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# Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans in the United States: Examining Ethnic and Racial Experiences in Higher Education

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Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans in the United States:

Examining Ethnic and Racial Experiences in Higher Education

by

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**DEDICATION**

I want to dedicate this master's thesis to my family, who migrated to the United States from Cuba and always emphasized the importance of education. Thank you to my mother, Yanet Cruz Cascante, my father Luis Vaillant Téllez, and my little brother Alejandro Marcos Vaillant Cruz. I could not have done this without your support.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

## ABSTRACT

Education research in the United States has vastly excluded Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students from the canon. Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students are presented with unique challenges and opportunities for identity exploration and development at the university level. As Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery argue, higher education institutions extend emerging adulthood or the period in which individuals explore identities and develop a sense of self (Shwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery 2005). Education research in the United States has historically centered around US-based racial formation, suggesting that Blackness and Latinness are mutually exclusive, what researchers Christopher Busey and Carolyn Silva refer to as the "Brown monolith myth" or the homogenization of Latinness (Omi and Winant 2014; Busey and Silva 2020). The exclusion of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans from the education research literature minimizes the diversity of experiences of the Latinx/Latin American ethnic community.

This ethnographic study takes qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with fifteen self-identified Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American collegians. It is a subset of a larger research project sponsored by the University of South Florida's Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC). This study aims to contextualize the ethnoracial experiences of these students, mainly seeking to comprehend their identity formation by examining processes of inclusion/exclusion, representation, access to resources and mentoring opportunities, country of socialization, and migratory statuses. Conclusively, this thesis argues that higher education institutions sometimes assist in strengthening or reshaping the identities of

Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students and higher learning institutions can benefit greatly from understanding their impact on the formation of these students' identities to better serve them by acknowledging their presence on campus and facilitating an on-campus sense of belonging amongst this student population. Furthermore, this thesis contends that the emerging literature on Afro-Latinx collegians has failed to acknowledge the importance of country-of-origin socialization and migratory statuses.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*I feel like nowadays, a lot of people are trying to really pay attention to the fact that like, there's no one way to be Latino, like, it's not a monolith. The same way, there's no monolith in being Black.*
 -Carlos

Angela, an Afro-Honduran recent graduate and staff member at a university, reflects on a time in her undergrad when she was encouraged by two female classmates, whom she had met in a woman and gender studies course, to attend a Latin American Student Association (LASA) event. She describes these classmates as "white passing Latinas"[1]—straight hair and light skin, noting that her appearance differs greatly from theirs. Angela had been hesitant to attend the event, but her classmates persuaded her, assuring her that it would be fun. Her classmates knew of Angela's history of feeling excluded from the Latinx community. At the event, her classmates conversed with the E-Board members and mingled with other attendees, while Angela sat alone quietly. "No one was talking to me."

Since attendees of the event were required to use their student identification cards to check in, Angela walked to the LASA secretary and handed over her ID. The secretary had noticed her presence at the event from the moment she walked, yet he ignored her. However, his demeanor changed upon seeing Angela's last name on her ID card. It was clear that her last name was derived from the Spanish language. "I remember [he] took my ID, and he saw my last name and immediately starts speaking Spanish." Angela was taken aback by the secretary's reaction.

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[1] Here, the participant also engages in a monolithic discourse of what it means to be "Latina." By referring to her classmates as "white-passing Latinas," Angela asserts that while her classmates are "Latinas," they pass as "white." Thus, differentiating "white" from "Latina"—reasoning that one could only be one or the other.

1

"I was like... 'Thank you for your enthusiasm, but I just don't like the way that you completely ignored me for the past 10 minutes..., [and now you want to] have a conversation.'"

Even Angela's classmates noticed this behavior change and remarked that it seemed "weird." This event was the first time Angela had felt heard and believed her classmates. Although she had previously expressed discomfort with attending Latinx student events, her classmates could not fathom why she felt this way. Angela was a Latina like them, so why would she feel excluded from her own community? Angela explained that she has often felt that other Latinos viewed her as a "strange commodity" or "animal in a zoo." She concluded her retelling of this event by commenting, "I just wish that I could go to a majority Latin event and not feel strange." Angela's personal experience narrative poses numerous questions about how [2]Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students identify themselves and are identified by others in the United States. Is this feeling of exclusion a commonality among students of this subpopulation? How do institutions of higher education influence the way students view themselves? Do students' perceptions of their identities change within higher education institutions?

In 2020, the Latinx population in the United States increased by 23 percent from the past decade, reaching 62.1 million and outpacing the overall national population growth rate by 7 percent (Passel, Hugo Lopez, and Cohn 2022). At the time of this research in 2020-2022, Latinos were the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, and by 2050, it was estimated that the Latino population would double (Stokes-Brown 2012; Noe-Bustamante et al. 2020). Consistent with this population growth, Latinx enrollment in higher education institutions was also rapidly

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[2] The terms Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans are employed to differentiate country-of-origin socialization. I refer to those who were raised and socialized in the United States as Afro-Latinx and those who were raised and socialized in Latin America as Afro-Latin Americans (see the terminologies section for more information on this distinction).

growing (Flink 2012). In 2019, 36 percent of Latinx individuals between 18 and 24 were enrolled in a post-secondary institution, lowering the enrollment gap between Latinx and non-Latinx white college students by 5 percent since 2010 (Post-Secondary National Institution 2020).

The rise of Latinx student enrollment in post-secondary institutions denotes a change in the demographic composition of United States colleges and universities. Historically, colleges and universities, with expectations, were established for the privileged class and perpetuated curriculums that excluded people of color. This structure tended to alienate students that did not meet the traditional student profile and, at times, perpetuated structural racism (Rendon 1993; Barber et al. 2020). The mid-1800s saw a boom in public universities—intended to serve the broader United States society that private institutions had once dismissed by some institutions (Douglass 2018). In 1954, the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed the segregation of all institutions of learning (*School Segregation and Integration* n.d.). The establishments of public universities and the integrations of schools and institutions of higher education rewrote some of the racial and socioeconomic exclusions propagated by these educational institutions.

However, by the time of this research, some politicians were problematizing these educational institutions by labeling them too "woke" or left-leaning—which correlates with the increase of Latinx enrollment in higher education institutions. For example, legislation and directives in numerous states were implemented to ban the teaching of critical race theory and conversations about race-based inequalities in K-12 schools. In Florida, the Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (W.O.K.E.) Act was passed, with Governor Ron DeSantis boldly asserting, "[i]n Florida we are taking a stand against the state-sanctioned racism that is critical

race theory" (Anderson and Svrluga 2022; Florida Government Staff 2021). Similar initiatives began to spring up in some higher education institutions, where the use of critical race theory also came under fire. Republican Alabama State Representative Ed Oliver stated, "[i]f you don't think universities are indoctrinating your kids, everybody needs to wake up" (Anderson and Svrlug 2022). While higher education institutions in the United States have come a long way, this attempt to outlaw discussions of racial inequities has threatened the voices of students and faculty of color; this is significant as studies (see studies listed in the next paragraph) have shown that the college campus can influence the ethnic identity development of minority students.

Minority students report more marginalization and discrimination in higher education than their white non-Latino counterparts (Gay 2004; Barber et al. 2020). For Latinos, studies indicate that institutions of higher learning can serve as spaces for identity exploration and development (Case and Hernández 2013; Reyes 2017). Nevertheless, education research focusing on the Latino population has widely neglected the experiences of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans, focusing mainly on the Mexican American population—the Latino subgroup that is least likely to identify as Afro-descendant (Torres 2004; Logan 2003). The Afro-Latin and Afro-Latin American subpopulation has remained significantly underserved and misrepresented in education literature and higher education institutions. Higher education institutions could better serve Afro-Latin and Afro-Latin American students by creating inclusion on campus by acknowledging this student subpopulation's history and presence.

Furthermore, education research in the United States has traditionally been written through the lens of US-based racial formation, presenting the Latino population through what researchers Dr. Christopher Busey and Carolyn Silva refer to as the "Brown monolith myth"—in which Blackness and Latinidad are perceived as mutually exclusive (Omi and Winant 2014;

Busey and Silva 2020). I propose that education research on this subpopulation should move away from US-based racial formation and adopt an *ethnoracialization model* in which migration status and country of socialization are considered when studying these students' identity formation (Brown and Jones 2015). I suggest that reframing *how* Latinx people and Latin Americans are studied will create more accurate depictions of Latinos and lead to more inclusionary policy initiatives by academic institutions.

**Research Aims and Questions**

This study is a subset of a larger research project sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) at the University of South Florida. A research team consisting of myself, recent graduate Sharon Benitez, graduate student Joel Ramírez, and Dr. Beatriz Padilla carried out numerous interviews over two years and were integral to the research design. For this thesis, I will be using the portion of the data generated from this larger project, focusing only on the Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American participants interviewed (see chapter three for more details). This ethnographic research study focuses on the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students within the context of the United States by unpacking how institutions for higher education serve as a space for identity exploration and development.

The study also addresses how instances of ethnoracial discrimination in the academy influence Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students' identities and feelings of belonging and acceptance at their institution. While the focus of this thesis is not academic achievement per se, it is important to note that events of ethnoracial discrimination can have a negative impact on minority college students' academic performance (Stevens, Liu, and Chen 2018). This study highlights the diversity of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American identities

with a strong focus on the intersection of race, ethnicity, and migration. It recognizes that the emerging literature on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans fails to emphasize country of origin racial socialization and the importance of migratory statuses. Thus, this study attempts to fill this knowledge gap through qualitative data. The ISLAC research team developed several research questions for the larger ISLAC-sponsored study. I used the subset of these questions that were most appropriate for this the focus of this thesis. This thesis tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students negotiate their ethnoracial identity on campus?

   2. How do incidents of discrimination or "racial and/or ethnic challenging" in higher education impact Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college identity formation?

   3. What role do generation, migration, and country of origin play in the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students?

2. 4. Do Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students feel a sense of belonging and representation at the institution? And if so, in what spaces? (e.g., Latinx student unions, Black Student Unions, etc.)

   a. Do Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students believe higher education institutions do enough to create inclusion and understanding of their perceived ethnoracial identity?

   b. Do Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students feel represented and their identity respected at their institution?

c. What on-campus communities and organizations are Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students more inclined to participate in?

d. Do Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students have access to and awareness of campus resources and mentorship?

The applied objective of this project is to employ the qualitative data generated to present potential initiatives for higher education institutions to more aptly serve Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students through inclusionary practices. For two years (2020-2022), I worked for the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) as a graduate assistant and assisted in creating programs that aid Latinx and Latin American students, with a special focus on those of Afro-descendants.

**Terminologies**

Participants in this study (described below) had the freedom to choose what term would be used for their identification. The ISLAC research team did not impose terminologies on our participants. For clarity, I chose to employ the terms Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American to refer to our participants. *Latinx* is a term that became popular in academic spheres to refer to individuals with Latin American origins who collectively identify within and outside the gender binary; it became an alternative to Latino/a. Furthermore, to distinguish between the racial socialization of Latinx people and Latin Americans based on their country of socialization, Afro-Latinx, and Afro-Latin Americans will be used to highlight the distinction between those raised and socialized in the United States from those raised and socialized in Latin America. As shown in Table 1, most participants self-identified as Afro-Latino, Afro-Latina, or Afro-Latinx. It is important to note that some participants accepted multiple terms of identification, such as

country of origin, [3]Black, and Afro-Latinx, with "Black" being the second most popular identifier. The various terminologies of identification used by participants and their decision to actively use them indicate that terms are a form of identity expression for the study participants. Although participants had the opportunity to select terms for their identification, I have elected to utilize Afro-*Latinx* and Afro-*Latin American* for expediency. However, these were not always the identifying terms participants preferred, and some employed different terms contextuality.

**Table 1.** Participant Terms of Identification

| Terminology of Identification | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Afro-Latino, Afro-Latina, or Afro-Latinx | 9 | 64% |
| Afro-Country of Origin (e.g., Afro-Honduran) | 2 | 14% |
| Country of Origin | 4 | 29% |
| Latino, Latina, or Latinx | 1 | 7% |
| Black | 4 | 29% |

\* Some participants used multiple terms of identification (such as country of origin only and Afro-Latino, Afro-Latina, or Afro-Latinx)

**Thesis Outline**

*Chapter Two* examines the existing literature on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American collegians and identity formation. It provides an overview of the emerging literature on this topic. These issues are framed in the literature of the anthropology of education.

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[3]When referring to culture, race, and ethnicity, *Black* will be capitalized, while *white* will not, in order to challenge hegemonic views on race.

*Chapter Three* demonstrates the methodology of this project. This chapter includes a resume of the larger Institute for the Study of Latin America sponsored research study, of which this project is a subsect. This chapter discusses participants, data collection, the recruitment process, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

*Chapter Four* presents qualitative findings that address research questions 1 and 2. This chapter breaks down the participants' feelings about ethnoracial identity and identity formation milestones that served as identity exploration and development. Through participant testimonials, this chapter begins to deconstruct the significance of the university as a space for identity formation.

*Chapter Five* unpacks the impact of migratory statuses, generations, and geography on the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students. This consideration is typically missing from the emerging literature on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students. This chapter argues that Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American identities are more complex than sometimes presented in the emerging literature on this subpopulation. It also examines the differences in experiences between Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students due to the country of racial socialization. This chapter focuses on question 3 and its various sub-questions.

*Chapter Six* addresses instances of ethnoracism in higher education to better comprehend how these events impact the identity development of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students. Due to institutional inequalities and white hegemony in the United States, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students will likely experience ethnoracism and subjugation during their lifetime (Helms, Nicolas, and Green, 2012). As institutions of higher learning continue to replicate these larger societal inequalities, occurrences of ethnoracism on campus

still occur. Thus, these instances can affect the identity formation of this student subpopulation. This chapter attempts to comprehend how ethnoracism on campus influences Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students' identity formation through the qualitative data generated.

*Chapter Seven* discusses the on-campus affiliations and communities of the participants of this study. It also discusses student resources—what resources students have prior to entering institutions of higher education and what resources are provided by their university or college. It highlights the significance of student organizations and communities on the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes this student subpopulation's on-campus "feelings of belonging" and questions if Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans truly feel represented, respected, and safe at their institutions. The availability of mentorship and the awareness of campus resources are also underscored in this chapter. Overall, Chapter Seven attempts to answer research question four and its sub-questions.

*Chapter Eight* discusses the ethnographic data presented in the previous four chapters of this thesis while providing potential contributions to applied anthropology and theory. It also emphasizes the applied implications of this project while displaying the initiatives taken by the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean to improve the status of Latinx and Latin American collegians, including those of Afro-descendants.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Latinx and Latin American enrollment in post-secondary institutions has grown exponentially. The enrollment rate for 18 to 24-year-old Latinx college students rose from 22 to 36 percent from 2000 to 2018 (Flink 2012; National Center for Education Statistics 2020). While, in the United States, education research has heavily focused on the Mexican American subjectivities, the Latinx subgroup that is least likely to identify as an Afro-descendant; a 2016 Pew Research Center report found that a quarter of Latinx people in the United States self-identify as what I am here calling Afro-Latinx (Torres 2004; Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020; López and González-Barrera 2016). Thus, I argue that when education researchers apply umbrella terms such as *Latinx* and *Hispanic* when only presenting Mexican American experiences, they oversimplify the Latinx identity and misrepresent the experiences of this pan-ethnic population (Logan 2003).

As mentioned above, education researchers Christopher Busey and Carolyn Silva assert that referring to the Latinx ethnic group as "Brown" in education research depicts them as a homogenous group; they refer to this homogenization as the "Brown monolith myth" (Busey and Silva 2020). Busey and Silva problematize the use of the word "Brown"' as originating from anti-Black Latin American political rhetoric and ideologies of *mestizaje* ("race" and cultural mixing), such as *la raza cósmica* ("the cosmic race—an idea espoused in Mexican nationalism to extoll the image of the "Mestizo," seen as a mixture of European and Native "race" and culture) racial democracy, racial paradise, and lusotropicalism (Busey and Silva 2020).

The "Brown monolith myth" situates the Latinx people and Latin Americans, a heterogeneous pan-ethnic population, into United States-based racial formation and substantially misrepresents Latinness. The erasure of Latinx ethnoracial heterogeneity leads to the racialization of this pan-ethnicity (Grosfoguel 2004). Recently, new literature has emerged regarding Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students. Black Latina scholars have spearheaded the expanding recognition of in education literature; their unwillingness to allow Afro-Latinx people and Afro-Latin Americans to be erased from the education research canon has prompted a growing study of this matter (Busey 2021; Dache, Haywood, and Mislán 2019). Nevertheless, more in-depth ethnographic research on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students is still necessary.

### Anthropological Understanding of Identities

While how individuals and groups construct themselves and their conceptions of identity and belonging have been of interest to anthropologists since the field's inception. The term, itself, is relatively new and did not emerge until the 1960s when psychologist Erik Erickson's produced work on psychological development (Griffiths 2015; Identity and Belonging n.d.) Erickson viewed identity as something children lacked, and adults aimed to have. In his conceptualization of identity, individuals formed identity through a process of identity formation brought upon an identity crisis (Golubović 2011). On a basic level, identity refers to the language used to characterize "who's who (and hence, 'what's what')" (Jenkins 2014, 5). Jenkins (2014) defines *identity* as a "multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as a member of collectives" (Jenkins 2014, 5). Identity is not a tangible "thing" but rather a process of identification. Jenkins maintains that identity "is not something that one can *have,* or not; it something that one *does*" (Jenkins 2014, 5).

Nevertheless, it is common for individuals to speak of their identity as something that can be had, lost, held on to strongly, weakly, or changed—this is demonstrated through the testimonies of the participants of this study. It is important to recognize that identities are complex because they are not neutral classification—meaning "humans are generally not disinterested classifiers" (Jenkins 2014, 6). Classifications have hierarchies because identification "has to be *made* to matter" (Jenkin 2014, 6). As Jenkins (2014) expresses, while identifications are correlated to behavior and motivations, they are not always predictable nor straightforward (Jenkins 2014, 6-7).

Identity became a part of the anthropological vocabulary through the Manchester School and was influenced by the sociological concepts of social constructivism and symbolic interactionism (Mitchell 2010). The first wave of anthropological writings on identity focused on ethnic identity and the contextualization and construction of ethnicity, particularly concerning political contexts. American anthropologists of the 1970s became preoccupied with the emerging "identity politics," which requested the acknowledgment of distinctions in "race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, etc." (Mitchell 2010, 368). *Identity* has been defined as "both a category of analysis and a category of practice" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, cited in Mitchell 2010, 368). Mitchell argues that as a category of analysis, the use of "identity" by anthropologists has been "soft," "essentialist," and "weak," reasoning that the anthropological use of identity is vague and marked with looseness, driving it to lose its utility.

While these arguments hold salience, it is also important to understand that individuals may choose to claim identities and classifications. Individuals may hold perceptions of who they are (*personal identities*) and who they are in the context of the collective *(collective identities).* Although identity is a construct, those who view themselves as having "identities" assign value

to them. Identities may be used as indicators of *whom* some individuals perceive themselves to be. In the anthropological conceptualization of identities, identity is divided into *collective* and *personal identity.* The collective identity refers to group identities that first are established through the "primary group" or socialization within the nuclear family and then later through "secondary socializations" (or socialization outside of the family, such as at school). In comparison, personal identity is said to derive from an individual's own determination and free choices separate from the collective (Golubović 2010).

Although the classifications that the individuals hold for themselves and others are social constructs, they inform the individuals' decisions, how others treat them, and how *they* treat others. Therefore, the study of people's perceived identity enables anthropologists to comprehend how people establish their sense of self and how these identities facilitate interaction with others. In this thesis the study of identities will be done through the emic perspective or through my conceptualization of how participants think about themselves and those around them based on their testimonials and self-identified identities. It examines how the study participants situate themselves regarding *their* perceived identities and groups. The emic perspective then gives insight into how social interactions are informed by individuals' perceived positionalities and identities (Bernard 2017).

**Understanding Patterns of Racial Formation**

Racial formation theory, introduced by Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994), explains *race* through ethnicity, assimilation, social class, colonialism, and nation within the context of the United States. Omi and Winant refute the notion that race is biological and instead argue that race stems from "conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning" (Feagin and Sean 2013; Omi and Winant 2014).

Omi and Winant explain that *race* is a social construction shaped by social conflicts and sociohistorical events. *Race* is thus, "constructed and transformed sociohistorically through competing political projects" (Omi and Winant 2014, 369). Nevertheless, although race is neither biological nor genetic, social constructions of race have real implications for minoritized peoples (Mukhopadhyay et al. 2013). While Omi and Winant focused on racial formation within the context of the United States, the concept of racial formation can be applied globally. It can be maintained that each nation constructs its own racial formation based on its sociohistorical and political projects. While not every nation has the power to construct itself on equal terms to other nations, the construction of local systems of racial formation persists as actors such as class and the state cannot be separated from structural racism.

In the United States, racial formation is constructed into what is sometimes referred to as the white/Black binary, in which race is dichotomized into two categories: white and Black. Groups that do not fit seamlessly into this binary are then racialized in association with white or Black (Omi and Winant; Alcoff 2003). Therefore, United States-based racial formation racializes Latinx identity and presents Blackness and Latinness as mutually exclusive (Flores and Jiménez Román 2009). However, racial formation in Latin America is far more intricate than in the United States. While some Latinx people have acculturated into the US-based racial formation, some continue to orient themselves within the racial formation of the Latin American country in which they were socialized (López and González-Barrera 2016). Socialization refers to "interactive processes—their structures, contents, contexts, and actors—in and through which one learns to be an actor—to engage in interaction, to occupy statuses, to enact roles, and to forge social relationships…" (Poole 2002, 832; Persell 1990).

Many Latin American countries and territories, informed by the region's history of colonization, employ phenotypic attributes, such as skin color and hair texture, to establish complex racial categories and sub-categories that originate from colonial logic, such as the colonial *castas* (castes) system (Telles and Pachel 2014). For instance, anthropologist Umi Vaughan's analysis of Cuban racial formation gives insight into the complexity of the racial categories of the region. Vaughan notes that in Cuba, there are a plethora of "in-between-categories" utilized to denote an individual's race—*trigueño/a*, *moro/a*, *mulato/a*, and *jabao/a* (Vaughan 2005). These categories distinguish particular phenotypic attributes to categorize (e.g., *trigueño/a*, or having wheat-colored skin and *jabao/a* or having fair skin and curly hair) (Vaughan 2005).

In Brazil, racial categories focus on color rather than the supposed "biological race," as is common in the United States. In 2000 Brazil began featuring five color categories in their census—*branco* (white), *preto* (Black), *pardo* (Brown), *amarelo* (Yellow), *Indígena* (indigenous) (Nobles 2000, 1743). Edward Telles and Tiana Paschel attribute the plethora of racial classifications and the racial fluidity of Latin America to "*blanqueamineto*" or "whitening-logic," in which it is common practice for individuals to evade racial terms such as "Black" (Telles and Paschel 2014). Some scholars have referred to Latin American racial formation as a "racial continuum" or "color continuum," in which race is constructed on a spectrum of color and other phenotypical categorization, thus, making Latin American racial formation far more flexible than the US-based white/Black binary (Hoetink 1985; Omi and Winant 2014, 15).

Anthropologist Peter Wade argues that racial formation strengthens national identity and unity for dominant groups by excluding those that are not a part of the dominant group through racism and discrimination. Wade writes, "[r]acism can therefore present itself as a form of

'super-nationalism' and virulent ideas of national inheritance, the national body, national purity, and aesthetic ideals of nations men (and women)" (Wade 2001, 848; see, also, Anderson 2006). United States-based racial formation, which is highly exclusionary, creates a sense of "inclusion" for a those in the dominant group, strengthening identity for those who have power in the imagined community (Anderson 2006; Wade 2001). This thesis problematizes the sole use of US-based racial formation in education research, as it does not consider that migrants or children of migrants may bring their understandings of racial formation. Education research would also benefit from incorporating migration studies and the *ethnoracialization model.*

## Panethencity and the Ethnoracialization Models

Migration has disrupted the white/Black binary in the United States, transforming a once "biracial nation" into a multiethnic society (Brown and Jones 2015; Lee and Bean 2004). Scholarship on pan-ethnicity has risen due to increased migration and demographic shifts, yet pan-ethnicity has rarely been studied in relation to racialization—scholarship has commonly presented the two as distinct processes (Brown and Jones 2015, 182). Pan-ethnicity refers to "the grouping together of individuals with previously distinct ethnic identities under one broader and encompassing label" (Brown and Jones 2015, 182). The pan-ethnicity model views group formation as occurring after the adoption and mobilization around group ascription (Brown and Jones 2015, 182). Sociologists Hana Brown and Jennifer A. Jones reason that pan-ethnicity relates to racialization and propose a new model of group formation named *the ethnoracialization model* (Brown and Jones 2015, 186). This model views treats ascription and self-identification as an ongoing process interrelated (Brown and Jones 2015, 189).

The study of Latinness in the United States can benefit significantly from the ethnoracialization model as it acknowledges both migration and racialization, which is more

suitable for depicting Latinx subjectivities as it encompasses the complexity of this identity. In this thesis, the analysis of the Latinx pan-ethnicity will always be done in relation to the ethnoscape or "the landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals" (Appadurai 1996, 33). Panethencity can be employed as a theoretical tool to unpack how people are defined or identified and who has the power to define or identify them. Furthermore, sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel argues that the Latinx people are "racialized ethnicities," which he attributes to power relations established through coloniality, referred to as "colonial situations" (Grosfoguel 2004). He explains, "[by] 'colonial situations,' I mean the cultural, political, and economic oppression of subordinate racialized ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups, with or without the existence of colonial administrations" (Grosfoguel 2004, 320). Migrants in the United States have often come from nations and regions that the United States has dominated and, due to global divisions of labor, are considered to come from a country of low standing (Grosfoguel 2004, 322). He argues that racialized ethnic groups are "colonial subjects" who have been racialized through subjugation (Grosfoguel 2004).

Henceforth, as Peter Wade notes in his argument, the dominant racial/ethnic groups' exclusion of migrants through discriminatory actions benefits dominant groups and ultimately leads to the racialization of said migrants (Wade 2001; Grosfoguel 2004, 320). Although Latinx people are a pan-ethnicity and are pan-racial, they have become a *racialized ethnicity* through their marginalization. In particular, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans are left to negotiate their ethnic and racial identities. In the United States, Latinx people have historically been racialized underneath the "Brown monolith myth" (Busey and Silva 2020). Political scientist Tiffany Howard asserts that "Afro-Latinos face additional challenges with respect to the

formation of their personal and social identity given the demarcations of race and ethnicity in the

United States" (Howard 2017, 29). Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans' *ethnoracialization* is

multifaceted and must be studied through an intersectional lens. Through ethnoracialization and

by nature of being "colonial subjects," their identity formation takes numerous forms, and the

university can serve as a playground for identity exploration and development.

### Unpacking Identity Formation in Higher Education

Scholars Juan Flores and Miriam Jiménez Román reframe Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin

American identity formation around what they have dubbed the "triple consciousness," taking

inspiration from Pan-Africanist scholar W.E.B. DuBois's concept of "double-consciousness"

found in his book The *Souls of Black Folk* (Flores and Jiménez Román 2009; DuBois 1903).

DuBois famously wrote of "his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls; two thoughts, two

unreconciled strivings; to warring ideals in one dark body" about the intricacy of African

American identity (DuBois 1903, 9). DuBois emphasized the racialized experience of African

Americans through 'double-consciousness,' noting that African Americans fit in a liminal space

between the Black racial identity and their "American" ethnic identity. Flores and Jiménez

Román assert that "four theoretical coordinates" need to be considered when conceptualizing

Afro-Latinx subjectivities in the context of the United States (Flores and Jiménez Román 2009,

321):

> the tradition of the group of Afro-Latinos themselves, the transnational discourse or
> ethnoscape, the historical and ongoing relationship between Latinos and African
> Americans, and the distinctive phenomenological experience of what it means to be both
> Black *and* Latino in this country.

Thus, triple-consciousness encompasses more than just ethnoracial identity. This thesis suggests that Afro-Latinx people and Afro-Latin Americans must be understood on a multi-dimensional level that considers ethnicity, race, migration, generation, and migratory status.

Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery contend that in the 20th century United States, the university serves as a place of identity exploration for young adults as they continue to consolidate their perceived identity well into their early adulthood (Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery 2005). They cite Jeffery Arnett's concept of emerging adulthood (early to mid-20s) used to describe the postponement of significant "adulthood" events, such as parenthood and permanent employment, due to their university years. Thus, they argue that attending an institution of higher learning during "emerging adulthood" enables young adults to explore identity options and construct a sense of identity (Arnett 2000; Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery 2005). For minority students, the university can play a significant role in their identity exploration and development (Gay 2004). Studies have shown that higher education institutions can strengthen minority students' identities and ignite these students to construct pan-racial coalitions that challenge systems of inequality at their institutions.

Research has also demonstrated that student organizations and activism coalitions increase minority students; overall self-esteem and sense of empowerment (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020). Minority students are more likely to build coalitions if they know of historical role models, have developed anti-racism ideologies, and have an established identity (Literte 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that Greek-letter organization affiliation by post-secondary students increase their sense of ethnic identity and leads to homophily (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020, 155). The university may be space to explore multiple self-ascribed and imposed identities for Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students.

A recent study by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman and Edlin Veras found that post-secondary institutions are influential in the self-discovery and identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-American college students (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020). Concurrent to the findings presented by Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery, the study conducted by Hordge-Freeman and Veras correlates identity exploration with admission into institutions of higher learning as young adults entering colleges or universities often experience complete independence for the first time and can engage in new "relationships, activities, and friendship groups without being under the critical eyes of their families" (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020, 155). Furthermore, they note that courses, particularly those on the African Diaspora or within Africana Studies, enable Afro-Latinx to fill knowledge gaps about their racial and ethnic identity (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020). Thus, higher education institutions not only act as a space for exploration in terms of relationships and communities, but exposure to new course material can also rework students' understanding of themselves and their perceived identities.

The article "A Badge of Honor not Shame," written by three Afro-Latina scholars, uses their narratives to share different positionalities of Afro-Latinas navigating higher education. This article addresses how unique Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American subjectivities truly are. While in one of the narratives shared, the subject expressed not being perceived as "Black enough," another shared not being perceived as "Latina enough" (Dache et al. 2019). In the first narrative, an Afro-Latina faculty member met another Latina faculty member with whom she had been exchanging emails but had never met in person. Upon meeting, the Latina faculty member questioned the narrator about her ancestry, to which the narrator responded in Spanish to emphasize her "Latinness." The narrator reflected on how her Latinx identity was being questioned because of her phenotypical features and concluded her narrative by stating, "I did

not join the Latinx organization at my university. Instead, I became an affiliate in the Black Studies Department and Afro-Romance Languages Institute" (Dache et al. 2019, 136).

Intriguingly, another narrative shared in this article expressed a completely different sentiment. In the second narrative, an Afro-Puerto Rican woman expressed how she has to navigate "Blackness" in a white/Binary world, explicating that she identified with what she defined as her African roots but was constantly questioned for not fitting into US-centered "Blackness." She noted that during a debate with a white male colleague about the significance of President Barack Obama to representation, she was told by her colleague that "because [she] was *not* Black, [she] could not proceed to know Black communities perceived Obama's presidency" (Dache et al. 2019, 136). In these two narratives, it is apparent that Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American subjectivities are also not a monolith and that others, including African Americans and other Latinx people, may attempt to impose identities based on their understanding of ethnoracialization and racial formation. Both these Afro-Latina scholars expressed how outsiders questioned their ethnoracial identity in higher education spaces. At times these imposed identities can lead to conscious decisions of how and where to align oneself, as in the case of the first narrative, where the Afro-Latina scholar decided not to participate in the Latinx organization. These narratives are a microcosm of situations at post-secondary institutions that strengthen or mold identities, especially for minority students.

## Mentorship, Representation, and Ethnic Spaces

In 2015, faculty from the University of South Florida's Department of Anthropology published an article collaborating with three Ph.D. post-graduates to create a plan for reaching underserved students. They proposed three components that higher education institutions could use to support underrepresented students—recruitment, retention, and representation (Yelvington

et al. 2015). Representation and mentorship are one of the most critical components of how universities can support underrepresented students. Afro-Latinx students may find that their ethnoracial identities are challenged by higher education institutions and may face subjugation as members of an ethnoracial minority.

For these students, representation, faculty mentorship, and departmental support are especially pertinent (Dache et al. 2019). In 2018, only 6 percent of all full-time faculty in the United States identified as Latinx or Latin American compared to 75 percent of faculty who identified as white non-Latinx individuals (National Centers for Education Statistics 2021). At the University of South Florida, my home institution, by 2020, 66 percent of faculty members were white compared to 6 percent of faculty who identify as Latinx or Latin American. Overall, most University of South Florida faculty at this time were white, male, and over 60 years of age (University of South Florida 2020). In 2021, 22.2 percent of the University of South Florida students identified as Latinx or Latin American, and the university was well on its way to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) (University of South Florida 2021). Even at the University of South Florida, located in Tampa, Florida, an area with a population of 26.2 percent of Latinx people in 2020, only 6 percent of faculty members identified as Latinx that same year (while 66 percent of USF faculty identified as non-Latinx white) (U.S. Census Bureau 2021; University of South Florida ). The article written by the University of South Florida Department of Anthropology faculty asserted that faculty representation is imperative, and diversifying course material to include underrepresented scholars' work is just as vital (Yelvington et al. 2015).

Additionally, a study by the University of Washington found that creating "ethnic spaces" in higher education institutions, such as establishing cultural centers, made

underrepresented students feel more welcomed and represented (Eckart 2020). University of Washington researcher Teri Kirby stated, "[ethnic spaces] are more than just gathering places—they show students from underrepresented ethnic groups that they are welcome at the university" (Eckart 2020). 'Ethnic spaces' are yet another viable way to make Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students feel more represented; however, these spaces are being threatened by budget cuts (Eckart 2020).

Studies demonstrate that mentorship is particularly important for minority students and encourages learning, leadership, and career development (Johnson 2016). Mentors in higher education can facilitate students to pursue their dreams and help them maintain resiliency (Ramos 2019). The United States Department of Education notes that faculty representation of underrepresented student groups may raise these students' feelings of academic validation. Furthermore, faculty and mentors who share students' ethnoracial backgrounds may have more of a cultural understanding of their students and hold them to higher expectations (Schak 2016). Universities and colleges can create safe spaces for Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students to explore their identities through more representation, ethnic spaces, and mentorship.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The emerging literature on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students has largely drawn upon qualitative research methods. "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 10). However, additional ethnographic research is necessary as literature on this topic is only now emerging. An applied anthropological approach is valuable here as the narratives of participants interviewed can be employed to suggest potential initiatives to improve the status of this student subpopulation. In this project, ethnographic data from semi-structured interviews give insight into the lived ethnoracial experiences of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students (Bernard and Gravlee 2014, 353).

Because of time constraints, participants in this study were only interviewed once. Semi-structured interviews enabled members of the study team (described below) to ask uniform questions for each interview through the use of an interview guide while also asking questions relevant to each specific interview, known as "probing" (Bernard 2017, 212). As H. Russel Bernard notes, "written guides are an absolute must if you are sending out several interviewers to collect data" (Bernard 2017, 212). Since this was a collaborative project, an interview guide was crucial to ensuring that each participant was asked the same questions. Specifically, these interviews gave perspicuity of how the university plays a substantial role in affirming or reaffirming identity among this student subpopulation.

## Data Generation

The methodology for this research is principally based on constructing an ethnography on the ethnoracial experiences and identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students (undergraduate and graduate) within the United States. This research is a part of an ongoing study sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) at the University of South Florida titled "Latinx and Latin Americans: Mapping Ethnic and Racial Experiences," which encompasses the experiences of Latinx and Latin Americans faculty, students, and staff in higher education, including the experiences of Afro-descendants. As part of my graduate assistantship appointment at ISLAC, I participated in all phases of this study, including research design (see Table 2). All the semi-structured interviews were video, and audio recorded over the video conference platform Zoom with the consent of the participants.

**Table 2.** Phases of Research Methodology

| |
|---|
| Phase 1:<br>• Study staff from the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) first created the research design and system of operations. Subsequently, the staff established an interview guide and recruitment materials, including a flyer set to be shared through social media and listservs.<br>• The ISLAC study staff then submitted all the materials to the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board Approval (IRB), and was approved on November 25, 2020. (IRB # 001763) |
| Phase 2:<br>• Recruitment of participants began after the approval of the Institutional Review Board. Recruitment primarily came from university listservs, snowball sampling, and social media. As the ISLAC study staff began conducting semi-structured interviews recorded via Zoom, recruitment continued. |
| Phase 3:<br>• After each interview, the ISLAC research team entered demographic information about each participant in an excel sheet. This spreadsheet served as an organizational tool for the research team. The ISLAC research team saved the audio recordings of each interview with participants to a password-protected box folder that can only be accessed by authorized study staff. The study staff then transcribed each interview using the transcription platform Otter.ai. Finally, the study staff coded research data using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA. |

**Research Design**

The ISLAC study staff team consists of the principal investigator Dr. Beatriz Padilla (Interim Director of ISLAC and faculty member in USF's Department of Sociology), and two ISLAC-affiliated student researchers, with the inclusion of myself. The first phase of this study consisted of a review of education research, race studies, anthropological and sociological literature on Latinx and Latin American collegians, including the subpopulation concentrated on in this thesis. During the first phase of this project, the ISLAC study staff also created a semi-structured interview guide and an informal system of operation. The ISLAC study staff then submitted a proposal, interview guide, and recruitment material to the USF's Institutional Review Board. Approval was received from the IRB and was labeled as a minimal risk study in early December 2020.

The second phase of the broader ISLAC-sponsored research project began in December 2020; data collection commenced in this phase. College students, faculty, and staff who identified as Latinx and Latin American were interviewed through the wider project. Only a portion of these participants identified as Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students—the target demographic of this thesis. Participants of this study were asked about their family and background, academic journey, college friends, identity and changes to their identity, on-campus affiliations and communities, knowledge of campus resources, feeling of belonging at their institution, and instances of discrimination or exclusion within higher education. These were open-ended questions, and participants were encouraged to go into detail and speak candidly about their experiences. The interviews typically ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. The participants partly dictated the length of the interviews, as participants who

elaborated on questions tended to have longer interviews. While most of the interviews were in English, some were in Spanish. Many participants used foreign language words in their English-language interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to construct understanding and themes based on the narrative provided by participants; thus, semi-structured interviews were an excellent fit for the nature of this study (Bernard and Gravlee 2014, 353).

## Research Site

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews cannot be conducted in person out of consideration for both the researchers' and participants' health and safety. Hence, the ISLAC study staff conducted all semi-structured interviews for this study via video conference platforms, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This virtual research setting benefitted the study greatly as the ISLAC research staff recruited participants from universities across the United States—giving insight into how geography affirms and reshapes identity formation. However, most participants resided in the Tampa Bay and Orlando metropolitan areas. Hence, the unforeseen circumstance brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic enabled the ISLAC research team to reach a much wider population of Latinx and Latin American students, faculty, and staff.

## Participant Recruitment

Recruitment transpired through targeted email listservs and flyers posted (see figure 1) on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. A primary method for recruitment used in this study was snowball sampling—recruiting participants via connections and rapport with other participants or through word of mouth (Bernard and Gravlee 2014, 675). I accounted for various demographic factors such as gender, country of origin, time spent in the United States,

generation, and migratory status with variability in mind. The ISLAC research study staff

developed criteria for inclusion listed below:



**ARE YOU LATIN AMERICAN/ LATINX/AFROLATINX AT USF?**

We are looking for members of these communities
to engage in research about your experience in higher education.

We are looking for participants that:
- Identify as Latinx/Afrolatinx or
- Identify as Latin American

- USF affiliated as
  - student
  - staff
  - faculty member

- Interviews may last over an hour and audio
recorded via Microsoft Teams/Zoom

**IRB - STUDY # 1763**
This research is sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Latin America and
the Caribbean - ISLAC

**For questions, please contact Dr. Beatriz Padilla:**
padillab@usf.edu
INTERVIEWS ARE ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

**Figure 1.** Flyer for Participant Recruitment Developed for Larger ISLAC-Sponsored Projected at the University of South Florida circulated via social media and email listservs.

The criteria for inclusion used to recruit participants are listed below:

a. Participants self-identify as Afro-Latinx or Afro-Latin American.

b. Participant or one/both of the participant's parents are of Latin American origin.

    i. The ISLAC research team has identified Latin America as the region in the

Americas that was colonized by the Spanish, Portuguese, and French or other

Latin/romance language-speaking nations, with including the Caribbean.

       1.   Thus, participants from non-Spanish-speaking countries and territories

           were included in this study (e.g., Haitians).

   c.   Participants are college students or alumni (undergraduate or graduate).

   d.   In this study, participants were identified as Afro-Latin American have been socialized

      most of their life in Latin America and have lived in the United States for at least a year.

      Many of these participants were international students or later-in-life migrants.

## Sample

A total sample of fifteen self-identified Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students were recruited for this study to comprehend the university's role in the affirmation and reaffirmation of identity formation of this student subpopulation. As we saw in Table 1, these participants use several self-identifying ethnonyms that do not necessarily include Afro-Latinx or Afro-Latin American. Feasibility and access to participants drove the fairly small sample size—eight of the participants in this study identified as female and seven as male. In previous studies of this nature, Afro-Latinas have typically been overrepresented within the pool of participants. For example, in Hordge-Freeman and Veras's study on Afro-Latinx identity formation, 91 percent of the participants were women (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020). Seven of the 15 participants of this study identify as male, making this pool of participants fairly diverse. Only three participants met the criteria of Afro-Latin American. The majority of the participants were born or raised in the United States. The ISLAC research staff was unable to recruit Afro-Brazilian participants.

Four participants identified as Haitian, and eight were multi-ethnic, with parents from two or more nations and territories (see Tables 3 and 4). Three of the four Haitian participants were multi-ethnic, with part of their ancestry deriving from a Spanish-speaking Latin American

country, and self-identified as Afro-Latinx or Afro-Latin American. One participant solely had

Haitian ancestry but self-identified as Afro-Latina. While if Haitians, particularly those

socialized in the United States, should identify as Afro-Latinx has been widely debated, I believe

these individuals should have the agency to self-identify. Ayanna Legros writes in her article,

"As a Haitian-American Woman, I Know I'm Afro-Latina but It's Time for You to

Acknowledge It Too," "I identify as Afro-Latina because my family comes from an island in

Latin America...I'm an Afro-Latina because my ancestors gave Latin Americans an alternative to

enslavement. When I assert the term, I am declaring that every Independence Day Latinxs

celebrate would not exists without Haiti" (Legros 2018). While some have contested this article,

it supports the idea that Haitian people should be allowed to self-identify.

**Table 3.** Participant Profiles

| Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Ethnicity | Place of Birth | Years in the US | Language Spoken at Home |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alberto | 37 | Male | Puerto Rican/ Dominican | Puerto Rico | 20 | English/Spanish |
| Angela | 24 | Female | Honduran | United States | NA | English/Spanish/ Garifuna |
| Carlos | 21 | Male | Haitian/Cuban/ Dominican | United States | NA | English/Spanish |
| Didi | 27 | Male | Mexican | United States | NA | English/Spanish |
| Elena | 27 | Female | Cuban/Puerto Rican | United States | NA | English/Spanish |
| Ellie | 22 | Female | Bahamian/ Cuban | United States | NA | English/Some Spanish |
| Emmanuel | 25 | Male | African American/ Haitian/ Dominican | United States | NA | English |
| Jessica | 26 | Female | Dominican | United States | NA | English/Spanish |
| Jo | 22 | Male | Puerto Rican | United States | NA | English/Spanish |
| Margarita | 28 | Female | Peruvian | Peru | 3 | Spanish |
| Mario | 25 | Male | Nicaraguan | Nicaragua | 24 | Spanish |
| Miguel | 26 | Male | Haitian/Cuban/ Dominican | United States | NA | English/Spanish/ Creole |
| Rue | 26 | Female | Haitian | United States | NA | English/Haitian Creole |
| Sara | 22 | Female | Cuban | United States | NA | Spanish |
| Sofia | 29 | Female | Nicaraguan/ Colombian | Nicaragua | 1.5 | Spanish |

Eight of the fifteen students interviewed for this study considered themselves first-generation college students. It is important to note that no criteria were given for this identification, and participants were expected to self-identify. Some participants answered "yes" to this question because their parents had not attended college in the United States while they had completed a college degree in their country of origin. Others answered "yes" to this question because one parent did not attend college while the other did. Furthermore, ten out of the fifteen participants were graduate students, while five were undergraduate students. Three participants interviewed were also faculty or staff members at their respective universities.

**Table 4.** Other Participant Characteristics

| Other Characteristics | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| * First-Generation College Student | 8 | 53% |
| Graduate Students | 10 | 67% |
| Undergraduate Students | 5 | 33% |
| Staff or Faculty Member Also | 3 | 20% |
| * Some participants answered "yes" to the question about being a first-generation college student because they were first generation in the United States (that is their parents received a post-secondary degree outside the United States). Others answered "yes" because one parent did not complete a post-secondary degree. | | |

## Data Analysis

The final phase of this study consisted of data analysis through qualitative data analysis software. The ISLAC research team would have weekly meetings where the interviews conducted were discussed. These meetings were vital as they served as a time for ideation and

influenced our data analysis process. Each member of the ISLAC research team had unique positionalities that assisted in dissecting the interviews. After the semi-structured interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and uploaded to MAXQDA. The ISLAC research team collectively established codes and sub-codes, listed below. These codes originated from the questions asked in the interview guide and commonalities found between the participants' narratives. Interview notes or notes taken during the semi-structured interviews by study staff were also integral to the data analysis.

A password-protected spreadsheet that served as a database for participant demographics enabled the research team to quickly and effectively find commonalities between participants and compare demographic information. A portion of the spreadsheet was dedicated to identity formation milestones or an important event for the identity formation of the participant. The study staff reflected on the experiences shared by participants and wrote a short synopsis of each interview after completion.  Through codes, reflections, the demographic database, and interview notes, the study staff could draw conclusions about the data generated (Bernard and Gravlee 2014, 591). Below are the codes, themes, and sub-codes used in this project:

1. **Family Background**
    a. Raised in Latin America or the US? (Socialization)
2. **Academic Journey**
    a. Academic Journey Before College (K-12)
    b. Academic Journey Since College
3. **Friends**
    a. Who are the participant's friends?
    b. Have the participant's friends changed upon arrival to their higher education institution?
4. **Identity**

    a. Identity Formation Milestones: When/where did the participant realize their identity?

        i. Has the university played a role in developing or reshaping this identity?

    b. Racial identity formation

    c. Ethnic identity formation

    d. Country of origin socialization

    e. Other identities (other than ethnoracial identities) relevant to the participant?

    f. Have there been any changes to the participant's identity?

5. **Instances of Discrimination**

    a. Racial, gender, ethnic, etc. discrimination

        i. Did the participant experience discrimination firsthand at their institution?

        ii. Did the participant view discriminatory behavior towards anyone else at their institution?

        iii. Did the participant experience any microaggressions at their institution?

6. **Affiliations and Communities**

    a. What organizations and communities is the participant involved in?

        i. Did they mention any organizations that ethnoracial organizations (e.g., Latin American Student Association, National Society of Black Engineers)?

    b. What are the participants' communities or social awareness interests?

## Ethical Considerations

    Researchers must uphold the professional code of ethics set by their respective fields to protect their participants' rights and privacy. The code of ethics set by the American Anthropological Association states that researchers are to "do no harm," to "be open and honest regarding [their] work," and to "obtain informed consent and necessary permissions" (American Anthropological Association 1998). In order to abide by these codes of ethics, participants were read a statement about the project prior to their interview, and verbal consent was obtained. As this research concerns Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students' ethnoracialized

and personal experiences, the researcher had a special duty to protect vulnerable participants as they shared confidential information.

Moreover, research from the field of psychology has found that instances of racism, both covert and overt, can be traumatizing for those who experience it, and retelling instances of trauma can potentially be retraumatizing. Hence, researchers must be cognizant of the psychological toll retelling incidents of racism and discrimination may have on participants (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo 2005). Considering the subject matter's sensitivity, in conducting this research, I endeavored to uphold the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (American Anthropological Association 1998) and the Professional and Ethical Responsibilities of the Society for Applied Anthropology (Society for Applied Anthropologists 1983).

In December 2020, the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study (IRB #001763) and concluded that the study is of minimal risk for participants. Dr. Beatriz Padilla of USF's Department of Sociology was listed as the principal investigator in all IRB materials, and I was listed as a study staff. USF's IRB approved the verbal consent script presented in Appendix 1, in which participants were given a detailed description of the research and asked for their verbal consent. In order to protect the identities of participants, all participants were assigned pseudonyms. All research components, including transcripts and audio recordings of the interviews, were stored in a password protected Box.com folder that could only be accessed by the ISLAC study staff and was to be deleted upon the study's completion. No identifiable information has been used in the writing of this thesis to protect our participants' right to anonymity.

**Positionality**

I came to the University of South Florida in January 2020 after graduating from my undergraduate program only a few months prior. I was the first in my family to earn a bachelor's degree, and I was now the first to attend a graduate program. While I felt a sense of pride in being the *first*, it also came with many unforeseen challenges. The transition from undergraduate to graduate was more difficult than expected. I doubted myself and my abilities—I was dealing with something I later came to understand as the "imposter syndrome" (the idea that one gets the feeling that one is not qualified for the expectations surrounding their position).

The next fall, I was fortunate enough to be appointed an assistantship with the Institute for the Study of Latin America, and I began to work under the supervision of Dr. Padilla. Through this assistantship, I participated in the research design of the ISLAC-sponsored study that became the basis for this thesis. This study was designed to inquire about Latinx and Latin American faculty, students, and staff about their experiences in higher education institutions. I interviewed Latinx and Latin American collegians throughout the United States for this project alongside Dr. Padilla and two other student researchers. In particular, the experiences of the college students I interviewed stood out to me, as I saw many commonalities between their lived experiences and my own.

During the first semester of my master's program, I took a graduate seminar in the Africana Studies department, where I met several students who identified as Afro-Latinx[4]. Although I had been exposed to Afro-descendants from Latin America all my life, the term Afro-Latinx was relatively new for me. It was not until I took a course on Brazilian culture in my undergraduate program that I first encountered this terminology. Growing up in a Cuban family,

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[4] These students may not have identified with this terminology. While Afro-Latinx is a widely used term in academic circles, it is still not often used by those it is meant to designate.

I knew Cubans came in all shades and hair textures. I knew our history of *mestizaje,* and colonization made us a non-homogeneous group, and I was well versed in the complex Cuban racial classification system. I knew that Cubans would refer to me as *jabada,* a term used to describe those with fair skin and curly hair (Vaughan 2005).

Personally, my parents had always reminded my brother and me of our mixed ancestry— our native Taíno and African roots. My last name, Vaillant, meaning "valiant" in French, was passed down to my grandfather of Haitian Cuban ancestry and was always the source of pride in my family. *Vaillant* made us unique and, most importantly, linked us to our ancestors. Nonetheless, the term *Afro-Latinx* was foreign to me until I uncovered the term during my undergraduate studies. Thus, the university commenced reshaping my understanding of identities. My own experience showed me how higher education institutions could hold significance in shaping and reshaping college students' identity formation.

As I met more Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students through my graduate courses and interviewed Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students for the ISLAC project, I realized how similar our stories were—the university changed how we saw ourselves, our identities, and the identities of others. It was through these interviews and conversations with students from this Latinx and Latin American subpopulation that I came to understand how the institutions of higher education mold the identities of college students, specifically those who do not always fit seamlessly into the United States' racial formation (Omi and Winant 2014). For me, this thesis is personal—my participants' stories resonated with me as a first-generation, mixed-raced, Afro-descendant Latina college student.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FEELING "IN-BETWEEN"

## Introduction

This chapter explores how ethnoracial identities begin to form and how Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American individuals must negotiate these identities throughout their lives, even before entering an institution of higher learning. A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the feeling of being "*in-between*" Black and Latinx. Some participants felt that they had to choose between their ethnic and racial identity, while others felt that they had to prove the validity of their identity to others. I attribute this feeling of "in-betweenness" to the white/Black binary and the racialization of the Latinx pan-ethnicity in the United States—this feeling of "in-betweenness" relates to the triple consciousness, which takes into consideration various historical and transnational discourse of what Blackness and Latinness means in the United States (Flores and Jiménez Román 2009). This finding is consistent with what Hordge-Freeman and Veras refer to as "*ethnoracial dissonance*" or Afro-Latinx individuals' disassociation of racial schemas. They further elaborate on this concept by explaining that:

> in the context of their families, Afro-Latinxs report the normalization of colorism and consistently negative appraisals of "[B]lack" racialized features (skin, hair, and facial features, silence about race and racism, and the encouragement of Latinx ethnicity contrasted with the stigmatization of [B]lackness (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020, 146).

In this thesis, participants showed signs of *ethnoracial dissonance.* While not all participants shared being socialized into having negative appraisals of perceived "Black racialized features," many did share that feeling encouraged to embrace the Latinx ethnic identity over the Black racialized identity. Some even came to realize their Black racialized identity later

on in life, which I refer to as *"coming into one's Blackness"* (see page 43).

The testimonials presented in this chapter indicate that the study of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students can benefit from inquiring participants about their life histories. Although the life history method used informally in this study, participants were encouraged to go into detail about any moment in their academic or life journey that felt relevant to them (Goodson 2001). Many impactful moments of identity transformation occurred during participants' childhood or before their university years. Many of our participants' narratives show that Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American individuals typically already have established identities formed during their early years; the university helps to change, affirm, or reaffirm these identities.

Multiple participants conveyed instances in which their identities were challenged or questioned or events in which their identity began to transform; we refer to these occurrences as *identity formation milestones*. We found that *identity formation milestones* shaped how participants thought of their identities and what *choices* they made concerning their ethnoracialization. Not surprisingly, individuals can have multiple identity formation milestones over their lifetime as identity is fluid and ever-changing. According to Phinney, "Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background" (Phinney 2003, 63). While many participants reported that their identity formation process began before college, the campus often served as a space for exploration or identity development. Furthermore, ethnoracism was a prevailing theme throughout these interviews, and many participants faced discrimination before starting college. Numerous participants had experienced some form of ethnoracism, which often impacted their ethnoracial identity formation and sometimes led to mobilization and advocacy.

## Identity Formation Milestones

We define *identity formation milestones* as significant life events that shifted, transformed, solidified, or revised a participant's identity. Commonly reported identity formation milestones included early school years, moving to a new geographic location, harassment, bullying or ethnoracism associated with their ethnoracial identity, having their identity questioned or challenged, meeting new people with a shared identity, or finding Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American communities on social media.  In our interview guide, the question that typically prompted discussion about identity formation milestones was "When did you come to realize your identity?" Participants were also asked, "Has your identity changed or evolved and if so what was your path?" These questions led to a discussion about identity development and exploration. Identity formation milestones tend to be impactful moments that leave a lasting impression on the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans.

One example of an identity formation milestone that stood out was an event in the life of Didi, a self-identified bi-racial US-born Mexican man. Didi's parents both identify as Mexican, but only his father identifies as Afro-Mexican. While this event occurred in Didi's childhood, it substantially shifted his identity and would later influence his ethnoracialization choices during his college years.

Didi said he realized his identity when he was seven years old when he played in his yard with his siblings, throwing around a pink boomerang toy his parents bought him from the flea market. He threw the boomerang once, and without paying attention, he accidentally hit his neighbor's window. He explained: "We lived across the street from these really racist people." The boomerang landed in their yard, and his neighbors came out and began yelling racial insults at Didi and his siblings.

> They were just yelling and calling us all these racist things, and that's when I kind of got a little traumatized, and that was kind of…, [why] I didn't like the fact that I was half Black for a little bit to be honest, just because of that experience.

When Didi's mother heard their neighbors calling her children the N-word and a "mutt," she confronted them. "[That was]...the start of our family's problems, to be honest, because my mom fought them...physically fought them, she went into their yard, and [then] she got arrested." Didi's mother went to prison because of this incident, which Didi attributed as the start of his family's "problems," due to this "act of aggression that was geared [towards them], racially." Didi believed that because of this incident, he "can't help but to resonant with [his] Blackness more."

Didi recalled going back to his hometown where this event occurred and speaking to a member of the family who called him and his family racial epithets.

> I'm just looking at her, and I'm like, "You're Catherine, right?" And she's like, "Yeah, who are you?"...She had no idea of anything...I just thought it was so crazy that...these experiences have...stuck with me for...twenty years, and she's oblivious to it. Like she has no idea what happened.

Most participants' identity formation milestones were incidents of ethnoracism. Identity formation milestones informed by instances of ethnoracial discrimination leave lasting impressions on Afro-Latinxs and Afro-Latin Americans. In the United States, Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are more susceptible to ethnoracial discrimination and hate crimes due to prevailing systems of white supremacy (Helms, Nicolas, and Green 2012). Furthermore, racial trauma or the experience of racial humiliation, shaming, discrimination, or witnessing ethnoracial discrimination towards another BIPOC individual can cause mental or emotional stress and injury (Comas-Díaz, Hall, and Neville 2019; Helms, Nicolas, and Green 2012). Consistent racial discrimination and microaggressions can result in racial "battle fatigue."

For Didi, the discrimination he underwent as a child led him to align more closely with his Black identity and to advocate for Black issues once he entered university. Since he remembers his father, an Afro-Mexican man from Michoacán, experiencing humiliation and hate-based physical injury from Mexicans who were not Afro-descendants, Didi did not orient himself with Latinx issues at his institution of higher learning, nor did he choose to join any organizations geared towards the Latinx community on campus—these were all very conscious discussions that were based on his previous experiences. While his father, who was born, raised, and socialized in Mexico, did not reflect on his experiences as being particularly harmful, for Didi, who had been socialized in the United States, his father's experiences stood out to him as racial discrimination and shaped *his* identity formation. We argue that socialization influences what individuals view as discriminatory and how they react to discriminatory actions. Didi said:

> I feel like...with organizations that represent Latinxs, there's always a face to it, a white face, or like a light [-skinned] face. And it's…not as intersectional as I want it to be. Whereas with Black organizations, it's…everyone. There's trans people, there's queer people,...there's mixed biracial people…But [from] what I've seen...I haven't really seen Latinx organizations [that are diverse],…I feel like a lot of Latinx people kind of perpetuate this whiteness, I believe and they…uphold a system instead of trying to…get rid of it. And I think a lot of it does come from...lived experience, because, like I said, my dad, he didn't mind being called racial slurs, or...people treating him bad because he… [had been] tied up and burned [by other Mexicans] …When he was a child,.. they would burn his feet…to take money from my dad's whole side of the family.

### Coming into One's Blackness

Demi's identity formation milestone differed greatly from Didi's. While Didi had been aware of his Black identity from a young age as it was always a subject of conversation in his family, Demi realized her Black identity later in life. Demi's identity formation milestone reshaped her identity and would influence how she would identify in adulthood.

> I remember being in school, and...one of my friends, we were walking in line, and he touches my hair, he's like "You have Black people hair." And I was like, "What are you talking about, David? I'm not Black. What is Black people hair?" And that was like, a

downward spiral...I started researching race and... all this information. So, I asked my mom about our family's history, because...I couldn't conceive that I could be Black. I was like, "But I'm Cuban." And boy, did I find out some information as a 12-year-old who doesn't really...know all this stuff about...race...I don't think as Latinos we're raised with race. Like, yeah, we make casual comments like "*mejorar la raza*" ["improve the race" through mating with lighter-skinned individuals] and all these things. But...we don't ever really talk about it, right? ...We use it in our nicknames...but we don't ever sit down and really discuss it. I think that the Latino community does have an issue with race and identity, but not in the way that America does. So, yeah, I had a big identity issue. And now I'm like, "Yeah, I mean, I'm definitely Afro-Cuban, right?" I don't use it as often...because to me, I'm just...myself, right. I'm who I am. But if I were asked to identify, I put Black on paperwork now.

Demi's testimony was a common theme amongst our participants. Many of the college students we interviewed, particularly those socialized in the United States, *came into their Blackness* after identity formation milestones. When Demi mentions, "I don't think as Latinos we're raised with race. Like, yeah, we make casual comments like '*mejorar la raza* [improve the race],'" she is expressing Hordge-Freeman and Veras's concept of ethnoracial dissonance as she expresses having a disassociation of racial schemas due to her upbringing and Latinx ethnic identity (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020). Furthermore, like Demi, other Afro-Latina participants commented on their hair and the messages they have received about it throughout their lives, particularly from family members. As Patricia Hill Collins notes, historically, Black women's hair has been racialized in the United States, and their bodies objectified. Collins states, "Dealing with prevailing standards of beauty—particularly skin color, facial features, and hair texture—is one specific example of how controlling images derogate African-American women" (Collins 2002, 89).

Other Afro-Latina participants, such as Leo and Sara, commented on their family member's emphasis on the upkeep of their hair. Both Sara and Leo noted that when they were younger, they were more inclined to straighten their hair, sometimes due to family pressures, but both have grown to embrace their natural hair textures. Leo remarked, "When I was in middle

school and high school, I thought I had to straighten my hair to look more professional. But since the whole natural hair movement and I [learned to] love my hair." Jessica, an Afro-Dominican woman, describes her family's expectations of her physical appearance during her upbringing, stating, "When I was younger, my family didn't embrace my skin complexion…They were like 'You gotta be lighter and have straight hair'…" These narratives again correlate with *ethnoracial dissonance* as racialized features, such as hair, are sometimes met with negative appraisals, often by family members during upbringing.

I attribute this later-in-life identification with Blackness to the rigidness of the white/Black racial binary and ethnoracialization of the Latinx pan-ethnicity in the United States. Various participants expressed confusion about how their identities fit into US-based racial formation in their early years of life. A considerable number of participants stated that they believed they had to choose between their Blackness and Latinx identity. In this thesis, I refer to instances of not knowing *how* to identify as "*identity confusion.*" While this confusion does not signify that identity is "real" or tangible, it underscores how identities fluctuate in response to historical contexts and life processes, as this ethnography shows. The narratives of Sara and Jo give insight into this feeling of in-betweenness and *coming into Blackness* later in life.

As a self-identified Afro-Cuban woman, Sara would only realize her Black identity when she went to Cuba and noticed that many Cubans had a darker skin tone and curlier hair.

> I started...doing more research...on my background...when I went to Cuba...for the first time... Everyone was way darker than I am. Everyone had way kinkier hair than I do. And that...opened my eyes to [be] like "Yes, Sara. You're not just Hispanic, you're also Black."

Before this identity formation milestone, Sara had only identified with her Latinx identity and not her Blackness because she was unsure how to navigate the white/Black binary in a society that racialized Latinx ethnic identities. She reflected:

...Back when I was...younger, I would mostly associate myself with just being Hispanic. I didn't realize that I was...Black and Hispanic...I associated being Black with...being...African American and not just..., having dark skin...Also, another reason...I didn't identify as Black as much when I was growing up is because a lot of...African American people would...be like, "Yeah, you're…Hispanic, so you're in this category. You can't also be Black, [because] you're not as Black as me."

Sara's review of her identity confusion highlighted numerous commonalities among our participants. Many participants reported that identities had been imposed onto them and were told how they should identify. Sara received messages from members of the African American community that her ethnic identity and phenotypic markers were not "Black enough." She was made to understand Blackness and Latinness as mutually exclusive because of the messages she received from those around her. Lighter-skinned participants and those that did not fit the United States-based description of "Blackness" commonly noted not feeling accepted by the African American community or that their identities had been questioned or challenged by others in the United States. Augustin Lao-Montes attributes the exclusion of Afro-descendants from Latin America to the United States' construction of Blackness, commenting that the "hegemonic Anglo-American outlook…even dominants definitions of the Africa diaspora" (Lao-Montes 2015, 79). Institutional structures and bureaucracies, such as demographic questions and the census, can also cause identity confusion.

Mario, a Nicaraguan man who migrated at a young age to the United States and has an Afro-Nicaraguan mother, joined Army ROTC at his university to pay for his master's program. Although he identifies as Black, he explains that because of his Latinx identity, the army forces him to write "white" as his race on demographic forms. In his experience, he and other Latinx individuals have not been allowed to self-identify racially by his university's Army ROTC program. This scenario illustrates how bureaucracies can impose identities onto Afro-Latinx and

Afro-Latin American individuals who do not fit into the typical US-based racial formation, in which Blackness and the Latinx identity are presented as mutually exclusive.

> When I joined the army, they started telling me I was white. So, whenever I do any documentation with army paperwork, I write white, just because of the fact that you need to have uniform paperwork. So even if I felt like I identify as [Black], I can't write that anymore because the army requires this level of effective bureaucracy. So, I have to make sure that the identity they perceive is the identity that I have…I don't feel any less like [Black] descendancy. But whenever I write white, it just feels weird for me, kind of feels like I'm suppressing a little bit of my identity just for the sake of my job.

Jo, a self-identified Afro-Puerto Rican man, also illustrates how demographic questions can complicate Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American identities, especially for those socialized in the United States.

> ...[G]rowing up… when you do standardized testing...you fill out those bubbles to... identify who you are, they never had Puerto Rican as an option. We've always had Hispanic, and then it had African American. And I didn't know...what exactly to choose. So, I always felt like, "Oh, well, my family's Puerto Rican. I'll just choose Hispanic..." Even though I was both [Black and Hispanic], ... I've always...chose Hispanic...growing up, because...I didn't know much else, aside from being Hispanic, because of all the music and food that I was around growing up [was Puerto Rican]. It wasn't until late into high school, where I met different people, where I sort of like, had to...ask myself more about, like, what my identity truly was and if that was...really correct to call myself only Hispanic, even though I was obviously Black. I just didn't know any difference until I got more educated on it...The reason why I was educated was [because of an Afro-Latinx friend I made].

In this quote, Jo addresses another substantial commonality that multiple participants conveyed in their interviews: feeling like they had a different *culture* from African Americans. Several participants, both those socialized in the United States and Latin America, felt that they culturally did not have much in common with the African American community and did not feel accepted. Some participants with racial markers that fit US-based racial formation felt more accepted by African Americans. However, even some of these participants felt like the cultural differences were too great and noted that they sometimes faced alienation by the African American community because of these differences.

## Navigating the White/Black Binary

Leo, a half Puerto Rican, half Afro-Dominican woman, college student, and staff member at a university, recollects an experience with her co-workers. Leo remarks that while she did not feel accepted by her South American co-workers, she was also alienated by the African American co-workers at her office due to cultural differences. She concluded that to fit in with her African American co-workers, she felt that she had to make the conscious decision to turn on her Blackness and turn off her Latinness.

> ...I feel like I've had to really try and prove to my co-workers that I'm a Black woman. There's a group of people in the department that hang out together that are all...African American, and because I felt like I didn't fit [with].... [my] South American co-workers, I gravitated toward the Black people because that was the other option I had. And so, I always felt like I had to prove myself to them, to prove that I'm like Black enough for them. Because their culture is a little different than mine. And so...for instance,...I remember that we were eating together, and someone was like, "Oh, have you ever had grits before?" And I was like, "No, I never had grits before." And then they were like, "Oh, that's because you're ethnic Black" .... It was just kind of an awkward situation...It's been like me trying to turn on the Blackness and turn off...[my] "Latina" because I'm trying to fit in with this group that I work with.

When Leo's co-worker referred to her as 'ethnic Black,' they were "othering" Leo's experiences and invalidating her Blackness due to her ethnic identity. Anthropologist Paula López Caballero defines what she calls the "*effect of othering*" as the creation of "us" by the creation of the "other" (López Caballero 2009). In other words, drawing on Peter Wade's analysis of imagined communities, groups sometimes gain a sense of belonging by *othering* those who do not share their identities. Therefore, groups establish a sense of "self" by othering or excluding those who do not fit this shared identity (Wade 2001; Anderson 2006; López Caballero 2009). "Othering" has been further defined as occurring through "cultural and racial ambiguity," "categorization and labeling," "hierarchical power dynamics," and "limited access to resources" (Borrero et al. 2012). In Leo's case, cultural and racial ambiguity, categorization, and

labeling were employed to establish an "other" by labeling her "ethnic Black." Although Leo

attempted to establish relationships with her co-workers based on a perceived common identity,

she found that her "cultural identity" differentiated her.

Like Leo, Emmanuel experienced othering. Emmanuel felt excluded and his identities

invalidated by both the Latinx and African American communities. Emmanuel was from a multi-

ethnic family, his father is Dominican and Haitian, and his mother is African American. He had

to learn how to negotiate his ethnoracial identity. For him, his ethnic identity was not solidified

until he entered the university and was exposed to others who shared his identity. Like

Emmanuel and Leo, numerous participants conveyed feeling excluded by the African American

or Latinx community. It is crucial to note that hegemonic forces continue to posit that "race"

exists. These forces bear so much power that they can even get other groups to buy into these

ideologies.

> I identify as Black [for] race. With ethnicity...I struggle a lot. Because the thing is, growing up when...I would hang out with all my Hispanic friends, I was never "Hispanic enough" because I didn't speak Spanish...that was one part of the culture I didn't have. And then when I'm hanging out with African Americans, they're just like, "Oh, you're Hispanic?'" and then I'd be like, "Yeah, I'm Dominican." [They would say] "Yeah, that doesn't count as Hispanic," or...that I'm not...light skin enough to be Hispanic. On the other side of that, I would run into a lot of African American people that'd be like, "Okay, because you were raised like this, you didn't have the African American experience. So, you're not *really* African American." So, I think that was what I struggled with a lot in high school. As I matured in college and... met a bunch of people who I was able to talk through this stuff with.

While Mario was born in Nicaragua, he migrated to the United States in infancy. He was

raised in a predominantly African American and Haitian area of the United States. Growing up,

Mario felt excluded by the Latinx group because he learned Spanish later in life, and his accent

did not resemble that of his peers. Since Mario felt rejected by his Latinx peers, he gravitated

toward African Americans and now self-identifies as African American. Although he recognizes

that he is of Nicaraguan descent, he accentuates his self-identified African American identity.

Mario's testimonial shows how socialization and identity formation milestones impact identity

formation. Since Mario was socialized in a largely African American neighborhood, he

acculturated into African American culture and felt more accepted by African Americans than by

Latinx people in his area.

> I'm multi-racial. I consider myself [African American] when I fill out my questionnaires, I write, "I'm African American." I always thought [of] myself as African American, because that's kind of like what I grew up around, only Black individuals, and even when I was asking my teachers, what do I put when [demographic questionnaires] asks what my race is because I don't know, they were like just like "Put African American" and ever since then, I told myself, "I'm African American." [As far as my ethnicity], well, I'm Latinx. I consider myself Black...because my mother is [Black] as well.

For as long as Angela could remember, her parents emphasized both their Blackness and

Honduranness. She recalls having African statues in her parents' home and being reminded of

her Garifuna heritage. In the third grade, she encountered an instance of identity challenging,

which made her think about how she was perceived and how her Black and Honduran identities

interplayed with one another. Angela's teacher opened an atlas during a third-grade class, and the

students began pointing out different countries. Angela pointed to Honduras and explained that

her parents were from there. A classmate questioned if Angela was really from Honduras.

Angela retorted, "So, are you in my household? How you gonna tell me who I am? Or what I

am?" Her classmate responded, "No you're not, you're Black." Angela then proceeded to show

her classmate her last name. "It's a both/*and* situation. Do you see my last name? What makes

you think I wouldn't be someone from Honduras?" He replied, "Your last name [may be of

Spanish origin] but you're not from Honduras." In this scenario, we see how racialization in the

United States has constructed Latinx and Blackness as mutually exclusive. While Angela was

very aware of both her Honduran identity and her Blackness, her classmates attempted to impose

his understanding of her ethnoracial identity, informed by his own understanding of racial

formation through his socialization.

## Conclusion

This chapter introduces the term "identity formation milestones," an essential component

of this thesis. Although typically occurring early in life, identity formation milestones have a

lasting and lifelong impact on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American identity formation.

Experiences of ethnoracism were commonly experienced as identity formation milestones, but

these milestones can also include occurrences such as meeting others with shared identities or

moving to a new geographic area. Since identity is fluid and dynamic, individuals may have

multiple identity formation milestones throughout their lives that can change how they identify.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses identity confusion or difficulty in expressing one's identity,

generally informed by difficulty navigating the rigid US-based white/Black binary. This chapter

also addresses the sometimes-reported feeling of exclusion from the African American and

Latinx communities expressed by our participants.

**CHAPTER FIVE: MIGRATION, GEOGRAPHY, AND GENERATIONS**

**Introduction**

This chapter problematizes the sole implementation of US-based racial formation in the education research canon. I argue that a comparative approach to racial formation leads to a more accurate representation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American experiences, as much of the current education literature has not distinguished the difference between Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx experiences. I associate this lack of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American representation in the literature with how the US-based racial formation presents the Latinx ethnic group. In this racial formation, Latinx and Latin American form a pan-ethnic group, "which emerges in the U.S. due to Latinos' political, economic, and cultural 'otherness' in contrast with" others in the United States (Godoy Peñas 2020, 5). Additionally, literature addressing Afro-Latinx subjectivities tends to ignore issues of migration or resocialization upon arrival. I argue that because education research in the United States is framed around the white/Black racial binary, it diminishes important identity markers informed by generation, geography, socialization, and migration.

Education research has generally ignored numerous factors implicating the ethnoracial identity experiences of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students. Afro-Latin Americans (e.g., international students or later in life migrants) have been socialized in racial formation systems that differ from the United States and go through a resocialization process upon migration. The Afro-Latin American participants interviewed for this study generally stressed their migrant identity and their different perceptions of racial formation. Silvio Torres-

Saillant problematizes this simplification of the Latinx and Latin American identity, as it "conceals the tensions, inequities, and injustices in our midst, contributing to a conceptual ambiance that legitimizes the absence of Black and Indian faces and voices from Latino fora" (Torres-Saillant 2008, 53).

## Country of Origin Socialization

Sophia shares her experience of as an Afro-Latina in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial family from Latin America. Her mother identifies as a white Nicaraguan woman, while her father identifies as Afro-Colombian. Sophia commented that her Nicaraguan grandmother would call her a "foreigner" growing up for wearing her natural hair, stating, "[m]y grandmother says that I am foreigner because I leave my hair [natural], but there is meaning to having an Afro." She explained that "going natural" was what she calls a "*process of decolonization*." She described this process as learning to embrace her racialized identity and counteracting the messages she had received in her youth, in which, for example, natural hair was considered unfavorable—this self-identified *process of decolonization* as an identity formation milestone that shifted and transformed Sophia's identity. Sophia was born and raised in Latin America and moved to the United States to study as an international graduate student. Her Latin American socialization informs her identity formation. Nevertheless, her migration to the United States has impacted her identity in that she has had to learn to re-socialize into the racial identity formation of her new home.

While Sophia was born and raised in Nicaragua, she moved to Colombia to complete a graduate degree. Moving to Colombia led to her first experience with ethnoracism which served as an identity formation milestone. Growing up in Nicaragua, Sophia resonated most with her

gender identity. She commented, "[i]n Nicaragua, my identity was solely based on my womanhood. I considered myself a woman and everything that was a Latina woman." Once moving to Colombia, she became more aware of her racial identity because of the racialization she experienced: "Colombia was also like a 'revolution,' in hippie terms, because in Nicaragua sometimes you feel [discrimination] but I couldn't describe a situation that impacted me strongly."

However, Sophia noted that, while she experienced racism in Colombia, she did not begin identifying as an Afro-Latina or a "Black Latina woman" until moving to the United States. In Colombia, she primarily identified by her national identities. Interestingly she stated that in Colombia, "I utilized more my nationalities...The racial variable was not a major fact...It was more about me being a foreigner, even though I have dual citizenship with Colombia." Although she had encounters with racial discrimination in Colombia that she describes in detail, Sophia states that the "racial variable was not a major factor" in Colombia. Here, Sophia may be romanticizing her experiences in Latin America. When Sophia moved to the United States, she began a resocialization process that impacted her identity formation. Upon beginning her graduate program in the United States, she met other Afro-Latin American international students who had re-socialized themselves into the US-racial formation system. It was from her peers that Sophia learned the term "Afro-Latina," which shifted how she identified herself within the terminology. Furthermore, meeting other Afro-Latin American students who emphasized their racial identity gave Sophia a new understanding of her identity and caused her to stress her Black identity more. "[N]owadays I identify as a Black Latina woman, or an Afro-Latina. Actually, the term Afro-Latina only became my identity when I came to the United States because it did not come [to me] in Colombia."

**Language Racialization and Finding a Community**

In the United States, Sophia's identity began to reform. As English was her second language, she experienced *othering* due to her English linguistic abilities. In the United States, students with accents sometimes face accent bias or the process where "people evaluate others based not only on how they look (appearance), but also on how they sound (speech)" (Clarke and Thomas 2006, 357). Sophia expressed that because English was not her first language, her accent became an identity marker in the United States. *Linguistic profiling* is defined as "discrimination based solely upon auditory cues…used to identify an individual as belonging to a linguistic subgroup…or racial subgroup," in the United States, this is a common occurrence and has been reported by many collegians with foreign accents (Clarke and Thomas 2006, 357; see, also, Sembiante et al., 2020 and Brewer 2013).

Sophia mentioned experiencing linguistic profiling and accent bias in the academy. "It has been [a process] to navigate through the academy [in the United States], to navigate professors who have been majority white…" Sophia remembers a time in the United States when she first began developing her English language skills, and her professor invalidated her language abilities in front of her colleagues. "There were times that my professors, in front of everyone, would tell me that they did not understand what I was trying to say after I had already been talking for several minutes." Instances of accent bias and linguistic profiling were a widely reported identity formation milestone for the Afro-Latin American participants in the ISLAC study. Many felt that their accents were an identity marker that distinguished them from the African American community as it underscored their ethnic identity.

Margarita, an Afro-Peruvian woman who also migrated to the United States to complete a graduate degree, notes that in the United States, her Blackness is sometimes questioned due to her accent, hair texture, and skin tone. She mainly attributes this *identity challenging* to her accent. Linguistic racialization draws attention to the duality of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American ethnic and racial identities (Burgos 2009). While Margarita is sometimes perceived as African American, her accent distinguishes her from this community.

> The differences are three things...my skin color or the tone, my hair texture, and my accent. Those are three things. In order of significance, I would say the first thing is my accent, then it is my hair texture, and lastly, it's my skin tone. Sometimes I have been able to pass. I mean if I am with other people who are African Americans, people assume that I too am African American. They think I am African American until I speak.

Margarita elaborated on her feeling of disconnection from the African American community and her feeling of being challenged by them. In the United States, Blackness is often correlated with being African American. Through the accounts of Afro-Latin American collegians presented in this study, it can be noted that Afro-Latin Americans and some Afro-Latinx people, depending on their socialization, hold different cultural identities from African Americans. A recent Pew Center Research study indicates growing diversity amongst Black individuals in the United States (indicating expanding multi-racial, Afro-Latinx, and Afro-Latin American populations) (Tamir 2021). As Margarita's sentiments suggest, Blackness is not a monolith, and education research should not present it as such. I contend that the subtleties of these complex identities are missed when Blackness of Afro-Latinness is presented as a monolith in the literature. Margarita's identity and perceptions of others' identities have changed by living in the United States and re-socializing in the US-based racial formation system. For international students, their new geographic location of residence may inform their identity formation and act as an identity formation milestone.

I have felt that tension with African Americans, like they were questioning my Blackness. But that has not made me question *my* Blackness. It has awakened in me this curiosity about how African Americans see me and how they can distinguish that I am not like them. So, it's my skin color and my hair texture. I have started taking notice, but it hasn't made me doubt myself because of that but what it did do, is change my perspectives of identity classifications. [My perspective] has changed a lot in the last three years [since arriving in the United States]

Like Margarita, Sophia explains that, within the United States, she has felt more accepted by Latinx people and excluded by African Americans, for which she does not know why. Afro-Latin American students may have stronger ties to their country of socialization and may at times have a stronger relation to the cultural identity of their country of origin than Afro-Latinx students who have been socialized in the United States. Hence, for Afro-Latin American college students, their identity formation may situate them closer to other Latinx people who share similar cultural understandings than with African Americans.

Here, [in the United States], it has been a total internal conflict, because here yet again, it depends on the groups you maneuver in. I have gotten closer to...the Latino community...I would not dare say that I have been received in the same capacity by the African American community. Why [have I not been received the same way by] the Black community? I have no idea.

**Generations**

Some Afro-Latinx college students identified a disconnection with their Latinx identity. A common theme found within the narratives collected was that Afro-Latinx individuals who were unable to speak the native language of their country of origin (e.g., Spanish) were at times excluded from Latinness, especially for those with darker skin and phenotypic features that were perceived as fitting into the US-based racial formation's presentation of "Blackness." Moreover, some Afro-Latinx individuals expressed instances in which others questioned their ethnic identity, strengthening their Blackness and diminishing their Latinx identity. A study in cross-cultural psychology investigated Latinx people's perceived intragroup acceptance and collective

self-esteem based on the level of Spanish proficiency. Ultimately the study found that non-Spanish speaking Latinx people (whose origins come from a Spanish-speaking country) reported having lower collective self-esteem and lower feelings of intragroup connectedness (Sánchez et al. 2012).

Previous ethnographic studies have shown that Latinx individuals that do not speak the language of their country of origin sometimes feel "shunned" by their ethnic community (García Bedolla 2003). Here, *ethnic gatekeeping* will refer to the feeling of invalidation of one's ethnic identity by members of their ethnic group due to lacking stereotypical or "expected" identity markers (e.g., the inability to speak the language of their country of origin, an appearance that does not fit the widely "expected" ethnic markers). This section of chapter five explores how migration generation can sometimes cause a disconnection from Afro-Latinx people's ethnic country of origin.

Mario describes feeling rejected by Latin Americans because of his Spanish-speaking skills. "So, because my Spanish was unnatural, [Latin Americans] just ridiculed me and criticized me. And it was very infuriating." He explains that he began disassociating from his Latinx identity due to this rejection. "I had a lot of conflict with my identity, as someone from Nicaragua…It's easier for [Latin Americans] to reject you than to accept you." He disliked the Latinx community because he felt shunned by the ethnic gatekeeping of those he had encountered. "I just disliked the Latin culture, because I just felt like it was judgmental, and it was pushing me away." It was not until he began to learn Portuguese at work that he began feeling more connected with the other Latinx people. Nonetheless, he still felt disconnected from what he perceived as his own culture. "I still had that bias that I felt more accepted by Brazilian

culture than my own culture." Mario's lack of intragroup connectedness due to his non-native

Spanish skills is concurrent with the findings presented in previous studies.

Although Angela, a second-generation Afro-Honduran woman, does not speak Spanish

with native-level fluency, she was able to find intragroup connectedness in other ways. Social

media became an integral part of her identity construction.

> I think my identity…has definitely evolved. Especially [because of] social media. I'm seeing other people who embrace their African roots and embrace their Black experiences wherever they're from, really helped me gain confidence in like, you know, what? I did not grow up watching [*tele*] *novelas* [popular soap operas on Latin American television] like that like that, [but] regardless, I'm still Latina. And I think especially, I'm going into my mid-20s. Um, I've become more comfortable myself, which also includes, like, my culture and my heritage.

Studies have shown that social media can serve as a place for "identity expression,

exploration, [and] experimentation," and users have the opportunity to find online communities

that "provide a source of names for different sectors" (Gündüz 2017, 85). Jasmine Haywood

found that Afro-Latinx college students may "use media networking sites as sites of

empowerment and affirmation" (Haywood 2017, 777). Angela denotes that she has felt excluded

from Latinx people throughout her life, such as in the third grade and later during the LASA

event. She found others with similar life experiences through social media and felt affirmed in

what she construed as her "Latina" identity. She began to feel a sense of belonging and social

connectedness through social media as she virtually connected with other individuals who felt

the same level of exclusion she did.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored the importance of migration, generation, and language on the

ethnoracial experiences and identities of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students.

Afro-Latin American college students (international students or later-in-life migrants) came to the United States with an already formed understanding of racial formation and had to be re-socialized. Many participants reported experiences of language-based discrimination and accent bias, or "othering" based on their accents. In contrast, second-generation and earlier in life migrant Afro-Latinx college students reported feelings of intragroup exclusion due to not being able to speak their language of their country of origin. However, social media communities enabled some participants to find spaces of acceptance and understanding. While many of our participants' identities were formed early in life, their identities were sometimes solidified or challenged by institutions of higher education. Ethnoracism at institutions of higher learning was another normally conveyed theme and had enduring consequences on the identity formation of this student subpopulation. We will explore this theme more closely in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER SIX: ETHNORACISM IN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**

**Introduction**

Elizabeth M. Aranda and Guillermo Rebollo-Gil argue that due to the racialization of ethnicity, multi-racial groups, such as Latinx people, experience racism based on "the social construction of race [that involves] ethnic and global factors such as national origin, culture, language, the historical relations between the colonial powers and their political subjects, and race" (Aranda and Rebollo-Gil 2004, 910). A study by Stevens, Liu, and Chen (2018) using logistic regression analysis found that minority college students reported experiencing higher instances of racial discrimination in post-secondary institutions. The study also found a correlation between poor academic performance and racist experiences in higher education for minority students (Stevens, Liu, and Chen 2018).

Studies have shown that some minority students feel differential treatment in their post-secondary institutions, reporting that faculty and other students are typically the perpetrators of these acts on campus. Since interactions with faculty members and other students are fundamental to student success, minority students are in a disadvantageous position (Suárez-Balcazar et al. 2003). As highlighted in the Stevens, Liu, and Chen study, minority students are likelier to feel a diminished sense of belonging on college campuses if they have experienced discrimination or bias within their institution. Furthermore, some research has shown that when minority students do not feel supported by their academic institution, they feel a diminished sense of belonging (Hussain and Jones 2021). In this chapter, two case studies from two Afro-Latinx students uncover how instances of ethnoracial discrimination in institutions of higher

education can lead to lowered feelings of belonging on campus and make minority students feel unsafe and unheard. This chapter deviates from the data representation of the previous chapters. In this chapter, the narratives of two students, Ellie and Emmanuel were selected due to their impactful nature. Their stories are compelling, and it is important to note that these are extreme cases. However, numerous participants reported encountering instances of microaggressions towards themselves or others on their university or college campuses.

## Case Study–Ellie

### An Afro-Cuban and Bahamian Undergraduate Student

Ellie recalled racial tensions rising on campus during the 2016 presidential election. Weeks before the election, students who were openly affiliated with an organization for college Republicans began writing derogatory remarks on school property, such as "Build the Wall, Go Home Mexicans," "Rape Hillary [Clinton]," or "Rape Democrat Women." Ellie said: "It was really because...it got to the point where you couldn't leave the dorm without [seeing these messages]." Ellie stated that the student writing these messages would target areas where they knew minority students would be. "[I]t was so ridiculous...[and] we repeatedly told the chancellor, '[W]e don't feel comfortable with this, because they're writing threats on the sidewalk, and it's offensive, and honestly it's racist, every '-ist' out there.'"

The school chancellor reportedly responded that he was not at liberty to intervene as it was their freedom of speech. However, Ellie contends that when she and her friends wrote "Black Lives Matter" around campus, the school chancellor "had a problem with it, and said that [they] were a terrorist organization." Students who decided to erase the derogatory terms written around campus began to be punished by the university. "The chancellor supported them to the

point...where it was considered to be against campus policy for us to get rid of 'Rape Hilary' in front of our dorm."

She said: "[The harassment] just continued on, and it kept boiling up into violence." During one event, Ellie heard banging on her dorm room door at night. When she woke up the next morning, she realized that her roommate had "set her up." Her white female roommate decided to put a Black Lives Matter sign on their dorm door. "She did that thinking that [the other people in the dorm] would think it was me that did that." In the morning, Ellie noticed the decorations and the Black Lives Matter sign had been ripped off the dorm door. "[E]verything [was] damaged. And down the hall on every door, 'White Lives Matter,' 'White power,' 'All Lives Matter,' 'Cop Lives Matter' [was written]." Ellie reported the incident to her university's administration, saying, "I don't feel safe here. I feel like my life is threatened...I feel like these people are going to fucking kill me." The school administration responded by saying they could not do anything regarding the matter. An administrator allegedly stated, "Just because they said, 'white power' doesn't mean that it was an attack against you."

White students would sit around Ellie's door all night and have loud conversations to keep her up from getting sleep. These students would make racist comments throughout the night, such as "Black people are fucking monkeys." In retrospect, Ellie believes the students were doing this as a fear tactic because the more she was unable to sleep, the more on edge she would be. "And [this] would go on and on all night long, every single night, every single day, and no matter how much I complained about it, they wouldn't do anything [about it]." One-night, Ellie walked out of her dorm to use the communal bathroom. At this point, the psychological effects of not sleeping and the harassment were wearing on her. "I was just like, I'm not safe

anywhere." As Ellie stepped out of her dorm, she remembered a white student screaming, "Go back where you fucking came from!" directly toward Ellie.

Eventually, Ellie's parents decided to come to the university to complain to the administrators as she was not being heard. "My parents ended up taking matters into their own hands because [they told me] that every time they spoke to me on the phone, I sounded 'off.'" Ellie's dad felt like her behavior was changing, and he told her that he knew she was going through something bad. "I didn't tell [my parents] the extent of it at the time." It was not until Ellie's parents spoke to the school's administrators that they finally did something. The administrators' solution was to move her to another dorm. Although there was video evidence of the students who harassed Ellie, as there were cameras in the hallway, "they got away [with it] and never got punished for [what they did]."

She was moved into the Honors Dorm. The situation did not improve as her new roommate reportedly had human fleas. "I was getting eaten up [to the point] there were...bites all over my arms." Once again, she went to the administration and asked if they could bring an exterminator, and yet again, the administration did nothing. It was not until Ellie suggested that she was going to take the flea-infested carpet from her dorm and "roll [it] up...[and] throw it in the hallway" that administrators finally did something about the situation. Then, Ellie reported that she was still being harassed elsewhere on campus. "Whenever I walked outside, there would be someone saying something to me, or writing something, or making it known that I [was] not welcome there." All the harassment and issues with her roommates began weighing on Ellie heavily. "What happened was, I ended up...having a psychological breakdown where I just said I have to move off-campus." The university charged Ellie for breaking her housing contract. She moved back with her parents, which she felt forced to do. "I just couldn't do it mentally anymore

and I ended up refusing to pay the money. I'm moving because [the administration] couldn't

handle all the shit they were doing [to] me."

Another incident was Ellie attended an internship sponsored by her university in another

state. Since she was trying to save money, she decided to share an Airbnb with other students

from the program, thinking she would go to do her internship and go home. One-night Ellie

returned from her internship, and her roommates locked her out. Her roommates called the police

claiming that she was attempting to break in. "I had to hide in the bush because they called the

police hoping that I would get shot for [falsely] breaking in." She spent the night hiding and

attempting to evade the police. At around 3 a.m., she was finally let into the Airbnb by one of her

classmates, who did not know what was happening. "She wasn't in on it. I'm pretty sure not

because she was so confused and was like 'How long have you been out here? What the fuck?'"

The next morning, Ellie overheard a conversation between the students who had decided

to lock her out the night prior, thinking that Ellie had already left for the day.

> [T]hey were sitting in the living room, and the walls were so thin...they were laughing
> about the night before and laughing about how hard I was knocking on the door. [They
> said,] "She sounded so scared. Haha haha. Oh, you see the cops? Haha. And it sucks that
> she didn't get shot." [I thought] "Wow, so they did all that on purpose, hoping that that
> would be it for me…" I ended up keeping it mostly to myself, because I just didn't want
> more trouble."

While Ellie was locked out of the Airbnb, she called her parents, asking them if they

could send her money for a hotel—a decision she would later regret. "I didn't know [my parents]

ended up calling the person who was the head of the internship program and complaining too....

My parents contacting the head of [the program] caused more trouble for me." Ellie recognized

that her parents intended to hold those involved accountable. From Ellie's perspective, while her

classmates did learn some of the consequences of their actions, they attempted to discredit her.

"[They tried] to make me seem like I'm insane." After this situation, Ellie felt as if no one

believed her "on anything at all." "I remember that [no one believed me] in the department. [They would say], 'You know, she's fucking crazy. Like she thinks people are actually out to get her.' But then in the same sentence, [they would] turn around and say the N-word and talk about how [Latinx people] don't deserve to be here."

## Case Study—Emmanuel

### A Haitian, Dominican, and African American Undergraduate Student

Emmanuel also conveyed that tensions at his university rose after the 2016 presidential elections. He was an active member of a multicultural club on campus—one of few at his predominantly white institution. He remembers a night when one of the club members was walking home alone from an election watch party. The female club member was attacked by white students hiding in the bushes. Those white students jumped out and yelled, "Yeah, Whoa, Trump!" A few days later, his club decided to hold a panel discussion called "Difficult Dialogues Discussion." They brought in a psychologist to moderate the discussion, believing it would help ease tensions. However, "[the psychologist] didn't do a great job [of moderating] the talk." Only three students attended the event, and, according to Emmanuel, they spent the entirety of the time engaging in microaggressions. In one instance, one of the students said, "Yeah, racism is over because people like Michael Jordan are famous." While the club members attempted to rebuttal insensitive and discriminatory claims made by the three students who attended the event, they felt helpless. "It was the worst time that I think I've ever had at that club because it was just like nothing we could say [could] stop their argument, but we…had to sit there and take it, because if we had…[shown] aggression, we would have just been seen as the club full of angry Black people that are causing problems."

In another event, Emmanuel ordered a black bean burger at the university cafeteria. Once he bit into the burger, he realized he was mistakenly given a beef patty, not a black bean burger. He returned to the cafeteria and asked a staff member for a replacement. Emmanuel was told, "We don't do exchanges here." Emmanuel again explained his situation to the staff member, reminding him that he was given the wrong order. The staff member went to the kitchen and complained to another staff member about Emmanuel, calling Emmanuel a "Kunta Kinte-looking motherfucker," referring to a character in the 1977 popular TV miniseries "Roots." The other staff member had gone to high school with Emmanuel and shared with Emmanuel what was said about him by the staff member who had refused to do the exchange. "The only reason I knew [about this] was because the guy I knew from high school came to me afterward." Emmanuel reported the staff member who had made derogatory remarks to the school administration, and he was dismissed from his position. Emmanuel did not feel comfortable around the cafeteria staff members from there on out. "I just felt like none of the staff that worked there other than the person I went to high school with treated me well after that. It was super awkward."

Emmanuel was a part of the university's newspaper. He was initially a staff writer, then the entertainment editor, and, finally, he became the editor-in-chief. He was the first Afro-Latinx person to take this role. However, he was forced to share the editor-in-chief position with someone else. Emmanuel reported that this had never been done before. He speculated that he was not allowed to hold the position on his own because of the nature of the stories he wanted to feature in the newspaper. For example, Emmanuel wanted to run a story investigating why ethnic-based Greek letter organizations were not allowed on campus. The club's faculty advisor informed him that he had to stop working on the story without providing Emmanuel with an

explanation. Another instant of this suppression occurred when he attempted to write about mold on the school campus. The university president notified the newspaper team that they were not allowed to write about this. Emmanuel asserted: "[My university] is a private school. That's how I found out that free speech doesn't exist in private schools."

## Conclusion

The narratives presented in this chapter represent some of the most extreme cases of ethnoracial discrimination at post-secondary institutions. When Ellie conveyed the derogatory remarks to her school administration, emphasizing that she felt unsafe on campus, her school administration was reluctant to assist. Thus, Ellie reported feeling unsafe and having a lowered sense of belonging on campus. Her post-secondary institution became a hostile environment for her. Ellie's mental health was negatively impacted by the instances of severe racialized harassment on campus she was facing. The field of psychology suggests that racial trauma can have a devastating impact on minoritized people's mental health (Villines 2020). Those who experience racial trauma can have physical and psychological symptoms (Coping with Racial Trauma, 2020). For Emmanuel, going to a predominantly white institution posed unique challenges. He, like Ellie, felt unsafe on campus. As an active member of several student organizations, he felt like his freedom of expression was limited. Minority students are more likely than their white students to experience discriminatory actions in the institution of higher education, which can have devasting impacts on minority students' overall well-being.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: AFFILIATIONS, RESOURCES, AND COMMUNITIES

### Introduction

Minority students are more likely to experience a lack of resources during their academic journey. Latinx students, in particular, are overrepresented in two-year colleges and less selective four-year universities than white students. While selective four-year institutions can provide students with costly resources, less selective four-year universities and community colleges do not have the resources to provide students with the same services (García 2018). Thus, there is a major university spending gap on resources. This chapter deals with campus life: resources, student affiliations, and communities. It examines the resources that Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin Americans have prior to entering the university and the resources their institutions provide them. It also highlights representation and mentorship on campus and aims to understand how communities and student organization affiliations impact how students from this subpopulation see themselves.

For Latinx students, campus communities and affiliations are especially beneficial to their feeling of belonging on campus. Nancy Schlossberg's work on *mattering* suggests that students need to feel their presence noticed and of importance to others, such as their families, peers, faculty, and staff members (Johnson et al. 2007, Schlossberg 1989). Mattering also deals with a student's *sense of belonging,* which "captures the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (Hurtado and Carter 1997, 327). Numerous studies have indicated that student engagement on campus, through ethnic spaces and organizations, helps increase student persistence and sense of belonging (Cooper 2009; Eckart 2020).

As Hordge-Freeman and Veras cited, sororities and fraternities grant minority students spaces of acceptance and homophily (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2020).

**Case Study—Mario**

**An Afro-Nicaraguan Graduate Student who was born in Nicaragua but raised in the United States**

Mario discussed his academic journey by talking about his high school self. "I didn't really see a purpose when it came to having a good education...I didn't really have a support system. My mother was always working." Studies show that some level of parental involvement, especially parent-child discussions, in their child's education improves their student's overall academic achievement, behavior, and attitude towards school (McNeal 2014). A qualitative study conducted with lower-income families concluded that implementing parental involvement strategies influenced positive behavior and attitudes toward learning institutions (Smith 2006, 14). "[Since my mom wasn't around] I fell in with the crowd [where] education wasn't a real pertinent thing."

Mario explains that his primary focus was on joining the military when he was nearing his high school graduation. "When I was nearing my senior year, my main focus was to join the military because they were going to offer me citizenship. At that time, I had a temporary residency. So, I believed that I would not be able to get a high-quality education until I became a citizen." However, due to a torn meniscus, his plans changed. He decided to go to community college instead and was admitted to the honors program at his local community college. Getting into the honors program was an awakening; this is when he realized that his high school had not adequately prepared him for college. "It was difficult because even though I was able to get into the Honors College...I wasn't prepared. I did not know how to use any form of punctuation

whatsoever. [My college] had to teach me…The public [high] school system didn't really service...[immigrants]. In addition, the public-school system did not prepare me for college."

Mario found out that he was undocumented at the age of 18. "I was told when I graduated high school, I was undocumented, and I should have an alternative plan [rather than] going to college." His mother had temporary protected status, and Mario remained undocumented until his father remarried a US citizen. Through this new marriage, Mario was able to receive his citizenship. Mario underscored how his family lived below the poverty line and how this impacted his ability to attend a four-year university: "My family was poor...because my father left, so my mother raised me by herself…We lived in economically impoverished neighborhoods." Like Mario, numerous participants reported financial hardships and difficulties paying for school. For example, Sara also conveyed facing financial complications in her attempt to obtain her degree. She had to postpone starting college and take semesters off to save money to pay for her classes. She recalls that other Latinx students at her college were facing similar hardships, commenting "[The few] Hispanic people that I do have classes with, [are] always talking about, 'Yeah, I'm probably not gonna [keep going to school] after next semester…Because of my financial aid or…I need to work and have to pay bills for my mom,' or whatever the case is."

Mario correlated not receiving any acceptance to a four-year university upon his high school graduation to the low quality of education he received. "[My high school] never focused on us...getting good grades, [they] simply focused on [us] graduating with the bare minimum. Therefore, I was not able to get to any [higher education] institution." Because he did not have any financial support because of undocumented status, Mario felt he had to attend a community college as it was more affordable. He states, "I went to [community college] because... [I was]

undocumented...I was not able to qualify for any financial aid whatsoever." Undocumented

students typically do not have access to federal and state grants, loans, and other financial aid—

leaving them to face more financial burden than documented students (Bjorklund 2018). Mario

had to work to pay for school while attending school part-time, while commuting to school pay

way of public transportation.

> I didn't really...have a [financial] support system. So, I had to work and go to school...I
> didn't even have a car; I relied on public transportation. [I took my school's shuttle] that
> takes you from [one side of the city] to [to the other side] was how I went to school every
> day, and I often had to stay in school from 8 am to 9 pm.

Mario went further into his financial hardships. "While in college, I did decide to focus

more on my studies, mainly because I had to pay for my own schooling. So, I [thought] that if

I'm going to go to school, ...and I'm paying for school, I better make sure that I get my money's

worth." Nevertheless, he described feeling unsure of what direction to take in higher education.

He notes that his university did not provide him with mentorship, making the transition from his

associate's to bachelor's degree program difficult to navigate. He explained that he was not

prepared for the expectations of a four-year university. As minority students are overrepresented

in community colleges and underrepresented in four-year universities, this sentiment is not

completely surprising (García 2018).

> When I finished my associate's, I went to get my bachelor's degree. While [my community
> college] did help me, it didn't prepare me for the expectations that the university had in
> comparison to community college. So, it...felt like I was repeating the cycle again, where
> [my university] was teaching me.

Mario explained that while he believed his four-year university did provide him with the

resources necessary for his success, he was not given any mentorship. "I had no guidance

whatsoever [at my university] ... I wasn't exactly motivated, [I had] no peer mentor. And in

addition, because I was [a] community college [transfer], going into university my junior year, I

had no support system whatsoever." While he knew there was a multicultural organization on campus, he did not find that it did not offer him the mentorship he needed. He remarked that he required additional assistance in his transition from community college to his four-year university as he was not accustomed to the academic rigor of his university.

Mario describes feelings of exclusion at his university, which led Mario to look for a group of individuals in which he could feel accepted. Ultimately, Mario found acceptance within his fraternity. "What really did kind of give me my own 'in-group' was when I joined a social fraternity that was Latin based." He felt closer to the men of his social fraternity because they, too, were raised in the United States. His fraternity gave him a sense of belonging and mattering on campus. Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that Latinx college students involved in sports, student government, on-campus religious groups, and Greek letter organizations reported having a higher sense of belonging (Hurtado and Carter 1997). It enabled him to find a space of inclusion and acceptance within his university.

> [The identity] of being a Latinx and being in America [is] like its own branch of the Latinx community. So, it was easy for me, to essentially integrate with them. So, they became my friend group, ...the predominantly Latinx fraternity.

Jessica, a self-identified Afro-Latina, shared similar sentiments when describing her involvement in a Latin sorority. She explains that before joining the sorority, she felt that her identities were not "solidified." She explains, "[Joining my sorority] was finding my home away from home. I just learned so much about myself because I was surrounded by-like minded women. And so, since [joining] I've been more in tune with my culture." Jessica's testimony shows that her participation in this student organization enabled her to find an on-campus community that allowed her to explore her ethnic identity.

## Conclusion

This chapter addressed resources, mentorship, student affiliations and communities. It explored how a lack of resources before entering post-secondary institutions can impact students' performance at a college or university through Mario's case study. Mario struggled academically upon transitioning from high school to college as his high school did not adequately prepare him for college-level work. As an undocumented student, Mario did not qualify for financial aid. Hence, Mario had to work to pay off school and thus, chose to be a part-time student. Mario reported feeling unmotivated because he did not have a peer mentor or a support system. Furthermore, Jessica and Mario discussed having an increased sense of belonging upon joining a Latinx-based Greek-letter organization. Both reported feeling more connected with their ethnic identity upon gaining membership. This finding was consistent with previous research, which indicated that student organization affiliations help increase students' feeling of belonging and homophily.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

**Introduction**

Through semi-structured interviews with fifteen college students, this thesis has aimed to unpack the identity formation of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students, a student subpopulation that has extensively been excluded from education research. This chapter is a final examination of the results presented in the previous four chapters This chapter details this ethnography's contributions to identity theory, and recommendations for future research are made. Interventions that have already been established by the Institution for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean are illustrated within this chapter, giving insight into the applied potential of this project. Finally, this chapter suggests for potential interventions intended to serve Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students.

**Contributions to Anthropological Theory**

Since the field's conception, anthropologists have been intrigued with how individuals and groups construct themselves and their perceived sense of *identity*. While the definition of identity has been widely contested within the field, identity has been described as the language used to characterize the human world and situate individuals and collectives (Jenkins 2014). Although identity is a social construct and no one truly holds identity, for individuals, including the participants of this study, identity is sometimes perceived as something that can be gained, lost, changed, or held strongly or weakly—for these individuals, identity is perceived as a very real *thing*.

The ethnography provided in the thesis provides two principal theoretical contributions to identity theory. The first problematizes *how* identity theory is applied within the education research about Afro-Latinx people and Afro-Latin Americans. In previous studies, researchers have assumed categories of "race" and "ethnicity" from wider society, mainly from a United States perspective. However, as this thesis demonstrates, these categorizations are not unwavering but are, in fact, capable of shifting based on situations such as transitions in geography or histories Categories of "race" and "ethnicity" are unstable and ever-changing. Secondly, and relatedly, this thesis displays that identity formation is more a conflictual process of external ascription and self-identification than is typically conceived, as individuals constantly negotiate their identity in correlation to external structures and pressures. For instance, Mario's perceived personal identity aligned with the African American community as he grew up in a predominantly African American neighborhood. His personal identifications shifted upon learning to speak Portuguese and joining a Latinx-based fraternity in which through, external ascription and self-identification, he began to embrace a "Latinx" identity. Thus, life events and environmental changes lead Mario to renegotiate his ethnoracial identities.

This thesis also contends that Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation, although acknowledging history, does not truly represent the uncertainty, negotiation, and change that is the process of racial formation. This ethnography suggests that racial formation is much more complex and subject to change. Additionally, Omi and Winant conceptualize racial formation theory in the United States without regard to migration—this is not surprising as previous research has studied racialization without relation to migration (Brown and Jones 2015). Concurrently, much anthropological inquiry into identity has emphasized its culturally constructed nature. In fact, anthropological theory has employed *cultural paradigm* to explain

the origin of identity and its meanings (Golubović 2011). However, what has not been conceived theoretically is how changes in geography and processes of socialization and resocialization impact perceptions of identity.

Theories of identities need to consider that individuals' understandings of "race," "ethnicity," "Black," and "white," varies historically and cross-culturally. When living in Nicaragua, Sophia's perceived identity was based solely on her gender. Then upon moving to Colombia, she primarily identified by her country of origin and stated that others viewed her as a "foreigner." Nevertheless, once she migrated to the United States to complete her master's degree, she began a resocialization process again, and her identity was further altered after meeting students who identified as Afro-Latinx. She began to use "Afro-Latina" and "Black Latina "as her principal terms of identification. This example shows that identity dilemmas, migration, and life events impact identity choices. Hence, this thesis argues that identity theory must be more critical of histories and cross-cultural perceptions of identity.

Institutional matrices theory affirms that "Human society is seen as a social system, as multiple inter-related social systems, with the main 'sociological co-ordinates' being *economics, politics,* and *ideology*" (Kirdina and Sandstorm 2010, 3). The institutional matrix established in this thesis suggests that processes of identity formation, racial formation, and ethnogenesis do not occur outside of institutional locations of power and should not be represented as if they do. As this thesis is situated in educational settings, it is necessary to elaborate on universities and colleges as locations of power that can bring forward social processes that can generate identity politics among students.

In this ethnography, Emmanuel and other minority students participated in the multicultural club on campus; they chose to do so because they were underrepresented at their

institution, and some had experienced discrimination on campus. When students choose to form identity-based coalitions, such as in Emmanuel's scenario, they decide to do so because the location of power in which they are situated sometimes pushes them to partake in social processes that form identities. If Emmanuel had not felt underrepresented on his campus, he might have felt less inclined the join the multicultural club, or he would have taken a different route to his identity formation. Ultimately, this study suggests that certain elements of social and cultural capital are to be acquired when identifying as a "race" and "ethnic group," even those in many contexts disempowered. This type of political economy of identity underscores strategy and negotiations. In Emmanuel's case, his identification with a "race" and "ethnic group," although minoritized at his institution, provided him with a place of inclusion through his multicultural organization—a form of social capital.

## Applied Implications

The larger ISLAC-sponsored project "Latinx and Latin American in the United States: Mapping Ethnic and Racial Experiences in Higher Education," of which this thesis is a part, has been utilized to engage with multiple initiatives at the University of South Florida intended to improve the status of Latinx and Latin American students. For example, on October 12, 2021, the ISLAC research team held a panelist discussion and colloquium titled "Mapping the Ethnic & Racial Experiences of Latino/a/x and Latin Americans in Higher Education," where preliminary results from the study were presented virtually (see Figure 2). The intended purpose of this colloquium was to bring attention to the challenges that Latinx and Latin American students, faculty, and staff encounter in higher education institutions through our participants' testimonials. While this colloquium did not solely focus on the subjectivities of Afro-Latinx and

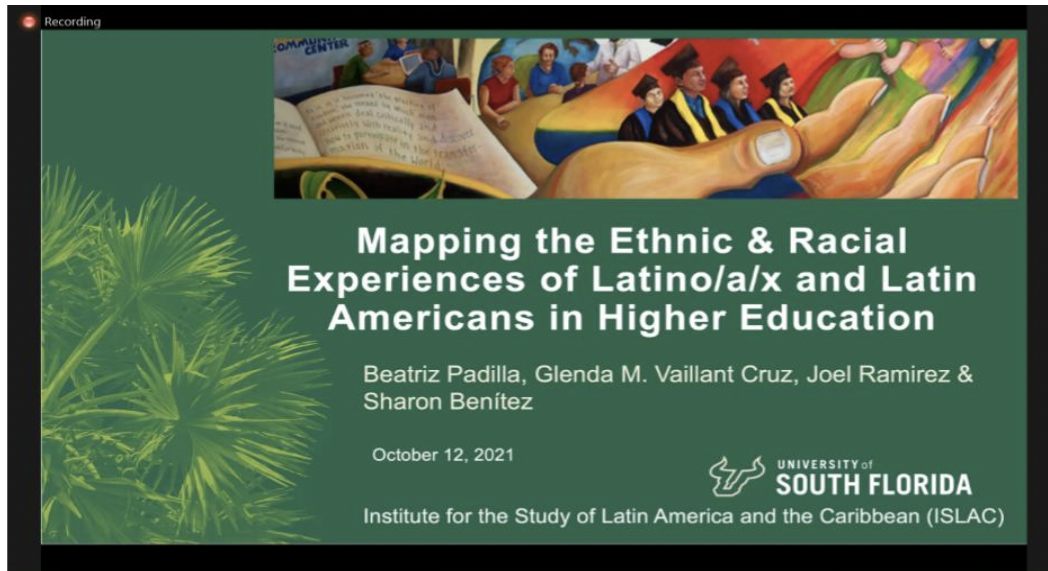Afro-Latin American college students, there was an in-depth discussion about this student subpopulation.



**Figure 2.** "Mapping the Ethnic & Racial Experiences of Latino/a/x and Latin Americans in Higher Education"

Preliminary findings of this project were presented in diverse venues to further promote engagement and collaborations with the community and stakeholders. In the summer of 2021, the ISLAC team presented at the panel "International and Minority Students in Higher Education: When the Global South is in the Global North" at the International Forum on Global South Studies. Further engagement with the University of South Florida occurred on November 3, 2021, when ISLAC co-sponsored the "Latinx Student Leadership Forum" with the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the USF's Tampa campus. Again, although these presentations did not only concentrate on Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students, this population was still highlighted in great detail within both panels. Including the experiences, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students within wider discussions of Latinx people in higher education acknowledge their unique histories and experiences while presenting a holistic and more accurate representation of Latinness.

## Recommendations for Future Research

More ethnographic research on this student subpopulation with diverse participants is needed. Participants in previous studies have primarily self-identified as Afro-Latina. Future research should strive to have a more inclusive participant sample and more representation of Afro-Latinx males. A substantial recommendation throughout this thesis is that education research acknowledges the diversity of experiences with the Latinx community, taking socialization, geography, and migration into account when studying this population. Furthermore, education research should take a more comparative approach to racial formation when unpacking Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American subjectivities and Latinx people as a whole, as individuals' country of socialization matters in terms of how they perceive themselves and others. This study found that many Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students' identity formation process began before entering post-secondary institutions. Thus, the life history method would be particularly useful in future studies.

## Recommendations for Policy Initiatives

A 2020 report produced by the Education Trust, a non-profit organization that aims to close opportunity gaps that impact minority students and "students from lower-income families," found that minority students in higher education institutions could benefit from race-conscious policies (The Education Trust n.d.; Jones and Nichols 2020). The Education Trust defines race-conscious policies as "policies that explicitly address race in the design and provide higher education access, opportunity, or support to students of color and their colleges and universities serving them" (Jones and Nichols 2020, 3). The Education Trust found that policies that used income as a substitute for race did not typically benefit minority students nor result in social justice. Therefore, the gap

between minority and white non-Latinx students cannot solely be explained by income; structural and systemic inequalities also play a role (Jones and Nichols 2020).

While the ethnographic evidence gathered in this study does not necessarily indicate that the identity formation process begins in college or university settings, as often the identity formation of our participants began prior to entry into a post-secondary institution, the narratives presented in this study do show that university initiatives and student organizations can help students develop a sense of inclusion. Moreover, some participants shared that they did not feel safe on campus and that their institution did not do enough to protect their well-being, such as Ellie, who endured severe ethnoracial discrimination with little support from her school's administration. Many more expressed feelings of isolation from Black or Latinx student organizations, such as Angela, who did not feel accepted when attending a Latin American Student Association event. Thus, education policy initiatives geared towards Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American college students could be beneficial to their overall feelings of belonging on campus and could even support their academic performance, as studies have indicated that experiences of ethnoracial discrimination in higher education may be detrimental to academic achievement (Stevens, Liu, and Chen 2019).

These policy initiatives could include recognizing Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students during school-wide presentations and acknowledging their presence and histories through courses related to the African diaspora in Latin America or diversifying of syllabuses to include Afro-Latinx or Afro-Latin American scholars. Establishing student organizations and "ethnic spaces" for this student subpopulation and their inclusion in Black and Latinx spaces and organizations can benefit their feelings of belonging on campus. Finally, developing faculty and peer mentorship programs and targeted hiring practices that diversify faculty can help increase

Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American students' feelings of inclusion through representation and

potentially improve their academic outcomes.

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## Script for Obtaining Verbal Informed Consent
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
**Title:** Latinx and Latin Americans in Florida: Mapping Ethnic & Racial Experiences in Higher Education
**Study # 001763**

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**Overview:** You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Beatriz Padilla who is the Interim Director of the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) at/in USF. This person is called the Principal Investigator. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at USF and is supported/sponsored by ISLAC. The purpose of the study is to map the ethnic & racial experiences of Latin Americans and Latinx in Higher Education living in the state of Florida, mainly in the Tampa Bay Area, including Afro-Latinx which influence their identities. We do this by interviewing participants who live in Florida and are from any Latin American country or of Latin American origin, including Latinx and Afro-Latinx. Interviews may last one hour or more, depending on each person's experience. Interview questions focus on the life experience of participants.

Participants: You are being asked to take part because you meet the criteria: you or your parents were born in a Latin American / Caribbean country, you are a student, faculty or staff in a higher education institution.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect: your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities or your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: There is not compensation or cost four your participation, however your participation contributes to increase scientific knowledge on identities and migration. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

<u>Confidentiality</u>:  Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Your personal information collected for this research will be kept as long as it is needed to conduct this research. Once your participation in the research is over, your information will be stored in accordance with applicable policies and regulations. Your permission to use your personal data will not expire unless you withdraw it in writing. You may withdraw or take away your permission to use and disclose your information at any time. You do this by sending written notice to the Principal Investigator at the following email address: padillab@usf.edu

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies.

If you have concerns about the use or storage of your personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Beatriz Padilla at (610) 329-9098. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact the IRB by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Would you like to participate in this study?

**Interview Guide**
**Latin Americans, Latinos/as/x in Higher Education**
**(Faculty, students, staff)**

Demographic Profile

| |
|---|
| Fictitious name: |
| Age: |
| Sex/gender: |
| Country of birth:                              How many years in US? |
| Mother: |
| Country of origin:              Education              Occupation: |
| Father: |
| Country of origin:              Education              Occupation |
| Language spoken at home: |
| Are you first generation attending college? |

Tell me your story in higher ed…
      (Probing: How was your experience, how was the environment; Who are your friends?
      Have you changed groups?)
How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity? (Probe if it was the same in country of origin)
Has your identity changed or evolved? Tell me when, how, what was your path? (Probe higher ed)
When did you come to realize your identity/s?
      What role did the university play in your identity? / Did higher ed have a further impact
      in your identity?
When did you first realized you were a "minority"? of a person of color? (Probe country of origin & US)
Are you active in organizations (university & other)? What types? (Probe: if those represent Latino/a/x? Which ones?)
What are your communities in the university?
What are your causes or interests? (Probing: any special commitment?)
Have you used resources available to you in the university? Which one? Have they been useful?
Do you feel "at home" at USF/your university? Why?
 Probing: How do you feel in the university? Do you feel represented as Latinx? (as faculty/staff/student)
For Students) Do you feel your voice or opinion in class matter? Are you heard? Respected? Challenged? (any experience you want to share?)
(Faculty) Do you feel students respect you as a professional? Are you challenged? By whom? (any experience you want to share?)

(Staff) Do you feel faculty/students or co-workers respect you? any experience you want to share?)

(Students) Do you have instructors who are Latino/a/x?
    (Probing: Many? Is your relationship with them different? (in terms of respect, etc.)
    Have you had any mentor? Who are your mentors?)

(Faculty) Do you have many Latino/a/x students?
    (Probing: Many? How is your relation with them? (in terms of respect, etc.)

(Staff) Are you co-workers of the same race/ethnicity that you? How are the working relations?

Have you experienced discrimination or racism in higher ed as student/faculty/staff? By whom? How did you overcome such experiences?

Have you witnessed discriminatory or prejudicial attitudes? By whom? Towards who?

Have you seen racist behavior, attitudes or comments in higher ed? For example?

What have you done when witnessing racist or prejudicial behavior? (Probing Why (yes or not)?

For those who do not identify as Afro-latinx or afrodecendant, are you aware of the struggle of people of afro-decent?

Any other comment you want to add?

# APPENDIX 3: IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION



UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

November 25, 2020

Beatriz Padilla, PhD
17711 Esprit Dr
Tampa, FL 33647

Dear Dr. Padilla:

On 11/25/2020, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

| | |
|---|---|
| Application Type: | Initial Study |
| IRB ID: | STUDY001763 |
| Review Type: | Exempt 2 |
| Title: | Latinx and Latin Americans in Florida: Mapping Ethnic & Racial Experiences in Higher Education |
| Funding: | None |
| Protocol: | • Study Protocol 1763 Version 1; |

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about

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Page 1 of 2

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whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Various Menzel
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

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Page 2 of 2