

5-2023

# NON-SPANISH SPEAKING LATINOS' EXPERIENCES OF INTRAGROUP MARGINALIZATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHNIC IDENTITY

Marissa Ayala

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NON-SPANISH SPEAKING LATINOS' EXPERIENCES OF INTRAGROUP  
MARGINIZATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHNIC IDENTITY

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Marissa Ayala

May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

This study will explore how non-Spanish speaking Latinos perceive themselves amongst fellow Latino's and formulate their identity in the absence of the Spanish language. Limited research has been conducted to see how Latinos are impacted by not being able to speak Spanish and how this may be reinforcing of negative self-schemas. However, attention has been given to how bilingual Latinos are able to embrace the benefits of being able to stay connected to their heritage roots. As well as how Spanish positively impacts the identity the of Latinos. Therefore, there is a need to understand non-Spanish speaking Latinos experiences of intragroup marginalization and identify how these experiences have shaped their ethnic identity. This information will be gathered through the use of in-depth one-to-one interviews and data will be analyzed through a content analysis. These findings can be utilized to increase social worker's knowledge in serving Latino communities.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Formulation

The nation's Latino population is extremely diverse, but these individuals experience a shared connection to the Spanish language. In the U.S, 40 million Latinos speak Spanish at home, and 88% say it is important for future generations to be able to speak Spanish (Lopez et al., 2018). Spanish fluency diminishes in later generations, as families typically lose their native language upon two to three generations of arrival (Lopez et al., 2018). As a result, many Latinos identify as being monolingual English speakers; only 6% of second-generation Latinos are fluent in Spanish, and less than 1% among third or higher generation Latinos (Lopez et al., 2018). The language gap experienced across these generations has significant implications for cultural experiences.

As a 3rd generation, non-Spanish speaking Latina, my membership into Latino culture has been embodied by feelings of inadequacy and disconnect. Throughout my life, I have felt that my right to identify as a 'Latina' has been revoked by my inability to speak Spanish. I have been told numerous times that I am *not a 'real' Mexican*. I have been told that *I am only good for taking out the trash*. I have been called an *embarrassment to my culture*. These experiences have become a symbolic marker of my cultural authenticity. For example, not speaking Spanish has made it nearly impossible to connect with Spanish-speaking members of my ethnic group. As a result, demonstrating confidence in

identifying as Latina is difficult when the critical aspect of language is missing from these interactions.

My experiences in this regard are not unique. Sanchez et al. (2011) conducted a study of 53 Latinos to examine perceived intragroup acceptance in relation to Spanish proficiency. More specifically, Spanish speaking ability is measured to determine if non-Spanish speaking Latinos feel more rejected by other Latinos. The findings revealed that Spanish-speaking Latinos sustain a greater sense of autonomy within the Latino community. While Latinos who demonstrated a lower proficiency in Spanish indicated greater feelings of rejection from the Latino community, and lowered self-esteem in part because they felt less similar to other Latinos (Sanchez et al., 2011).

The nature of this issue has been affected by restrictive language education policies that limit the usage of home languages in the academic setting. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has contributed to a decline in bilingual education, as it requires that all students, including English-language learners (ELLs), demonstrate proficiency in the English language (Menken, 2013). Schools essentially promote an anti-bilingual learning environment to withstand being sanctioned by the government for not demonstrating what the law defines as “adequate yearly progress.” They enforce strict consequences for failing to meet standards, resulting in grade retention or failure to graduate which intrinsically pressures students to disregard use of their native language. NCLB evidently pushes emergent bilinguals to retain greater fluency in English,

resulting in detrimental costs to a student's identity, familial connections, and self-growth (Menken, 2013).

In addition, the role of language among Latinos has major implications for social work practice at the micro-level. The process of acculturation, particularly the acquisition of a new language has the potential to disrupt intergenerational relationships in Latino families. Succeeding generations adapt to American culture at an accelerating rate, which consequently distances youth from older generations. Language incompatibility has weakened family ties and reduced levels of closeness between Latino grandchildren and their more traditional grandparents (Silverstein & Chen, 1999). At the same time, when parents and adolescents no longer share a cultural understanding of language, healthy communication becomes minimized and can increase family conflict (Marsiglia et al., 2016). Social workers must contend with these diverse dynamics of Latino families and involve these aspects in the engagement and assessment phase.

Understanding how language influences the lives of Latinos informs culturally sensitive practice and supplies social workers with the knowledge to better serve this population. Social workers can lean on the importance of understanding how Spanish fluency contributes to feelings of acceptance or a lack thereof among Latinos. This highlights the need in social work practice to evaluate factors that steer away from 'dominant' culture in working with Latinos. In addition, this can provide the context to gather more in-depth research about how other cultural practices serve as a rite of passage into Latino communities.

Overall, these findings will support the skills needed to understand, communicate, and improve the delivery of services among Latinos.

#### Purpose of this Study

The Spanish language act a huge part of the 'dominant' culture in Latino communities and is central to development of identity, community, and belonging (Arredondo & Scatterfield, 2016). Therefore, this study has been influenced by a desire to gain a greater understanding of the barriers and challenges associated with Spanish language fluency in Latino communities. Namely, how the absence of Spanish in the lives of non-Spanish speaking Latinos has shaped their world-view and perceptions. The literature suggests that non-Spanish speaking Latinos are susceptible to encountering negative self-judgment among their bilingual peers. Likewise, their ethnic identity can become minimized in the presence of these feelings. Because Spanish acts as a protective factor in Latino communities, this study will highlight the barriers and challenges that non-Spanish speaking Latinos face.

To better understand non-Spanish speaking Latino's experiences of intragroup marginalization and how this has shaped their ethnic identity, the research methods in this study include a qualitative design. The use of in-depth one-to-one interview will take place to gather data from this sub-set of Latino individuals. This design has been deemed most fitting to this studies purpose, because it draws attention to elaborate detail in a manner that allows participants to depict the narration of their own stories.

## Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

This study will supply social workers with the knowledge to better meet the diversity that exists within the Latino population, by highlighting the factors that deviate from 'traditional' cultural characteristics. It is important for social workers to recognize within-group differences, and understand how these factors have shaped the unique context of the individual. This includes assessing levels of acculturation, with regard to the influences of language. For Latinos, who only speak English they may undermine their struggles because they acquire the experience of being able to adapt to mainstream society. It is the role of social workers to counteract these feelings, and explore components that may cause intercultural conflict and distress. These findings will create a voice for non-Spanish speaking Latinos to share how language has influenced their lives which has largely been undermined in research. Ultimately, improving how social workers understand, communicate, and attend to this unique sub-set of individuals within the Latino community.

This study will lean primarily on the assessment phase of the Generalist Intervention Model. The assessment phase will be utilized to gain an understanding of how language has influenced the experiences of non-Spanish speaking Latinos. From this process, the researcher will be able to gather a clear understanding of what factors articulate the issue being explored at hand. With that being said, the research questions posed by this project are as follows: What are non-Spanish speaking Latinos experiences of intragroup marginalization?

How do their experiences of intragroup marginalization impact their ethnic identity?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter will cover existing research that examines the importance of Spanish in Latino communities and the barriers associated with language fluency. The subsections will include diversity of the Spanish language in Latino communities, by drawing attention to the role of Bilingualism and Spanglish. As well, attention will be given to the influence of acculturation and assimilation in language acquisition. The following subsection will highlight the experiences of intragroup marginalization and its social and psychological impacts. Lastly, ethnic identity in Latino communities will be covered, as language fluency can disrupt non-Spanish speaking Latinos perceptions of their ethnic identity. The final subsection outlines the theoretical perspectives that can be utilized to frame the discussion of the posed research questions, including self-perception theory and cultural socialization theory.

#### The Importance of Spanish Language in Latino Communities

Language is intrinsic to the processes of identity development in the lives of Latinos. The use of the Spanish language shapes one's world view by allowing the transmission of values, beliefs, and experiences to be shared. It evidently acts as a unifying demographic characteristic in Latino communities that is identified as staying connected to one's roots (Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). In

fact, it is a strongly held motivation for Latinos to retain their heritage language, even while increasing their proficiency in English. Much research indicates that the Spanish language signals the experience and maintenance of ethnic identities in Latino populations (Arredondo & Scatterfield, 2016). Thus, it is important to consider the factors that contribute to the degree of identification as being “Latino” in exploring the diverse aspects of Spanish in Latino communities.

### Diversity of the Spanish Language

Bilingualism in America enables Latinos to navigate between divergent ethnic worlds. Bilingual Latinos can integrate with existing family and community networks while simultaneously appreciating aspects of English culture (Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). Borreo (2015) sought to understand the role of bilingualism in the lives of Latino youth, by exploring its value and contributions to their success. The results revealed that bilingualism spoke to their sense of self-confidence and became internalized as a cultural asset. Although this study was conducted from a small sample size, it is important to consider how non-Spanish speaking Latinos do not possess similar experiences that allow them to embrace dual identities. Rather their inability to interpret the Spanish language can be viewed as a prospect that disconnects them from Latino culture and traditions.

Spanglish is viewed as the hybrid language among Latinos, that involves merging aspects of the Spanish and English language into communication patterns. Spanish speakers progressively adapt to Spanglish after years of



exposure, which is typical for 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latinos (Ardila, 2005). Despite its prevalence, members of the Latino community carry mixed attitudes towards the use of Spanglish. Casielles-Suárez (2017) broadens the approach to examining Spanglish, by considering the linguistic features of Spanglish and the social and cultural issues involved. For bilinguals, Spanglish can be viewed as an outlet towards celebrating their belonging to two worlds. While lesser positive attitudes believe that Spanglish is insulting to Latino Heritage, deeming it “unfortunate” and “misleading” (Casielles-Suárez, 2017). Thus, non-Spanish speaking Latinos may reframe from adopting the Spanish language in their speech all together to avoid negative judgment. This can arise out of feeling like they are “mocking Spanish” by not adhering to the proper linguistics of the language.

#### Acculturation and Assimilation in Language Acquisition

Acculturation describes the process where individuals adopt the behaviors, beliefs, and values of a cultural group outside of their own. Language assimilation is one outcome of acculturation, wherein a community of individuals shift to a different language. Tran (2010) explored whether or not the acquisition of English comes at the expense of Spanish loss among second-generation Latinos. The results yielded the conclusion that Latinos reported gains in English and Spanish proficiency simultaneously over time as they entered young adulthood (Tran, 2010). However, this study focused solely on those born in the United States to immigrant parents and those born abroad who immigrated to the United States at a relatively young age. Thus, the notion that English use is

detrimental to the retention of Spanish among Latino youth cannot be entirely debunked for subsequent generations.

In fact, the proportion of English-dominant Latinos have had to 'relearn' Spanish or reformulate their identities without the use of Spanish. This is true for later generation Latinos; their opportunities to engage in Spanish dialect become minimized as parents become English dominant. Dennis et al. (2016) examined bicultural competence among the Latino 2.5 generation, or young Latino adults who have one-foreign born parent and one U.S.-born parent. The 2.5 generation were identified as having greater Latino orientation with regard to language use, cultural participation, and ethnic identity in comparison to 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Latinos. Yet, compared with 1<sup>st</sup> generation Latinos, 2.5 generations Latino's experience more acculturative stress due to the pressures of retaining Spanish fluency (Dennis et al., 2016). These findings indicate that Latino identity is informed by adaptation to American culture, which requires further examination among non-Spanish speaking Latinos with both U.S. born parents.

#### Intragroup Marginalization

There is an abundance of research that examines intragroup marginalization among Latino adolescents and young adults. Intragroup marginalization is a form of perceived rejection from one's native cultural group due to adopting a new mainstream culture (Ferenczi & Marshall, 2014). Latinos grow up perceiving messages from other Latinos about what it means to be Latino. Intragroup marginalization can contribute to feelings of incompetence and

reinforce cultural distancing due to the inability to meet expectations rooted in dominant cultural values (Ferenczi & Marshall, 2014). Many studies draw attention to intragroup marginalization among Latinos through examination of its social and psychological impacts.

### Social Impacts

Sebanc (2009) investigated intragroup marginalization through features of bilingual Spanish-speaking and English-speaking undergraduates. Research has routinely indicated that adolescents hold a greater connection to same-race friendships rather than cross-race friendships. The results held true to this conception revealing that being bilingual is a uniting factor for high quality friendships among Latino undergraduates. Bilingual Latinos preferred to make friends with fellow bilinguals, rather than monolinguals because they offered more intimacy, security, and companionship. At the same time, this has contributed to poor college adjustment due to increased negative judgment from peers (Llamas, 2018). It is evident that rejection is internalized by non-Spanish speaking Latinos through a perceived lack of social support from bilingual Latinos. However, this study solely focused on the impacts of intragroup marginalization within the academic setting, revealing the need to conduct more research on how non-Spanish speaking Latinos can be affected within various aspects of their lives.

## Psychological Impacts

As a result of experiencing intragroup marginalization, Latino youth are at an increased vulnerability of experiencing psychological impacts (Ferenczi & Marshall 2014; Basáñez et al., 2015). During adolescence and extending into young adulthood, support from friend groups contributes to greater psychological health. When faced with rejection, Latino youth come to perceive themselves as the 'black sheep' of their heritage culture, thereby, contributing to internal conflict within themselves (Ferenczi & Marshall, 2014). Ferenczi & Marshall (2014) found that friend intragroup marginalization is a significant contributor to acculturative stress, which acts as a marker of decreased subjective well-being. Similarly, as Latino youth engage with these experiences of social disempowerment, they become at increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms (Basáñez et al., 2015). An important limitation to note is that these studies did not differentiate Latino youth between language fluency. Thus, it is necessary to explore the social-emotional consequences associated with intragroup marginalization among merely non-Spanish speaking Latinos.

## Ethnic Identity in Latino Communities

Ethnic identity is a multidimensional concept that defines the task of attaching membership to a particular ethnic group (Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2009). It encompasses the extent to which an individual affiliates with their heritage culture and their evaluations of affirmed belonging. In looking at the role of ethnic identity among Latino's, it has been viewed as a protective factor that

contributes to a heightened degree of psychological well-being. Such as that ethnic identity buffers against stress associated with acculturative processes and perceived social rejection (Iturbide et al., 2009). This positive relation is viewed with respect to ethnic identity promoting high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Iturbide et al., 2009). However, it is important to consider how non-Spanish speaking Latinos do not reap these same benefits, especially with regard to experiences of intragroup marginalization.

In the face of rejection from ingroup members, non-Spanish speaking Latinos may struggle to maintain positive self-evaluations, thereby, diminishing their feelings of ethnic belonging. Even more so given the role of language brokering and its positive influence on ethnic identity in the lives of Latinos (Weisskirch, 2005). Parents often turn to their children to translate written and face-to-face communication when they are unable to understand the dominant language, which describes the process of language brokering. For Latino youth who engage in these experiences, they identify that having the ability to translate makes them feel good and provides the opportunity to build a greater connection with their home culture (Weisskirch, 2005). As a result, these Latinos will develop stronger feelings about who they are as ethnic individuals. In contrast, non-Spanish speaking Latinos do not share this same opportunity to develop affirmation for their ethnic identity. Because the Spanish language is a great indicator of cultural affiliation and attachment, the ethnic identity of non-Spanish speaking Latinos is prone to judgment and uncertainty.

## Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Two theoretical perspectives were found in the literature that will be utilized to conceptualize the ideas in this study; they are self-perception theory and cultural socialization theory.

Self-perception theory as outlined by Basáñez et al., (2015), provides a framework to demonstrate how self-knowledge unfolds as it is rooted in the assumption that people's ideas and future behavior can be shaped by observing their own internal states. It heavily relies on ambiguity because people will utilize their behavior to infer what they feel. Self-perception theory plays out when our feelings are unclear; for example, when we meet someone new, we may infer their opinion about us based on some action that we did or did not do. In relation to this study, Latinos who feel obscure standing among fellow Latinos may infer their self-perceptions based on their Spanish-speaking ability. This theory is essential to understanding how non-Spanish speaking Latinos perceive themselves, and how their behaviors have been reinforcing of these self-categorizations.

To gauge non-Spanish speaking Latinos sense of ethnic identity, cultural socialization theory can provide a framework for gathering more insight. It largely extends off the ecological systems theory, however, through a cultural lens. Cultural socialization theory seeks to understand the bi-cultural process by emphasizing the importance of considering the family context and non-familial socialization agents for achieved cultural balance and competence (Dennis et

al.,2016). This can be beneficial to examining how one's social environment contributes or withholds exposure to Latino traditions and practices. As well as, understanding how these aspects have created a sense of acceptance or rejection in the formulation of their ethnic identity.

### Summary

This study will seek to explore non-Spanish speaking Latinos experiences of intragroup marginalization and identify how these experiences have influenced connection to their ethnic identity. The research revealed that Spanish fluency largely influences the formation one's sense of self and cultural belonging. Rejection has been a common experience for Latinos who do not meet the 'social standards' of their cultural group. However, there is a greater need for more research among non-Spanish speaking Latinos, who largely fall into later generations. The self-perception theory and cultural socialization theory are helpful in understanding how non-Spanish speaking Latinos perceive themselves among fellow Latinos, and how their cultural perspectives nurture a greater connection to their ethnic identity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This study will highlight the voices of non-Spanish speaking Latinos to generate an awareness of how the absence of the Spanish language has affected their lives. Particularly, attending to their experiences growing up only speaking English and the implications it has inflicted on their sense of self. This chapter describes the specific details of research methods needed to analyze the concepts of this study including language, intragroup marginalization, and ethnic identity among non-Spanish speaking Latinos. The sections discussed will be study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

#### Study Design

In order to explore non-Spanish speaking Latinos experiences of intragroup marginalization and their effects on ethnic identity, this study will undertake an exploratory research design. The goals of this project seek to gain an understanding of this population with regard to the influences of language in their lives which has largely been undermined in research. To best highlight this information, qualitative measures are most practical through the use of in-depth one-to-one interviews with non-Spanish speaking Latinos.



The use of individual interviews is beneficial in gathering a diverse perspective that draws attention to the unique experiences of non-Spanish speaking Latinos. As well, it does not limit disclosure; rather it provides the room to generate conversation that elicits a raw perspective of their emotions. With this, participants can ensure that an accurate representation of their experiences are being shared through the use of their own words. Simultaneously, conclusions can be made that demonstrate common themes that would otherwise be difficult to prove if choosing to utilize structured questionnaires. Overall, in using this qualitative measure the use of rich and detailed information can be explained.

Despite its strengths, it is also important to consider the limitations that can emerge out of the use of one-to-one interviews. A potential drawback is participants level of comfort in answering personal questions because communicating with a complete stranger can be intimidating. This may be influenced by shame or embarrassment in not being able to speak their native language. Thus, generating biased results. To minimize this reaction, it will be critical for myself as the researcher to assess participants willingness to share these details and provide a safe, judgement-free environment to do so.

### Sampling

This study will gather data from a non-probability sample; the inclusion criteria will require fulfillment of identification as a non-Spanish speaking Latino. Participation can also be extended to include those who identify as Hispanic

because Latino and Hispanic are often use interchangeably. In addition, only those who are 18 and older will be considered. To gather participants, purposive and snowballing sampling will be utilized. English speaking Latinos will be recruited through a flyer that will be posted to social media. Respondents will also be asked for referrals of participants who meet eligibility requirements. This seems logical as the literature review has shown that Spanish language fluency dictates peer group interactions, wherein bilingual latinos are more likely to engage with fellow bilingual latinos. In total, 8-10 subjects will be participating in one-to-one interview

#### Data Collection and Instruments

In order to obtain the unique perspective of each participant, semi-structured one-to-one interviews will take place via Zoom. A predisposed set of questions will guide the entirety of the interview, and potential follow-up questions to gather further insight or clarification. The interview guide will reflect no more than 10 questions that highlight participants experiences of intragroup marginalization and perceptions of their ethnic identity. Demographic data will be collected prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix A), including age, gender, education, and immigrant generation (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and so forth generation). More in-depth demographic will include exploring participants family background such as relationships with their grandparents and their travel history.

Due to the limited research on this topic, the researcher developed an interview guide as outlined in Appendix B that expands on the concepts desired

for exploration. This interview will be broken into two parts, with each part pertaining to the posed research questions. Such as: Part 1 (Experiences of Intragroup Marginalization) and Part 2 (Impacts on Ethnic Identity. In exploring Intragroup Marginalization, these questions will explore participants feelings of acceptance or lack thereof among fellow Latinos. While questions regarding the Impacts of Ethic Identity will be devised with consideration to the scale utilized in the research conducted by Iturbide et al. (2009), The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Because this scale uptakes a quantitative approach, only select questions will be utilized and be re-framed in a manner that reflects open-ended questioning.

### Procedures

Participation for this study will be solicited through the use of a flyer (APPENDIX C) and word of the mouth. The flyer will include a general statement of the studies purpose and goals, eligibility criterion, and follow-up email for those interested to inquire about further details. Upon gathering interested participants, they will be provided an in-depth explanation of the study, be able to understand their role in the process, and address any questions or concerns via email.

Participants will be asked to determine a time and date that works best to complete their interviews, wherein the researcher will try best to accommodate them. In efforts to enhance recruitment, participants will be entered in a raffle to win a \$30 gift card of their choice as a small thank you for their generosity in willing to participate.

Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, offering participants the ability to complete their interviews from within the comfort of their own home. When respondents confirm participation, they will be emailed a Zoom link to access the meeting room where the interview will take place during their designated time and date. Prior to interviews, participants will be asked to introduce themselves and demographic data will be collected. Then, the researcher will review aspects of confidentiality and give an overview of how the interview process will look. Each interview will last between 30-45 minutes; this time will be allotted for respondents who may have more or less to share. At the conclusion of interviews, participants will be thanked for their involvement and asked to leave their names and call back numbers for entry into the raffle.

#### Protection of Human Subjects

Participants will be required to sign an informed consent sheet (Appendix D) prior to participating in their interviews. This document secures formal permission of participants engagement in the study, including the utilization of technology via Zoom and the consent to record interviews for transcription. All video recordings will be saved to cloud recording, which are automatically stored and encrypted through Zoom's platform. The use of Zoom limits personal contact to minimize the risks that have been raised by the changing dynamics of COVID. As well, to prevent unwanted guests from entering our meeting rooms, each participant will be provided a unique link that requires a code to access and the meeting will lock upon their entry. In addition, to ensure that participants

experiences are confidential, their real names will not be utilized when presenting their commentary. Rather they will be assigned pseudonyms, which will be an assigned number to each participant that allows for anonymity in this research. Three years after this study is completed, all recordings and data will be permanently deleted.

### Data Analysis

Before starting the analysis, the researcher will need to transcribe the data using the Zoom transcription feature. Then, the researcher will transfer the audio transcriptions to a Google document for the purpose of examining the data. Thereafter, the content gathered from interviews will be analyzed using a content analysis approach which involves isolating small pieces of the data and organizing them in a manner that describes a particular phenomenon. This analysis includes the following steps: identifying units of meaning, labeling codes, grouping codes into categories, and applying themes (Kleinhesksel et al., 2020). These themes will essentially generate a story to answer the posed research questions.

Using this approach to analyze the data, the researcher will first attend to the narratives provided by participants using open coding, wherein tentative labels will be applied to various phrases of commentary. Essentially, these codes will act as building blocks to then initiate axial coding, which allows for connections to be made amongst codes. In categorizing these codes, the

researcher will develop a coding process based on a numbering system to identify pieces of text that indicate certain themes. Such as numbering codes that might indicate the theme of rejection in relation to non-Spanish speaking Latino's experiences of intragroup marginalization. This will allow me to attend to the direct and raw communication of participants to find correlations, patterns, and themes.

### Summary

To best facilitate this process, the use of qualitative methods will be used to provide a perspective that dives into the true nature of non-Spanish speaking Latinos self-perceptions and world-view. This study will examine the barriers and challenges associated with intragroup marginalization among non-Spanish speaking Latinos, and the implications that these experiences have on ethnic identity. Implementing individualized interviews will draw attention to the unique experiences of participants in a manner that freely encourages the expressions of one's thoughts and feelings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

A total of eight participants were interviewed for this study. All participants were interviewed between November 2022 to January 2023. The majority of participants were gathered through the flyer posted to social media, while others were referred by participants. This chapter describes an evaluation of the qualitative data gathered. The researcher begins with introducing the demographics of participants and their background history. Then the major themes that emerged from the open codes are discussed, which list: Disconnect from Latinos, A Source of Insecurity, A sense of Loss, and Belonging to Latino Identity.

#### Participant Demographics and Background

Five female participants and three male participants were recruited for this study. Most participants were in their mid-twenties, however, participants ages ranged from twenty-three to thirty years old. In regards to level of education, two participants completed some college, five participants received a bachelor's degree, and one participant received a master's degree. Three of the participants who received a bachelor's degree reported being enrolled in Master's programs. Each participant identified as Latino which was pre-established by the eligibility requirements for this study. A majority of participants were third generation or

higher, which refers to those with two U.S Native parents. Two participants were second generation, having at least one foreign born parent. Each of the participants with a foreign-born parent described how their parents came to the U.S at a very young age where they were raised and acquired knowledge of the English language.

Seven of the participants reported that they were raised in a household where English was only spoken by their parents. Similarly, most participants identified that their grand-parents know how to speak Spanish but that they primarily speak English due to being raised in the United States. Whereas, three participants reported that their parents or family members do not speak little to no Spanish at all because they do not have any connection to immigrant generations. Only one participant was raised by immigrant grandparents, who only spoke Spanish in the home. While more than half of the participants described not having close a relationship or not having had the chance to make connections with great-grand parents. In fact, one participant described how her great-grand parents passed away before being born. Lastly, two participants traveled to Mexico as a child to visit where their family is from, but only one a few occasions. And one participant regularly visits family in Mexico during the summer.



## Disconnect from Latinos

Many participants described experiences where language acted as a barrier between them and other Spanish-speaking Latinos. They discussed how failure to adopt the Spanish language has minimized the level of familiarity and connection they hold towards other members in the community. This theme was gathered from the various statements made by participants depicting feelings of disconnect among fellow Latinos. Many participants expressed how their interactions with Spanish-speaking Latinos have been reinforcing of their struggles to fit in. This was revealed across multiple considerations within their lives, including perceived judgement, weak connections and feeling like an isolated subgroup.

### Perceived Judgement

Six participants revealed that when they disclosed to Spanish-speaking Latinos that they did not speak Spanish, they were met with responses that inflicted feelings of judgement. Participants reported that these encounters were largely based off of the expectation that they should know Spanish based on how they look. Participants discussed how Spanish-speaking Latinos have demonstrated subtle gestures of frustration or disappointment when they find out that they cannot communicate or understand with them. For example, a participant reported 'I would have a lot of people coming up to me at work asking me stuff in Spanish, and then I would respond like I'm so sorry but I do not speak Spanish, and they would give me a dirty look.' Similarly, another participant

stated “people automatically assume I speak Spanish, so you know they start talking to me.... and I usually am like I oh, I do not understand or something like that and then they will look at me a little weird.” Participants further recounted how having to talk to Spanish-speakers would evoke uncomfortable feelings associated with fear of received responses. One participant shared how interacting with older Latinos who speak Spanish made him nervous, stating ‘I just nod my head and smile because I do not want them to think I am rude.’ He further reported:

I just do not like having that conversation where it is like why did your parents not teach you, or something like that. Because in my case, my parents could not teach me because they do not know Spanish. Moreover, only one participant disclosed being outwardly judged by other Latinos who speak Spanish fluently. Specifically, by being called derogatory or hurtful things for not being able to speak the language. She reported that she was called a “wannabe” and “white-washed Mexican” by her mother in-law who only speaks Spanish. This participant further discussed how these interactions have made her feel unaccepted and rejected by her in-laws, stating “that should not define who I am because I have all of these other things going for me.”

### An Isolated Subgroup

A majority of participants described experiences of feeling like they stand alone amongst other Spanish-speaking Latinos. They described how they have struggled with perceiving themselves as less or inferior for not speaking the language. Participants frequently questioned their credibility to label themselves as Latino. This was demonstrated by a participant who shared “I feel like I am not

100% Mexican'. Another participant shared a similar response, stating 'I just do not have a place, I kind of feel like I am floating around other Latinos at times. And one participant even stated "I have definitely felt not Latina enough." A participant further elaborated on how she experienced a sense of rejection from the community as whole which has unfavorably differentiated her from other Latinos, reporting:

I am not Mexican enough to hang out with Mexicans, but I am not quite enough to hang out with my white peers, or just other ethnic identities.

Similarly, Participants shared their struggles with not having the same interests or understandings as Spanish-speaking Latinos, which has been reinforcing of their feelings of isolation. For instance, a participant stated how he feels that he is the 'black sheep' relative to other Latinos because he is not steep into the culture and does not speak Spanish. Another participant also described himself as being in an 'outcast group,' where he associates with more people like him. When the researcher inquired about what it means to be an 'outcast,' this participant reported 'I just cannot totally connect to a majority of Latinos because I do not speak Spanish, listen to Spanish music, or things like that.'" These two participants discussed how they do not carry the attributes that equate to being Latino which singles them out into a distinct category. At the same time, participants highlighted how the pressure to know Spanish has undermined their association to the Latino community. A participant stated "If you have the Latino blood and don't speak it, you will be criticized for it." However, across all

participants, there was a consensus that not speaking Spanish submerges them into a subgroup of their own.

### Weekend Connections

There was also a shared experience of encountering weekend connections within their interpersonal relationships that further disconnected participants from Spanish-speaking Latinos. More than half of participants related this to limited interactions between themselves and older generations who speak Spanish. One participant shared “I feel like I would be a lot closer to my great-grandma who is still alive because she really only speaks Spanish...there are times when I try speaking to her and she kind of understands me but then sometimes she does not know.” Likewise, another participant shared ‘My grandmother only speaks Spanish, so as much as I want to talk to her, I cannot.... I really wish I could have a good conversation with my grandmother.’ A participant also described that her knowledge of the Spanish language diminished as she became older and practiced the language less, making it ‘difficult to have a full conversation’ with her grand-parents now. Three participants expressed a sense of sadness when discussing the degree to which their relationships have been disrupted by not being able to speak Spanish. Other participants share how communication has been limited with other family members, including aunts and uncles who only speak Spanish.

Furthermore, two participants related Spanish-language fluency to a diminished connection between themselves and members outside of their family.

One participant discussed how she would be able to create a greater bond with her peers if she spoke Spanish. She shared 'All of my friends in college were first generation Hispanics, so I felt that they connected more that level...then there is me coming in as a third generation; it is like I am way separated from that.' Whereas a different participant discussed how not speaking Spanish has created a barrier between her and the connections that she is able to establish with her in-laws. This participant reported "I feel I would probably be more included, like be able to tell them things and laugh with them, rather than just sit there." These participants expressed a desire to know Spanish in order to feel included when interacting with other Latinos.

#### A Source of Insecurity

Furthermore, experiences of disconnect from fellow Latinos who speak Spanish has also been tied to barriers that impact the self-esteem of participants. Most participants identified that being a Latino who does not speak Spanish carries the exhausting burden of insecurity, reflected through feelings of embarrassment, guilt, and shame. They described how their limited ability to interact with Latinos who speak Spanish creates an emotional barrier that perpetuates a lack of confidence. At the same time, these feelings have been intensified by the internal battle to prove to other Latinos that they are enough. These experiences demonstrate how the self-perceptions of participants have been thwarted by the idea that it is necessary to speak Spanish in order to be considered Latino.

## Embarrassment

About 80% of participants associated feelings of embarrassment with not being able to speak Spanish. When assessing their level of comfort in trying to speak Spanish, most participants expressed discomfort in trying to communicate with fluent Spanish-speaking Latinos. For instance, one participant described how it would make her feel 'nervous' when she would be asked questions in Spanish while at work, stating "I will try my best to answer them, but I can only understand and say so much before I have to refer them to someone else." Another participant also stated "I do not feel comfortable speaking it because I can barely grasp what is being said. When I hear Spanish, it is just completely mixed together and I cannot even understand Spanish songs...so yeah there is a little embarrassment there." Participants also related their fears of trying to speak Spanish to being perceived as indifferent by Spanish speaking Latinos. A participant stated "I will stop myself from speaking it because I will question if I am saying things right or my point is getting across." He further elaborated on how he will be called a 'white guy' for not being able to speak Spanish correctly because "that is what you hear most of the time." Another participant demonstrated these similar feelings, stating:

I feel like I am going to be judged either way. I feel like I am going to be judged for mispronouncing something, or I am going to be judged because I do not speak it. But if I try, then at least I tried. But then I am going to be made fun of for saying something wrong, so I would rather just not subject myself to that.

Two participants demonstrated a desire to refrain from trying to Spanish due to the embarrassment that would be received by other people's negative reactions. One stated "I feel less knowledgeable because I cannot point the terminology that best matches with what I am trying to express to them." Yet all participants expressed frustration in their lack of ability communicate with Spanish-speaking Latinos. They identified how these factors have influenced internal feeling of inadequacy that minimize their efforts to practice and learn the language. However, two participants expressed feeling relatively comfortable trying to speak Spanish, describing that it enables them to feel more connected to the culture and provides the opportunity to expand on their Spanish speaking skills. For example, one participant reported "my friends might make fun of me when I speak it, but I know that it is never with malicious intent."

### Shame and Guilt

Furthermore, about half of participants associated feelings of guilt and shame with not being able to speak Spanish fluently. In discussing their interactions with Latinos who do not speak English, many participants described how they have felt powerlessness in these situations. Particularly, expressing an intense desire to support Spanish speaking Latinos that cannot be fulfilled, which reverts into an internalized experience of demonstrating wrongful behavior. For example, a participant shared "when someone looks annoyed of me for not being able to speak Spanish....it just makes me feel bad because I would love to help them." Another participant shared how she exhibits "hurt feelings" when she

cannot properly communicate, stating 'I wish I could be able to relate to them more, for example, like if I had a client who only spoke Spanish...then I would be able to relate to them on a personal level.' While a different participant discussed how she would be able to gather a deepened level of trust that is not present in the absence of Spanish. Another participant shared similar perspective stating, "I work with children so like if I want to speak to a parent and communicate with them about their child's behavior.... It is obviously hard to do and does not help to strengthen relationship." Each of these participants discussed how their experiences have submerged them under a state of helplessness that takes away from the potential to create meaningful interactions.

Other Participants also related their experiences of shame to their internalized views of what it means to be Latino. Such as, identifying that Spanish language fluency acts a determinant of authenticity into the Latino community. For example, a participant shared how the pressure to communicate with Spanish speaking Latinos has been intensified by outwardly presenting as Latino, stating "I am brown so it is like you do not want to tell them you do not speak it." Similarly, another participant reported "People will look around for someone who looks Mexican or Hispanic, and then they will look at me....and I am just like wow, I feel really bad." A participant further discussed how group differences set her apart from other Latinos, stating "There is some like guilt for not being able to connect with you know people who are more in touch with their Hispanic culture ...and even though I share that I cannot connect on that level."



These participants experienced feelings of inadequacy by not being able to confidently represent and support the Latino community.

### A Sense of Loss

All participants identified that their lives would be enriched with more opportunities if they were able to speak Spanish. Participants discussed how they have been limited by only being able to speak English on a social and cultural level. They analyze this through consideration of how they have been unable to attend to the large community of only Spanish speaking Latinos in different ways. Particularly, emphasizing how language acts as critical barrier in building relationships which dictates sources of success and happiness. As a result, Participants recognize themselves at a disadvantage relative to their bilingual counterparts, because they have experienced losses as a result of being incapable of immersing themselves into the Latino community through language.

### Employment

Participants identified that not being able to speak Spanish limits their opportunities for employment. Participants discussed how this is an extremely desirable skill sought by employees because it establishes increased rapport and productivity in serving Latino communities. In discussing their experiences, participants revealed how this has reinforced feelings of incompetence when applying and looking for jobs. For example, a participant stated “I feel like I would get better jobs with better pay because everyone wants bilingual people” Another participant also shared how she has felt restricted in the workforce as a

Latina who does not speak Spanish, stating ‘When I look at applications, they almost always put preferences for bilingual Spanish speakers which automatically limits me.’ Whereas another participant shared how she struggles with putting that she is bilingual on applications because her Spanish language fluency has diminished as she has gotten older. She reported “When I take the bilingual Spanish test, I will not pass because I am not using proper Spanish” .... “So even when I try it does not work out.” In addition, participants expressed how their value inside of the workplace itself diminishes because they cannot navigate communication on a personalized level with those who speak Spanish. Three participants shared how they would be able to create a more meaningful work environment if they were able to build connections with other Latinos. One participant specifically stated:

If I was able to work with Hispanic people more in my social work experience, I would have a greater understanding of like what hardships or obstacles they face, or what it is like emotionally to be in a new place.

### Culture

Other participants shared experiences that demonstrated a sense of loss relative to the Latino culture. Participants discussed how language acts as an important part of being able to engage and perceive themselves apart of the culture. Many participants described how not being able to speak Spanish has resulted in feeling a level of familiarity rather than association with the Latino culture. One participant shared “I do not speak Spanish so I do not really know the culture and what people of like first generation have gone through.” He went on to share how he wishes he could embrace the culture on a deeper level, but

stated “I just do not fit into that category.” Likewise, another participant stated “I do not know the language, I cannot understand the music, so I am unable to invest myself into the culture in ways I would want to.” Many participants also described feeling locked out of their culture because they obtain minimal knowledge about their Latino roots. For example, three participants shared how they have utilized DNA testing websites to gain an understanding about their cultural background. For example, one participant stated “I found all of these things out that my family would not be able to tell me themselves.” And another participant shared, “All I know is that I have family in Chihuahua but have never been there, and doubt they even know I exist.” In sharing their experiences, participants displayed a level of disappointment about being separated from their culture despite being Latino. Such as, yearning for “connection” and “involvement.”

#### Minimized Belonging to Latino Identity

All participants described feeling a sense of pride in being able to identify as Latino. Particularly, by recognizing the strength and bravery that Latino communities have been able to exemplify. However, their level of attachment to this identity has been characterized by a lack of security because they do not speak the Spanish language. Subsequently, participants described how they have created their own representations of what it means to be Latino. Especially, in the face of acculturation where half of participants described how they have come to perceive themselves as the ‘Americanized’ version of Latinos.

## Conflictual Pride

Participants communicated that they feel proud to be able to call themselves a Latino. They demonstrated this pride largely in acknowledgement of the hardships that the Latino community has overcome. For example, five participants demonstrated gratitude in being able to stem from a community that has courageously paved the way for themselves to receive certain opportunities. A participant shared 'I am proud to be Mexican because I know that we have done great things. Similarly, another participant reported "I do like being Mexican, I think we have a beautiful culture.... we are just really unique in a lot of ways." And a different participant demonstrated pride in relation to the achievements made by Latino activists. One participant also shared her own achievements as a Latina, recognizing the struggles that exist in the dual role of being a minority and woman. She stated, "I hold pride in being a Latina woman who has a higher education." She further discussed how this has influenced her to always empower other Hispanic women, for instance, those running in "politics." And another participant revealed how her pride stems from the "perseverance" of women in her family which she relates back to their "Mexican roots." On the other hand, two participants discussed how they have gained a greater sense of pride as they have gotten older. They identified that being able to explore unknown areas of their Mexican heritage in their adult lives have allowed them to become more appreciative of being Latino. One participant shared:

It was not until college that I really felt like in love with, like with my cultural roots, and like where I come from, and that was definitely a separation

from my grandparents, which you would think would be the opposite, you know, growing up with immigrant parents, that I would have that pride with me,

Although most participants expressed a degree of pride in being Latino, there were also feelings present that deterred them away from fully attaching themselves to this label. They described how their connections and knowledge about the Latino culture have influenced how they choose to display and invest themselves in this pride. One participant shared that he feels proud to be Hispanic, but stated that he does not “present it so much on the outside.” He went on to say, “I guess I am not just strong about like with my chest out.” Likewise, another participant reported “I am not overly proud telling everyone I am Mexican” which he related to “not having a strong sense of belonging.” Two participants also shared how they minimize their representation of being Latino due to the backlash that they feel they may receive. For example, a participant stated, “I know I feel like comfortable identifying as Hispanic. But I do feel like if someone were to challenge me on it, then there is like not a lot that I can back it up with other than like that is who my family is.” Similarly, another participant shared “Yes, I have a lot of pride, and I am able to identify as Latina. But I still always feel like there's judgment attached to it in one way or another.”

### Americanized

Moreover, participants discussed how have seemingly created their own identity amongst Latinos, associating themselves with the term ‘white-washed’ or ‘Americanized.’ One participant reported ‘My family is kind of whitewashed, but

we still practice the traditions and stuff like that.” She shared how her family has coined this term relative to other Latino families, because “Spanish” is what “differentiates” them. Whereas another participant discussed how his family does not engage in traditional practices because that was not something he was raised with, deeming his family to be ‘Americanized.’ A participant also shared a similar sentiment, stating that her family has created their own traditions outside of the Latino community, which includes “celebrating Christmas-Eve and then having Santa Clause come.” She went on to describe how her partner would deem this to be a “very white-washed, Americanized Holiday.” It is important to note that this participant emphasized how things look very different in her partners family, who is also Latina but whose family speaks Spanish and is more connected to the culture. In sharing these experiences, participants did not view these terms in a derogatory manner, rather they demonstrated acceptance over this in that it defines who they are. In fact, one participant expressed “I feel this is very white-privilege hardship that I suffer.... I do not have to endure most hardships that other people do. I speak fluent English. I understand the culture here better than my Mexican culture.” There was recognition among participants that these terms stem from adopting the culture and values that they have grown around.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The researcher explored Latino's experiences of not being able to speak Spanish and how it has shaped their self-perceptions. This chapter discusses the study's main findings and how these results present themselves in relation to existing literature on the importance of Spanish in Latino communities. The limitations and suggestions for further research will also be defined to expand on certain frameworks and review new contexts. As well, the results will be considered through recommendations that can improve social work practice at various levels. Finally, a conclusion of this study will be provided that circles back to how the results have answered the posed research questions.

#### Discussion

This study highlights the factors that relate to intragroup marginalization among Spanish-speaking Latinos through consideration of its impacts on ethnic identity. The main findings include disconnect from Latinos, a source of insecurity, a sense of loss, and minimized belonging. A shared attitude across participants has been feeling detached from fellow Latinos through the lack of shared connection with the Spanish language. This has subsequently impacted participants on an emotional level by decreasing confidence in their abilities and value relative to other Latinos. At the same time, there has been a perceived

sense of loss as participants identified a lack of involvement with Latino culture. Based on these factors, participants have identified a conflictual sense of belonging and attachment to Latino identity. These findings primarily expand on existing literature by drawing attention to an overlooked group within the Latino population, non-Spanish speaking Latinos.

A major theme that emerged was disconnect from Latinos who speak Spanish. After reviewing the transcripts, many participants identified that they felt indifferent among their Latino counterparts due to the absence of Language. From the reactions that they received from other Latinos; they explained how they perceived rejection from these interactions. Particularly, because they have been unable to conform to the expectations and values of their heritage and cultural background. They identified that expressions of judgement were largely indicated through non-verbal behavior or subtle cues of disappointment. These struggles with denied acceptance from other Latinos have negatively impacted the self-esteem of participants through indicators of embarrassment, shame, and guilt. They shared how this has stemmed from feeling inferior or inadequate among fellow Latinos. These findings expand on the literature that intragroup group marginalization leads to psychological distress (Ferenczi & Marshall, 2014). Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that the disconnect experienced by non-Spanish speaking Latinos contributes to internalized conflict, heightening the insecurity that surrounds not being able to speak Spanish.



Similarly, this emotional stress has been exacerbated by not being able to present themselves as an 'authentic' Latino through the expression language. In fact, many participants identified that they steer away from trying to engage in communication with other Latinos who are fluent to avoid judgement. They shared how speaking a language that they are unfamiliar asserts them in a vulnerable state that strips away at their self-confidence. Particularly, emphasizing how it exposes them to the criticism of not being Latino enough. This has lessened their motivation to speak Spanish because they perceive that grammar errors and mispronunciations will be recognized as inferiority by other Latinos. This expands on the literature of using Spanglish within Latino communities as non-Spanish speaking Latinos perceive that broken Spanish will be viewed negatively. This differentiates from the positive fulfillment that bilingual Latinos are able to gain from incorporating English in their use of Spanish (Casielles-Suárez, 2017). However, all participants expressed wishing that they could speak Spanish, but their feelings of 'otherness' have distanced them from engaging in opportunities to learn.

It is also important to consider how social exclusion depicts itself within the lives of non-Spanish speaking Latinos because it intensifies the level of disconnect that is experienced. Many participants identified disruptions with the level of connection that they associate with other Latinos. They shared how language acts as critical component of being able to develop meaningful connections with others Latinos which has increased their vulnerability to

encounter social deprivation. Such as, emphasizing the challenges that they face in being able to communicate which reiterates the importance that language plays in unifying Latinos (Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). Participants shared how this has impacted their relationships with strangers, peers, and family members. They also discussed how these interactions have submerged them into a distinct and separate category that clearly differentiates them from Latinos who speak Spanish. Much research thus far has focused on how bilingual adolescent preference relationships will follow bilinguals (Seban, 2009), without little insight into the feelings it projects on Latinos who do not speak Spanish. Therefore, these findings expand understanding of the perceived social rejection associated with intragroup marginalization that non-Spanish speaking face within various interpersonal relationships.

Based on these experiences, it is evident that the Spanish language acts as a fundamental component in developing a strong sense of ethnic belonging. Most participants have identified that not being able to speak Spanish has inflicted some type of loss in their life. In which these losses eventually fell back onto the concept of not being able to build connections with other Latinos. For example, participants described how language has separated them from understanding their cultural heritage, thereby, creating uncertainty within their identity. In part, because there has been no historical or traditional representation in their upbringing that they can tie their Latino roots back to. Participants essentially determined that group membership is defined by language,

highlighting how it grants access to the experience of shared culture. As a result, participants have become more affiliated with American culture which has intensified the level of misunderstanding within their representation of the Latino community. These findings suggest that non-Spanish speaking Latinos encounter greater acculturative stress which has negatively impacted their self-formulations of ethnic identity. This is consistent with the literature that describes how secure attachment to an ethnic group can support the development of increased confidence (Iturbide et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that the correlations between self-esteem, ethnic identity, and acculturation among non-Spanish speaking Latinos remains undermined within the literature.

As a result of being minimally affiliated with the culture, participants discussed how they have had to reconsider what it means to be a non-Spanish speaking Latino in a community that is well connected through language. Participants have essentially reshaped their identity in light of group differences, considering themselves the 'white-washed' or 'Americanized' versions of Latinos. Participants explained how they have created traditions and norms outside of the expectations associated with the Latino community. While for those who discussed retaining some familiarity with cultural practices, there was still the barrier of language present which disrupted their attachment to Latino identity. These feelings have been influenced by participants perceptions of contrasting values and norms from those who speak Spanish. This expands on the literature of bicultural competence, determining that Latino orientation largely declines

among generations who are not born to immigrant parents (Dennis et al, 2015). Because participants have grown up primarily around English, their identity has been informed outside of connection with their native roots. Yet, participants still carry a sense of pride in being able to consider themselves as Latino, but they have stepped away from embracing this pride due to the labels that differentiate them from other Latinos.

### Limitations

It is also important to consider these findings relative to the study's limitations. This study interviewed 8 participants which is a relatively small sample size. At the same time, participation was mainly gathered from third generation Latinos. Therefore, minimal attention was given to second generation Latinos who have lost connection to their native language as they have gotten older. Gathering a larger sample can increase generalizability by providing a stronger representation of non-Spanish speaker across various generations. Another limitation that presented itself is response bias, as the researcher could not ensure that participants were expressing themselves in a truthful manner. Participants may have devised their responses in efforts to avoid feeling like they are dismissing the voices of Latinos who struggle to speak English. Especially given the fact that some participants recognized acquiring the privilege of being able to adapt to mainstream society. Also, conducting interviews via Zoom could have reduced the vulnerability of participants. Lastly, there was the limitation of little to no past research given for the researcher to expand off of. This

demanded the development an entirely new interview guide which would need to be replicated in subsequent studies to increase the credibility of these results.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, Research

This study brought attention to how non-Spanish speaking Latinos have been impacted by the absence of language. It highlighted key issues that social workers should be mindful of when working with this population, including how disconnect from fellow Latinos has undermined their sense of belonging. Considering these factors can allow social workers to create an inclusive space that looks beyond just the shared cultural characteristics of Latinos. These clients could benefit from a conversation around ethnic identity during the assessment process, which should seek to gain an understanding of cultural influences, immigration experiences, and ascribed meanings of what it means to be Latino. This is critical given the relationship that participants identified between psychological well-being and intragroup marginalization. Helping clients make sense of their identities and how their behaviors do not represent inferiority can work to counteract feelings of confusion, guilt, and insecurity. Furthermore, at the policy level it is recommended that human rights organizations ally with non-Spanish speaking Latinos to have their struggles be heard and recognized. This can enhance awareness among Spanish-speaking Latinos, who may not recognize how participants have come to perceives themselves as a sub-group within the community. It has also become evident that more research needs to be conducted on this matter. Because participants have been exposed to intense

emotions, it is recommended that research give attention to whether or not this is also linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety. Social workers can utilize this information to expand resources available to non-Spanish speaking Latinos that are supportive of their mental and behavioral health needs.

### Conclusions

Nevertheless, the content gathered from each study will aid in increasing acknowledgement that exists within the Latino population. This study was developed to gain a greater understanding of how non-Spanish speaking Latinos can be supported in the face of perceived rejection while understanding their effects on the development of their identity. Not being able to speak Spanish has evoked a sense of detachment from fellow Latinos that contributes to a conflictual sense of belonging into the Latino community. In sharing their stories, it can be observed that this creates an everyday struggle of trying to prove oneself to be 'Latino enough.' These findings create the opportunity for social workers to develop supportive outlets that protect these individuals from the detrimental effects of intragroup marginalization. Rather, participants can be guided in a direction that allows them to perceive their group differences as unique and special rather than defective.

APPENDIX A  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

## Demographic Questions

**1. How old are you?**

18-25 years  26-49 years  50-64 years  65 and older

**2. To which gender do you identify most with?**

Female  Male  Transgender  Different Gender Identity

**3. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?**

No schooling  Some High School  High School  Bachelor's Degree   
Master's Degree  Ph.D.  Trade School

**4. To which immigrant generation do you identify with?**

Unknown First-generation  Second-generation  Third-generation   
Fourth-generation  Fifth-generation and above

**5. Can you tell me a little about your family background? This can include where you grand-parents and parents grew up and their upbringing.**

a. **What does the relationship with your grandparents look like?**

b. **How has the upbringing of your family influenced your own?**

**6. What does your travel history look like? For example, have you ever traveled to visit relatives or loved ones in their country of origin?**



APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

## **Interview Guide**

### **Part 1: Intragroup Marginalization**

- 1. How have you been criticized for not speaking Spanish? How has this impacted the perception you hold for yourself?**
- 2. What hardships have you faced interacting with fellow Latinos who speak Spanish?**
- 3. Tell me about a time where you felt rejected by fellow Latinos.**
- 4. How do you perceive that your life would be different if you spoke Spanish?**

### **Part 2: Ethnic Identity**

- 5. Would you describe yourself as someone who holds pride towards their ethnic group?**
- 6. Tell me about the level of connection you feel towards other members of your ethnic group.**
- 7. Have you had to talk to others to gain an understanding of your ethnic background?**
- 8. What does ethnic group membership mean to you?**

Developed by Marissa Ayala

APPENDIX C  
RESEARCH FLYER

## MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENT SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

**YOU WILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO WIN A \$30 DOLLAR GIFT CARD**

**Do you identify as a monolingual English-speaking HISPANIC/LATINO? Are you 18 and over?**

**If so, then you meet the criteria for participation in this study 😊**

**What is the purpose of this study?** This study seeks to understand the barriers and challenges associated with Spanish language fluency in Latino communities. You will be provided the opportunity to share about your experiences as a non-Spanish speaking Latino, particularly reflecting on how this status among fellow Latinos has shaped your world-view and sense of belonging.

**What is my role?** As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30–45-minute interview.

**Where will interviews be held?** Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, allowing you to participate within the comfort of your own home.

Your participation is completely **voluntary** and your responses will be **confidential**. As a gesture of appreciation for your participation, you will be entered into a raffle for a thirty-dollar gift card.

If you believe you meet eligibility requirements and are willing to participate, please contact the researcher via email:

**Marissa Ayala**  
**Graduate Student, Cal State University San Bernardino**  
**006848641@coyote.csusb.edu**

**The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino (IRB-FY2022-198)**

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the experiences of intragroup marginalization among non-Spanish speaking Latinos, and the implications that these experiences pose on one's ethnic identity. This study is being conducted by Marissa Ayala, a graduate student, under the supervision of Laurie Smith, a Professor in the School of Social Work at Cal State San Bernardino. This study will seek approval by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of non-Spanish speaking Latinos and understand the correlations between intragroup marginalization and ethnic identity.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked a series of questions related to their self-perception and experiences growing up as a non-Spanish speaking Latino. Demographic information will include background information, family relationships and upbringing, and travel history. In addition, barriers and challenges associated with feelings of rejection and inadequacy that stem from intragroup marginalization will be explored. While, questions pertaining to ethnic identity will analyze pride, connection, understanding, and the values associated with group membership.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All commentary provided will remain confidential and recordings gathered for the purpose of transcription will be save to cloud drive that is

automatically stored and encrypted through Zoom’s software. All data collected will be permanently deleted three years after the completion of this study.

**DURATION:** Interviews will take 30-45 minutes to complete.

**RISKS:** Although not anticipated, there are minimal risks posed by this study such as feeling discomfort when exploring challenges related to intragroup marginalization and sense of belonging to one’s ethnic group. In the event that these feeling arise, you are not required to answer and may choose to skip the question or end participation.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. However, findings from the study will enhance social work practice in attending to the diversity of Latinos.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Erick Schott at (909) 537-7480.

**RESULTS:** Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database

(<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2023.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

I understand that this research will be video-recorded via Zoom for the purpose of the researcher developing an audio transcription: \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Place an X mark here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX E  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



September 20, 2022

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt IRB-FY2022-198

Erik Schott Marissa Ayala  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway San  
Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Erik Schott Marissa Ayala:

Your application to use human subjects, titled “NON-SPANISH SPEAKING LATINOS’ EXPERIENCES OF INTRAGROUP MARGINALIZATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHNIC IDENTITY” has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risks and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections

(OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2022-198 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

King-To Yeung

King-To Yeung, Ph.D., IRB Chair CSUSB Institutional Review Board

KY/MG

## REFERENCES

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