorporate acculturation effects.

Given the negative effect of perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization on well-being, the current study has two goals. First, the study explores how ethnic-related stressors (i.e., discrimination and marginalization) affect ethnic identity exploration and commitment. Secondly, the study examines the relationships

among ethnic-related stressors, ethnic identity (i.e., ethnic identity exploration and commitment), meaning in life presence, and meaning in life search. Results may further the understanding of the complexity of issues regarding ethnic identity and inform practice with clients of Mexican origin. Of note, while the current study focused on Mexican-origin adults specifically, much of the literature has examined Latinas/os more generally. The term Latina/o captures a large heterogeneous group made up of various cultures and nationalities, and while there are similarities within this group, one should be aware of within-group differences (e.g., Vega, Rodriguez, & Gruskin, 2009)

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Positive Psychology

Over the past few decades, positive psychology has emerged as a prominent framework in the mental health field. Although this emergence has not been without criticisms, the modern positive psychology movement has challenged practitioners to move beyond the study of psychopathology, and include an exploration of the psychological variables that contribute to a flourishing lifestyle (Seligman, 1998). In addition to addressing *what is going wrong* in someone's life, positive psychology encourages researchers and clinicians to incorporate clients' strengths into treatment and to highlight *what is going right*. In fact, a new form of therapy, *positive psychotherapy*, has demonstrated how a positive psychology framework can be applied into practice (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). This therapeutic approach focuses on identifying, understanding, and utilizing clients' character strengths as a vehicle to enhance well-being in the context of therapy (Seligman et al., 2006).

Seligman, often considered the founder of modern positive psychology, developed perhaps the most popular positive psychology well-being model (Seligman, 2011). In his model, Seligman posits that well-being stems from five important areas: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). Through utilization of *character strengths*, or positive characteristics and traits that emerge in thoughts, feelings and behaviors, one can build these five areas and increase their well-being (Seligman, 2011). To date, researchers have identified twenty-four *character strengths* that promote well-being and contribute to individual flourishing (Seligman, Park, & Peterson, 2004). These *character strengths* have been

organized into six broader categories: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Seligman et al., 2004).

The psychological literature has demonstrated support for both Seligman's well-being model and the link between *character strengths* and well-being (e.g., Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). In terms of the well-being model, research has demonstrated a strong relationship between Seligman's five areas and well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010). Furthermore, character strength literature has supported the link between *character strengths* and well-being (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). In fact, researchers have illustrated that psychological interventions enhanced with a positive psychology component (i.e., utilizing existing *character strengths*), are effective in treating depression (Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012).

Latina/o positive psychology. While the psychological literature on positive psychology is promising, much of this literature is based on samples consisting of people from the majority culture. Given the potential dangers of generalizing psychological findings from majority to minority populations, researchers and clinicians alike should make a concerted effort to examine the fit between racial/ethnic minorities and positive psychology.

The limited psychological literature on positive psychology with non-White populations suggests that positive psychology may be applicable to Latina/o populations (Cuadra & Florenzano, 2003). In two important studies, Cuadra-Peralta and colleagues (2010, 2012) demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions based in positive psychology and positive psychotherapy. In the first study, positive psychotherapy demonstrated effectiveness in increasing life satisfaction and decreasing depressive

symptoms in people diagnosed with depression at a Chilean clinic (Cuadra-Peralta, Veloso-Besio, Pérez, & Zúñiga, 2010). In the second study conducted in Chile, elderly Chilean participants in the group receiving positive psychology interventions reported significant positive pre-post intervention change in life satisfaction, with a significant decrease pre-post intervention in depression symptoms (Cuadra-Peralta, Veloso-Besio, Puddu-Gallardo, Salgado-García, & Peralta-Montecinos, 2012). Similar to Cuadra-Peralta's studies, Luna Bernal, Laca Arocena, and Mejía Ceballos (2011) examined the relationship between family satisfaction and well-being Mexican students attending a university in Mexico. The authors found that family satisfaction was positively correlated with life satisfaction and positive affect, and negatively correlated with negative affect.

Similar to the literature abroad, the limited literature on Latina/o positive psychology suggests that for Latinas/os living in the United States, many of positive psychology's constructs operate similarly in Latinas/os as they do in majority populations. For example, Yager-Elorriaga and McWhirter (2015) found that Latina/o and non-Latina/o White participants reported similar levels of gratitude, a character strength that has one of the biggest predictive associations with well-being. Additionally, they found that gratitude predicted well-being in both samples, suggesting that character strengths may work similarly in its relationship with well-being for both Latinas/os and non-Latina/o Whites.

Meaning in life. Understanding life's meaning has long been a central goal of a variety of disciplines, and has emerged as an important component of positive psychology. Researchers have both operationalized life meaning, and examined the

psychological impact of having and/or searching for life meaning (e.g., Steger, 2009). While a variety of different definitions of meaning in life have emerged, most of these conceptualizations have three common themes (Heintzelman & King, 2014). Themes focus on characteristics that make life meaningful, on the importance of feeling a sense of purpose in life with the belief that life matters or possesses significance, and on the extent to which life meaning makes sense to the individual (Heintzelman & King, 2014).

Steger and colleagues (2006) highlight two important dimensions of meaning in life: *presence* and *search*. Meaning in life presence refers to the level to which one senses their life as comprehensible, significant, and/or meaningful. Meaning in life presence also includes the degree to which an individual feels a purpose or mission in their life that cuts through daily life concerns (Steger, 2009). Research has consistently associated meaning in life presence with greater well-being (e.g., Steger & Frazier, 2005). Within the meaning in life literature, meaning in life presence is analogous to researchers' conceptualization of life meaning. The second important dimension of meaning in life, meaning in life search, refers to the level one is engaged in looking for meaning in their life (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008). Meaning in life search includes the active effort one makes in order to have life meaning, including searching for meaning, significance, and/or purpose in life (Steger, 2009). Meaning in life search has been associated with higher neuroticism, negative affect, anxiety, and depression (Steger et al., 2006). Interestingly, meaning in life search also has been linked to open-mindedness (Steger et al., 2008).

Meaning in life and well-being. The psychological literature has continually demonstrated that having meaning in life is associated with a plethora of positive outcomes in a variety of domains (Brassai, Piko, & Steger, 2011; Owens, Steger, Whitesell & Herrerra, 2009). Importantly, life meaning has been associated with positive psychological functioning markers, while also inversely related to traditional markers of negative psychological functioning (Owens et al., 2009; Steger, Kawabata et al., 2008). In terms of positive psychological indicators, life meaning is associated with greater happiness (Debats, van der Lubbe, & Wezeman, 1993), quality of life (Krause, 2009), and life satisfaction (Steger, Kawabata et al., 2008). For mental health outcomes, researchers are demonstrating that life meaning is related to both positive mental health outcomes (e.g., Brassai et al., 2011) and lower occurrence of psychological disorders (e.g., Owens et al., 2009).

In addition to general research examining life meaning's relation to positive and negative psychological markers, positive psychology researchers have examined meaning in life presence in the context of positive psychology well-being models (e.g., Schueller & Seligman, 2010). Within Seligman's well-being models (2002, 2011), he posits that utilizing *character strengths* to belong to and serve something greater than oneself is central to the pursuit of meaning, and consequently, well-being. In pursuing and finding life meaning, individuals also find a sense of satisfaction and belief that life is well lived (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). So far, there is ample evidence that the pursuit of life meaning leads to greater well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010). For example, Scheuller and Seligman (2010) found that the pursuit of meaning was strongly related to both subjective and objective well-being. Furthermore, when

compared with the pursuit of pleasure, the pursuit of meaning was more strongly related to well-being (Scheuller & Seligman, 2010).

Factors contributing to life meaning. The association between meaning in life presence and well-being highlights the importance of understanding what leads to a meaningful life. This relationship is critical for clinicians to aid clients in their pursuit of well-being. Generally, among those in which financial well-being is not a sole concern, people from various cultures point to eight common sources of life meaning: happiness, achievement, intimacy, relationship, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, and fairness (Wong, 2011).

While most of the research examining factors linked to a meaningful life have been correlational, three strands of experimental research have suggested that social relationships, positive mood, and coherence are fundamental to our understanding of life meaning (Heintzelman & King, 2014). In terms of social relationships, researchers have demonstrated that even a single experience of rejection can lead to perceptions of a less meaningful life relative to neutral or accepting feedback (King & Geise, 2011). In terms of a positive mood, experimental manipulations that lead to an enhanced positive mood (e.g., listening to happy music or writing about a positive experience) leads participants to rate their meaning in life higher (Hicks & King, 2008). In terms of patterns and coherence, participants rate their meaning in life significantly higher after viewing stimuli that is coherent and has a pattern relative to stimuli presented at random (Heintzelman, Trent, & King, 2013).

In addition to researching what leads to a meaningful life, clinicians have identified a variety of interventions congruent with a positive psychology framework

that foster life meaning (e.g., Scheuller & Parks, 2014). Of note, Scheuller and Parks (2014) identify two interventions that have emerged as viable ways to increase life meaning, and highlight important aspects of having meaning in life presence. The first intervention focuses on creating meaning through constructing a life narrative. Building a life narrative focused on emotional expression appears to be linked with improved well-being and greater meaning (Scheuller & Parks, 2014). Second, hope has emerged as another construct that increases meaning in life presence. Articulating goals, usually through writing, can bring greater clarity, understanding, and awareness toward life goals, and ultimately result in increased life meaning. Further, becoming goal-oriented and thinking about ideal outcomes can strengthen an individual's thoughts about their goals and plans, subsequently increasing life meaning (Scheuller & Parks, 2014). Overall, these interventions reveal that greater understanding of an individual's life and increasing hope are two important aspects of meaning in life presence.

The influence of culture on meaning in life. Once again one should note that while the meaning in life theory and literature provides a promising avenue by which to increase well-being, much of this theory is grounded within a Western perspective and examined using White participants. As Steger, Kawabata and colleagues (2008) point out, prominent meaning in life theories stem from Western European history, including Aristotelian ideals of the good life. Some researchers have proposed universal psychological constructs such as the existence of universal psychological needs (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000) or cross-culture, universally valued *character strengths* (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2009). These universal conceptualizations suggest that perhaps meaning in life may be a universal concept that is cross-culturally valued. However,

these ideas have been largely untested within the meaning in life literature. Fortunately, literature is emerging on the role of culture on meaning in life, particularly examining cultural variation in terms of mean levels of meaning in life (e.g., Church, Katigbak, Locke, Zhang, Shen, et al., 2013).

In one of the first studies to examine cultural differences in the levels of presence and search for meaning in life, Steger, Kawabata, and colleagues (2008) found a variety of differences among American and Japanese young adults. Particularly, American participants reported higher levels of meaning in life presence, whereas Japanese participants indicated a meaning in life search (Steger, Kawabata et al., 2008). Interestingly, meaning in life search was negatively related to both meaning in life presence and well-being among Americans, but positively related to meaning in life presence and well-being in Japanese young adults. In a related study examining cross-cultural differences in well-being through self-determination theory perspective, similar results emerged (Church et al., 2013). That is, when examining a variety of psychological variables, including meaning in life search and presence, among college students from a variety of cultures (i.e., United States, Australia, Mexico, Venezuela, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Japan) participants from the four Asian countries reported lower purpose in life than those from non-Asian countries (includes Australia; Church et al., 2013). Furthermore, participants from the four Asian countries reported higher levels of meaning in life search than the four non-Asian countries (Church et al., 2013). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that meaning in life levels differ cross-culturally, and while meaning in life is generally associated with well-being, this relationship may differ depending on the cultural context. In terms of Mexican-origin

adults, it appears that meaning in life search and presence levels do not differ significantly among Mexican and American young adults.

More recently, literature is emerging on meaning in life within Latina/o populations, including Mexican-Americans. In a study examining the impact of Latina/o college student's presence of meaning in life and search for meaning in life on happiness, meaning in life presence significantly predicted reported subjective happiness level (Vela, Castro, Cavazos, Cavazos, & Gonzalez, 2015). Interestingly, meaning in life search was not a significant predictor of lower subjective happiness, but rather had a non-significant relationship with subjective happiness (Vela et al., 2015). Thus, meaning in life search may not have a negative connection to well-being in Mexican-Americans as it appears to have in European American adults. In addition, researchers are beginning to uncover what factors lead to a meaningful life among Mexican-Americans (e.g., Telzer, Tsai, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2015). For example, greater family obligation is an important predictor of meaning in life among Mexican-origin adolescents (Telzer et al., 2015).

Ethnic Identity

Like meaning in life, ethnic identity has emerged a predictor of positive psychological functioning. Ethnic identity is an important component related to ethnic minorities' self-concept and is a critical aspect to one's self-identity (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). Self-ideas regarding someone's own ethnic group memberships are a crucial aspect of ethnic identity. Further, ethnic identity is a multidimensional concept that has a variety of aspects in which these self-ideas may vary (Bernal & Knight, 1993). That is, ethnic identity is often conceptualized by three dimensions: (1) self-

identification, or the ethnic labels or terms people use to identify themselves and the meaning attached to these labels, (2) knowledge about ethnic culture (i.e., traditions, customs, values, and behaviors), and (3) preferences, feelings, and values regarding group membership and culture (Bernal & Knight, 1993).

Related to these dimensions, researchers have highlighted two important aspects to ethnic identity: commitment and exploration (e.g., Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity commitment refers to the sense of belonging to an ethnic group, and may be the most important aspect of ethnic identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity exploration refers seeking experiences and information related to ethnicity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Exploration often involves reading and talking to people about their heritage, as well as learning and engaging in cultural practices (Phinney & Ong, 2007). For the most part, ethnic identity exploration has been most commonly associated with adolescents. However, exploration is a process that likely occurs throughout life. Exploration in tandem with commitment often leads to a strong sense of ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity models. A variety of models have emerged to better understand ethnic identity development (e.g., Phinney 1993; Ruiz, 1990). In perhaps the most well-known model describing ethnic identity development, Phinney's (1993) three-stage model of ethnic identity development attempts to capture the developmental experience of ethnic minority adolescents living in the United States. Phinney's model is founded on the integration of two prior lines of research: ego identity and prior ethnic identity research. That is, the model has generalized across several ethnic groups (Phinney 1993) and is congruent with Erikson's (1964, 1968) work, Marcia's (1980) ego identity statuses, and other ethnic identity models (e.g., Helms 1990).

The first stage of Phinney's model, *unexamined ethnic identity*, is marked by the absence of exploring one's ethnicity. This stage is often characterized by an acceptance of majority culture's values and attitudes. Acceptance of majority cultural values commonly includes internalized negative views of one's own ethnic group. Of note, while this preference for majority cultural is common of Phinney's and other prominent ethnic/racial identity models (e.g., Cross, 1978; Helms 1990), Phinney (1989) noted that only limited evidence of internalized negative stereotypes exists. Phinney's second stage, *ethnic identity search/moratorium*, often is triggered by an encounter that initiates one to explore their ethnic identity. That is, this stage often commences when an experience that challenges an individual's view leads to the individual examining their ethnic identity, and increases this individual's receptiveness to his or her identity. Once this encounter occurs, ethnic minority youth in this stage often engage in immersion/emersion in order to better understand their views of ethnicity. This search often manifests as: talking to family/friends about ethnic issues, reading books, visiting museums, and/or reflecting on ethnicity's effects. Previous models (e.g., Cross, 1978) noted that a search to understand an individual's culture is often highly emotional, as youth commonly become angry or incensed toward White society. However, in interviews with youth, limited evidence emerged for the presence of this intense emotion or anger toward majority culture (Phinney, 1993). In the final stage of the model, *ethnic identity achievement*, one usually has arrived at an achieved identity. Phinney (1993) describes an achieved identity as having a clear and confident idea of one's own ethnicity. Ethnic identity achievement is further marked by an acceptance

and internalization of one's ethnicity. At this stage, an individual will often feel secure and possess a grounded sense of self in terms of ethnic issues.

While Phinney's (1993) model applied to various ethnic minority groups, Ruiz (1990) developed an ethnic identity models specific to Chicana/os. Ruiz notes that the term Latinas/os encompasses a large, heterogeneous population that includes groups from various nationalities and different heritages. Thus, when generalizing to such a broad group that has many differences, one should proceed with caution. Proceeding with this caveat in mind, Ruiz's 5-stage model aims to describe the development of Latina/o ethnic identity.

The first stage of Ruiz's model, *causal*, is marked by a lacking of affirmation of one's ethnic identity and a failure to identify with Latina/o culture. During this stage, one receives messages from others and the environment that either affirms, negates, or denigrates one's ethnic heritage. The second stage, *cognitive*, arises when an individual internalizes three negative and/or distorted messages regarding his/her Latina/o heritage being internalized into his/her mental sets. These three messages are: (1) ethnic group membership is related to poverty and prejudice, (2) escape can only come through assimilation to White society, and (3) success can only come through assimilation. The third stage of the model, *consequence*, is characterized by when the fragmentation of ethnic identity become salient. That is, ethnic markers (e.g., name, skin color, and accent) lead one to feel ashamed or embarrassed by their ethnicity. This often leads one to reject Chicano/Latina culture. The fourth stage, *working through*, is defined by two key components. First, the ethnic identity conflict becomes too psychologically distressful for one to cope. Second, one can no longer pretend to identify as another

ethnic identity. Consequently, the person is pushed to reclaim their fragmented ethnic identity, and ethnic consciousness arises. The final stage of Ruiz's model, *successful resolution*, comes as one gains a greater acceptance of his/her ethnicity. This resolution leads to an improved self-esteem and a sense that one's ethnic identity is a positive resource.

Factors affecting ethnic identity. In addition to understanding how ethnic identity develops, it is important to recognize how other factors affect ethnic identity. Particularly, exploring how important demographic variables (e.g., age and gender), the environment, generation status, and the languages spoken are critical towards better understanding ethnic identity.

Gender/Age. According to previous research involving ethnic minorities, neither age nor gender appear to strongly predict ethnic identity (e.g., Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). With regards to gender, these findings are consistent for research involving samples of Latina/o adults, including those of Mexican descent (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). However, with regards to age, one study found younger age associated with higher levels of ethnic identity achievement, specifically among Latina/o undergraduate and graduate students (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004).

Family and peer socialization. In addition to important demographic variables, environment (e.g., school and family) appears to be largely connected to ethnic identity development (Phinney 1992). That is, Phinney (1992) theorized that an individual's environment, particularly family influence and ethnic community, directly influences an adolescent's view of their ethnic heritage. In terms of family influence, the literature largely demonstrates that family ethnic socialization is related to higher ethnic identity

in Latina/o adolescents, including those of Mexican-descent (e.g., Gonzales-Backen & Umaña-Taylor, 2011). For example, familial ethnic socialization appears positively related to ethnic identity achievement in Mexico-origin adolescents living in the United States (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Further, for Mexican-origin adolescents of immigrant families, parental cultural maintenance appears to be related to language proficiency and peer socialization with other Mexican-origin adolescents, two predictors of high ethnic identity (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). For Mexican-origin children, this trend is also apparent (Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993). That is, in their examination of ethnic socialization as a mediator between ethnic family background and ethnic identity, Knight and colleagues (1993) demonstrated a link between parental factors, family ethnic socialization, and ethnic identity for Mexican-American children.

Similarly, it appears that greater ethnic socialization among peers is related to higher ethnic identity in Mexican adolescents and adults (e.g., Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). For example, among Latinas/os in late adolescence or young adulthood, dating a Latina/o in their first relationship and using Spanish with friends are all related to higher ethnic identity exploration and achievement (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). Specifically for Mexican adolescents of immigrant families, one's in-group participation (i.e., social interaction with other adolescents of Mexican descent) tends to be associated with higher ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2001).

Language spoken. Perhaps related to the environment, language spoken has emerged as another strong predictor of ethnic identity (Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo, & Cota, 1990; Phinney et al., 2001). For example, in their study of ethnic identity

development in Mexican-American children, Bernal and colleagues (1990) found that the more children knew about factors related to ethnic identity (i.e., preferred ethnic related behaviors and information regarding cultural heritage), the more likely these children were to speak Spanish. This trend is also apparent in adolescents of Mexican immigrant families, as Phinney and colleagues (2001) found that Spanish proficiency predicts ethnic identity among this group. Similarly, for Latina/o young adults, the amount of Spanish spoken with family members was related to ethnic identity achievement (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004).

Generation Status. While environment and language appear strongly linked to people of Mexican-descent's ethnic identity, the relationship between generation status and ethnic identity is much less clear. In various studies with different ethnic groups, Phinney (1990) reported no clear pattern between ethnic identity and generation status. In line, individual study results have reported mixed findings. One potential explanation for these mixed findings is that generation status indirectly affects ethnic identity through variables capturing ethnic socialization. In their study examining ethnic identity development model in Mexican-origin adolescents living in the United States, Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2004) found that the number of familial births in the United States indirectly predicted ethnic identity. That is, the number of familial births in the United States predicted familial ethnic socialization, which in turn, predicted ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Similarly, Knight, Bernal, and colleagues (1993) found that maternal teaching regarding ethnicity moderated the relationship between generation status and ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity, positive psychology, and positive psychological functioning. For ethnic minority youth living in the United States, ethnic identity is a critical factor in positive adjustment and well-being (Phinney, 1990). In fact, researchers continue to demonstrate the importance of ethnic identity in multiple facets, including psychological functioning (Smith & Silva, 2011). Particularly, research is emerging illustrating a connection between ethnic identity and well-being in ethnic minority youth (Smith & Silva, 2011). A large portion of the research connecting ethnic identity and well-being could fall under the umbrella of the emerging field of positive psychology. That is, studying how a psychological variable, such as ethnic identity, contributes to *what goes right* in an individual's life fits with this core principle of positive psychology (Seligman, 1998).

Ethnic identity and positive psychological functioning. Given the importance of ethnic identity among people of Mexican-descent living in the United States, it is perhaps unsurprising that ethnic identity has emerged as a strong predictor for positive psychological functioning among people of Mexican-origin of all ages. In a recent meta-analysis examining ethnic identity and well-being among people of color in North America, the analysis demonstrated a modest relationship between the two variables (Smith & Silva, 2011). Ethnic identity's positive effect is also apparent in mental health, as researchers are demonstrating that ethnic identity predicts positive mental health outcomes in Latina/o adults, including those of Mexican descent (Ai, Aisenberg, Weiss, & Salazar, 2014). In fact, it appears that the predictive power of ethnic identity remains even after controlling for the effects of other important variables associated with well-

being, including demographic variables, acculturation, and reported discrimination (Ai et al., 2014).

The link between people of Mexican-origin's ethnic identity and well-being lies in the important assumption that ethnicity is a critical psychological construct central to the individual. That is, ethnic identity's association to well-being is at least partly due to the importance and/or salience of ethnic identity to the individual. Given the importance and centrality of racial and ethnic issues in the United States, self-evaluation regarding one's ethnic heritage and identity are important aspects to an individual's self-concept, including self-esteem. This perhaps is best illustrated during developmental periods such as adolescences and young adulthood where identity development process is both salient and important (Erikson, 1980). In line, higher ethnic identity in Mexican-American adolescents is linked to higher self-esteem and life satisfaction (Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon, & Dornhecker, 2013). Further, researchers are demonstrating that in Mexican-American young adults, ethnic identity and other cultural retention practices lead to higher self-esteem, which in turn leads to higher life satisfaction (Navarro, Ojeda, Schwartz, Piña-Watson, & Luna, 2014). In addition, it appears that higher regard for one's own ethnic group is related to higher levels of daily happiness and less daily anxiety in Mexican-American adolescents (Kiang et al., 2006).While ethnic identity's importance is more easily demonstrated and linked during important developmental periods, ethnic identity is also central to well-being in adulthood (Ai et al., 2014).

In addition to a direct relationship between ethnic identity and well-being, ethnic identity also is negatively associated with markers of psychological maladjustment, such as depression (e.g., Chavez-Korell, Benson-Flórez, Rendón, & Farías, 2014). In

older Latina/o adults, including those of Mexican-descent, ethnic identity affirmation (i.e., having positive feelings about one's ethnicity) and commitment are both related to lower depressive symptoms (Chavez-Korell et al., 2014). Additionally, ethnic identity appears to moderate the relationship between perceived stress and depressive symptoms in Latina/o, including Mexican-origin, adults (Chavez-Korell & Torres, 2014).

Positive Psychology and Ethnic Identity

With a potential fit between ethnic identity and positive psychology, ethnic identity could be incorporated into positive psychology frameworks focusing on how *character strengths* contribute to well-being. In one of the few studies to examine ethnic identity through a positive psychology lens, Yager-Elorriaga, Berenson, and McWhirter (2014) found that ethnic identity was positively related to hope in Latina/o youth. That is, Yager-Elorriaga and colleagues demonstrated that when ethnic pride was evoked in Latina/o youth, these youth reported higher state hope compared to a control group. Furthermore, the study found a significant positive correlation between higher baseline levels of hope and higher endorsement of Latina/o youth ethnic identity. In a second study examining ethnic identity under a positive psychology framework, Yager-Elorriaga and McWhirter (2015) examined the connection between ethnic identity and well-being, after controlling for variables associated with positive psychology. Of note, the study found that ethnic identity had a similar predictive relationship with well-being as had other variables linked to well-being and commonly researched within positive psychology (e.g., gratitude). In fact, ethnic identity predicted well-being even after controlling for the effects of gratitude and social comparison orientation. Gratitude and social comparison both predict well-being, providing preliminary evidence for ethnic

identity as a unique, and potentially important predictor of well-being (Yager-Elorriaga & McWhirter, 2015). Ultimately, while the research is limited on studies conceptualizing ethnic identity under a positive psychology framework, the connection between ethnic identity and positive psychological functioning suggests a good fit.

In terms of counseling, it appears that ethnic identity interacts with acculturation to help predict client outcomes for Latina/o adults and children (Gamst, Der-Karabetian, Aragón, Arellano, & Kramer, 2002). That is, Latinas/os who endorse more Anglo-orientation and report lower ethnic identity appear to have greater decreases in clinician-rated global functioning after receiving therapy (Gamst et al., 2002). While ethnic identity does not singularly predict global functioning changes during therapy, this finding suggests that ethnic identity, particularly lower ethnic identity, interacts with other variables to predict therapeutic changes (Gamst et al., 2002).

Ethnic identity and meaning in life. While the psychological literature has demonstrated the effect of ethnic identity on a variety of psychological outcome variables, few studies have examined the relationship between ethnic identity and prominent positive psychology variables, including meaning in life. Meaning in life and ethnic identity may be linked given that social relationships and belonging appear at the center of both constructs. That is, an integral part of ethnic identity is ethnic identity commitment, or the sense of belonging to an individual's ethnic group. This sense of ethnic belonging likely leads to an increase in life meaning by satisfying the *need to belong* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed that the *need to belong* is a fundamental human motivation that drives human interactions. They posit that the need to belong

informs a variety of interpersonal behaviors and motivates humans to develop and maintain a minimum number of interpersonal relationships. Given the foundational aspect of belongingness and interpersonal relationships, the literature has demonstrated that social relationships are a key source of life meaning (Hicks & King, 2009).

In one of the few studies to examine ethnic identity and meaning in life, Kiang & Fulgini (2010) demonstrated that meaning in life mediated the relationship between ethnic belonging and positive psychological, academic, and daily outcomes in Latina/o adolescents. In terms of the association between ethnic identity, meaning in life, and well-being, Kiang and Fulgini posited that the relationship between these variables could be attributed to ethnic identification leading to a sense of meaning, which in turn, enhances positive-well-being outcomes. That is, these authors suggest that their results support the idea that ethnic identity affects adjustment in adolescents, in part, through its role in building a positive sense of meaning in young people's life. In explaining the association between ethnic identity and meaning in life presence, the authors reasoned that the sense of ethnic belonging associated with ethnic identity is likely responsible for increased meaning in life presence.

Perceived Discrimination

Since the colonization of the Americas, perceived discrimination and racism have been major challenges for indigenous populations (Gutierrez, 1999). As immigration between the United States and Mexican border began to increase in the early 1880s, two dominant stereotypes became prominent to describe the "Mexican immigrant" (Gutierrez, 1999). The Mexican immigrant became known as either a problem that threatened the "racial, hygienic, and economic basis of American life"

(Gutierrez, 1999) or an asset that contributed to US growth by performing tasks that citizens would deny and paying taxes but not receiving the benefits. Many of these stereotypes may linger on today, and could cycle in intensity depending on the economy.

Perceived discrimination and well-being. The existing stereotypes, including those about immigrants, continue to impact people of color in the United States today, as people of color report significant levels of discrimination and racism (Chou, Asnaani & Hoffman, 2012). Among the daily stressors people of color experience is perceived discrimination, an individual's experience of being treated unequally in relation to others (Flores et al., 2008). People of marginalized groups often experience perceived discrimination in subtle forms of racial bias and discrimination known as *racial microaggressions*. Sue, Capodilup, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquilin (2007) investigated how these racial *microaggressions* appear among marginalized populations by grouping these aggressions into three broad classifications: *microassaults* – explicit racial derogation; *microinvalidations* – actions that nullify the experiential reality of racial minorities; and *microinsults* – subtle behaviors or communication styles that debase or minimize an individual's racial heritage.

Unfortunately, *microaggressions* and other forms of perceived discrimination negatively affect well-being (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2014). In fact, a recent meta-analysis revealed that perceived discrimination has a negative effect on psychological well-being, as measured by self-esteem, depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and life satisfaction (Schmitt et al., 2014). Further, perceived discrimination had larger effect sizes for disadvantaged groups, children, and

for perceptions of personal discrimination (versus group). Of note, the relationship between perceived discrimination and well-being was stronger for negative outcomes (i.e., depression, anxiety, and psychological distress) of well-being relative to positive outcomes (i.e., self-esteem and life satisfaction) of well-being (Schmitt et al., 2014). That is, discrimination had a stronger association to negative outcomes than its inverse relationship with positive outcomes.

Various theoretical perspectives have emerged to explain the detrimental effects of perceived discrimination, including on well-being. Flores and colleagues (2008) proposed that the *minority status stress model*, which posits that the unique or extra stress an individual from an oppressed group experiences due to being a member of a marginalized group contributes negatively to well-being, fits with Mexican-origin adults. In line, it appears that like other minorities, Latinas/os face a number of ethnic related stressors (e.g., perceived discrimination, stereotype confirmation concern, and own-group conformity pressure) that significantly predict lower levels of well-being (French & Chavez, 2010). In support for the minority stress model, researchers have demonstrated that perceived discrimination leads to a unique chronic stress that cannot be accounted for general perceived stress (Flores et al., 2008). Further, the summation of these two sources of stress leads to poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Flores et al., 2008).

In terms of perceived discrimination's effect on well-being directly or indirectly, Schmitt and colleagues (2014) highlight a variety of relevant theoretical perspectives that can shed light on the negative relationship between perceived discrimination and well-being. First, symbolic interactionist approaches posit that other's view of the self

are commonly internalized, and thus affect one's self-concept (Goffman, 1963). For those of marginalized groups, Goffman argues that an individual can experience a *spoiled identity*, or an identity that is partially ruined by the judgment of others. In addition to threatening an individual's self-concept, perceived discrimination also can potentially affect one's group identity. This becomes particularly relevant as humans strive to have their group identities accepted and valued by general society (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Beyond affecting personal and group identity, discrimination can also affect an individual's view of personal, social, or economic control (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). Discrimination serves as a reminder of the existing societal inequities in power and access, differentials that are typically based on factors such as ethnicity. Evidence for a connection between discrimination and lowered perceived control is evident in research suggesting that perceived discrimination leads to a decreased sense of control in marginalized groups (e.g., Moradi & Hasan, 2004).

Perceived discrimination and meaning in life. The psychological literature has demonstrated the link between perceived discrimination and well-being among racial and ethnic minorities in the United States; however, a limited amount of literature has examined the association between discrimination and meaning in life among people of color, including Latinas/os. The potential association between these constructs appears to be grounded in general Latina/o cultural values. For example, Muñoz & Mendelson (2005) identified the development of a positive meaning in life in response to difficult circumstances as a core aspect of his work adapting CBT to Latinas/os. Extrapolating from this idea, it appears that examining life meaning after experiences of discrimination may occur naturally for many Latinas/os. Given the value of highlighting

life meaning in difficult circumstances, perceived discrimination may lead to increased meaning in life in Latinas/os, including Mexican-origin people.

Perceived discrimination and Latinas/os. While research has generally demonstrated discrimination's negative effect on marginalized groups (Schmitt et al., 2014), Moradi and Risco (2006) point out that a dearth of literature exists examining the effect of perceived discrimination on Latinas/os. Considering again the growth of the Latina/o population in the United States, including Mexican-Americans, this gap in the literature is concerning. Fortunately, studies examining the effect of perceived discrimination among Latinas/os generally, and people of Mexican-origin specifically, is growing (e.g., Finch et al., 2000; Finch et al., 2001; Moradi & Risco, 2006).

Similar to the previous research with other populations, the literature on perceived discrimination among people of Mexican-descent demonstrates a largely negative effect of perceived discrimination on a variety of well-being indicators (Finch et al., 2000; Finch et al., 2001). For example, Latina/o reports of perceived discrimination are significantly related to greater psychological distress and indirectly related to lower self-esteem through personal-control (Moradi & Risco, 2006). In adults of Mexican-origin, perceived discrimination is directly related to depression, although there appears to be a variety of variables moderating this effect (Finch et al., 2000). Of note, country of residence, English language acculturation, gender, and the country where one had their education are all significant moderators between perceived discrimination and depression (Finch et al., 2000). Importantly, it appears that the connection between perceived discrimination and depression in Mexican-origin adults may also affect these individual's physical health (Finch et al., 2001). That is,

researchers have identified depression as a major mechanism that can explain the association between perceived discrimination and poorer health outcomes in Mexican-origin adults (Finch et al., 2001). In their validation of a perceived discrimination measure for Mexican-origin adults, Flores and colleagues (2008) found that perceived discrimination predicted greater depression and poorer general health.

Given the negative relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being and physical health, researchers have begun to examine how experiences of discrimination impacts Mexican American coping strategies (e.g., Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). Again in line with previous studies on Mexican-origin adults, there appears to be a negative relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective well-being among Mexican American college students (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). Further, for Mexican American college students, perceived discrimination appears to be related to a variety of disengagement coping strategies, including self-criticism, wishful thinking, and social withdrawal. Unfortunately, each of these disengagement coping strategies appears to be negatively related to well-being (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014).

With some researchers demonstrating the negative effect of perceived discrimination on well-being, other researchers are beginning to look at how different types of intergroup perceived discrimination affect well-being (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009). The *rejection-identification model* (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) has prompted an important distinction in types of perceived discrimination. That is, the model proposes that perceived discrimination could lead to one identifying more with their in-group, which in turn can increase psychological well-being. In fact, evidence

has emerged to partially support this assertion as some of the literature suggests that perceived group discrimination is related to higher personal self-esteem through indirect pathways such as group identification in Latinas/os (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009). However, it also appears that personal perceived discrimination is related both directly and indirectly with lower personal self-esteem in Latinas/os (Armenta & Hunt, 2009).

Perceived Discrimination and Ethnic identity

Given perceived discrimination's role as a risk factor for poor psychological well-being, researchers and clinicians alike have looked for psychological constructs that could serve as protective factors to eliminate the association between perceived discrimination and poor well-being. Ethnic identity has been robustly linked with psychological well-being among minority groups, and has emerged as a mediator between perceived discrimination and poor well-being among persons of color, including those of Mexican-origin (Smith & Silva, 2010).

Ethnic identity as a buffer. Given the literature demonstrating the positive effect of ethnic identity (e.g., Smith & Silva, 2010), understanding ethnic identity's mechanisms towards achieving greater well-being is critical. To this point, various theoretical perspectives have emerged to potentially explain the association between ethnic identity and well-being. The first theoretical perspective that can allow researchers and clinicians to better understand the relationship between ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, and well-being lies in the study of stress. Some literature suggests that ethnic identity offers individuals a variety of ways to cope with stress (e.g., Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Given the stress associated with discriminatory experiences, coping strategies inherent in ethnic identity may be one way in which the

development of ethnic identity may help buffer the negative effects of discrimination. In support ethnic identity commitment appears to act as a stress buffer to experiences of discrimination (Torres & Ong, 2010). That is, ethnic identity commitment is associated with decreasing the intensity of daily discrimination experiences (Torres & Ong, 2010).

Another possibility once again comes from *rejection-identification model* (Branscombe et al., 1999). As noted previously the model posits that perceived discrimination can lead to increased ethnic group identification. Ethnic group identification refers to a tendency to self-identify with a certain ethnic group, and is related to Phinney's (1992) ethnic identity commitment component. Thus, perceived discrimination leads to stronger ethnic group identification, which subsequently leads to greater psychological adjustment. Branscombe and colleagues (1999) refer to this increased group identification in the face of discrimination as the "rejection-identification" effect. Coming back to Armenta and Hunt's (2009) study, these authors found that certain experiences of perceived ethnic discrimination indirectly was related to positive psychological outcomes. Congruent with the "rejection-identification" effect, these authors found that perceived ethnic discrimination's relationship with well-being was partially explained by ethnic group identification. That is, perceived discrimination led to increased group identification, which in turn was related to lower depressive symptoms (Armenta & Hunt, 2009).

Another possibility lies in social identity theory. Phinney (2003) argued that social identity theory was a way to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and discrimination. Following social identity theory, belonging to an ethnic group should increase self-concept and evoke positive feelings. The strengthened self-concept and

positive feelings may be central in combatting the negative messages and effects of perceived discrimination. Support for this perspective has been mixed as literature examining ethnic identity as a protective buffer between perceived discrimination and mental health outcomes has produced contradicting results (Torres, Yznaga, & Moore, 2011).

Examining the components of ethnic identity, particularly the differential effects of ethnic identity commitment versus exploration, may provide clarity for the mixed results on ethnic identity. For example, in a group of adolescents from a variety of ethnic groups, ethnic identity commitment served as a buffer between discrimination and self-esteem, while ethnic identity exploration exacerbated this relationship (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). This trend also is apparent in Latina/o adults as ethnic identity commitment appears to reduce the intensity and recovery from daily perceived discrimination experiences, while ethnic identity exploration appears to increase the effects of daily discrimination on depression (Torres & Ong, 2010). In line, ethnic identity commitment appears to serve as a buffer between covert discrimination and mental health in Latina/o adults, while ethnic identity exploration appears to be associated with increased psychological distress (Torres et al., 2011). Finally, in Latina/o college students, ethnic identity affirmation, or ethnic pride, appears to mediate the relationship between ethnic group discrimination and depressive symptoms (Brittian et al., 2015).

Racism/discrimination's effect on ethnic identity. While ethnic identity's components likely mediate the relationship between perceived discrimination and various psychological outcomes, instances of discrimination and racism may also have a

direct effect on the level or development of an individual's ethnic identity (e.g., Hipolito-Delgado, 2008). That is, experiencing discrimination may lead to a change in ethnic identity, either positively or negatively. While limited, there is literature examining racism and discrimination's effect on ethnic identity development (e.g., Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012).

Experiences of discrimination leading an individual to reflect on their own ethnicity, and consequently ethnic identity, fits with theories of racial and social identity (Cross, 1995; Tajfel, 1981). That is, these theories posit that experiencing perceived acts of discrimination can facilitate thoughts regarding what ethnicity means to an individual. In line, there appears to be an association between experiencing peer discrimination and ethnic identity exploration in Latina/o adolescents (Pahl & Way, 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). However, for Latina/o youth, it appears that only peer discrimination and not adult discrimination, affects levels of ethnic identity exploration (Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). Additionally and as mentioned previously, there is some evidence for "rejection-identification" effect. This evidence suggests that experiences of discrimination increase ethnic group identification, and thus ethnic identity, in part, because the acts of discrimination has led to increased thoughts regarding ethnic issues (Armenta & Hunt, 2009). However, other researchers have found no link between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity affirmation in Latina/o youth, which appears to contradict the "rejection-identification" effect (Pahl & Way, 2006). Interestingly, internalized racism, or acceptance of discriminatory notions and stereotypes that suggest an individual's racial group is inferior (Padilla, 2001), appears to be predict lower levels of ethnic identity (Hipolito-Delgado, 2008).

In sum, while it appears that perceived discrimination and internalized racism affect ethnic identity development, the limited nature of studies examining discrimination and racism's effect on ethnic identity raises caution. That is, while there appears to be a relationship between these constructs, further research is needed to confirm this finding. Furthermore, given that different types of discrimination can have differential effects on ethnic identity (e.g., Pahl & Way, 2006), further research is needed examining other types of discrimination that affect ethnic identity.

Intragroup Marginalization

A large portion of the perceived discrimination literature among persons of color has focused on intergroup perceived discrimination. However, a limited amount of psychological literature has examined the effect of within-group ethnic and racial discrimination or intragroup marginalization (Clark, 2004). Intragroup marginalization refers to the "perceived interpersonal distancing by members of the heritage culture when an individual displays cultural characteristics of the dominant group" (Castillo et al., 2007, p. 232). Castillo and colleagues (2007) posit that intragroup marginalization occurs when one desires a distinct social identity. Castillo and colleagues conceptualization fits with social identity theory, as social identity theory maintains that group norms are a critical part of group identity (Tajfel, 1981). Thus, when an individual begins to either behave or display attitudes incongruent with group norms, this individual may be perceived as a threat to the group (Castillo et al., 2007). In their validation of an intragroup marginalization measure, Castillo and colleagues (2007) found evidence supporting the idea of intragroup marginalization, with family and friends being two sources of intragroup marginalization for Latinas/os.

Among Latinas/os, intragroup marginalization often manifests as interpersonal distancing from those who are exhibiting behaviors or attitudes that do not fit with general Latina/o cultural group norms (Castillo, 2009). This distancing often materializes as teasing or criticizing bicultural individuals by telling them that they are "acting White," a "coconut," or "white on inside" (Castillo, 2009). Unfortunately, it seems likely that the occurrences of intragroup marginalization will only increase as the number of bicultural individuals is increasing rapidly in the United States (Colby & Ortman, 2015). The potential increase in intragroup marginalization highlights the concern regarding the limited literature on intragroup marginalization. This concern is amplified by the research suggesting within-group discrimination has become an obstacle for many Latinas/os living in the United States (López, 2008).

The existing literature on intragroup marginalization demonstrates a general negative effect on well-being (e.g., Castillo et al., 2007). For example, many in the Latina/o community report a hesitancy to pursue a college education as admission into college may also represent a threat to acceptance within the Latina/o community (Niemann, Romero, & Arbona, 2000). That is, Latina/o college students who identify strongly with their culture and feel a sense of ethnic loyalty (i.e., an individual's ethnic pride and preference for cultural orientation) may feel the threat of alienation or being viewed as an elitist in their communities because they have a college education (Niemann et al., 2000). This appears to be the case due to ethnic loyalty, as this sense of ethnic commitment significantly predicts attitudes, beliefs, and values that typically create a conflict with education and relationships (Niemann et al., 2000). Further, for Latina/o students in college, intragroup marginalization can lead to increased

acculturation stress (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008). This stress often stems from bicultural students being cautious about being seen as White by their group members, or being seen as too ethnic by dominant group members (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Of note, it appears that intragroup marginalization and a hesitancy to pursue higher education among Mexican origin adults may be impacted socioeconomic status. That is, certain researchers (e.g., Niemann et al., 2000) suggest that individuals with a low socioeconomic status may feel that ethnic loyalty is particularly important to their relationships, and that educational attainment may negatively impact their relationships.

As researchers continue to demonstrate the effects of intragroup marginalization, other literature is emerging, explicating the role of protective factors against intragroup marginalization (e.g., Llamas & Consoli, 2012). One important factor appears to be familial support (Llamas & Consoli, 2012). That is, familial support appears to mediate the relationship between intragroup marginalization and thriving, or an individual's ability to flourish in the face of adversity (Llamas & Consoli, 2012). Another important mediator appears to be friends' social support, as perceptions of peer social support mediated the relationship between intragroup marginalization and college adjustment in Latina/o undergraduate students (Llamas & Ramos-Sánchez, 2013).

Acculturation

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) define acculturation as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals have different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (pp. 149). Within ethnic minority communities individual

acculturation level acculturation level may alter other variables that affect psychological outcomes, or that acculturation can directly affect a variety of psychological factors (Yoon et al., 2013). In the past, the acculturation process was considered unidimensional, but more recent conceptualizations of acculturation have shifted towards conceptualizing acculturation as bilinear and/or multidimensional (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Models of acculturation. The early models of acculturation conceptualized the acculturation process as a unidimensional process (Yoon et al., 2013). Unidimensional models maintain that as an individual gains cultural knowledge from the dominant culture, the individual moves away from their culture of origin (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). An important limitation of unidimensional models it this assumption that adherence to mainstream culture results in the rejection of one's culture of origin. This limitation perhaps is best illustrated by bicultural individuals who fully participate in both cultures and shows the limitation of conceptualizing acculturation as a dichotomy (i.e., acculturated or unacculturated).

Given the unidimensional model's limitations, over time bilinear models replaced unidimensional ones (Yoon et al., 2013). The bilinear model posits that cultural socialization to dominant culture and adherence to an individual's culture of origin occur relatively independent from each other. That is, the degree to which one maintains their culture of origin acts as a separate dimension from the degree to which one engages in mainstream culture (Berry, 1997). Berry's work has led researchers to conceptualize acculturation as both acculturation (i.e., acquiring the new culture) and enculturation (i.e., maintaining one's native culture).

Based on the level an individual adheres to these two dimensions, Berry proposed four acculturation strategies: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. The integration strategy consists of an individual attempting to maintain their culture of origin while also acquiring the new culture. That is, a person engaging in integration has a high degree on both native and dominant culture dimensions. The second strategy, assimilation, occurs when an individual acquires the new culture while also rejecting his or her own culture of origin. Thus, a person utilizing this strategy would rank low on the degree of adhering to their native culture, but a high degree on adhere to dominant culture. The third strategy, separation, occurs when an individual maintains their original culture, while also rejecting the new culture. A person employing the separation strategy subsequently would rank high on markers of their native culture while ranking low on markers of dominant culture. The final strategy, marginalization, refers to when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the new culture. An individual engaging in this strategy would thus rank low on both native and dominant culture dimensions.

The third acculturation model, multidimensional, dictates that acculturation can occur across a variety of areas such as behaviors, cultural identity, knowledge, and values and across a variety of contexts (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Conceptualizing acculturation as multidimensional is not mutually exclusive from bilinear approaches, as researchers have conceptualized the acculturation process as both bilinear and multidimensional (e.g., Yoon et al., 2013). The multidimensional model further posits that an individual can adopt certain cultural traits from each culture, and employs these traits differentially depending on the setting (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Acculturation and mental health. Acculturation has been implicated with a number of psychological outcomes (Yoon et al., 2013). A recent meta-analysis found that acculturation was associated with markers of positive mental health, while also inversely related to negative mental health markers (Yoon et al., 2013). That is, acculturation was positively related to favorable outcomes such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, and positive affect, while also inversely associated with unfavorable outcomes such as depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and negative (Yoon et al., 2013).

For Latinas/os there appears to be an inverse relationship between acculturation and depression (e.g., Cuéllar & Roberts 1997). For example, Cuéllar and Roberts (1997) found that Latina/o undergraduates with the higher levels of acculturation had significantly lower depression scores than students with lower acculturation levels. It appears that acculturation stress may be a mechanism by which acculturation and depression are related, as researchers have found that acculturation stress mediates the relationship between these two variables (Castillo, Navarro, Walker, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, et al., 2015).

As noted previously, there are a variety of acculturation strategies, and amongst Latinas/os generally, and people Mexican-origin specifically, it appears that the effect of acculturation depends on the acculturation strategy (Edwards & Lopez, 2006; Torres, 2010). That is, for Latina/o adults, it appears that an Anglo orientation and English competency pressures are among factors that are related to higher depressive symptoms (Torres, 2010). However, an orientation towards Mexican culture appears to be an

important predictor of life satisfaction among Mexican American adolescents (Edwards & Lopez, 2006).

Purpose of the Current Study

Discrimination, marginalization, and ethnic identity. The first goal of the current study was to expand on the literature examining the relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity. Previous research has demonstrated that intergroup perceived racism/discrimination is related to increased ethnic identity, particularly ethnic identity exploration (Hipolito-Delgado, 2008; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). This literature has suggested that examining one's social identity may be the underlying mechanism that explains the relationship between discrimination and ethnic identity. That is, congruent with Erikson's (1968) theoretical notions, instances of discrimination may increase the salience of one's ethnicity, and thus, lead to individuals exploring more about their ethnicity to better understand their discriminatory experiences (Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). This examination of their ethnic identity leads to greater exploration and identification with their ethnic background.

While the psychological literature has examined the relationship between ethnic identity and intergroup discrimination, no substantive literature has examined the effect of intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity or its components. Intragroup marginalization appears to affect an individual's social identity and other factors that appear related to ethnic identity (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Niemann et al., 2000); therefore, it is possible that instances of marginalization impact ethnic identity. Exploring the influence of intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity is important to

better understand the needs of ethnic/racial minorities, especially in terms of identifying the underlying mechanism that connect these variables. Thus, the goal of the study was to replicate the literature demonstrating a predictive association between intergroup perceived discrimination and ethnic identity, as well as to expand on the discrimination literature by exploring the effect of intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity among Mexican-origin adults.

Ethnic-related variables and meaning in life. The second goal of the study was twofold, and focused on an examination into how ethnic related variables are associated with meaning in life. Given the lack of literature examining whether positive psychology frameworks fit with Latina/o populations generally, and people of Mexican-origin specifically, the first aspect of this second goal was to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and meaning in life in Mexican-origin adults.

Ethnic identity and meaning in life. The need to belong is a fundamental motivation that lies at the heart of nearly all of individual's interpersonal interactions and relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and having a sense of belonging leads to a life meaning (Hicks & King, 2009). The need to belong appears congruent with a variety of Mexican cultural values, including the concept of ethnic belonging (Comas-Diaz, 2006). Given that ethnic identity, especially the subcomponent of commitment, appears to capture this need to belong through ethnic identification, individuals with higher levels of ethnic identity, particularly ethnic identity commitment, are likely to feel a sense of belonging that leads them to report greater meaning in life presence (Kiang & Fuligni, 2010). Put simply, a positive ethnic identity may be associated with a greater sense of ethnic belonging, which in turn, enhances life meaning.

Discrimination, marginalization, and meaning in life. Another aspect of the study was to expand on the literature examining the relationship between ethnic related stressors (e.g., intragroup marginalization and intergroup perceived discrimination) and meaning in life. Perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization are both marked by interpersonal experiences that marginalize individuals. In isolation, this marginalization is likely to threaten an individual's sense of belonging as prejudice can negatively affect interpersonal relationships within groups (Poteat, Mereish, & Birkett, 2015) and decrease an individual's sense of life meaning. That is, the interpersonal distancing inherent in discrimination and marginalization may lead individuals to feel a lack of belongingness, which in turn, decreases life meaning.

Does ethnic identity moderate the relationship between discrimination and meaning in life? Given that the literature has shown both negative and positive effects of ethnic related stressors on well-being, an important goal of the study was to examine how ethnic identity affects the relationship between ethnic related stressors and meaning in life. Previous researchers have demonstrated that perceived discrimination's association with well-being is dependent on an individual's level of ethnic identity (Torres et al., 2013). That is, an increased ethnic identity commitment buffers the negative association between discrimination and well-being, while ethnic identity exploration exacerbates this negative association (Torres et al., 2013). In explaining this effect, Torres and colleagues posit that ethnic identity commitment may mitigate the ambiguous nature of many discriminatory events that can lead to a negative self-evaluation, while those engaging in ethnic identity exploration may be more susceptible and/or sensitive to discriminatory experiences. This relationship may extend to

predicting meaning in life. That is, ethnic identity commitment may influence the association between discrimination and meaning in life by enhancing an individual's sense of belonging; ethnic identity exploration may influence the association between discrimination and meaning in life by increasing an individual's ability to recognize and address discrimination.

Considering the source of intragroup marginalization (i.e., an in-group member is the source of marginalization), it is likely that intragroup marginalization interacts differently with ethnic identity than perceived discrimination does. In fact, given the importance of ethnic belonging in Mexican culture (Comas-Diaz, 2006), the interaction between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity may be the opposite of the interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity. That is, the connection between ethnic identity and the need to belong may be affected by experiences of within intragroup marginalization. Those with high ethnic identity who experience intragroup marginalization may report lower life meaning relative to those with low ethnic identity who encounter these same experiences.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: How do discrimination factors affect ethnic identity components (i.e., commitment and exploration) in Mexican-origin adults?

- *Research Question 1a:* Does perceived discrimination predict ethnic identity commitment and exploration?

Hypothesis 1a: The researcher hypothesized that as perceptions of perceived discrimination increase, participants will report increased levels ethnic identity exploration and commitment. This hypothesis is based within the *rejection-*

identification model, which posits that discrimination leads individuals to increase their group identification (Branscombe et al., 1999), and the literature suggesting that discrimination could lead individuals to explore their ethnicity to better understanding these experiences (Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). Finally, given the influence of acculturation and other demographic variables, the researcher hypothesized that intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination's predictive association would remain even after controlling for important demographic variables' variance.

- *Research Question 1b:* Does intragroup marginalization predict ethnic identity commitment and exploration?

Hypothesis 1b: The researcher hypothesized that as perceptions of intragroup marginalization increase, participants will report increased levels of ethnic identity exploration, and lower levels of ethnic identity commitment. This hypothesis is based in the literature examining intragroup marginalization. That is, while little to no literature has examined intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity, the literature on intragroup marginalization suggests that the interpersonal distancing from members within one's group can lead an individual to re-examine their own social identity (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Niemann et al., 2000). Given the nature of intragroup marginalization (i.e., distancing from in-group members), this push away from in-group members may lead individuals to both increase their examination of one's ethnic identity (i.e., ethnic identity exploration), and potentially lower their sense of identification with their ethnic group (i.e., ethnic identity commitment).

Research Question 2: How are ethnic-related variables related to positive psychological functioning in Mexican-American adults?

- *Research Question 2a:* Do ethnic identity commitment and exploration predict meaning in life presence and search?

Hypothesis 2a: The researcher hypothesized that as ethnic identity commitment increases, meaning in life presence will increase, while meaning in life search will decrease. This hypothesis is consistent with Kiang & Fulgini's (2010) study that found that among Latina/o adolescents, meaning in life presence was associated with ethnic group identification. The ethnic belonging that marks ethnic commitment likely satisfies the innate need to belong, and gives a sense of belongingness that leads to meaning in life presence, and negates a need to search for life meaning. Further, the researcher hypothesized that as ethnic identity exploration increases, meaning in life presence will decrease, while meaning in life search will increase. Again, this hypothesis is based in the literature examining meaning in life and ethnic identity (e.g., Kiang & Fulgini, 2010). If Mexican-origin individuals are exploring their ethnic identity, it is likely that they have not yet feel a strong sense of group identification, and thus may not have the sense of life meaning associated with ethnic group belong. Given that they do not have this sense of life meaning from their ethnic identity, these individuals could be more likely to be searching for life meaning.

- *Research Question 2b:* Do the variables intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination predict the components of meaning in life?

Hypothesis 2b: The researcher hypothesized that as perceptions of intragroup marginalization increase, participants will report increased levels of meaning in life search, and lower levels of meaning in life presence. While little to no literature has examined the relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life, this

hypothesis is based in the literature demonstrating a negative association between intragroup marginalization and well-being (e.g., Castillo et al., 2007). Since it appears that within-group identification may lead to a sense of belonging to add a sense of purpose and life meaning (Kiang & Fulgini, 2010), it is likely that interpersonal distancing from in group members that defines intragroup marginalization removes this association. That is, experiencing marginalization from their own group may remove the sense of ethnic belonging that would satisfy the need to belong, and thus lead to a lower meaning in life presence and an increased meaning in life search.

In addition, the researcher hypothesized that as perceptions of perceived discrimination increase, participants will report lower levels meaning in life presence and higher levels of meaning in life search. This hypothesis is based on the perceived discrimination literature suggesting that prejudice negatively impacts interpersonal relationships and decreases well-being (Poteat et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2014). The marginalization inherent in perceived discrimination appears to negative impact relationships and thus threaten the need to belong (Poteat et al., 2015). With a lower sense of belongingness due to discrimination, these experiences thus likely lead to a decreased meaning in life presence. In addition, perceived discrimination leads to an examination of an individual's social identity, and in particular, their ethnicity identity, to better understand the discrimination (Torres et al., 2013). This increase exploration of their ethnic identity is likely related to a grander search about life meaning, and thus these individuals likely will greater levels of meaning in life search.

- *Research Question 2c:* Does the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence and search depend on the level of ethnic identity commitment or exploration?

Hypothesis 2c: The literature examining perceived discrimination and ethnic identity suggests that these two variables combine to predict well-being (Armenta & Hunt, 2009). In particular, it appears that greater ethnic identity commitment weakens the relationship between discrimination and lower well-being, and in some instances, those with greater ethnic identity commitment report that discrimination leads to greater well-being (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Green et al., 2006). Further, researchers have demonstrated that discrimination leads to greater in-group identification, and this greater identification can either buffer the negative effects of discrimination, or lead to increased well-being (Armenta & Hunt, 2009). The opposite appears to be true for those with greater ethnic identity exploration. That is, the literature demonstrates that increased ethnic identity exploration exacerbates the negative association between perceived discrimination and well-being (Green et al., 2006). For these individuals, it appears ethnic identity does not serve as a buffer from negative discriminatory experiences.

Given that meaning in life presence is associated with well-being while meaning in life search is negatively associated with well-being, the researcher predicted that the interaction between ethnic identity and perceived discrimination would be similar to interactions found in the literature examining how these variables interact to predict well-being. Thus, the researcher hypothesized that as ethnic identity commitment increased, the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life

presence would strengthen. Further, as ethnic identity exploration increased, the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence would weaken or be removed. This is because for individuals with high ethnic identity commitment, perceived discrimination may lead to greater in-group identification that is associated with belongingness, and this sense of ethnic belongingness would be lead to greater life meaning. However, for those with greater ethnic identity exploration, this sense of discrimination may lead to greater questioning about ethnic group and cause more questions that ultimately lead to a negative association with meaning in life presence.

In terms of predicting meaning in life search, the researcher predicted the opposite. That is, as ethnic identity commitment increased, the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life search would weaken, while as ethnic identity exploration increased, it would strength the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life search. Again, this is because among those with high ethnic identity commitment, perceived discrimination may activate an in-group identification that leads to greater belongingness and meaning in life, and thus negate any push toward meaning in life search. For those with high ethnic identity exploration, instances of perceived discrimination may lead to greater questioning of their ethnic identity, and this questioning may disable the meaning in life presence that comes with a sense of in-group identification. Thus, with increased ethnic identity questioning and less meaning in life presence, these individuals may find themselves searching for life meaning as a result of perceived discrimination.

- *Research Question 2d:* Does the relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life presence and search depend on the level of ethnic identity exploration and commitment?

Hypothesis 2d: Little to no literature has examined intragroup marginalization, ethnic identity, and well-being. The existing literature on intragroup marginalization suggests that intragroup marginalization has a negative association with well-being (Castillo et al., 2007) and could influence ethnic identity (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Niemann et al., 2000). Given the lack of literature, the interactions that included intragroup marginalization were exploratory in nature. It seems that intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination may have some similar effects in terms of their association to well-being, and given that both constructs are related to ethnic identity, this suggests that intragroup marginalization may interact with ethnic identity to predict meaning in life. However, intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination likely work in fundamentally different ways in terms of their association to ethnic identity and meaning in life. That is, while out-group discriminatory experiences lead to greater group identification, it is possible that in-group marginalization does not lead to this greater identification given the source of marginalization. With a greater group identification leading to greater well-being, understanding how intragroup marginalization, and potentially a lower sense of group identification interacts with ethnic identity to predict meaning in life is an important aspect to the current study.

Chapter 3: Methods

Participants

In order to be eligible for the study, participants had to be of Mexican descent (e.g., they, their parent(s), their grandparent(s), etc were born in Mexico) and at least 18 years of age. Further eligibility criteria required that participants are or have lived in the United States. In addition, the researcher gathered important demographic information, such as: immigration and generational status, Latina/o influence in the community, current state of residence, income information, and education level.

One hundred and thirty-five Mexican-origin adults fully completed the survey and were used in the analysis. Fifty-two of these surveys were completed online, while eighty-three were completed using paper-and-pencil versions (72 came from participants recruited through the NE Church and 11 from the Midwestern Organization). Sixty (44.4%) of the surveys were completed in English, while seventy-five (55.6%) were completed in Spanish. Ninety-one (68.4%) participants reported a gender identity of female, 41 a male gender identity (30.8%), and one person self-reported identifying as agender. The mean age of participants was 36.14 years old (*SD* = 12.26), with a range of 18-78 years of age. Participants reported a range of education experience (3 participants did not respond) with 5.3% reporting receiving no schooling completed (*n* = 7), 6.7% reporting receiving nursery school to 8th grade of schooling completed (*n* = 9), 14.4% reporting completing the 9th, 10th, or 11th grade (*n* = 19), 26.5% reporting completing high school or equivalent (*n* = 35), and 46.9% reporting receiving at least some post-secondary education (*n* = 62). Participants reported a range of income information (3 participants did not report income information), with 8.3% (*n*

= 11) of participants reporting a household income of $10,000 or less, 32.6% (*n* = 43) reporting an income between $10,000 and $29,999, 25% (*n* = 33) reporting an income between $30,000 and $49,000, 18% (*n* = 24) reporting an income between $50,000 and $69,999, and 15.9% (*n* = 21) reporting an income $70,000 or above.

In terms of nationality and ethnic information, participants responded to a variety of important demographic information. Fifty (37%) of participants reported being born in the USA, while eighty-five (63%) reported being born in Mexico. Of those born in the USA, 61.2% (*n* = 30) were first generation born in the USA, 20.4% (*n* = 10) were 1.5 generation born in the USA, 4.1% (*n* = 2) were second generation born in the USA, and 14.3% (*n* = 7) were third or later generation born in the USA. Of those born in Mexico, the mean reported time living in the USA was 21 years (*SD* = 9.9) with a range of 1 to 74 years. The most common states in which participants either grew up, or are currently residing, were: California, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas. For those who reported growing up in the USA, 5.6% (*n* = 5) reported almost no Latina/o influence in their community growing up, 30.3% (*n* = 27) reported a small influence, 25.8% (*n* = 23) reported a moderate influence, 25.8% (*n* = 23) reported a large influence, and 12.4% (*n* = 11) reported a very large presence. For those living in the United States, 5.3% (*n* = 7) reported almost no Latina/o influence in their current community, 12.8% (*n* = 17) reported a small presence, 34.6% (*n* = 46), 43.6% (*n* = 58) reported a large presence, and 3.8% (*n* = 5) reported a very large presence. Finally, in terms of choosing an identifying term that best fits their ethnic identity, 3.0% (*n* = 4) choose “Chicana/o,” 10.4% (*n* = 14) chose “Latina/o,” 24.4% (*n* = 33) chose

"Hispanic," 20.7% (n = 28) choose "Mexican-American," 40.0% (n = 54) chose "Mexican," and 1.5% (n = 2) chose "American."

Measures

Both the online and paper-pencil surveys in English and Spanish consisted of questions assessing demographic information, ethnic identity, meaning in life, intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and acculturation.

Demographics. Participants answered questions asking about their age, gender, place of residence, Latina/o community presence, education level, financial status, ethnicity, and immigration and generation of immigration status.

Ethnic identity. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007) is a revised version of the original 12-item measure of MEIM assessing ethnic identity. The MEIM-R consists of 6-items that have been reworded to make the measure applicable for both the present and the past (e.g., "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group" and "I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better"). The MEIM-R includes two factors, exploration and commitment and respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). In order to score the measure, one can either calculate the mean of the scale as a whole, or calculate the mean of each subscale individually. Higher scores reflect higher levels of ethnic identity. In a pilot test examining the revised measure's theoretical models, exploratory then confirmatory factor analysis of 192 ethnically diverse university students (70% Latina/o) demonstrated that the measure had a two-factor structure and good reliability for exploration items (α = .83) and commitment items (α = .89). Further examination (e.g.,

Brown, Unger Hu, Mevi, Hedderson, Shan, Quensenberry, & Ferrara, 2014) of the measure has demonstrated good psychometric properties, and further evidence for the measures two-factors and reliability. In the current study, the measure demonstrated good reliability as the exploration subscale alpha coefficient was .823 and the commitment subscale alpha coefficient was .801.

Meaning in life. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) is a 10-item measure that assesses meaning in life. The measure captures meaning in life among two components: presence of meaning in life (P) and the search for meaning in life (S). Participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Absolutely Untrue*, 7 = *Absolutely True*). Example items include: "I understand my life's meaning" and "I am searching for meaning in my life." Presence and search scales are calculated by summing the corresponding scale items into a single subscale score. Higher scores on each scale indicate a higher presence or search for meaning in life. In the development of the questionnaire, Steger and colleagues (2006) reported strong evidence for a stable two-factor structure and high discriminant validity. Further, Steger and colleagues reported a high internal consistency for each subscale across the three studies examining the psychometric properties of the measure (i.e., P α = .82-.86; S α = .86-.87). In the current study, both meaning in life presence (α = .784) and search (α = .840) yielded acceptable alpha coefficients.

Intragroup marginalization. The Ethnic Group Scale of the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007) is a 13-item measure that assesses an individual's personal distancing from their original ethnic group. In the current study, the wording was adapted to fit with the Mexican

community. The subscale has four factors that capture intragroup marginalization: (1) pressure to conform (e.g "People of the Mexican community tell me that I need to act more like them"), (2) accusation of assimilation ("People of the Mexican community tell me that I have too many White friends"), (3) linguistic expectations (e.g., "People of the Mexican community tease me because I don't know how to speak my ethnic group's language"), and (4) discrepant values (e.g., People of the Mexican community have the same hopes and dreams as me"). Participants respond to items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *does not apply or never*, 7 = *extremely often*). Higher scores on each of the subscales indicate increased intragroup marginalization for that factor. In the development of the measure Castillo and colleagues (2007) reported an exploratory factor analysis demonstrated good construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis revealed good replicability of the factors, and comparison with other measures revealed good discriminant validity. Further, in their development of the measure, the Ethnic Group Scale demonstrated good internal consistency (α = .82). In the present study, the Ethnic Group scale had good reliability as the alpha coefficient was .807.

Perceived discrimination. The Discrimination Stress Scale (Flores, Tschann, Dimas, Bachen, Pasch, & De Groat, 2008) is a 14-item questionnaire assessing experiences of perceived discrimination (e.g., "How often are you treated rudely or unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?" and "How often are you discriminated against because of your race or ethnicity?"). The authors of the measurement developed the scale based on the discriminatory experiences of Mexican-origin adults. Participants respond to scale items on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 4 = *very often*). Perceived discrimination scores are calculated by taking the mean of all the items, with higher

scores reflecting higher experiences of perceived discrimination. In their development of the measure, Flores and colleagues' (2008) exploratory analysis revealed evidence for a single, unrotated factor. Further, the authors reported good internal consistency (α = .92). In the current study, the perceived discrimination alpha coefficient was .925.

Acculturation. The Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Bauman, 2005) is an adapted, briefer version of the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). The measure consists of 12-items that assess acculturation in either a linear, unidimensional or bidimensional perspective depending on how the measure is scored. The measure consists of two factors: Mexican orientation scale (MOS; e.g., "I enjoy speaking Spanish") and Anglo orientation scale (AOS; e.g., "My thinking is done in the English language"). Participants responded to items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all*, 5 = *Almost Always*). The unidimensional approach creates a single score of all the items summed together across the MOS and AOS scales, whereas the bidimensional approach calculates an individual score for MOS and AOS. In the development of the ARSMAS-II among two youth samples, the measure produced acceptable reliability results for both subscales (Sample 1: MOS α = .93, AOS α = .69; Sample 2, MOS α = .84, AOS α = .75), and support for the two-factor structure (Bauman, 2005). Since its creation, the measure has been widely used, including with adult Latina/o populations (e.g., Sabina, Cuevas, & Schally, 2015). In a recent study with Latina adults (Sabina et al., 2015), the measure has showed good reliability (MOS α = .86 in English and .73 in Spanish; AOS α = .73 in English and .71 in Spanish). The present study also indicated good reliability as the AOS subscale had an alpha coefficient of .893, while the MOS subscale had an alpha coefficient of .903.

Procedure

Participants were recruited using criterion-based sampling methods (Patton, 1990). The researcher recruited participants through university and professional organization listserves and social media sites. In particular, the researcher submitted a recruitment script to an organization in the Midwest that provides a variety of social services to Latinas/os, to a church located in a Northeastern state, and to social media websites. In addition, the researcher employed snowball sampling methods to further recruit participants from this target group (Patton, 1990). Snowball sampling targets participants considered difficult to identify via formal means, and a recommended method for recruiting potentially undocumented immigrants. Both online and paper-and-pencil surveys were available at the Midwestern counseling agency that offers Spanish-speaking services, and at the Northeastern church. Participants recruited through social media only had access to the online survey unless they indicated a preference for a paper-pencil survey, which no participant did. Both versions (i.e., internet or paper-pencil) of the survey were available in English and Spanish and were approved by the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board. The surveys consisted of the measures above, and participants had the option to skip or discontinue taking the survey at any point.

Research Design

Research question 1a and 1b. Does intergroup perceived discrimination (PD) ethnic identity commitment (EIC) and exploration (EIE)? Does intragroup marginalization (IM) predict ethnic identity commitment and exploration?

Variables and statistical analysis. In order to examine the first research question, the researcher ran two separate hierarchical linear regressions. The criterion variable for this research question was Mexican-origin adults' self-reported levels of ethnic identity commitment for the first regression, and ethnic identity exploration for the second regression. Variables were entered in the same order for each regression. The first block included all demographic variables (i.e., any of the following variables: age, gender, education, income, and Latina/o influence in current community determined by the preliminary analysis) that significantly correlated with the dependent variable as well as acculturation subscales. Given that demographic and acculturation variables have been associated with ethnic identity (e.g., Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004), these variables were entered at step 1 in order to be able to control for their influence on the criterion variable. The second and final block included intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination entered simultaneously, due to the lack of literature examining perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization together.

Research question 2a, 2b, and 2c. Do ethnic identity commitment and exploration predict meaning in life presence and meaning in life search? Do perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization predict meaning in life presence and search? Does discrimination/marginalization interact with ethnic identity to predict meaning in life presence and search?

Variables and statistical analyses. In order to explore the second research question, the researcher ran two hierarchal linear regressions. The criterion variable for this research question was Mexican-origin adult's self-reported levels of meaning in life presence for the first regression, and meaning in life search for the second regression.

Variables were entered in the same order for each regression. The first block included all demographic variables (i.e., any of the following variables: age, gender, education, income, and Latina/o influence in current community as determined by the preliminary analysis) that significantly correlated with the criterion variable as well as acculturation subscales. The literature suggests that these variables either are, or could be associated with meaning in life, and thus these variables were entered at step 1 to control their influence on the criterion variable. The second block included intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and ethnic identity subscales. These were the main predictor variables and thus entered in step 2 in order to assess research questions 2a and 2b. These variables were entered simultaneously given the lack of literature examining these constructs together. Finally, the third and final block included the interactions between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity subscales (i.e., IM*EI_C and IM*EI_E), and the interactions between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity subscales (i.e., PD*EI_C and PD*EI_E) entered simultaneously. These interactions were entered at the same step due to the lack of literature examining the interaction between these variables together and were entered to assess research questions 2c and 2d.

Chapter 4: Results

Preliminary and Descriptive Data Analysis

Sample means, standard deviations, and coefficient alphas for meaning in life, ethnic identity subcomponents, intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and acculturation are in Table 1. Before conducting any analysis, the researcher first conducted a preliminary analysis to ensure no violations of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Further, an outlier analysis revealed that no data point had too great of an influence on the regression analysis (i.e., all data points had a Cook's d value < 1). Bivariate correlation analyses among the variables revealed a number of significant relationships between the variables that can be found in Table 2. Of note, education and ethnic identity exploration were significantly positively correlated. Further, meaning in life presence was significantly correlated with age, while meaning in life search had a positive association with Latina/o influence in one's current community, and a negative association with income. Given the significant associations, these demographic variables were entered in at step 1 of the appropriate regression analysis to account for their influence on the criterion variable.

Next, to examine the influence of nominal demographic variables (i.e., gender, survey language chosen, country born) on the main predictor (i.e., ethnic identity subscales, intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and acculturation subscales) and criterion variables (i.e., meaning in life subscales), the researcher conducted independent t-test analyses. The analyses revealed no significant difference among males' and females' reported scores on any of the predictor and criterion variables ($p > .05$ for all). The analyses also revealed some differences based on which

language participants chose to complete the survey and in what country participants were born. In terms of language, participants who chose to complete the survey in English reported significantly higher levels of intragroup marginalization and Anglo orientation, and lower levels of Mexican orientation, meaning in life presence and meaning in life search relative to those who chose to complete the survey in Spanish (Table 3). In terms of place of birth, those who indicated they were born in the USA reported higher levels of intragroup marginalization and Anglo orientation, and lower levels of Mexican orientation and meaning in life search compared to those born in Mexico (Table 3).

Finally, given the different ways the researcher recruited participants, the researcher conducted an independent sample t-test to determine whether any differences emerged among different sub-samples of participants (i.e., from the Northeastern church, online, and through a Midwestern organization) among the criterion variables. In particular, given the association between religion and meaning in life (Hicks & King, 2008), the researcher was interested in whether any mean differences existed on meaning in life presence and search between the Northeastern church sample relative to the other subsamples. Participants recruited through online and the Midwestern organization were combined into a single group given the similarities between the groups' data, and in an effort to have a similar sample size with the other comparison group (i.e., those recruited from the NE church). The t-tests revealed that the subsamples did not differ on meaning in life presence, ethnic identity commitment, or ethnic identity exploration (Table 4). However, the analyses did reveal that participants

recruited from the Northeastern church reported increased meaning in life search relative to the other subsamples (Table 4).

Main Regression Analysis

Research question 1a and 1b: Do intragroup marginalization (IM) and perceived discrimination (PD) predict ethnic identity commitment and exploration? The researcher conducted two regression analyses to assess the first research question. For the first regression, only acculturation subscales were entered into step 1 given that no demographic variables significantly correlated with the criterion variable, ethnic identity commitment. The analysis revealed that the final model, which included the acculturation subscales, perceived discrimination, and intragroup marginalization, accounted for 4.5% of ethnic identity commitment's total variance, and that the model was not significant, $F(4, 129) = 1.52$, $p = .20$. In the final model, no individual predictors were significant (Table 5).

In the second regression, amount of education was entered into step 1 along with acculturation subscales given education's association with ethnic identity exploration, the criterion variable. Adding perceived discrimination and intragroup marginalization into step 2, the final model, explained an additional 5.3% of the variance, and the change in R^2 was significant, $p = .024$. The analysis revealed that the final model accounted for 13.3% of ethnic identity exploration's total variance, and that the model was significant, $F(5, 130) = 3.844$, $p = .003$. In the final model, Anglo orientation, $\beta = 0.287$, $p = .018$, and perceived discrimination, $\beta = 0.238$, $p = .006$ emerged as significant individual predictors (Table 5).

Research questions 2a and 2b: Do intragroup marginalization (IM), perceived discrimination (PD), and ethnic identity predict meaning in life presence? In order to assess the second research question, the researcher conducted two separate hierarchical linear regressions. Given that both regressions included interaction terms, before conducting any analysis, the researcher centered the main predictor variables and used the centered variables to create the interaction terms.

In the first regression, age was entered alongside acculturation subscales into step 1 given its association with meaning in life presence, the criterion variable. Adding perceived discrimination, intragroup marginalization, and ethnic identity commitment (EIC) and exploration (EIC) in Step 2 of the model explained an additional 15.5% of the variance, and the change in R^2 was significant, $p < .001$. Adding the interaction terms (i.e., IM*EIC, IM*EIE, PD*EIC, and PD*EIE) in step 3 of the model accounted for an additional 5.3% of the variance, and the change in R^2 was not significant, $p = .08$. The analysis revealed that the final model accounted for 27.7% of meaning in life presence's total variance, and that the model was significant, $F(11, 130) = 4.14$, $p < .001$. In the final model, intragroup marginalization, $\beta = -.308$, $p = .002$, ethnic identity commitment, $\beta = 0.348$, $p = .002$, and the interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment, $\beta = 0.226$, $p = .014$, emerged as significant individual predictors (Table 6).

Research Question 2c: Does the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence and search depend on the level of ethnic identity commitment or exploration? Given the significant interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment, the researcher conducted a

post-hoc simple slope analysis. The analysis revealed that the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence was not significant when ethnic identity commitment was at a high level (i.e., +SD), β = 0.202, p = .013. The relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence was significant when ethnic identity commitment was low (i.e., -SD), β = -0.250, p = .032 (Figure 1).

Research questions 2a and 2b: Do intragroup marginalization (IM), perceived discrimination (PD), and ethnic identity predict meaning in life search?

In the second regression, income, and Latina/o influence in one's current community were entered alongside acculturation subscales in step 1of the regression due to their significant association to meaning in life search, the criterion value. Adding perceived discrimination, intragroup marginalization, and ethnic identity subscales in Step 2 of the model explained an additional 4.6% of the variance, and the change in R^2 was not significant, p = .17. Adding the interaction terms (i.e., IM*EI_C, IM*EI_E, PD*EI_C, and PD*EI_E) in step 3 of the model accounted for an additional 5.1% of the variance, and the change in R^2 was not significant, p = .12. The analysis revealed that the final model accounted for 20.1% of meaning in life search's total variance, and that the model was significant, $F(12, 129) = 2.454$, p = .007. In the final model, Latina/o influence in one's current community, β = .245, p = .008, and income, β = -0.189, p = .05, ethnic identity exploration, β = .245, p = .03, and the interaction between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity exploration, β = .224, p = .05 emerged as significant individual predictors (Table 6).

Research Question 2d: Does the relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search depend on the level of ethnic identity exploration? Given the significant interaction between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity exploration, the researcher conducted a post-hoc simple slope analysis. The analysis revealed that the relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search was not significant when ethnic identity exploration was at a high level (i.e., +SD), β = 0.192, p = .23. The relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search was significant when ethnic identity exploration was low (i.e., -SD), β = -0.294, p = .05 (Figure 2).

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current's study main goal was to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, different experiences of discrimination/marginalization, and meaning in life among Mexican-origin adults. In particular, the study first aimed to examine the influence of intragroup marginalization (IM) and perceived discrimination (PD) on ethnic identity. The analysis provided partial support for the hypothesis that intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination would predict ethnic identity subcomponents, as perceived discrimination predicted ethnic identity exploration. That is, intragroup marginalization did not impact one's ethnic identity, while perceived discrimination led to a greater search regarding one's ethnicity but did not impact an individual's commitment to their ethnicity.

Second, the study aimed to explore the predictive association of intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, ethnic identity subscales (i.e., ethnic identity commitment, EIC; ethnic identity exploration, EIE) on meaning in life presence and search. For the study's second goal, the analysis again provided partial support for the hypothesis that ethnic identity subcomponents, intragroup marginalization, and perceived discrimination would predict meaning in life search and presence. Of those variables not involved in significant interactions, the results indicated that intragroup marginalization was negatively associated with meaning in life presence, suggesting that perceptions of in-group members distancing themselves from an individual leads to lower life meaning.

Finally, the study aimed to determine whether the interactions between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity subscales (IM*EIC and IM*EIE), and the

interactions between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity subscales (PD*EIC and PD*EIC) predicted meaning in life presence and search. The analysis demonstrated that only two of interactions significantly predicted meaning in life. Specifically, the analysis revealed that the interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment predicted meaning in life presence, while intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity exploration interacted to predict meaning in life search. The results suggest that ethnic identity serves as a buffer perceived discrimination's negative effect.

Marginalization/Discrimination and Ethnic Identity

In terms of the study's first goal to examine the relationship between intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and ethnic identity, the results indicated differing results depending on the ethnic identity subscale. In terms of ethnic identity commitment, no predictive relationship between marginalization and discrimination on ethnic identity commitment emerged. For ethnic identity exploration, perceived discrimination emerged as a significant predictor, while intragroup marginalization had no significant association with ethnic identity exploration. Thus, experiences of out-group discrimination impacted the level of exploration, but not commitment, individuals have related to their ethnicity, while in-group marginalization did not impact either exploration or commitment toward an individual's ethnicity. Interestingly, the more one reported an Anglo orientation, the higher the level of ethnic identity exploration.

The lack of association between intragroup marginalization on ethnic identity commitment and exploration suggests that experiencing intragroup marginalization neither impacts commitment to ethnic identity, nor level of exploration into ethnic

identity among Mexican-origin adults. To this point, little to no literature exists examining the relationship between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity, making it difficult to assess how well the current's study results fit with the literature. While the existing literature on intragroup marginalization suggests that experiencing this interpersonal distancing can lead to increased stress (Castillo et al., 2008) and a negative effect on well-being (Castillo et al., 2007), it appears that within-group distancing does not inherently influence one's commitment to their ethnic group.

A few relevant points exist regarding this null result. First, it appears that the concept of intragroup marginalization has been mostly tested within college students (e.g., Castillo et al., 2008). In particular, many studies examining intragroup marginalization have focused on Latinas/os being hesitant to pursue higher education (Niemann et al., 2000). Based on these studies, it appears likely that intragroup marginalization among Latinas/os, including those of Mexican-origin, may be higher among younger individuals and those pursuing higher education. In support for this idea, the current study found that younger and more educated individuals reported more instances of intragroup marginalization (Table 2). Given that a large portion of the current's sample was older and had less educational experiences, the sample does not appear to fit with those who may experience higher levels of intragroup marginalization due to education. In combination with other studies examining intragroup marginalization, it appears that a subset of Latinas/os may be more likely to experience intragroup marginalization, and the effect of intragroup marginalization on certain outcomes, including ethnic identity, may be restricted to this group.

If intragroup marginalization is more common amongst younger Mexican-origin adults pursuing education, then the null result between ethnic identity and intragroup marginalization may be due to the study's sample. An alternative to this view is that intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity are not related. In support of this alternate explanation, while the study's sample did include a portion of participants who older and had with fewer educational experiences, it also included participants who were younger, and had more educational experiences. Thus, it is possible that the current sample included a large enough portion of individuals that reported higher intragroup marginalization to find an effect.

Regardless, the results highlight the need to continue examining the relationship between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity, especially among different demographics within the Mexican community specifically, and Latinas/os generally. The potential that the study's sample led to a null result highlights the importance of understanding how certain Mexican cultural values may lead to instances of intragroup marginalization. The literature has provided support for the notion that values prevalent in Mexican culture (i.e., preference for endogamy and traditional gender roles) may be at odds with educational attainment (Niemann et al., 2000). The literature also suggests that an important aspect of intragroup marginalization is a caution about being seen as too "White" (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Given this connection, it is likely that due to acculturation and assimilation processes that intragroup marginalization is more common for those who have a greater Anglo orientation and less common for those with a Mexican orientation. That is, those with a greater Anglo orientation may not connect with the Mexican values that appear incongruent with educational attainment.

In fact, the current study provided support for this idea as intragroup marginalization was positively correlated with an Anglo orientation and negatively correlated with a Mexican orientation (Table 2). In addition, the correlation analyses revealed that those who choose to take the survey in Spanish, were born in Mexico, and had a greater Latina/o influence in their communities reported less intragroup marginalization (Table 2). Ultimately, more research is needed to understand how certain factors influence intragroup marginalization, as well as intragroup marginalization's association with well-being.

In terms of perceived discrimination, the results suggest a relationship between experiencing increased levels of discrimination and greater ethnic identity exploration. However, the results also suggest a lack of relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment. These results appear to fit with much of the literature examining the relationship between ethnic identity and perceived discrimination (e.g., Brittian et al., 2015; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Among Latina/o adolescents, perceived discrimination appears to be significantly associated with increased ethnic identity exploration, but not with ethnic identity commitment. Given the similar result in the current study, this suggests that perceived discrimination's association with ethnic identity subcomponents might be similar in Latina/o adolescents and adults. In particular, the literature suggests that perceived discrimination negatively affects an individual's self-concept, and thus these experiences lead individuals to further explore an important aspect of their self-concept, ethnic identity (e.g., Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2012). However, it should be noted that some studies (e.g., Romero & Roberts, 2003) have found a negative association

between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity exploration, presumably because discrimination's negative effect on self-concept leads to less exploration due to a potentially tarnished or threatened ethnic background. Overall, the study's result suggests that perceived discrimination affect's Mexican-origin ethnic identity exploration, presumably through the same mechanism (i.e., affecting an individual's self-concept) as in Latina/o adolescents.

The lack of association between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment also runs counter to the prediction of the *rejection-identification model.* This model suggests a "rejection-identification" effect, where perceived discrimination leads to increased group identification, and there has been ample support for the model amongst adults (e.g., Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003). However, examining the literature that has not found support for the *rejection-identification model* highlights relevant sample differences, especially in terms of race/ethnicity. In particular, while various studies have shown support for the model among certain adult groups (e.g., African Americans and international students), it does not appear that many, if any, studies have examined the fit with the model and Latina/o adults. The few studies that have looked at the model's fit with Latinas/os, including those of Mexican origin, target adolescent samples (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Romero & Roberts, 2003). These studies have found evidence that the *rejection-identification model* only partially fits with adolescent, if at all (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Romero & Roberts, 2003). For example, in a sample of Mexican-origin adolescents, Romero and Roberts (2003) found that against the model's predictions, the relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity (measured through affirmation and exploration subcomponents) were

negatively related. Further, Armenta and Hunt (2009) found that among Latina/o adolescents, while group discrimination led to increased group identification, personal discrimination led to decreased group identification. In explaining the result, Armenta and Hunt suggested that the model may not fit with adolescents. However, given the current study's result, it appears that the model may only partially, or not, fit with Mexican adults as well. Thus, it is unclear whether the model does not fit with adolescents, Latinas/os, or both. Future research is needed to clarify the model's fit amongst Latinas/os generally, and Mexican-origin individuals specifically, including examining how certain cultural differences may lead to differing support for the model depending on the sample used. In doing so, future research can add to the underlying mechanism that accounts for the relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity and examine how cultural differences add to this underlying mechanism.

In addition to the main analysis, the results indicated that Anglo orientation was positively associated with ethnic identity exploration. That is, as participants reported more aspects consistent with an Anglo orientation (i.e., thinking, reading, and speaking in English and/or having Anglo friends) they also reported increased ethnic identity exploration. The literature has consistently demonstrated that while acculturation and ethnic identity are closely linked, the relationship between these two concepts is very complex and difficult to study (Phinney, 2013). In terms of the current study, the correlation analysis demonstrated that those with a higher Anglo orientation were often younger, more educated, had increased income, more likely to be born in the USA, and more often chose to take the survey in English (Table 2). Given the characteristics associated with an Anglo orientation, it is possible that those with a higher Anglo

orientation may be more removed from certain aspects of their Mexican culture. In support for this idea, the correlation analysis also revealed that an Anglo orientation was associated with a lower Latina/o influence in one's current community. If those in the sample who ascribed more to an Anglo orientation were more removed from certain Mexican cultural practices, it fits that these individuals are more likely to be exploring their ethnic identity.

Factors Influencing Meaning in Life

The literature has robustly demonstrated the association between meaning in life and well-being (Steger et al., 2008), leading some researchers to make life meaning a central part of their well-being models (e.g., Seligman 2002, 2011). In the present study, meaning in life was measured using as two distinct aspects: presence and search. The subcomponent of meaning in life presence in the current study more closely fits with the meaning component of positive psychology's well-being models, while search refers to the exploration of life's meaning. Understanding the factors that influence meaning in life for Mexican-origin adults is an important step to more completely understand what factors lead individuals in this group to a meaningful life. The present study hoped to achieve this goal, and the results provided a start to answering what leads to a meaningful life in Mexican-origin adults.

Meaning in life presence. The study's results indicated that intragroup marginalization, and the interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment significantly predicted meaning in life presence. In terms of the interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment, the post-hoc analysis revealed that perceived discrimination had no association to meaning in

life presence when participants reported a high ethnic identity commitment. When participants reported low ethnic identity commitment, there was a significant negative association between perceived discrimination and meaning in life. That is, for participants with low ethnic identity commitment, as experiences of perceived discrimination increased, meaning in life presence decreased. Furthermore, the results revealed the trend that as ethnic identity commitment increased, the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence weakened (Figure 1).

The significant interaction between perceived discrimination and ethnic identity commitment provides support for the literature demonstrating that ethnic identity serves as a buffer between perceived discrimination and negative outcomes in Latinas/os generally, and Mexican-origin adults specifically (e.g., Torres & Ong, 2010). That is, when participants reported higher ethnic identity commitment, perceived discrimination had no predictive association on meaning in life presence suggesting that ethnic identity commitment buffers the negative effect of perceived discrimination on meaning in life presence. Furthermore, given that there was no interaction between ethnic identity exploration and perceived discrimination, it appears that ethnic identity commitment is largely responsible for ethnic identity's buffering effect found in the literature. This falls in line with studies indicating that ethnic identity commitment works as a buffer toward negative outcomes, but ethnic identity exploration has either no effect, or exacerbates the relationship between discrimination and negative outcomes in Latina/o adults (e.g., Torres et al., 2011).

Given that ethnic identity commitment appeared to buffer the relationship between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence, this result suggests that

ethnic identity has an association to meaning in life presence for Mexican-origin adults. While careful to interpret ethnic identity commitment's main effect on meaning in life presence because it was a variable in the interaction, ethnic identity commitment also emerged as an individual predictor of meaning in life presence. Thus, congruent with the researcher's hypothesis, the results indicated that the more participants had a commitment to their Mexican ethnic identity, the more meaning in life presence these participants experienced. While few studies have examined the relationship between ethnic identity and life meaning, the current study's result fits with the limited studies that have found a positive association between these two variables (e.g., Kiang & Fuligni, 2010). More generally, the result supports the vast amount of literature establishing a link between ethnic identity and positive psychological functioning, especially psychological well-being (Smith & Silva, 2011).

Understanding the underlying mechanism in the association between ethnic identity and meaning in life presence is an important step toward potentially using ethnic identity as an intervention to increase life meaning and well-being. In their study establishing a relationship between ethnic identity and meaning in life presence among Latina/o adolescents, Kiang and Fulgini (2010) offered such a mechanism, as these authors suggested that an increased ethnic identity leads to a greater ethnic identification, which in turn, leads to a greater sense of meaning. Further, these authors added that ethnic identity could lead to a greater sense of belongingness, an important contributor to meaning in life presence, and thus explain the relationship between these two variables. This explanation fits with the study's framework and results, which posited that ethnic identity commitment could satisfy the need to belong, and thus add

life meaning. In addition, it appears that ethnic identity commitment fits with two factors that lead to greater meaning in life presence, self-acceptance and relationships (Wong, 2011). That is, ethnic identity commitment captures a sense of ethnic belonging, which given its importance to self-concept, is likely related to an individual's self-acceptance. Perhaps further highlighting the need to belong, a central component to Mexican culture is often family values and ethnic pride (Comas-Diaz, 2006). If one ascribes to these cultural values, it appears natural that having an increased commitment to a Mexican ethnic identity will lead to greater meaning in life presence, in part, through greater relationships and satisfying the need to belong. Importantly, only ethnic identity commitment, and not ethnic identity exploration, had an association to meaning in life presence in the current study, further adding support for this potential mechanism. As more studies emerge establishing the link between ethnic identity and meaning in life presence, these studies should consider examining the mechanism between these two constructs.

In terms of intragroup marginalization, the results fit with the researcher's hypothesis and illustrated that the more an individual reported experiencing intragroup marginalization, the lower meaning in life presence they reported. Again, given that the literature examining intragroup marginalization is limited, it is difficult to place the current study's result within a more general body of research. However, despite this limitation, the negative association between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life presence appears to fit with the literature illustrating that intragroup marginalization has a general negative effect on well-being (e.g., Castillo et al., 2007). Given the present study's congruence with the limited studies examining the relationship between

intragroup marginalization and well-being, it appears that intragroup marginalization has a negative influence on the well-being among Latinas/os generally, and Mexican-origin individuals specifically. With the literature on intragroup marginalization being so new, future research should continue to explore the impact of intragroup marginalization on well-being, as well as examining what factors affect the relationship between marginalization and well-being in Latinas/os.

While the present study was correlational in nature, and thus limits any causal assertions, one potential mechanism underlying the association between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life presence is a lack of belonging in relation to one's ethnic group. That is, given that within-group members distancing themselves from an individual characterizes the concept of intragroup marginalization, it is possible that this distancing leads an individual to feel disconnected to people in their ethnic group. This disconnection may lead to a lack of belongingness or a lack of self-acceptance that affects their view of life meaning. This underlying mechanism appears to fit with the proposed mechanism between ethnic identity and meaning in life presence, adding potential support for the explanation. However, the analysis also revealed no association between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity commitment, a variable that captures ethnic belonging, adding caution to this explanation. The sample may have accounted for this null result between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity commitment and thus, if these two proposed mechanism do indeed fit, then it appears that ethnic identity commitment leads to a belongingness that increases life meaning, whereas intragroup marginalization leads to a lack of belongingness that decreases life

meaning. Future studies should considering examining these underlying mechanisms through a direct experimental design or through model testing.

Meaning in life search. Meaning in life presence has been robustly associated with positive outcomes (e.g., Steger & Frazier, 2005), yet the meaning in life search has routinely been associated with more negative outcomes, including increased anxiety and depression (Steger et al., 2006). For Latina/o adolescents, meaning in life search has been related to lower happiness, increased daily distress, and higher emotional lability (Kiang & Fulgini, 2010). Given the negative association with meaning in life search and psychological well-being, better understanding what factors lead to this search, in tandem with determining what leads to a meaningful life, can potentially help psychologists to help individuals translate their search for life meaning into the presence of life meaning. In terms of better understanding the factors that lead to meaning in life search, the current study found that ethnic identity exploration and the interaction between ethnic identity exploration and intragroup marginalization predicted meaning in life search. Interestingly, income and the level of Latina/o influence in one's current community also predicted meaning in life search, with income having a negative association and Latina/o influence having a positive association with meaning in life search.

In examining the interaction between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity exploration, the results indicated that when participants reported high levels of ethnic identity exploration, there was no significant relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search. However, when participants reported a low level of ethnic identity exploration, there was a negative association between intragroup

marginalization and meaning in life search. That is, among those with a low level of ethnic identity exploration, those that experienced more instances of intragroup marginalization reported searching less for life meaning. Further, the post-hoc analysis revealed the trend that as ethnic identity exploration increases, the relationship between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search goes from a negative association, to a positive one (Figure 2).

Considering the interaction between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity exploration demonstrates that understanding what leads to searching for life meaning is a complex picture. Further complicating the picture is the lack of literature examining the relationship between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity. However, the interaction suggests that the greater one has explored their Mexican identity's customs, traditions, and history, the more likely interpersonal distancing from within-group peers will lead to searching for life meaning.

While speculating on a mechanism between the relationship between intragroup marginalization, ethnic identity exploration, and meaning in life search becomes more difficult considering the lack of literature examining these constructs, one potential explanation for this interaction lies again in the connection between ethnic identity and life meaning in Mexican-origin adults. For those with a low level of ethnic identity exploration, it is likely that they either already know what their ethnic identity means to them, and/or have decided that their ethnic identity is not a major source of life meaning to them. Experiences of intragroup marginalization may affirm the decision those with low levels of ethnic identity exploration have made about their ethnic identity and life meaning, and thus negate the need to search for life meaning. That is, experiencing

intragroup marginalization may further clarify the source of these individual's life meaning, and thus lead them to not search for life meaning. It appears that for those who have high ethnic identity exploration, no significant association exists between intragroup marginalization and meaning in life search. Thus, for those that have already explored what their ethnic identity, experiencing intragroup marginalization does not impact meaning in life search. This likely is due to the connection between meaning in life search and ethnic identity exploration. That is, those with greater ethnic identity exploration also reported increased meaning in life search. Thus, those high levels of ethnic identity exploration likely have or are in the process of exploring life meaning, and thus intragroup marginalization has little to no effect on meaning in life search. Future research can further add to the underlying mechanism between these constructs to continue to clarify the complex relationship between intragroup marginalization, ethnic identity exploration, and meaning in life search.

Examining the interaction highlights an important connection between ethnic identity exploration and meaning in life search. While again careful to interpret the main effects of ethnic identity exploration because it was a part of a significant interaction, the association between ethnic identity exploration and meaning in life search appears to be relevant. While the current study suggests that individuals that engage in increased ethnic identity exploration also have higher search for life meaning, very few studies have examined the relationship between ethnic identity and meaning in life search. In one of the few to examine these two variables, Kiang and Fulgini (2010) found no correlation between meaning in life search and ethnic identity exploration among Latin-, Asian-, and European-American adolescents. While this result appears

incongruent with the current study, potential differences in the sample may account for the differing results. In particular, the inclusion of other ethnic groups (i.e., including examining Latinas/os generally, rather than a specific subgroup like the current study) and age differences may explain the diverging results. Future studies should further examine the relationship between ethnic identity exploration and meaning in life search in order to clarify what characteristics strength or weaken the relationship between these two variables.

Interestingly, income and Latina/o influence in one's current community were related to meaning in life search. Those who reported a lower income also reported an increased search for life meaning, while those who reported a greater Latina/o influence in one's current community also reported a greater search for life meaning. Given that these concepts were not the main variables of interests, the researchers can offer little in regards to explaining these associations.

Counseling Implications

As the USA continues to diversify, clinicians must actively pursue knowledge and opportunities to become culturally-competent. The population of Latinas/os generally, and Mexican-origin people specifically, continues to grow at an exponential rate in the United States, making cultural competence with this specific population critical. The present study aimed to further examine the construct of ethnic identity, a variable that has shown great promise in terms of association to well-being. The present study further demonstrated the positive effects of ethnic identity, as ethnic identity was associated to meaning in life, a construct robustly linked to psychological well-being

(e.g., Scheuller & Seligman, 2010), and buffered the relationship between perceived discrimination and lower meaning in life.

Given the link between ethnic identity and well-being, the study added further support for the use of ethnic identity based intervention in counseling settings with Mexican-origin adults specifically, and likely Latina/o adults generally. That is, clinicians should consider examining Mexican-origin client's ethnic identity, including exploring how a client's identity is a strength for these individuals. In doing so, it is likely that this exploration evokes the ethnic pride that the literature continually links with positive outcomes. Further, when Mexican-origin adults are faced with discrimination, clinicians should consider how a strong ethnic identity can buffer the negative effects of discrimination, and be open to incorporating an individual's ethnic identity into this conversation. One potential way to explore ethnic identity and its associated positive outcomes may come in evoking ethnic pride. That is, by asking clients what makes them proud to be a part of their ethnic group, clients may begin to experience positive feelings and be reminded of the life meaning that comes with belonging to their ethnic group. Previous studies have provided support for this idea by demonstrating that evoking ethnic pride increases hope levels (Yager-Elorriaga et al., 2014). As always, clinicians should consider talking about and exploring ethnic identity in a culturally respectful and congruent manner.

Limitations

While the current study had some important and promising results, there are relevant limitations to highlight. Throughout the present study, the researcher made a conscious attempt when and where to use the term Latina/o versus Mexican-origin

people. Recall, the term Latina/o captures a large heterogeneous group made up of various cultures and nationalities. There are similarities within this group, but one should be careful about the use of this term due to within-group differences among this group (e.g., Vega et al., 2009). In line, the present study focused on Mexican-origin adults, a subgroup within this larger group. Given that many of the existing literature examines ethnic-related constructs at a more general level, fitting and interpreting the specific results into the more general literature should be done with caution.

One of the study's strengths was the ability to recruit Mexican-origin adults from a variety of backgrounds (i.e., immigrants versus first-generation born). However, there is much heterogeneity within Mexican-origin adults, and future studies can continue to investigate how some of the within-group differences affect the relationships between intragroup marginalization, perceived discrimination, and well-being. Another note important aspect of the current study's sample is the level of education of many of the participants. Many of the participants reported a low, or even no, education. This may have resulted in some participants not fully understanding some of the questionnaires, especially those questions that were more "academic." The first author was available to answer questions, hopefully mitigating some of this concern.

Another related limitation to the survey language fitting the education level is the congruence between the survey's concepts and participant's worldview of these ideas. Although anecdotal, meaning in life emerged as a questionnaire that many participants had questions about. That is, participants were unsure about what life meaning meant, even though many of these participants likely had and eventually did

report, much life meaning. This highlights whether the survey is able to articulate these ideas in a way that is culturally congruent and understandable to participants. Although many of the surveys were normed and built with Latina/o and/or Mexican-origin individuals in mind, the structure of these surveys remain in a linear, Western perspective. For example, participants respond to each question on a Likert scale, a linear representation of a very complex and nuanced concept. Many participants reported that this was the first time responding to a Likert scale. Further, while the measures are relatively broad and open, they still imply an individualist perspective. Mexican cultural has many ideas that do not fit with a Western perspective, particularly an individualistic, active orientation. For example, both meaning in life and ethnic identity questionnaires imply an individualist, active orientation toward having life meaning and a positive ethnic identity that many not fit with the participant's perspective of these concepts. Many participants may gain their meaning from their family's view of life meaning and ethnic identity through their community (Wong, 2011), and these ideas may not have been activated given the individualistic style of the questionnaires. Fortunately, easing some of these concerns, all of the measures produced good reliability. This added some confidence, however, the reader should keep these concerns in mind as assessing the results and conclusions.

A final note regarding limitations is related to the study's design. The study utilized a correlational design, making any causal assumptions speculative. Researchers and readers often fall into making causal assumptions based on correlational designs, and while correlational studies can inform causal experiments that confirm speculations,

the current study can do only that, speculate. Further studies should build upon the current study to study causal assumptions initially proposed in the current study. Finally, one should be cautious about both significant interactions and the association between ethnic identity exploration and meaning in life search given that when entering the steps that included these variables, the changes in R^2 were not significant. Thus, while both interaction and ethnic identity exploration emerged as significant individual predictors in their respective final models, the change in R^2 was not significant when they were entered stepwise, highlighting that these results are potentially a Type I error. Further studies can clarify the veracity of this result.

Conclusion

The presented study added to the very limited literature examining ethnic identity, discrimination/marginalization, and meaning in life. Importantly, the study demonstrated that ethnic identity commitment acted as a buffer between perceived discrimination and meaning in life presence's association, and appeared to be significantly related to increased well-being. With ethnic identity having such a significant positive effect, psychologists should strongly consider incorporating ethnic identity into applied settings by using ethnic identity as a vehicle to increase well-being. Further, the study added to the limited literature examining intragroup marginalization, demonstrating that intragroup marginalization is associated with increased exploration of ethnic identity and search for meaning in life.

Finally, the study illustrated that the relationship between discrimination and marginalization, ethnic identity and meaning in life is very complex. The presence of the interaction terms highlighted that the associations between discrimination and

marginalization are dependent on ethnic identity levels, whether it be exploration or commitment. Given the nuances among ethnic identity levels and the potential underlying mechanisms appears congruent with ethnic identity development status models, future studies may explore how ethnic identity status (e.g., Marcia's ego identity statuses) interact with intragroup marginalization and perceived discrimination to predict well-being in Mexican-origin adults.

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Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 1
Key Variables' Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Coefficients

Variable	Mean	*SD*	*α*
EI Commitment	4.07	0.787	.801
EI Exploration	3.90	0.833	.823
ML Presence	27.39	4.717	.784
ML Search	29.13	6.058	.840
Intragroup Marginalization	38.44	8.207	.807
Perceived Discrimination	27.96	8.336	.925
Anglo Orientation	20.74	6.577	.893
Mexican Orientation	23.00	5.805	.903

Note. EI = Ethnic identity; ML = Meaning in Life.

Table 2
Summary of Intercorrelations between Important Demographic, Predictor, and Criterion variables

	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**
1. Language	.672**	.435**	-.001	-.504**	-.437**	.286**	.193*	.192*	.088	.146	-.321**	.069	-.596**	.591**
2. Country	-	.494**	-.165	-.515**	-.362**	.302**	.116	.223**	-.040	.104	-.341*	.064	-.562**	.603**
3. Age		-	-.272**	-.236**	-.041	.060	.234**	.036	.075	.111	-.244**	-.050	-.335**	.362**
4. Gender			-	.196*	-.079	-.075	-.118	-.077	.111	-.002	.120	.122	.097	-.086
5. Education				-	.423**	-.304**	.082	-.164	.195*	.022	.229**	.053	.680**	-.472**
6. Income					-	-.132	.113	-.239**	-.068	<.001	.062	-.044	.350**	-.323**
7. Community						-	-.035	.230**	-.081	.017	-.202*	.094	-.282*	.270*
8. ML Presence							-	-.043	.186*	.338**	-.332**	-.072	-.060	.204*
9. ML Search								-	.190*	.069	-.101	.038	-.164	.136
10. EI Explore									-	.585**	.025	.215*	.244**	.005
11. EI Commitment										-	-.080	.119	.031	.134
12. IM											-	.103	.327**	-.458**
13. PD												-	-.073	.065
14. AOS													-	-.451**
15. MOS														-

Note. Language: 1 = participants chose to take the survey in English, 2 = participants chose to take the survey in Spanish; Country: 1 = indicates participants were born in the USA, 2 = indicates participants were born in Mexico; Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.
Community = Latina/o influence in current community; ML = meaning in life; EI = ethnic identity; IM = intragroup marginalization; PD = perceived discrimination; AOS = Anglo orientation; MOS = Mexican orientation.
* $p < .05$ (two tail). ** $p < .001$ (two tail).

Table 3
Independent Sample t-test by Survey Language and Country Born

	Survey Language						Country Born					
	English		Spanish				USA		Mexico			
	M	*SD*	M	*SD*	*t*	df	M	*SD*	M	SD	*t*	df
EI Ex	3.82	0.86	3.97	0.81	-1.01	133	3.95	0.80	3.87	0.86	0.46	133
EI C	3.94	0.81	4.17	0.70	-1.71	104.10	4.00	0.87	4.14	0.73	-1.20	133
ML P	28.12	5.42	29.95	3.91	-2.27*	133	28.42	5.07	29.55	4.48	-1.52	133
ML S	26.10	6.52	28.43	5.48	-2.21*	133	25.64	6.33	28.42	5.68	-2.63*	133
IM	41.38	8.92	36.09	6.77	3.80**	107.68	42.08	9.21	36.31	6.74	3.87**	80.14
PD	27.32	8.21	28.47	8.45	-0.80	133	27.26	8.13	28.36	8.47	-0.742	133
AOS	25.08	3.89	17.22	6.20	8.93**	124.76	25.52	3.18	17.90	6.44	9.13**	128.48
MOS	19.18	5.63	26.06	3.78	-8.11**	98.94	18.46	5.72	25.68	3.89	-7.92**	76.08

Note. n = 60 English; n = 74-75 Spanish; n = 41 USA; n = 90-91 Mexico
EI Ex = Ethnic identity exploration; EI C = Ethnic identity commitment; ML P =Meaning in life presence; ML S = Meaning in life search; IM = Intragroup marginalization; PD = Perceived discrimination; AOS = Anglo orientation; MOS = Mexican orientation
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

Table 4
Independent Sample t-test by Sample

	Sample					
	NE Church		Other			
Variables	M	*SD*	M	*SD*	*t*	df
Exploration	3.81	0.87	4.00	0.79	1.26	133
Commitment	4.12	0.75	4.04	0.83	-0.79	133
Presence	29.62	4.00	28.57	5.39	-1.30	113.20
Search	28.76	4.79	25.82	6.95	-2.82*	107.84

Note. n = 72 NE Church; n = 63 other
Exploration = Ethnic identity exploration; Commitment = Ethnic identity commitment; Presence = Meaning in life presence; Search = Meaning in life search
* $p < .05$

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Research Question 1

	Ethnic Identity Commitment				Ethnic Identity Exploration			
Variables	*B*	SEB	β	ΔR^2	*B*	SEB	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.028				.080*
Education	-	-	-		0.033	.035	.155	
AOS	0.014	.012	.114		0.030	.015	.235*	
MOS	0.025	.013	.184		0.023	.014	.115	
Step 2				.017				.053*
Education	-	-	-		0.017	.034	.059	
AOS	0.016	.012	.130		0.037	.015	.287*	
MOS	0.021	.014	.152		0.017	.015	.118	
IM	-0.006	.010	-.063		-0.004	.010	-.037	
PD	0.012	.008	.008		0.024	.009	.238*	

Note. Ethnic Identity Commitment final model $R^2 = .045$ and was not significant at $p = .05$. Ethnic Identity Commitment final model $R^2 = .133$ and was significant, $p < .05$.

* $p < .05$.

Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Research Question 2

	Meaning in Life Presence				Meaning in Life Search			
Variables	*B*	SEB	β	ΔR^2	*B*	SEB	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.069*				.104*
Income	-	-	-		-0.480	.190	-.234*	
Lat. Pre	-	-	-		1.161	.565	.184*	
Age	0.077	.036	.202*		-	-	-	
AOS	0.040	.070	.057		0.005	.090	.005	
MOS	0.122	.081	.139		0.022	.099	.022	
Step 2				.155*				.046
Income	-	-	-		-0.396	.195	-.193*	
Lat. Pre	-	-	-		1.248	.564	.197*	
Age	0.056	.034	.147		-	-	-	
AOS	0.036	.070	.051		-0.067	.096	-.075	
MOS	-0.012	.082	-.015		-0.007	.107	-.007	
EI_Exp	0.025	.586	.005		1.927	.792	.276*	
EI_Com	1.762	.589	.296*		-0.909	.781	-.123	
IM	-0.173	.054	-.295*		-0.036	.071	-.051	
PD	-0.040	.047	-.070		-0.044	.062	-.063	
Step 3				.053				.051
Income	-	-	-		-0.389	.194	-.189*	
Lat. Pre	-	-	-		1.548	.572	.245*	
Age	0.061	.033	.161		-	-	-	
AOS	0.045	.069	.063		-0.045	.095	-.050	
MOS	-0.023	.081	-.028		-0.019	.106	-.019	
EI_Exp	-0.107	.594	-.019		1.707	.798	.245*	
EI_Com	2.070	.602	.348*		-0.503	.798	-.068	
IM	-0.181	.057	-.308*		-0.037	.076	-.051	
PD	-0.014	.048	-.024		-0.028	.064	-.040	
EIE*IM	0.143	.078	.188		0.210	.105	.224*	
EIC*IM	-0.066	.075	-.093		-0.151	.098	-.178	
EIE*PD	-0.061	.069	-.083		0.096	.092	.103	
EIC*PD	0.162	.065	.226*		0.022	.087	.024	

Note. Meaning in life presence final model $R^2 = .277$ and was significant $p < .001$.
Meaning in life search final model $R^2 = .201$ and was significant, $p < .05$.
* $p < .05$.

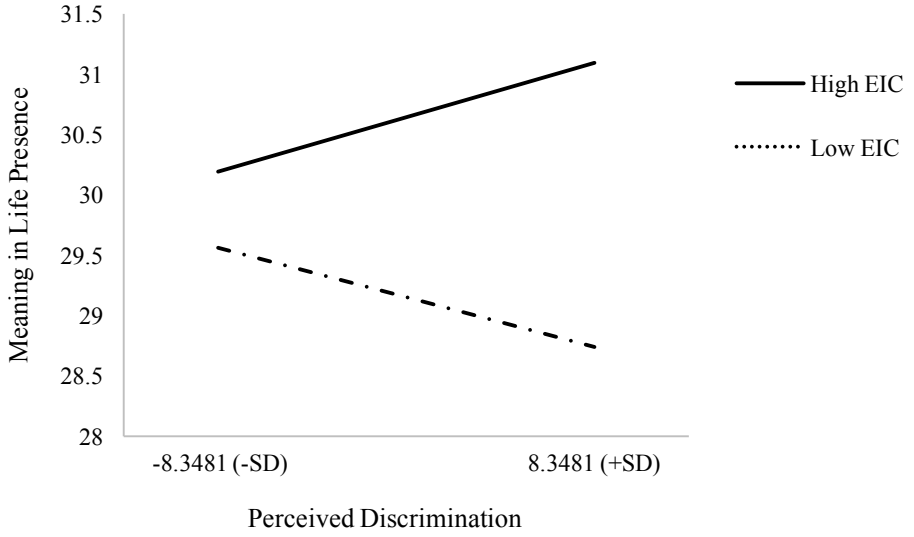

Figure 1. Simple slope regression lines for perceived discrimination on meaning in life presence when ethnic identity commitment is low (-SD) and high (+SD).

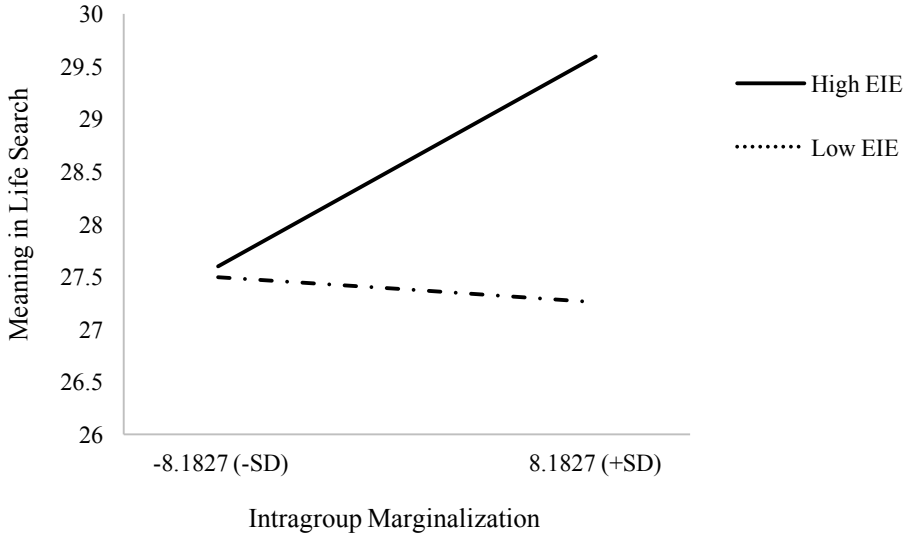

Figure 2. Simple slope regression lines for intragroup marginalization on meaning in life search when ethnic identity exploration is low (-SD) and high (+SD).

Appendix B: Demographic Information

Spanish Version

¿Cuántos años tiene? _____

Sexo.

- ❍ Hombre
- ❍ Mujer
- ❍ Otro _____

¿Hasta qué año o nivel escolar terminó? Si actualmente está inscrito en la escuela, marque el año escolar anterior o el último nivel escolar que ha terminado.

- ❍ No terminé ningún nivel escolar
- ❍ Kínder a 8º grado
- ❍ 9º,10º o 11º grado
- ❍ 12º grado- sin diploma
- ❍ Diploma de preparatoria (High School) o equivalente, por ejemplo GED
- ❍ Créditos de Universidad, pero menos de un año
- ❍ 1 o más años de Universidad, pero sin terminarla
- ❍ Diploma por dos años de universidad
- ❍ Licenciatura (título de universidad)
- ❍ Maestría
- ❍ Profesional
- ❍ Doctorado

¿Cuál es su ingreso anual?

- ❍ Menos de $10,000
- ❍ $10,000 a $19,999
- ❍ $20,000 a $29,999
- ❍ $30,000 a $39,999
- ❍ $40,000 a $49,999
- ❍ $50,000 a $59,999
- ❍ $60,000 a $69,999
- ❍ $70,000 a $79,999
- ❍ $80,000 a $89,999
- ❍ $90,000 a $99,999
- ❍ $100,000 a $149,999
- ❍ $150,000 o más

¿En qué país nació?

- ❍ Estados Unidos
- ❍ México
- ❍ Otro país _____

Si no nació en Estados Unidos, ¿cuántos años ha vivido en Estados Unidos? _____

Si Ud. nació en Estados Unidos, ¿Qué generación es?

- ❍ 1ª generación nacida en EE. UU. (yo y mis hermanos somos los primeros en nacer en EE.UU.)
- ❍ 1.5 generación nacida en EE. UU. (uno de mis padres nació en Estados Unidos y el otro no.)
- ❍ 2ª generación nacida en EE. UU. (Mis dos padres son de la 1ª generación que nació en Estados Unidos)
- ❍ 2.5 generación nacida en EE. UU. (uno de mis padres es de la 1ª generación nacida en Estados Unidos y el otro es de la 2a. generación nacida en Estados Unidos)
- ❍ 3ª + generación nacida en EE.UU. (mis abuelos nacieron en EE.UU)

¿Si Ud. creció en Estados Unidos, en qué estado creció? _____

¿Si Ud. creció en Estados Unidos, cuántos Latinos había en su comunidad?

❍ Casi ninguno ❍ Unos poquitos ❍ Una cantidad moderada ❍ Muchos ❍ Casi todos

¿Si Ud. vive en Estados Unidos, en qué estado está viviendo? _____

¿Si Ud. vive en Estados Unidos ahora, cuantos Latinos hay en su comunidad?

❍ Casi ninguno ❍ Unos poquitos ❍ Una cantidad moderada ❍ Muchos ❍ Casi todos

La gente de origen mexicano usa varios términos para identificarse a ellos mismos. Si Ud. tuviera que seleccionar uno ¿cuál usaría?

❍ Chicana/o ❍ Hispana/o ❍ Mexicana/o
❍ Latina/o ❍ Mexicano/a-Americano/a ❍ Americana/o

Si Ud. tiene algo que agregar a sus respuestas, o tiene un comentario, por favor, escríbalo aquí.

English Version

How old are you? _____

Please select your gender.

❍ Male
❍ Female
❍ Other _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.

❍ No schooling completed
❍ Nursery school to 8th grade
❍ 9th, 10th or 11th grade
❍ 12th grade, no diploma
❍ High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
❍ Some college credit, but less than 1 year
❍ 1 or more years of college, no degree
❍ Associate degree
❍ Bachelor's degree
❍ Master's degree
❍ Professional degree
❍ Doctorate degree

What is your household income?

❍ Less than $10,000	❍ $30,000 a $39,999	❍ $60,000 a $69,999	❍ $90,000 a $99,999
❍ $10,000 a $19,999	❍ $40,000 a $49,999	❍ $70,000 a $79,999	❍ $100,000 a $149,999
❍ $20,000 a $29,999	❍ $50,000 a $59,999	❍ $80,000 a $89,999	❍ $150,000 or more

In what country were you born?

❍ United States
❍ Mexico
❍ Other _____

If you were not born in the U.S., how many years have you lived in the U.S.? _____

If you were born in the United States, which generation do you represent?

❍ 1st generation born in U.S. (my parents are from Mexico but I was born in the US)
❍ 1.5 generation born in U.S. (one parent is U.S. born and one is not)
❍ 2nd generation born in U.S. (both parents are 1st generation U.S. born)
❍ 2.5 generation born in U.S. (one parent is 1st generation U.S. born and the other is 2nd generation U.S. born)
❍ 3rd + generation born in U.S. (my grandparents were born in the U.S.)

If you grew up in the United States, in which state did you grow up in? _____

If you grew up in the United States, how much of a Latino population was in your community?

❍ Almost none	❍ A little	❍ A moderate amount	❍ A lot	❍ Almost all

If you live in the United States, in which state did you currently live in? _____

If you live in the United States, how much of a Latino population is in your current community?

❍ Almost none	❍ A little	❍ A moderate amount	❍ A lot	❍ Almost all

People of Mexican descent use various terms to identify themselves. If you had to select one term below, please select the term that best fits.

❍ Chicana/o	❍ Hispanic	❍ Mexican
❍ Latina/o	❍ Mexican-American	❍ American

If you have anything to add to your answers above or have any feedback, please write it here.

Appendix C: Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure - Revised

Las siguientes preguntas son acerca de su identidad étnica (mexicana). Recuerde que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, solamente conteste lo mejor que pueda.

1 = Completamente en desacuerdo
2 = No estoy de acuerdo
3 = Neutral
4 = Estoy de acuerdo
5 = Completamente de acuerdo

1. He investigado sobre mi grupo étnico, así como su historia, tradiciones y costumbres.
2. Tengo un fuerte sentido de pertenecer a mi propio grupo étnico.
3. Entiendo muy bien qué significa ser parte de mi grupo étnico.
4. He hecho cosas frecuentemente que me ayudan a entender mis antecedentes étnicos mejor.
5. He hablado frecuentemente con otras personas para aprender más sobre mi grupo étnico.
6. Siento una fuerte cercanía a mi propio grupo étnico

The following questions ask you questions about your Mexican ethnic identity. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible.

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
3. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
4. I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.
5. I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.
6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Appendix D: The Meaning in Life Questionnaire

Por favor, dedique un momento a pensar lo que le hace sentir que su vida sea importante y tenga un significado. Con esas ideas en mente, por favor, responda a las siguientes preguntas tan sincera y exactamente como pueda. Y tenga en cuenta que se trata de preguntas muy subjetivas, que no tienen una respuesta correcta o incorrecta.

1 = Totalmente falso
2 = Bastante falso
3 = Más o menos falso
4 = No sé. Ni verdadero ni falso
5 = Más o menos verdadero
6 = Bastante verdadero
7 = Totalmente verdadero

1. Entiendo el significado de mi vida
2. Busco algo que dé sentido a mi vida
3. Siempre busco el propósito de mi vida
4. El propósito de mi vida está claro
5. Tengo buena idea de lo que da sentido a mi vida
6. He descubierto un propósito de vida que me satisface
7. Siempre busco algo para que mi vida se sienta importante
8. Estoy buscando un propósito o misión para mi vida
9. Mi vida no tiene un propósito claro
10. Busco un significado para mi vida

Please take a moment to think about what makes your life and existence feel important and significant to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers.

1 = Absolutely untrue
2 = Mostly untrue
3 = Somewhat untrue
4 = Can't say true or false
5 = Somewhat true
6 = Mostly true
7 = Absolutely true

1. I understand my life's meaning.
2. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
3. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
4. My life has a clear sense of purpose.
5. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
6. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
7. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
8. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.
9. My life has no clear purpose.
10. I am searching for meaning in my life.

Appendix E: The Ethnic Group Scale of the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory

Abajo hay 13 afirmaciones que tienen que ver con su experiencia con la gente de la comunidad mexicana. Escoja la respuesta que le quede mejor.

1 = Nunca o no se aplica	4 = A veces	7 = Casi siempre
2 = Casi nunca	5 = Frecuentemente	
3 = Raramente	6 = Muy frecuentemente	

1. La gente de la comunidad mexicana se ríe de mí cuando intento hablar español
2. La gente de la comunidad mexicana tiene las mismas esperanzas y sueños que yo
3. La gente de la comunidad mexicana acepta mis metas de carrera/trabajo
4. Mi éxito en el trabajo/escuela ha hecho que la gente de la comunidad mexicana esté más cerca de mí
5. Gente de la comunidad mexicana dice que he cambiado
6. La gente de la comunidad mexicana no está muy cercana a mí como lo estuvo antes por los logros que he tenido en el trabajo/escuela
7. Gente de la comunidad mexicana se burla de mí porque yo no hablo español
8. Las personas de la comunidad mexicana me dicen que yo debo portarme más como ellos
9. La gente de la comunidad mexicana me dice que yo soy un 'traidor'
10. La gente de la comunidad mexicana me dice que tengo demasiados amigos blancos
11. Gente de la comunidad mexicana se burla de mí porque yo no hablo español
12. La gente de la comunidad mexicana me dice que yo no soy realmente parte del grupo porque yo no me porto como alguien de la comunidad mexicana
13. La gente de la comunidad mexicana quiere que yo actúe de la manera que actuaba antes

Below are 13 statements that have to deal with experience with people of the Mexican community. Pick the answer that best fits.

1 = Never or does not apply	4 = Sometimes	7 = Extremely often
2 = Almost never	5 = Often	
3 = Rarely	6 = Very often	

1. People of the Mexican community laugh at me when I try to speak my ethnic group's language.
2. People of the Mexican community have the same hopes and dreams as me.
3. People the Mexican community are accepting of my work/career goals.
4. My success in work/school has made people of the Mexican community closer to me.
5. People of the Mexican community say that I have changed.
6. People of the Mexican community are not as close to me as they used to be because of my work/school achievements.
7. People of the Mexican community tease me because I don't know how to speak my ethnic group's language.
8. People of the Mexican community tell me that I need to act more like them.
9. People of the Mexican community tell me that I am a 'sellout.'
10. People of the Mexican community tell me that I have too many White friends.
11. People of the Mexican community tease me because I don't know how to speak my ethnic group's language.
12. People of the Mexican community tell me that I am not really a member of my ethnic group because I don't act like my ethnic group.
13. People of the Mexican community want me to act the way I used to act.

Appendix F: The Discrimination Stress Scale

Las siguientes preguntas se tratan de experiencias que las personas de origen mexicano tienen algunas veces en este país.

1 = Nunca 2 = Algunas veces 3 = Seguido 4 = Muy seguido

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia le tratan a Ud. ruda o injustamente debido a su raza o etnicidad?
2. ¿Con qué frecuencia le discriminan debido a su raza o etnicidad?
3. ¿Con qué frecuencia otras personas le faltan el respeto debido a su raza o etnicidad?
4. ¿Con qué frecuencia tiene que "probar" sus habilidades a otros debido a su raza o etnicidad?
5. ¿Con qué frecuencia el racismo es un problema en su vida?
6. ¿Con qué frecuencia le es difícil encontrar el trabajo que quiere debido a su raza o etnicidad?
7. ¿Con qué frecuencia usted no le cae bien a la gente debido a su raza o etnicidad?
8. ¿Con qué frecuencia ha visto que tratan mal a sus amistades debido a su raza o etnicidad?
9. ¿Con qué frecuencia siente que tiene más barreras que vencer que la mayoría de la gente debido a su raza o etnicidad?
10. ¿Con qué frecuencia se siente rechazado(a) por otros debido a su raza o etnicidad?
11. ¿Con qué frecuencia es su raza o etnicidad una limitación al buscar un buen trabajo?
12. ¿Con qué frecuencia la gente parece tener estereotipos o ideas equivocadas sobre su grupo racial o étnico?
13. ¿Con qué frecuencia la gente trata de impedirle que avance debido a su raza o etnicidad?
14. ¿Con qué frecuencia no recibe el reconocimiento que se merece por su trabajo debido a su raza o etnicidad?

These questions are about experiences that people of Mexican origin sometimes have in this country. Please select the response option that best fits.

1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Very often

1. How often are you treated rudely or unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?
2. How often are you discriminated against because of your race or ethnicity?
3. How often do others lack respect for you because of your race or ethnicity?
4. How often do you have to prove your abilities to others because of your race or ethnicity?
5. How often is racism a problem in your life?
6. How often do you find it difficult to find work you want because of your race or ethnicity?
7. How often do people dislike you because of your race or ethnicity?
8. How often have you seen friends treated badly because of their race or ethnicity?
9. How often do you feel that you have more barriers to overcome than most people because of your race or ethnicity?
10. How often do you feel rejected by others due to your race or ethnicity?
11. How often is your race or ethnicity a limitation when looking for a job?
12. How often do you people seem to have stereotypes about your racial or ethnic group?
13. How often do people try to stop you from succeeding because of your race or ethnicity?
14. How often do you not get as much recognition as you deserve for the work you do, just because of your race or ethnicity?

Appendix G: The Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II

Por favor responda a las siguientes preguntas tan sincera y exactamente como pueda.

1 = Nada
2 = Un poquito o a veces
3 = Moderado
4 = Mucho o muy frecuente
5 = Muchísimo

1. Yo hablo español
2. Yo hablo inglés
3. Me gusta hablar español.
4. Me asocio con anglos
5. Me gusta ver películas en inglés
6. Me gusta ver televisión en español
7. Me gusta ver películas en español
8. Me gusta leer en español
9. Escribo cartas en inglés
10. Mis pensamientos ocurren en el idioma inglés
11. Mis pensamientos ocurren en el idioma español
12. Mis amigos recientes son de origen anglo

Please read the statements and select the box that best fits each statement.

1 = Not at all
2 = Very little
3 = Moderately
4 = Very often
5 = Almost always

1. I speak Spanish
2. I speak English
3. I enjoy speaking Spanish
4. I associate with Anglos
5. I enjoy English language movies
6. I enjoy Spanish language TV
7. I enjoy Spanish language movies
8. I enjoy reading books in Spanish
9. I write letters in English
10. My thinking is done in the English language
11. My thinking is done in the Spanish language
12. My friends are of Anglo origin