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# Latinos' Collectivism and Self-Disclosure in Intercultural and Intractultural Friendships and Acquaintanceships

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LATINOS' COLLECTIVISM AND SELF-DISCLOSURE IN INTERCULTURAL AND  
INTRACULTURAL FRIENDSHIPS AND ACQUAINTANCESHIPS

by

Audrey L. Schwartz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Psychology

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Logan, Utah

2009

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## ABSTRACT

Latinos' Collectivism and Self-Disclosure in Intercultural and Intracultural  
Friendships and Acquaintanceships

by

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Utah State University, 2009

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Self-disclosure is the process of sharing personal information with others and varies according to relationship intimacy, cultural norms, and personal values. Collectivism, defined as the tendency to define oneself in terms of social/cultural roles, may impact self-disclosure in intercultural relationships. The present study investigated whether Latinos/as reliably self-disclose more in intracultural versus intercultural friendships and acquaintanceships. An additional question was whether cultural variables such as collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation are related to self-disclosure differences. Data were collected via an online survey from internationally born Latinos and Latino Americans. Results of linear mixed effects model testing revealed that relationship type and partner ethnicity had significant relationships with self-disclosure. Higher collectivism was related to increased self-disclosure across all relationship types. Acculturation was related to self-disclosure only in the context of partner ethnicity and

friendships, while ethnic identity did not demonstrate a general relationship with self-disclosure. Potential explanations for these results are discussed.

(96 pages)

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Self-disclosure is the process of sharing personal information with another person and has been shown to vary according to relationship intimacy, cultural norms, and personal values (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). The development of interpersonal relationships is in large part dependent upon how individuals share information about themselves, and thus self-disclosure is a key component to overall interpersonal communication.

The impact of culture on self-disclosure in close relationships has been a topic of investigatory interest since researchers began measuring self-disclosure in the early 1960s (Jourard, 1971). This attention to cross-cultural communication differences is understandable given the importance of multicultural sensitivity in a world of increasing diversity and globalization. In addition, interpersonal support networks and close friendships are considered to be a moderating factor in many mental health risks, such as depression (Alegria et al., 2007). For individuals immigrating to a new country, the task of developing friendships is contingent upon being able to appropriately communicate with others, including moderating self-disclosure. Therefore, whether an individual from one cultural background will be inclined to share personal information, or self-disclose, to an individual from another cultural background has implications not only for international relations on the whole, but also for individual mental health.

One of the possible cultural values that may play a role in determining an individual's level of self-disclosure during the development of an intercultural friendship is collectivism, defined as a tendency to define oneself in terms of social role or duty to

he in-group (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Collectivism was traditionally viewed as one half of the individualism-collectivism dichotomy that described differences among national cultures, although more recently it has come to be conceptualized as a discrete value that exists on a continuum from high to low. Previous research has shown that individuals who endorse high levels of collectivism tend to prefer communication methods that promote in-group harmony, such as indirectness (Oyserman et al.), accommodation, and collaboration (Gabrieldis, Stephan, Ybarra, Dos Santos Pearson, & Villareal, 1997).

In general, research has demonstrated that Latinos tend to endorse collectivism at higher rates than non-Hispanic White Americans (Oyserman et al., 2002). This finding, in conjunction with the current understanding of traditional Latino social structure and relationship patterns, suggests that intercultural friendship patterns among Latinos and White Americans may be a useful arena for investigating how cultural values affect communication.

Previous studies on self-disclosure have revealed inconclusive findings regarding possible differences in self-disclosure rates among Latinos and non-Hispanic White Americans. Applying the results of such studies to intercultural relationships is made difficult by the fact that many researchers use scales that measure the amount an individual has self-disclosed to specific people, such as family members or close friends, but do not control for the ethnicity of the target person. In addition, it appears that many researchers go about looking for differences in self-disclosure rates without a clear understanding of why those differences may exist and why they may be important.

The goal of the current study is to expand findings regarding Latino collectivism and self-disclosure by investigating the association between these two variables in Latino students' acquaintanceships and friendships with both Latino and White American relationship partners. The inclusion of variables such as ethnic identity, acculturation, gender, and country of origin is expected to provide further clarity into how self-disclosure and collectivism interact within specific individual contexts.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature will present and synthesize findings from past research regarding each of the four cornerstones of the current proposal: friendship, culture, collectivism, and self-disclosure. The review will begin by demonstrating the complex relationships among culture, friendship, and communication, and will then move into exploring Latino culture, collectivism, and, finally, self-disclosure. The purpose of this review will be to establish a framework outlining the ways in which self-disclosure within the context of a friendship could be expected to vary according to cultural identity (Latino) and values (high or low collectivism).

#### Culture, Friendship, and Communication

Culture has been defined as the lens through which individuals perceive the self, others, and the environment in which the two interact (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Honigman (1954) emphasized the “socially standardized” behavior that results from specific cultural environments. Of the many behaviors colored by socially established norms and expectations, interpersonal communication is particularly important. The appropriate methods for sending and receiving interpersonal messages in one culture may not apply in another, depending on that culture’s values and social structure. In addition, communication is regulated by how individuals define themselves, which depends in large part upon the language they use to describe themselves, the social category to which they perceive themselves to belong, and the values by which they gauge appropriateness of behaviors (Gaines, 1995).

Understanding cultural effects on communication is of obvious import, especially in light of Altman and Taylor's (1973) influential social penetration theory. The theory emphasizes the stage-like, developmental nature of interpersonal relationships, citing the processional motion of interpersonal interaction within a growing relationship. Knapp and Vangelisti (1991) expanded upon this theory, proposing a "staircase model of relationship stages." The model illustrated how, when a relationship is in the process of coming together, it passes through developmental stages of initiating (e.g., engaging in small talk), experimenting (e.g., asking questions and exploring similarities), intensifying (e.g., increasing depth and breadth of disclosure and expressing commitment), integrating (e.g., coming to be seen as a couple or as friends by social networks), and bonding (e.g., publicly marking the relationship, such as selecting friends to be a part of life events such as marriage or childbirth).

Across cultures, social penetration theory has largely been supported, as researchers have found friendships to follow a similar developmental pattern. Korn (1993), for example, found that despite the differences in cultural contexts and values, both American and North Korean friendships progress in stages, moving across markers such as acquaintance, casual friend, close friend, and best friend. The researchers found that each stage was consistently defined by increasing intensity of important characteristics. For the American sample, these characteristics included psychological support, trust, respect, and authenticity; for the North Korean sample, these characteristics included congeniality, sympathy, unselfishness, responsibility, honesty, generosity, and intelligence. The authors also found that although topics of conversation

were different, both samples reported increased intimacy of disclosure across each stage of friendship.

In addition to similar developmental patterns, the basic elements necessary for friendship formation are also similar across cultures: proximity, homophily, reciprocal liking, and self-disclosure (Gareis, 1995; Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Although proximity often occurs as face-to-face contact, the term refers mainly to frequent and reciprocal contact of any kind, such as letter-writing or phone calls. Multiple qualitative studies have found that frequent contact is requisite for natural development of friendship (Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1991; Hamm, Brown, & Heck, 2005; Kudo & Simkin). For example, through a series of interviews with Japanese exchange students studying in Australia, Kudo and Simkin found that although most students reported difficulty forming friendships with host nationals, the frequent contact provided by dormitories, classrooms, and shared social networks enhanced the likelihood of such friendships occurring.

Homophily, or perceived similarity, has been referred to as the most important element in predicting friendship formation (Gareis, 1995). Individuals are more likely to choose friends with whom they share similar attitudes, values, and opinions, most likely because they are perceived as supporting self-concept and personal identity, thereby providing reassurance of self-worth. Self-concept, composed of identity, evaluative, and behavioral self-other representations, is believed to “provide the rationale for choice,” by assisting a person in “[coping] with the future and making sense out of the past” (Cushman, Valentinsen, & Dietrich, 1982, p. 98). Given the importance of homophily and self-concept support, it is no surprise that communication researchers have sought to



better understand the ways that perceived similarity and cultural diversity interact in the process of relationship development. Of course, the relationship between the two is complicated by multiple factors, such as personality, social pressure, individual expectations and cultural understandings (Gareis; Gudykunst, 1985).

Gudykunst and Shapiro (1996) proposed that social identity, which is largely based upon group membership, is activated more in intergroup encounters than in interpersonal encounters, thereby substantially informing communication behavior. They predicted that this identity activation would result in differences in anxiety and uncertainty, perceived quality and satisfaction, and expectations. Using the Revised Iowa Communication Record (RICR; Gudykunst, 1992), which measures personal identity, social identity, expectations, uncertainty, anxiety, communication quality, and satisfaction, the researchers asked an ethnically diverse group of American college students to track their encounters with members of other cultures. For each intercultural encounter they had, respondents also tracked an encounter with a member of their own culture and race. The participants were asked to make sure that the individuals in each pair of encounters were of the same level of intimacy (e.g., friend, acquaintance, or stranger). The researchers found that when individuals engaged in intercultural interactions, they reported more anxiety and uncertainty, less positive expectations, lower communication satisfaction and quality, and an increased sense that their social identities were important. They also found a correlation between social identity and anxiety and uncertainty, suggesting that the stronger an individual's social identity, the higher his or her anxiety and uncertainty in an intercultural encounter.

In a follow-up study using the same methodology, but focusing on interethnic and intraethnic encounters, Gudykunst and Shapiro (1996) found similar results, although a comparison of the studies revealed a trend for lower levels of anxiety and uncertainty and greater quality and satisfaction in interethnic encounters than in intercultural encounters. The authors argued that this finding may be due to the influence of shared cultural membership in interethnic encounters, supporting the theory that cultural diversity activates social identity, and consequently, cultural communication scripts.

In intercultural friendships, cultural diversity appears to play an important mediating role, providing a main topic for communication at the beginning of a relationship and ending as a largely irrelevant factor once a friendship has become close (Gudykunst, 1985). Gudykunst compared levels of social penetration in intracultural and intercultural friendships between U.S. nationals and international exchange students by measuring the frequency and intimacy of topics discussed among friendship pairs. He concluded that individuals are likely to self-disclose at similar rates to close friends regardless of cultural background. However, little research has been conducted regarding how cultural differences influence self-disclosure rates in intercultural friendships that are still developing.

There are a number of reasons to study intercultural friendship development. As Oyserman, Sakamoto, and Lauffer (1998) pointed out, "One of the promises of multiculturalism is that by affording individuals a chance to express their particularized identities, society as a whole will be strengthened" (p. 1606). Intercultural friendships appear to play an important role in weakening individuals' prejudice and racism. For example, Aberson, Shoemaker, and Tomolillo (2004) found that individuals with

interethnic friendships exhibited less prejudice, as measured by an implicit association task, than individuals without close friends from an ethnic minority group. In addition, understanding the way culture influences self-disclosure in naturally occurring relationships, such as friendships, can inform other relationships in which self-disclosure is of utmost importance, such as a therapeutic relationship in which therapist and patient are of different cultural backgrounds.

Finally, numerous studies on immigrant mental health have found that social support and close relationships are vital protective factors against mental illness, particularly depression. For example, Alderete, Vega, Kolody, and Aguilar-Gaxiola (1999) found that among Mexican migrant farmers, the preservation of Mexican cultural norms, such as speaking primarily Spanish and maintaining Mexican traditions, improves the security of social networks and reduces the risk of depression. In addition, they found that individuals who reported high levels of instrumental, or tangible, social support, had nearly half the risk of depression as those who reported lower instrumental social support. Alegria and colleagues (2007), in a sample of Latinos from multiple countries, and Hovey (2000), in a sample of Central Americans, found that family conflict, dysfunction, burden, and ineffective support were all predictors of depression. Alegria and colleagues also reported that marital dissolution was a primary indicator of the development of depressive symptoms. Given these findings, as well as the importance of self-disclosure on relationship development (Korn, 1993; Kudo & Simkin, 2003), it is clear that understanding patterns of self-disclosure in both inter- and intracultural relationships will provide important information for health care professionals working with minority and immigrant clients.

## Investigating and Defining Culture

Before moving further into the discussion of Latino culture and the previous findings of cross-cultural investigations of collectivism and self-disclosure, a brief examination of terminology and methodology is necessary. While the terms “culture” and “ethnicity” continue to be used interchangeably in popular literature, it is important to note their distinct meanings. Culture, a multifaceted and multidimensional construct, most commonly refers to a shared way of life passed down through generations, including values, beliefs, and traditions, while ethnicity refers to shared race or nationality and an individual’s identification with a group of people with common cultural history (Turner, Wieling, & Allen, 2004).

There are a number of consequences to indiscriminately comparing populations on the basis of culture or ethnicity, including improper generalizations and often biased and useless conclusions. Cauce, Coronado, and Watson (1998) gave the example that too many studies find differences between ethnic groups and then fail to follow up on the etiology and meaning of those differences. In addition, it has been pointed out that differences found among ethnic subgroups cannot be assumed to be the result of cultural characteristics, particularly because sociodemographic variables often covary with ethnicity (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Steinberg & Fletcher, 1998). Cauce and colleagues recommended that cross-cultural comparative research should be performed only when there are strong theoretical underpinnings to support it.

Another problem with culture-based research is the habit of studying only one ethnic subgroup, such as Mexican Americans, and then making generalizations across the broader population, such as Latinos. Guilamo-Ramos and colleagues (2007) explained

that although careful consideration of the distinct ethnic groups within the broader construct of “Latino” is required, investigators still consistently refer to the distinct social and psychological features that all Latino subgroups reliably share. In their influential review of appropriate research methodologies with Latino populations, Marin and VanOss Marin (1991) asserted that although Latinos may not fully share demographic characteristics such as language or religion, they do tend to share common and distinct cultural values. These common values, and the possible utility of understanding how they may affect communication in meaningful ways, are discussed more fully in the next section.

#### Latino/a Culture

As a cultural group, the Latino population provides a valuable context for understanding the relationship between culture and communication. Latinos are an extremely heterogeneous ethnic group with roots in Mexico, South and Central America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and they continue to be the fastest growing ethnic minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). According to the U.S. Census, there were approximately 42.7 million Latinos in the U.S. in July 2005 (not including the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico), making up about 14% of the total U.S. population. It is projected that by July 2050, Latinos will constitute 24% of the total U.S. population.

Although Latinos may be categorized as belonging to Western culture, they are also distinguished in existing literature as endorsing a different set of values from non-Hispanic White Americans. Many of these values reflect important attitudes and behaviors surrounding interpersonal relationships. One of the most salient examples of a

culturally specific value is *familismo*, defined as dedication and loyalty toward the family and the assumption that the needs of the family are more important than the needs of the individual (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). A widely received definition by Burgess, Locke, and Thomes (1963) included as a primary portion, “the feeling on the part of all members that they belong pre-eminently to the family group and that all other persons are outsiders” (p. 35). In a review of Latino family research, Vega (1995) noted that Latinos, particularly Mexican Americans, have consistently been found to be more likely than White Americans to seek help from families, reside in close proximity to extended kin networks, and migrate toward family. In addition, the cultural values of *simpatía* and *personalismo* have been shown to impact communication and relationships. *Simpatía* refers to the emphasis placed on avoiding conflict and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships (Marin & VanOss Marin, 1991), while *personalismo* refers to a preference for relationships with members of the in-group, or other Latinos (Marin, 1989). In a qualitative analysis of parenting practices among Puerto Rican and Dominican mothers, Guilamo-Ramos and colleagues (2007) found that themes of *simpatía* and *personalismo* played distinct and important roles in how the mothers interacted with their children and with other caregivers. Latinos/as have also been found to dislike disclosing personal information to someone with whom they have not developed close personal connectedness and trust, or established *confianza* (Kail & Elberth, 2004). For example, Kail and Elberth found that Latina women seeking substance abuse treatment reported a preference for gathering intake information over several short sessions, in order for a relationship to be built.

The distinctive social structure, intrafamilial interaction patterns, and relationship values of individuals from Latino cultures may lead to differences in interactions with individuals from other cultures. Individuals from all cultures demonstrate a preference for communication with people to whom they are similar in a number of respects, such as interest, values, and ethnic background (Blau, 1995). In fact, according to Blau, one of the social decisions that must be made by an individual is which in-group preference to prioritize. Previous investigations of the well-established values placed on family and ethnic in-groups suggests that Latinos may prefer developing and maintaining relationships with other Latinos, a pattern which may create unique interpersonal dynamics with members of other ethnic groups. In fact, the Latino values of *familismo*, *simpatía*, *personalismo*, and *confianza* appear to be closely related to another well-established cultural value that also describes the way some individuals form, maintain, and regard interpersonal relationships: collectivism. Collectivism as a cultural construct can be reliably measured and applied to the context of intercultural communication and has been studied in relation to both communication and Latino populations.

### Collectivism

#### *Defining and Measuring Collectivism*

Introduced as one of four major value dimensions by Hofstede (1980) to explain the social differences among countries, the dichotomy of individualism-collectivism continues to be widely used to explain communication and relationship differences among cultural groups. In essence, collectivism is the tendency for individuals to define themselves in terms of their social relationships, or group memberships, and in terms of

their obligations to in-group members. This interdependent self-construal was originally thought to be the opposite of individualism, or the tendency for individuals to define themselves in terms of personal independence and personal goals (Hofstede). More recently, the idea that individualism and collectivism are mutually exclusive values has become less accepted, and many researchers conceptualize individuals as endorsing varying degrees of each value (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). It should be noted that although Triandis (1989) pointed out that collectivism and individualism refer to societies and cultures, while the terms allocentrism and idiocentrism are more appropriate for describing individuals, the present study, in accordance with Oyserman and colleagues (2002), will refer solely to the prior set of terms in an attempt to avoid confusion.

One of the consequences of shifting the conceptualization of individualism-collectivism from a country level to an individual level has been an adjustment, and a fair amount of disagreement, in the way the concepts are measured. Original scales following Hofstede's (1980) approach have been developed to fit the model of individualism-collectivism residing on a single spectrum, such that only one dimension is assessed and the other is inferred to be the opposite. Unfortunately, much of the subsequent research regarding the psychological implications of individualism-collectivism merely invokes the original country-level work of Hofstede without actually measuring the concepts. An extensive meta-analysis by Oyserman and colleagues (2002) found that of 170 studies, only 87 actually measured individualism or collectivism, and only 36 of those measured both. More recent self-report rating scales employ a variety of methods for operationalizing the concepts, although there does not appear to be a single common standard. In fact, Oyserman and colleagues found 27 distinct scales and countless others



that were slight modifications (such that only a few minor changes were made for the specific purposes of an individual research project) of previously published scales.

Most authors continue to disagree on what item content best targets collectivism. Content analysis by Oyserman and colleagues (2002) found that the existing scales cover a range of domains, including “others are an integral part of the self,” “wanting to belong,” “duty and sacrifice to the group,” “concern for group harmony,” “turning to close others for advice,” “contextual self,” “focus on hierarchy,” and “preference for group work.” However, of the many current scales in use which measure both constructs at an individual level, a scale by Gaines and colleagues (1997) appears to be more reliable than the others in assessing collectivism, not only in Latinos, but also in African Americans and Asian Americans. Consisting of ten items geared toward community obligation and sharing, the scale was found to be successful in separating collectivism from another, closely related other-oriented value: familism. Although some researchers have argued that familism should be included as a core element of collectivism (Realo, Allik, & Vadi, 1997; Triandis et al., 1993), Gaines and colleagues showed that when familism and collectivism are measured separately, they are only modestly correlated. This result reflects the conclusion made by Oyserman and colleagues that individuals can be family-oriented and obligated to their kin without necessarily being collectivistic, or group-oriented. However, although familism and collectivism appear to be distinctly separate values, the relationship between the two is nevertheless a positive one (Gaines et al.), suggesting that, to some degree, the tendency to define one’s self contextually crosses group membership lines.

### *Cross-Cultural Differences*

Cross-cultural studies comparing Latinos and White Americans have generally found that although individuals in most Latin American countries exhibit comparable levels of individualism as White Americans, they are generally more collectivistic. Oyserman and colleagues' (2002) meta-analysis included studies comparing levels of individualism and collectivism between the United States and Latin/South American countries and found that while individuals from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Perú, and Puerto Rico were less individualistic than individuals from the United States, the opposite was true for individuals from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. However, with the exception of Venezuela and Costa Rica, participants from Latin/South American countries consistently showed significantly higher levels of collectivism. Similar results were found when Latino Americans were compared to White Americans, with Latino Americans showing consistently higher rates of collectivism and reasonably similar rates of individualism.

A number of other studies support the notion that Latinos endorse higher levels of collectivism than do White Americans, although the ways in which researchers operationalize "Latino" tends to differ. For example, both Shkodriani and Gibbons (1995) and Freeberg and Stein (1996) compared individuals based on nationality, measuring collectivism between Mexicans and White Americans, while Ottati, Triandis, & Hui (1999) compared individuals based on ethnicity, investigating the construct among Latino Americans and White Americans. Shkodriana and Gibbons measured collectivism using a scale that addressed beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors in specific relationships. They found that university students in Mexico reported higher levels of

collectivism in their relationships with their parents, spouse, and classmates than university students in the United States. Freeberg and Stein (1996) compared values and family functioning among Mexican American and White American young adults and found that although there were no apparent differences in interactions of individualistic attitudes and perceptions of family structure, the Mexican American participants reported significantly stronger attitudes of collectivism and interactions between collectivism and family dynamics such as cohesion and interaction. The authors concluded that although the Mexican American participants had lived in the United States for most of their lives, they had retained the collectivist attitudes of their parents while integrating the individualistic attitudes of their host country. In an attempt to assess the effects of cultural orientation within specific occupational settings, Otatti and colleagues (1999) compared the scores of Latino and non-Latino naval recruits on a variety of value dimensions. They found that although high acculturation scores tended to predict greater similarity of the Latino participants to the non-Latino participants on dimensions such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, they nevertheless scored consistently higher in collectivism.

*Ethnic Identity, Acculturation,  
and Collectivism*

An additional element to be considered in the review of collectivism across cultural boundaries is the contribution of ethnic identity. Because ethnicity is one of the major factors that comprises an individual's overall cultural cache, it is relevant to question the extent to which ethnic identity and sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group influences the cultural values they endorse. In a cross-cultural investigation carried

out by Gaines and colleagues (1997), ethnic group membership consistently predicted levels of collectivism, with African American, Latino, and Asian American participants scoring significantly higher in collectivism than Anglo American participants. In addition, African American, Latino, and Asian American participants also scored significantly higher on racial/ethnic identity, as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). In fact, further analysis revealed that ethnic identity mediated the influence of ethnicity on collectivism, suggesting that the stronger a person of color's ethnic identity, the more likely he or she was to endorse collectivistic values.

Although ethnic identity has been found to be a distinct emotional, cognitive, and behavioral construct from acculturation, Cuellar, Bastida, & Braccio (2004) found that the two constructs are highly correlated, with higher acculturation corresponding to lower ethnic identity. This relationship has important implications for how the acculturation process may influence or be influenced by collectivism, which is essentially a cultural value closely tied to ethnic identity. Previous research has also found important links between acculturation and collectivism. For example, Gómez (2003) found that Latinos with a Master of Business Administration degree who scored lower on an acculturation measure reported higher collectivism compared to those who scored as more highly acculturated. In addition, Alderete and colleagues' (1999) findings that social networks among Mexican migrant workers are strengthened when group members preserved cultural traditions and language also support the connection between acculturation (English-language proficiency) and collectivism (traditional cultural values).

The relationships among these constructs are further complicated by the unclear distinctions that arise when ethnic identity, acculturation, and collectivism are studied in Latino Americans versus Latinos born in other countries or territories (such as Puerto Rico). Oyserman and colleagues' (2002) meta-analysis found that both Latino Americans and international Latinos endorsed higher collectivism than White Americans, raising the question of whether acculturation and ethnic identity rather than ethnicity per se is related to collectivism and its impact on communication.

### *Communication and Collectivism*

Oyserman and colleagues (2002) described the main identifying characteristic of collectivism as a duty to the in-group, as well as a strong tendency to distinguish between in-group and out-group members. This distinction between in-group and out-group members has been shown to predict differences in communication strategies. For example, Pearson and Stephan (1998) found that Brazilians who scored higher than Americans in collectivism showed less concern for self and engaged in more accommodation and collaboration than Americans when negotiating with a close friend. However, in business transactions with a stranger, they showed equal amounts of concern for self and engaged in equal amounts of competition as Americans. In a study on conflict resolution in Mexico and the United States, Gabrieldis and colleagues (1997) measured collectivism and individualism based on an interdependence-independence of the self model. They found that the Mexican participants viewed themselves as more interdependent and also preferred the conflict resolution styles that reflected high concern for others, accommodation and collaboration. The authors also found that the Mexican participants displayed higher amounts of self-analysis than Americans and did not differ

in the amount of competitiveness. Not only do these results support the idea that individualism and collectivism are separate dimensions and that an individual can be high or low in both constructs, they also suggest that collectivism is closely tied to engagement in communication which will retain in-group harmony and cohesion.

Research conducted in highly collectivist cultures has generally found that the interdependence value dimension influences communication style. Oyserman and colleagues (2002), for example, reviewed ten studies that examined communication preferences and found that indirect styles correlated negatively with individualism and positively with collectivism. Gudykunst and Nishida's (1994) review of Japanese communication style concluded that many of the preferences for low self-disclosure, avoidance of direct questions, and reliance on nonverbal communication can be explained by collectivism. "In collectivist cultures like Japan, individuals do not expose their true feelings until they know the other person well. In individualistic cultures, individuals are expected to express themselves to others even if they do not know them well" (Gudykunst & Nishida, p. 66).

One type of communication in particular that may be affected by collectivism is self-disclosure. Lombardo and Fantasia (1976) divided their sample of university students according to scores on a self-disclosure scale and found that high disclosers had significantly higher scores on a self-acceptance scale and significantly lower scores on a fear of negative evaluation scale. When they analyzed scores on an internal support scale, they found that high disclosers appeared to be more "self" rather than "other" oriented. This distinction of "self" versus "other" is an important one when considering how self-

disclosure rates may function in various cultures, particularly given the widely accepted distinction between individualist and collectivist cultures.

### *Summary of Collectivism*

Overall, previous research has found that Latinos/as tend to endorse higher levels of collectivism than White Americans. Research has also shown that individuals who score high in collectivism tend to prefer communication strategies which preserve in-group harmony. The finding that Latinos/as tend to define themselves in terms of their social and cultural roles more than White Americans, as well as the finding that this tendency may lead to different communication strategies, suggests that self-disclosure in Latino-White American intercultural relationships may be impacted.

## Self-Disclosure

### *Defining and Measuring Self-Disclosure*

Self-disclosure refers to the process of sharing personal information with another individual (Cozby, 1973). Measured in terms of the degree, depth, and breadth of intimacy of shared information in a given relationship, self-disclosure plays an important role in developing friendships and appears to be highly affected by cultural values and expectations (Jourard, 1971). Self-disclosure as a concept has long been considered a key component in healthy emotional growth and social role-playing (Jourard, 1959). It is also one of the four main elements described by Gareis (1995) as necessary for friendship formation; because one of the psychological purposes of a friendship is self-concept

support, it is necessary for information about the self to be shared between individuals if a friendship is to develop.

In a review of Japanese communication scripts, Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) explained that the high value placed on restraint (*enryo*), as well as the disparity between true attitude (*honne*) and the attitude expressed in public (*tatemae*), contributes to lower levels of self-disclosure in initial interactions in Japan than in the United States. Similarly, Gareis's (1995) case studies of international college students in the United States uncovered common self-disclosure trends within certain groups of students from the same country. Of the five Indian students the author followed, all definitively pointed out that highly personal information should never be shared with others, with the possible exception of one best friend.

Since its introduction as a quantifiable construct, verbal self-disclosure has been investigated in relation to a number of individual and social variables, including self-concept, personality, adjustment, social acceptability, and social exchange (Cozby, 1973). The effects of self-disclosure on liking and reciprocity have been widely studied (Collins & Miller, 1994), as have the purported differences in self-disclosure between males and females (Dindia & Allen, 1992). A meta-analysis of correlational and experimental disclosure-liking studies (Collins & Miller) revealed that when possible confounding moderators such as sex, attribution style, social norms, length of relationship, and intimacy level are carefully controlled, a significant positive relationship is found between disclosing and liking. In other words, individuals tend not only to be more likely to view a person more positively to whom they have self-disclosed, they are also more likely to view a person positively who self-discloses in return. A meta-analysis by Dindia



and Allen indicated a slight trend for women to self-disclose more than men, although gender differences were more prominent when the participants were friends rather than strangers. In addition, it appeared that the gender split was larger when the target person was a female rather than a male, indicating that men and women self-disclose at comparable rates with men, but that women self-disclose at a greater rate when speaking with women.

The most widely used method for measuring self-disclosure is via a self-report scale by Jourard and Lasakow (1958) in which participants rate how much they have disclosed about various topics to specific people. The original instrument, the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ), consisted of 60 items divided equally into six content areas: attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work (or studies), money, personality, and body. For each item, respondents report the extent (on a scale of 0-2, with 0 = no disclosure, 1 = general or limited disclosure, and 2 = full and complete disclosure) to which they have disclosed information to four target people: mother, father, best opposite-sex friend, and best same-sex friend. Variations of the JSDQ have altered the length, target persons, specific instructions, and style of presenting the items (e.g., Diaz-Peralta Horenstein, & Downey, 2003; LeVine & Franco, 1981; Shapiro & Swensen, 1977).

One of the shortcomings of the JSDQ is the lack of support for its predictive validity. Although previous studies (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Pederson & Higbee, 1968) have provided evidence of convergent and discriminant validity, other studies (Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; Himmelstein & Kimbrough, 1963) have found that scores on the JSDQ do not correlate strongly to actual disclosure in an experimental setting. However, Cozby

(1973) pointed out that the latter findings could be explained by the inconsistency introduced by comparing a subject's history of disclosing to family and close friends with actual disclosure to an experimenter or stranger. Despite criticisms raised against measuring self-disclosure using self-report, it remains a useful method for obtaining an overview of how individuals perceive their interactions with other (Tardy, 1988). One of the values of a self-report scale is that it effectively measures an individual's perception of their own behavior, which is useful in its own right. Understanding the perceived interactions continues to provide clearer understanding of cultural influences on psychology and behavior.

#### *Cross-Cultural Differences*

Currently, there is a paucity of literature regarding self-disclosure among Latinos/as, and most of what is available is inconclusive. Jourard's (1971) original cross-cultural investigation compared university students in Puerto Rico and in the United States using scores on the JSDQ. He reported that contrary to stereotypes that characterized Spanish-speaking persons as more emotionally open than English-speakers, the Puerto Rican sample disclosed significantly less to their parents and close friends than the American sample. Littlefield (1974) found similar results in a sample of adolescents, with White students reporting the highest level of total disclosure and Mexican Americans reporting the least amount of total disclosure. However, pooling the total scores across genders may not provide the most accurate indication of actual self-disclosure patterns, particularly given the fact that females within all the ethnic groups disclosed more than the males. In fact, the author found that White females disclosed the most, while Mexican American males disclosed the least. It may be that the remarkably

low scores of the Mexican American males pulled down the pooled score, despite the fact that the difference between White females and Mexican American females was not significant. Jourard's (1971) results are also compromised by the pooling of genders and target-person subscores.

A more recent study conducted by Diaz-Peralta Horenstein and Downey (2003) utilized a slightly modified version of the JSDQ and asked participants in Argentina and the United States how much they would disclose to a "normal looking, reasonably attractive" stranger on a bus or plane. The authors found that Argentinean participants obtained higher total self-disclosure scores than participants in the United States and that males in both cultures disclosed significantly more than females. Although it is interesting that these findings appear to be contradictory to what had been found 30 years previously, it is difficult to compare or contrast the findings of this study with those of Jourard (1971) and Littlefield (1974). First, it is questionable whether the results of either study can be generalized across Latino subgroups, particularly given the fact that they differ on other cultural measures, such as collectivism. In addition, the tendency to pool disclosure scores from different target people may mask a number of important differences, as does comparing past disclosure to friends and family with hypothetical disclosure to a stranger on a bus.

Other studies comparing White American and Latino self-disclosure have taken into consideration the possible influence of who administers the instrument. LeVine and Franco (1981), for example, found that overall, Mexican Americans reported less disclosure than White Americans on the JSDQ. However, they also found that the effect of the gender and ethnicity of the administrator was significant, such that Mexican

American males disclosed more than any other group when a female Mexican American verbally administered the instrument. In a follow-up study, Molina and Franco (1986) found that White American men disclosed the most, followed by Mexican American women. Mexican American men disclosed the least. They did not find any significant interaction effects for administrator gender or ethnicity, and they did not confirm the previous finding that Mexican American males disclosed more when the administrator was a female Mexican American.

Franco, Malloy, and Gonzalez (1984) found no overall difference between Latino and White American self-disclosure scores, but reported a significant administrator by subject ethnicity interaction. When a Latino administrator read the directions to a self-disclosure scale, Latino participants reported significantly less self-disclosure than when a White American administrator read the directions. The researchers also found that White American participants responded conversely, reporting more disclosure with a Latino administrator than with a White American administrator. The researchers suggest that participants may have been more guarded reporting their disclosure levels on personal topics with someone similar to themselves (at least in terms of ethnicity) and with whom they were more likely to come in contact with in the future.

### *Summary of Self-Disclosure*

Overall, previous research on self-disclosure in Latino/a samples has found inconsistent differences between Latinos and White Americans on reported levels of self-disclosure. However, it has been demonstrated that ethnicity influences scores at least to the degree that participants are willing to report to an administrator. Currently the field is limited in that no study has controlled for or manipulated the ethnicity of the target

person. In addition, the only Latino subgroups that have been investigated are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Argentinean, or Mexican American. It is unknown whether the findings can be generalized across all Latino populations, or if the unique cultural experience of each of these subgroups plays a role in the observed self-disclosure norms. Furthermore, it may be highly useful to understand whether or not there are significant differences in self-disclosure patterns based on international status. Specifically, might Latino Americans, who have spent their entire lives in the United States, have different disclosure patterns in intercultural (Latino-White) relationships than Latinos who have immigrated to or are temporarily visiting the United States?

The question also remains as to why self-disclosure is influenced by ethnicity. Although it has been demonstrated that people who endorse collectivism emphasize in-group harmony, there is little research addressing how this value affects interactions between members of different backgrounds. Previous research has focused on cross-cultural differences in self-disclosure and collectivism, largely ignoring the effects of ethnic identity and collectivism on self-disclosure in either inter- or intracultural relationships. Understanding this piece may lend insight into how developing relationships are affected by cultural values and ethnic identity.

Finally, it is worth considering how the interaction between culture and self-disclosure may change depending on at what stage the relationship is at. As discussed previously, the stages of friendship development appear to be similar across cultures (Korn, 1993), with close friendships characterized by the element of high self-disclosure (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Gudykunst's (1985) finding that individuals are likely to self-disclose at similar rates to close friends regardless of cultural background raises the

question of how intimacy level affects differences in self-disclosure in intercultural and intracultural relationships. If intercultural friendships differ from intracultural friendships in levels of self-disclosure, and if collectivism plays a role in this difference, it is important to know if this interaction is significant across all stages of friendship. Based on Gudykunst's prediction, self-disclosure differences should be more noticeable between intercultural and intracultural acquaintanceships than between intercultural and intracultural friendships.

### Latino Collectivism and Self-Disclosure

From the results of preceding studies, several things are clear: communication, particularly self-disclosure, plays an important role in friendship development; communication and friendship development are both affected by cultural values and norms; and some cultural values and norms vary between Latinos and White Americans. The particular value of collectivism has been shown to reliably differ between these two cultures, although it may be more useful to look at differences in collectivism at an individual level than at a cultural level. The combination of these findings suggests that communication between Latinos and White Americans at various stages of friendship development may be affected by individual levels of collectivism. More specifically, self-disclosure levels may be affected by individual levels of collectivism.

Currently there are no findings regarding whether or not self-disclosure differs between intercultural and intracultural Latino relationships. In fact, there is little certainty regarding how self-disclosure rates may differ between Latinos and White Americans in general. The majority of the literature regarding intercultural friendships has focused on

differences between cultures rather than looking directly at intercultural friendships, and even those studies have been inconclusive and complicated by methodological inconsistencies. Regardless of whether or not there are global differences in self-disclosure between the two cultural groups, there may be differences in the way that individuals from these two cultures interact on a personal level, and this is the focus of the current investigation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate levels of self-disclosure in the intracultural and intercultural relationships of Latino individuals living in the United States. The possible mitigating factors of gender, collectivism, ethnic identity, acculturation, international status, and relationship intimacy will be taken into consideration. The following questions will be asked:

1. What are the levels of Latinos' self-disclosure by type of relationship (i.e., friendship, acquaintanceship), partner ethnicity (i.e., Latino, White American), participant gender, and international status (i.e., born in the U.S. or in another country/territory)?
2. What are patterns of disclosure of Latinos by type of relationship, partner ethnicity, participant gender, and international status?
3. Are levels of self-disclosure in intercultural and intracultural friendships and acquaintanceships related to collectivism, ethnic identity, or acculturation?
  - a. Does partner ethnicity interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?
  - b. Does participant gender interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?

c. Does participant international status interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Sample

A convenience sample of exchange students and immigrants from Latin American countries, as well as Latino students born in the United States, were recruited through colleges and universities around the United States. Participants were solicited by emails sent through the National Latino/a Psychological Association listserv, multicultural and international centers at major undergraduate universities around the United States, and other appropriate channels, such as personal networks. Although recruitment was originally intended to target only international Latino students, difficulties in establishing a large enough sample size necessitated the additional recruitment of Latinos born in the United States. Universities were selected based on their inclusion in one or more of the following lists: Top Ten schools with largest enrollment as of Fall, 2007; Top Ten schools with largest number of international students, Top 25 Best Colleges for Hispanics according to Hispanic Magazine, and membership in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). Incentives were provided through a raffle system in which three random participants received an electronic certificate to an internet store. Based on sample sizes of previous studies of this type (e.g., Diaz-Peralta Hornstein & Downey, 2003; Molina & Franco, 1986), the recruitment goal was a sample size of approximately 150 participants.

Recruitment of participants lasted for nine months, during which time emails were sent and phone calls were made to all relevant organizations at over 40 universities. For

example, if a particular university advertised contact information for a multicultural center, a specialized Latino student center, and several specific Latino student clubs (e.g., Cuban Student group, Puerto Rican student group, La Alianza, MEChA), emails were sent to all of them. Students who received the email were encouraged to fill it out and forward it to friends who might be interested, resulting in a number of participants who were not current students. At the end of nine months, a sample size of 132 (95 females, 36 males, 1 undeclared) participants was established. Not all participants completed all portions of the survey, therefore the sample size for specific analyses ranges from 130 to 132. The average age of the sample was 25.48, with a standard deviation of 7.70, and a median of 22.50. Forty-three percent of the sample reported being undergraduates in college, 33% reported being in graduate school, 14% reported not being in school at all, and 10% did not provide their student status. Twenty-six percent of the sample reported being in a committed partnership, while 3% were divorced or separated, 36% were single and dating, 33% were single and not dating, and the remaining 2% did not report their relationship status. The majority of the sample reported speaking Spanish as a native language (57%), with 36% reporting English, 5% reporting Portuguese, 2% reporting some mix of English and Spanish. Of the total sample, 73 participants were American nationals, while 59 were international based upon country of birth. A breakdown of the international participants by country of origin is provided in Table 1. Twenty-five percent of the international participants reported having lived in the U.S. longer than 10 years, and 60% planned to continue living in the U.S. more than 20 years. Two participants did not complete the disclosure inventories, while two people did not complete the

Table 1

*International Participant Country-of-Origin*

Country of Origin	Frequency	Percent
Brazil	11	18.6
Bolivia	1	1.7
Chile	1	1.7
Colombia	6	10.2
Cuba	1	1.7
Dominican Republic	3	5.1
Ecuador	3	5.1
El Salvador	2	3.4
Guatemala	2	3.4
Mexico	15	25.4
Peru	3	5.1
Puerto Rico	9	15.3
Venezuela	1	1.7
Other	1	1.7
Total	59	100.0

collectivism scale, and therefore their results are not included in any analyses or summaries regarding the respective missing data.

### Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey measure. The link to the survey was embedded in recruitment emails, which were sent to directors of programs and various Latino student associations (see Appendix A for a copy of the recruitment letter). Informed consent was obtained through an introductory page describing the purpose of the research and the structure of the survey, and participants expressed consent by selecting a link providing access to the survey (see Appendix B for a copy of the letter of

information). The survey consisted of four separate questionnaires, described in detail below (see Appendix C for full copies of each questionnaire). The only confidential information collected in the course of the survey was the participant's email address. This information was collected using a separate webpage that participants accessed after they completed the survey to prevent this piece of identifying information from being linked to their survey results. Email addresses were stored in a password protected system until the incentives (gift certificates) were distributed, and then the file was destroyed.

## Instruments

### *Demographic Information*

A brief demographics questionnaire gathered information regarding gender, age, level of education, relationship status, academic or work status, country of origin, length of stay in the United States, and foreseen length of stay in the United States.

### *Self-Disclosure*

Self-disclosure was measured using a modified version of Jourard's 25-item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ; Jourard, 1971). The JSDQ is a self-report, retrospective instrument in which participants rate the extent to which they have shared various aspects of themselves with specific target people. The JSDQ has been shown to have good reliability and validity, with Jourard reporting a split-half reliability coefficient of .95 for studies using samples of Black American, White American, and Latino individuals. The instrument has also performed well in validity checks performed by Pederson and Higbee (1968) who reported both convergent and divergent validity with various scales of Campbell and Fiske's (1959) multitrait-multimethod matrices for an ethnically mixed

sample. The original scale specified the target people as mother, father, best male friend, best female friend, and spouse. For the purposes of this study, the target people were closest Latino friend, closest White American friend, a Latino acquaintance, and a White American acquaintance. Relationship intimacy was assessed by asking participants to rate the closeness of each relationship on a scale of 1 (*not close*) to 5 (*very close*). To eliminate possible confounding gender effects, target people were limited to the same sex as the rater. For each target person, participants rated their level of disclosure on 25 different items, such as food likes and dislikes, sex life, or political preferences. Before beginning the questionnaire, participants were instructed to nominate a person for each of the four target people, and to rate each of the 25 items according to a scale of 0 (*I will never disclose this information to this person*) to 3 (*I have disclosed this information fully to this person*). Investigation of scale properties indicated that the self-disclosure scales for Latino friend, White friend, Latino acquaintance, and White acquaintance yielded Cronbachs' alphas of .93, .95, .96, and .96, respectively.

### *Collectivism*

Collectivism was measured using the 10-item, Likert-type Collectivism scale from Gaines and colleagues (1997). The measure includes items such as "I consider myself a team player" and "I believe in the motto, 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall'," and is scored on a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Using a sample of Black American, White American, and Latin American individuals, Gaines and colleagues found average reliability coefficients of .73 for women and .74 for men, and determined that all of the items had factor loadings at least .20, with 9 of the 10 meeting

or exceeding .40. The current study found the scale to have an overall Cronbach's alpha of .86.

### *Acculturation*

Acculturation was measured using the four-item Brief Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (Norris, Ford, & Bova, 1996). These questions were included alongside the demographic questions in the survey. Norris and colleagues found that the scale has a Cronbach's alpha ranging from .80 to .92 when used with Mexican American and Puerto Rican adolescent and young adults. Data from the current study indicated that the Brief Acculturation Scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .85.

### *Ethnic Identity*

Ethnic identity was measured with the ethnic identity (EI) subscale of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). The measure consists of five items measuring the respondent's tendency to seek out information about his or her own ethnic group, seven items measuring the respondent's sense of affirmation, belonging, and commitment to his or her ethnic group, and three items used for specific ethnic identification. Previous research using the EI subscale of the MEIM has consistently found reliability alphas between .81 and .92 (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi, & Saya, 2003; Roberts et al., 1999), and a confirmatory factor analysis by Ponterotto and colleagues found that all items of the EI subscale had factor loadings of .45 and above. Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2001) found concurrent validity among Colombian, Nicaraguan, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Salvadoran adolescents when correlating scores on the MEIM and a measure of *familismo*, while Ponterotto, Baluch,

Greig, and Rivera (1998) found a relationship between MEIM scores and multicultural orientation and worldview.

Although the EI subscale of the MEIM has been found to consist of two separate factors (exploration and belonging), most authors have chosen to collapse the two factors and analyze the subscale in its entirety (Avery, Tonidandel, Thomas, Johnson, & Mack, 2007; López, 2008; Ponterotto et al., 2003). The current study analyzed the EI subscale of the MEIM by combining both factors and arriving at an average score for each participant. The scale was found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .86. The data distribution for the scale was found to be negatively skewed. In an attempt to normalize the MEIM for future analyses, the data were reflected, added to a constant of 5, transformed using a log-10 conversion, and re-reflected in accordance with the principles of data transformation by Osborne (2002).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Research Question #1

The first research question asked, “What are the levels of Latinos’ self-disclosure?” To answer this question, the means and standard deviations for each relationship type for the total sample, as well as subgroups according to international status and gender, are provided in Table 2.

#### Research Question #2

The second research question asked, “What are patterns of disclosure of Latinos by type of relationship, partner ethnicity, international status, and participant gender?” To assess main effects and possible interactions among these variables, the data were restructured to create a single “disclosure” dependent variable with corresponding “relationship type” (1 = *friend*, 0 = *acquaintance*) and “partner ethnicity” (1 = *Latino*, 0 = *White*) categories. Two series of 3-way linear mixed effect models were calculated: the first series used disclosure as the dependent variable with relationship type, partner ethnicity, and international status as fixed factors, while the second series used disclosure as the dependent variable with relationship type, partner ethnicity, and participant gender as fixed factors. To account for the nonindependence of the data, subject identity number was used as a clustering variable. In addition, the data were transformed into *z*-scores prior to analysis so that the regression weights could be interpreted as standardized coefficients.



Table 2

*Self-Disclosure Scale Means and Standard Deviations*

	Latino friend Mean (SD)	White friend Mean (SD)	Latino acquaintance Mean (SD)	White acquaintance Mean (SD)
Females ( <i>n</i> = 93)	3.52 (.42)	3.24 (.58)	2.67 (.63)	2.46 (.66)
Males ( <i>n</i> = 36)	3.35 (.46)	3.00 (.49)	2.68 (.57)	2.38 (.51)
International ( <i>n</i> = 57)	3.48 (.45)	3.12 (.56)	2.78 (.63)	2.51 (.58)
U.S.-born ( <i>n</i> = 73)	3.46 (.43)	3.22 (.56)	2.60 (.58)	2.39 (.65)
Total ( <i>N</i> = 130)	3.47 (.44)	3.18 (.56)	2.67 (.61)	2.44 (.62)

A range of fit indices are provided for each set of analyses, including the Aikake information criterion (AIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), the log Likelihood (logLik), and the Deviance. The AIC and BIC are indices of model fit and can be used to compare competing models to arrive at the most parsimonious and explanatory model (Burnham & Anderson, 2004). The AIC and BIC attempt to balance the tradeoff between bias (too few variables in the model) and variance (too many variables in the model), and provide an estimate of information lost by a particular model. Therefore, lower AIC and BIC values are indicative of better-fitting models, with the BIC providing a more stringent estimate. The logLik represents the log of the maximum restricted likelihood, or the ratio of two maximum likelihoods, with the likelihood under a simpler model divided by the likelihood under a more complete model (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Smaller likelihood ratios indicate that the more complex model is an improvement over the simpler model. The deviance is defined as negative twice the logLik (sometimes

referred to as  $-2LL$ ), and represents a “badness of fit” index, such that a smaller deviance value indicates a better model fit (Cohen et al.).

Each series began by calculating a linear mixed effect model using the three independent variables, the three two-way interaction variables, and the three-way interaction variable. Nonsignificant interaction variables with the lowest Betas were dropped in a step-wise fashion until a model with the best fit was reached.

The first series of analyses resulted in a model that included all three independent variables and the interaction variable between relationship type and international status. The model revealed a significant main effect for relationship type, with participants disclosing more to friends than to acquaintances. In addition, there were significant main effects for partner ethnicity and international status, indicating that participants disclosed more to their Latino friends than to their White friends, and that participants born in Latin American countries disclosed at higher rates than participants born in the United States. There was a significant interaction between international status and relationship type, indicating that international Latinos disclosed more than U.S.-born Latinos only in acquaintanceships. The interaction is graphed in Figure 1. The results of the first analysis are provided in Table 3.

The second series of models supported the findings from the first series, with the final model showing that relationship type and partner ethnicity had significant main effects. The model also found that although women tended to disclose at slightly higher rates than men, the effect was not statistically significant. There were no significant interactions among variables in any of the models tested. The results are provided in Table 4.

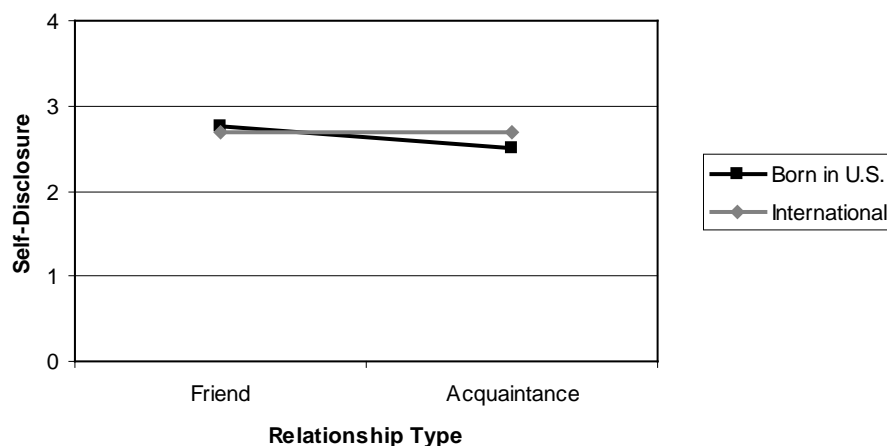


Figure 1. Interaction for relationship type and international status.

Table 3

Results of Three-way Linear Mixed Effect Model with International Status

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	1243	1273	-614.6	1206		
Partner ethnicity					.19	6.05*
Relationship type					.47	9.96*
International status					-.12	-2.16*
Relationship*international interaction					.13	2.30*

\*significant at  $p < .05$ .

### Research Question #3

The third research question, “Are levels of self-disclosure in intercultural and intracultural friendships and acquaintanceships related to collectivism, ethnic identity, or acculturation,” was answered in four parts. The first part involved examining bivariate

Table 4

*Results of Three-way Linear Mixed Effect Model with Participant Gender*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	1241	1266	-614.4	1210		
Partner ethnicity					.19	6.02*
Relationship type					.56	17.77*
Participant gender					.08	1.67

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

correlations among variables, while the following three parts involved examining models for each of the three potential moderating variables (collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation) in conjunction with partner ethnicity, participant gender, and international status within each relationship type.

Two Pearson's correlation matrices (one for females and one for males) were generated with all variables to address the question of how self-disclosure in intracultural and intercultural friendships and acquaintanceships is related to collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation. To fully address this question, correlation coefficients were generated for both total self-disclosure scores as well as difference scores between Latino friends and White friends and between Latino acquaintances and White acquaintances. Results of the correlation analyses are provided in Table 5.

To determine the potential effects of partner ethnicity, participant gender, international status, and the three potential moderating variables (collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation), the data for each of the three moderating variables were centered and new interaction terms were created in order to test three groups of linear

Table 5

*Pearson Correlation Matrix for All Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. LF disclosure		.374*	.186	.305*	.372*	.322*	-.147
2. LA disclosure	.255*		.135	.305*	.250*	.075	-.245*
3. WF disclosure	-.162	-.097		.162	.200	.025	.169
4. WA disclosure	-.213	.313*	.436**		.239*	-.065	-.077
5. Collectivism	.222	.422*	.278	.296		.368**	.032
6. MEIM	.227	.331*	.028	.168	.384*		-.144
7. Acculturation	-.317*	-.334*	.392*	.110	.109	-.307*	

*Note.* Correlations on the top half are those for female participants, correlations on the bottom are those for male participants.

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$  level (2-tailed)

\* significant at  $p < .05$  level (2-tailed)

mixed effect models, using participant ID as a clustered variable to account for the nonindependence of the self-disclosure scores. As in the analyses for question two, the data were transformed into  $z$ -scores so that the regression weights could be interpreted as standardized coefficients. The first group of analyses was intended to answer the first subquestion of question three (does partner ethnicity interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?), while the second group was intended to answer the second subquestion (does participant gender interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?), and the third

group was intended to answer the third subquestion (does participant international status interact with collectivism, acculturation, or ethnic identity to predict self-disclosure?).

In the first group of analyses, the centered scores for collectivism, acculturation, and ethnic identity were each multiplied by the code (0 or 1) for partner ethnicity to create three new interaction terms. Using these interaction terms, six linear mixed effect models were calculated using subject ID as a clustered variable: three using the self-disclosure data for friends only, and three using the self-disclosure data for acquaintances only. Specifically, the independent variables for both sets of analyses were as follows: (a) partner ethnicity (0 or 1), ethnic identity (MEIM scores), and the interaction term ethnicity x MEIM; (b) partner ethnicity, acculturation (Brief Acculturation Scale for Hispanics scores), and the interaction term ethnicity x acculturation; and (c) partner ethnicity, collectivism, and the interaction term ethnicity x collectivism.

Results indicated that for friends, there was a significant main effect for partner ethnicity in all of the models, with participants disclosing more to Latino friends than White friends. There was a significant main effect for collectivism, indicating that those who reported greater collectivism reported higher levels of self-disclosure to friends. Finally, there were significant interaction effects for ethnic identity and acculturation, but not for collectivism. As ethnic identity scores increased, reported self-disclosure to Latino friends increased while reported self-disclosure to White friends remained the same. The second interaction suggests that as acculturation scores increased, reported self-disclosure to Latino friends decreased and reported self-disclosure to White friends increased. See Table 6 for a summary table of the results. The interactions for ethnic identity and acculturation are graphed in Figures 2 and 3.

Table 6

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for Partner Ethnicity Among Friends*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	Beta	<i>t</i>
	729.2	750.5	-358.6	702.6		
MEIM					-.008	-0.10
Partner ethnicity					.271	4.94*
Interaction					.183	2.35*
	723.3	744.7	-355.7	696.6		
Acculturation					.256	3.08*
Partner ethnicity					.272	5.14*
Interaction					-.291	-3.89*
	720.6	742.0	-354.3	693.9		
Collectivism					.237	2.87*
Partner ethnicity					.270	4.83*
Interaction					.032	.41

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

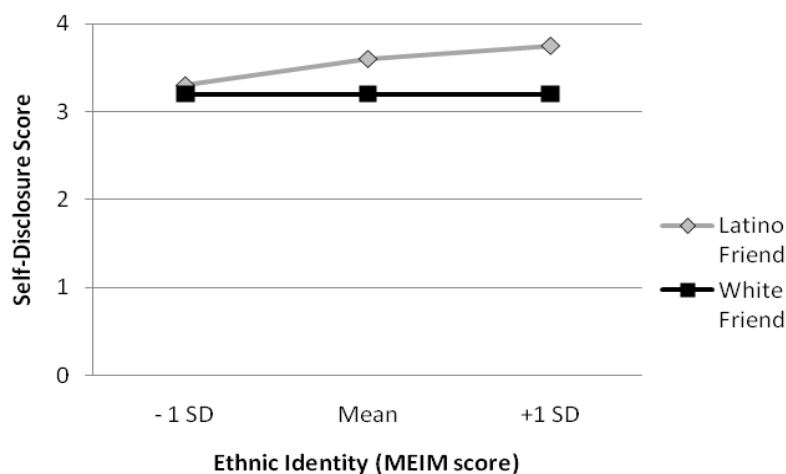
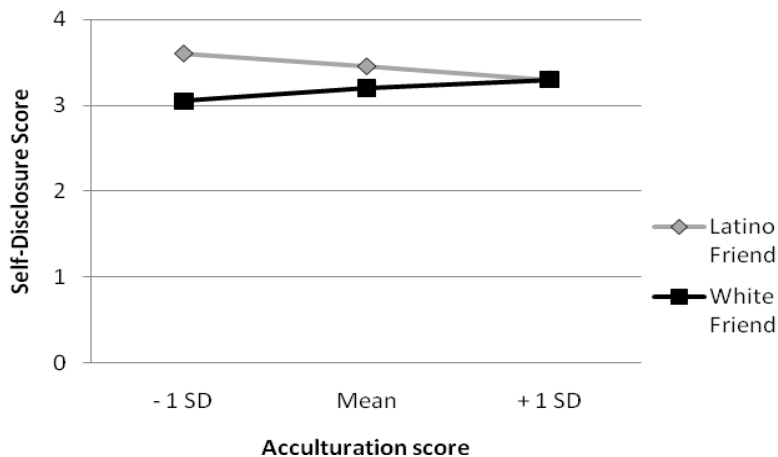


Figure 2. Interaction for ethnic identity and self-disclosure in friendships.



*Figure 3.* Interaction for acculturation and self-disclosure in friendships.

For acquaintances, results of the analyses showed a significant main effect for collectivism, but not for ethnic identity or acculturation. Similar to the friendship models, partner ethnicity had a significant main effect in all three models. There was also a significant interaction effect for acculturation, indicating that as acculturation scores increased, reported self-disclosure to Latino acquaintances decreased while reported self-disclosure to White acquaintances stayed the same. See Table 7 for a summary table of the results. The interaction for acculturation is graphed in Figure 4.

In the second group of regression analyses, the centered scores for collectivism, acculturation, and ethnic identity were each multiplied by the code (0 or 1) for participant gender to create three new interaction terms. Using these interaction terms, six more analyses were carried out using a linear mixed effect model: three using the self-disclosure data for friends only, and three using the self-disclosure data for acquaintances only. Specifically, the independent variables for both sets of analyses were as follows: (a) participant gender (0 or 1), ethnic identity (MEIM scores), and the interaction term gender x MEIM; (b) participant gender, acculturation (Brief Acculturation Scale for



Table 7

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for Partner Ethnicity Among Acquaintances*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	723.3	744.6	-355.6	696.6		
MEIM					.016	0.18
Partner ethnicity					.192	4.04*
Interaction					.079	1.18
	715.7	737.0	-351.8	688.9		
Acculturation					-.019	-0.23
Partner ethnicity					.193	4.15*
Interaction					-.168	-2.55*
	711.5	732.8	-349.7	684.6		
Collectivism					.248	2.95*
Partner ethnicity					.191	4.01*
Interaction					.025	0.37

\*significant at  $p < .05$ .

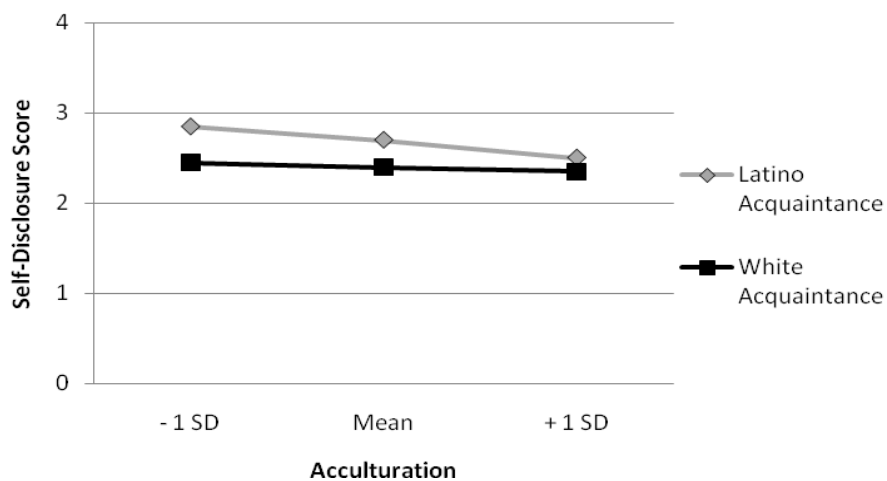


Figure 4. Interaction for acculturation and self-disclosure in acquaintanceships.

Hispanics scores), and the interaction term gender x acculturation; and (c) participant gender, collectivism, and the interaction term gender x collectivism.

Results indicated that for friends, there were no significant main effects for ethnic identity, acculturation, or collectivism. Participant gender, however, had a main effect in all three models, suggesting that female participants reported more self-disclosure to friends than male participants. There were no significant interactions. For acquaintances, results showed that there were no significant main effects and no significant interactions. The results of the analyses for friends are provided in Table 8, while those for acquaintances are provided in Table 9.

In the third group of regression analyses, the centered scores for collectivism, acculturation, and ethnic identity were each multiplied by the code (0 or 1) for participant international status to create three new interaction terms. Using these interaction terms, six more analyses were carried out using a linear mixed effect model: three using the self-disclosure data for friends only, and three using the self-disclosure data for acquaintances only. Specifically, the independent variables for both sets of analyses were as follows: (a) international status (0 or 1), ethnic identity (MEIM scores), and the interaction term international x MEIM; (b) international status, acculturation (Brief Acculturation Scale for Hispanics scores), and the interaction term international x acculturation; and (c) international status, collectivism, and the interaction term international x collectivism.

Results indicated that for friends, there was a significant main effect for collectivism, related to increased self-disclosure. International status did not show a significant effect in any of the friendship models, and there were no significant interactions. For acquaintances, results showed a significant main effect for collectivism,

Table 8

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for Participant Gender Among Friends*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	743.2	764.5	-365.6	718.6		
MEIM					.169	0.88
Participant gender					-.174	-2.71*
Interaction					-.055	-0.29
	746.2	767.5	-367.1	721.8		
Acculturation					.041	0.21
Participant gender					-.177	-2.70*
Interaction					-.006	-0.03
	729.3	750.6	-358.6	704.3		
Collectivism					.350	1.94
Participant gender					-.169	-2.73*
Interaction					-.103	-0.57

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

Table 9

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for Participant Gender Among Acquaintances*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	730.8	752	-359.4	707.5		
MEIM					-.192	-0.86
Participant gender					-.022	-0.30
Interaction					.283	1.29
	729.4	750.7	-358.7	706.0		
Acculturation					-.267	-1.21
Participant gender					-.039	-0.53
Interaction					.131	0.59
	719.9	741.1	-353.9	696.1		
Collectivism					.232	1.11
Participant gender					-.016	-0.23
Interaction					.036	0.17

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

although in this context there was also a significant effect for international status. There were no significant interactions in any of the acquaintanceships models. Results of the analyses for both friends and acquaintances are provided in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for International Status Among Friends*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	755.0	776.4	-371.5	729.3		
MEIM					.070	0.70
International status					.030	0.48
Interaction					.067	0.66
	758.4	779.8	-373.2	732.8		
Acculturation					.014	0.15
International status					.007	0.10
Interaction					.045	0.50
	741.0	762.3	-364.5	714.4		
Collectivism					.199	2.49*
International status					.012	0.20
Interaction					.092	1.15

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

Table 11

*Summary of Linear Mixed Effect Models for International Status Among Acquaintances*

Predictors	AIC	BIC	logLik	Deviance	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
	734.6	756	-361.3	709.8		
MEIM					.111	0.97
International status					-.133	-1.84
Interaction					-.048	-.42
	734.5	755.8	-361.2	709.7		
Acculturation					-.094	-0.87
International status					-.083	-1.00
Interaction					-.005	-0.05
	720.3	741.6	-354.1	694.7		
Collectivism					.246	2.69*
International status					-.155	-2.27*
Interaction					.050	0.55

\* significant at  $p < .05$ .

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The overarching purpose of the current project was to investigate self-disclosure patterns in Latinos' intracultural and intercultural relationships. Although previous work has demonstrated inconsistent results regarding broad communication differences among cultural groups (e.g., Diaz-Peralta Horenstein & Downey, 2003; Jourard, 1971; Littlefield, 1974), very little research has been carried out to assess the impact of various pertinent factors (e.g., type of relationship, partner ethnicity, acculturation level, ethnic identity, cultural values) on self-disclosure in a single cultural group. By measuring and analyzing the effects of these variables on self-disclosure rates, the current study aimed to fill vacancies in the literature on friendship development and communication, topic areas highly relevant for multicultural psychologists and professionals working in immigrant and minority mental health. In addition, understanding the relationships among collectivism, ethnic identity, acculturation, and self-disclosure may further illuminate the behavioral indicators of what have thus far been intensely scrutinized but somewhat inconsistently defined cultural variables (Oyserman et al., 2002).

#### Communication in Inter- and Intracultural

##### Friendships and Acquaintanceships

In general, the results of this study support the basic tenets of Altman and Taylor's (1973) Social Penetration Theory, as well as Knapp and Vangelisti's (1991) "staircase model" of relationship stages. Specifically, participants in this sample disclosed significantly more to their friends than to their acquaintances. This finding

provides further evidence that although individual differences may exist which lead some people to generally self-disclose at greater rates than others, Latinos, like the White Americans and North Koreans in Korn's (1993) study, disclose more of themselves to their friends than to their acquaintances.

Adding complexity to the larger picture was the finding that partner ethnicity is significant related to self-disclosure in both friendships and acquaintanceships. Specifically, the participants in this study reported disclosing significantly more to their Latino relationship partners than to their White relationship partners. This finding is partially consistent with previous research and the hypothesis of this study. Regarding inter- and intracultural acquaintances, it was predicted that Latinos self-disclose more to their Latino acquaintances than to their White acquaintances due to a similarity effect (Gareis, 1995) and based on Gudykunst and Shapiro's (1996) findings regarding increased anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural interactions. In this respect, the current finding that Latinos self-disclose at higher rates to their Latino acquaintances than to their White acquaintances is consistent with previous research. However, it was also predicted that once a dyad had reached the level of friendship, cultural or ethnic differences would no longer significantly impact self-disclosure (Gudykunst, 1985), a pattern which did not emerge in this sample. These findings can be more clearly understood by examining the interactions that arose within the context of ethnic identity and acculturation. These important interactions will be discussed in subsequent sections regarding those variables.

The findings of the current study are also consistent with Dindia and Allen's (1992) meta-analytic report that females tend to disclose at higher rates than men. The current findings suggest that participant gender had a significant effect in the friendship

models, but not the acquaintanceship models. In other words, female participants reported self-disclosing more than male participants in their friendships. However, in acquaintanceships, female and male participants reported disclosing at similar rates. The finding that females self-disclosed more than males within their friendships is highly consistent with previous research on gender roles, particularly research illustrating how women tend to focus more on talking within their same-sex friendships, while men tend to focus more on sharing activities, or “doing” things together with their friends (Winstead, 1986). What is interesting is the fact that this pattern did not emerge in acquaintanceships, a finding that provides support for the perspective that self-disclosure rates may be an indicator of intimacy, but that women have been more consistently socialized to express intimacy through increased self-disclosure (Fehr, 2004; Monsour, 1992). The results of the current study extend that perspective to apply to same-sex intercultural relationships as well as intracultural relationships.

Within friendships, there did not appear to be any self-disclosure differences between Latinos born in the mainland U.S. and Latinos born in other countries or territories. However, internationally born Latinos appeared to disclose at significantly greater rates to their acquaintances than did U.S.-born Latinos. Another way of describing this interaction is that while U.S.-born Latinos disclosed at greater rates to their friends than to their acquaintances, internationally born Latinos disclosed at very similar rates to both friends and acquaintances. However, when collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation were accounted for as potential moderating variables, international status was found to be significant only in the acquaintanceship model that included collectivism. This result has interesting implications for the relationship among



country-of-origin, relationship type, and collectivism, suggesting that perhaps the distinction between friends and acquaintanceships is slightly different for Latinos who have been raised in the United States versus Latinos who have been raised in Latin American countries.

### Self-disclosure and Collectivism, Ethnic

#### Identity, and Acculturation

In addition to studying the general patterns of self-disclosure in Latinos' intra- and intercultural friendships and acquaintanceships, the current research aimed to investigate the potential moderating effects of three cultural variables: collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation. Overall, it appears that while collectivism and acculturation had important main effects on self-disclosure in friendships in the context of partner ethnicity, only collectivism also displayed an important relationship with self-disclosure in the context of international status and within acquaintanceships. It did not appear that ethnic identity played a role in predicting self-disclosure in any of the relationship circumstances. Further, while ethnic identity and collectivism correlated significantly for both males and females, acculturation was not correlated at all to collectivism, and was related to ethnic identity only in males. The specific findings for each of the three cultural variables are discussed separately below.

#### *Collectivism*

One of the primary hypotheses tested in this study was that individual endorsement of collectivism, in this case defined as a duty to the Latino in-group, would play an important role in predicting self-disclosure rates in intra- and intercultural

relationships. Specifically, it was expected that Latinos who endorsed higher collectivism would also self-disclose significantly more to their Latino relationship partners than to their White relationship partners. This hypothesis was not supported by the data.

Although collectivism did have a significant main effect on self-disclosure in the context of partner ethnicity, it appeared to predict higher self-disclosure rates in general across all relationships—including intracultural and intercultural friendships and acquaintanceships. Interestingly, collectivism also predicted self-disclosure when analyzed in conjunction with international status, but did not have a main effect when analyzed in conjunction with participant gender. The finding that collectivism, when analyzed in the context of partner ethnicity and international status, predicts greater self-disclosure, could be taken to mean that Latinos who endorse higher collectivism may be inclined to self-disclose more in general rather than exclusively to members of their cultural in-group. In addition, although self-disclosure rates did indeed appear to differ between intercultural and intracultural relationships, these differences do not appear to be the result of the effects of different levels of collectivism, at least between Latino and White American friendships dyads.

In addition to predicting higher self-disclosure rates, collectivism also correlated significantly to ethnic identity in both males and females. This relationship between collectivistic duty to a cultural in-group and personal identification with Latino ethnicity is consistent with previous theories and findings on culture and identity (Gaines et al., 1997).

### *Ethnic Identity*

Despite the important relationship between ethnic identity and collectivism, the results of the current study indicated that ethnic identity did not demonstrate significant direct associations with self-disclosure patterns in friendships and acquaintanceships. This difference is not surprising, given the fact that ethnic identity and collectivism, although related, are discrete and separate constructs (Gaines et al., 1997). Although ethnic identity alone did not have a significant main effect, the construct did display an interesting interaction with partner ethnicity in friendships. Specifically, ethnic identity appeared to have no significant association with self-disclosure levels when the friend was White, meaning that Latinos who identified strongly with their ethnic background disclosed to their White friends at approximately the same rates as Latinos who did not identify as strongly. However, when the friend was Latino, ethnic identity appeared to play an important role, with Latinos who reported high ethnic identity disclosing at higher rates to their Latino friends than those who reported low ethnic identity. Another way of stating this is that although Latinos who were lower in ethnic identity exploration and commitment tended to disclose similarly to their Latino friends and White friends, Latinos who reported identifying strongly with their ethnic background disclosed more to their Latino friends than to their White friends. This finding is similar to Gudykunst and Shapiro's (1996) research on social identity, which found that individuals with higher social identity experienced higher anxiety in intercultural encounters, likely because culturally diverse situations tend to activate people's social identity and cultural scripts. Another explanation may be that high ethnic identity tends to be linked with higher awareness of discrimination experiences (Sellers & Shelton, 2003), so they may be less

trusting and therefore less likely to disclose to White Americans. These explanations, however, seem to make more sense for developing relationships rather than for established friendships. The current findings, on the other hand, emerged in the context of friendships but not acquaintanceships, suggesting that the influence of ethnic identity may not become apparent until a relationship has reached a more intimate stage.

It is not clear why this important pattern emerged for ethnic identity but not for collectivism. It could be that the collectivism measure that was used tapped into an obligation to all in-groups and social affiliations rather than to a specific cultural in-group. Therefore, endorsing high collectivism would be consistent with greater disclosure to all close friends and acquaintances, regardless of ethnicity or culture. Although previous research has found that Latinos tend to endorse collectivism at higher levels than White Americans (Oyserman et al., 2002), it does not appear that this has a significant impact on their willingness to share themselves with members of other cultural groups once those relationships are established (friendships) or in the process of being established (acquaintances).

### *Acculturation*

A historically related construct to ethnic identity and collectivism, acculturation also appeared to have interesting associations to self-disclosure. When studied in the context of partner ethnicity, acculturation level demonstrated a significant main effect in friendships but not acquaintanceships, however, it interacted significantly with partner ethnicity in both relationship types. While individuals with low acculturation self-disclosed at significantly greater levels to their Latino friends and acquaintances than to their White friends and acquaintances, individuals who reported high acculturation

disclosed at similar rates to both their Latino and White friends and acquaintances. Given the fact that the acculturation measure used in this study was based primarily on English language proficiency and preference, these findings make sense. Latinos who are less proficient in English will be less likely to share personal information with White American, English-speaking friends not necessarily because of cultural values or behaviors, but because of a language barrier. By the same token, Latinos who report greater comfort and use of the English language self-disclose at similar rates to both Latino and White friends and acquaintances because their language abilities permit them to do so. Interestingly, acculturation did not display a significant effect on self-disclosure when examined in the context of international status or participant gender, indicating that acculturation can be best understood through its relationship with intercultural and inter-ethnic communication rather than as a construct that exerts a global, overarching effect on self-disclosure.

#### Summary, Limitations, and Future Directions

Overall, the current study provides further clarification of the general patterns of self-disclosure in intra- and intercultural relationships of Latinos living in the United States. In particular, while relationship type plays a fairly generalized role in determining rates of self-disclosure, variables such as partner ethnicity, participant gender, and country-of-origin have much more complex influential relationships with communication. In addition, the results of the study indicated that high collectivism tends to predict greater self-disclosure across all relationships, high acculturation predicts similar rates of self-disclosure between inter- and intracultural friendships and

acquaintanceships, and ethnic identity does not directly predict self-disclosure rates but interacts with partner ethnicity to predict self-disclosure patterns.

Although the findings of this study provide insight into the communication patterns of Latinos living in the United States, they have limited generalizability for a number of reasons. First, the sample had an older average age than most college student samples, thereby making it difficult to ascertain the degree to which these findings might apply to a traditionally aged college sample. In addition, although few differences were found between internationally born Latinos and U.S.-born Latinos, the internationally born Latinos in the sample had spent a reasonably long amount of time in the United States and planned to spend a great deal more time living in the U.S. It is difficult to say for sure whether or not these same results would be found in a sample of younger, recently immigrated college students. Likely, most potential participants from the younger age bracket were not successfully recruited due to the fact that the survey was in English, thereby dissuading Latinos who would not yet have been able to develop intercultural friendships with English-speaking White Americans (or potentially even fill out the questionnaire). Given the fact that language preference (as measured by acculturation) was an important variable in predicting communication patterns in intercultural relationships, it would be interesting to see if the same patterns emerge when Latinos develop intercultural friendships in Latin American countries. In other words, do Latinos self-disclose at different rates to Latinos and White Americans when all communication takes place in their native language (i.e., Spanish or Portuguese)? It may also have been informative to gather country-of-origin data for each target person. Did the majority of internationally born participants select Latino friends from their home

country, meaning that these relationships were fairly long-standing, or did they choose more recent friends with Latinos living in the United States? Moreover, does the cultural context (i.e., country) in which a relationship develops influence self-disclosure levels?

Another consideration that may impact the generalizability of this study is the potential that multiple unmeasured variables may have been distributed differently between the internationally born sample and the U.S.-born sample. The finding that internationally born Latinos and U.S.-born Latinos disclose at different rates to their acquaintances may have been due to a different interpretation of the term “acquaintance,” as discussed earlier. However, it may also have been due to the fact that Latino immigrants tend to be a self-selected group of individuals who are younger, more motivated, and more hopeful (Cuellar et al., 2004). In other words, perhaps the finding had more to do with personality factors than broad cultural factors. Because intra-individual personality variables were not measured in this study, there is no way of truly knowing whether traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (McCrae & Costa, 1999) were different among the samples, or whether they played an important moderating role in determining self-disclosure rates in different relationship types. It could be speculated that the internationally born sample was more extraverted, thereby more likely to establish close interpersonal relationships with and disclose highly to a variety of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Trait-like personality characteristics may also have played an important role in explaining many of the other self-disclosure patterns found in this study. For example, Latinos who had similar inter- and intra-ethnic self-disclosure may have been

characterized by high extraversion and high openness to experience, as suggested by Five Factor theorists. Specifically, Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) found that immigrants high in conscientiousness and agreeableness were more likely to self-identify with their native culture, while immigrants high in openness and extraversion were more likely to identify with the dominant host culture, a concept that adds dimension to the current study's self-disclosure/acclulturation findings. Another personality approach to the current findings may be that individuals who had greater rate disparities in disclosure to inter- and intra-ethnic acquaintances may have actually been characterized as being high in neuroticism and low in openness to experience, since engaging in intercultural relationships may have required these participants to step outside their comfort zone and overcome individual differences, particularly if their English skills were still developing (meaning, they would have scored low on the acculturation measure). Furthermore, the finding that highly collectivistic individuals disclosed more in all relationships may indicate that the collectivism measure was tapping into extraversion, given that extraversion has been found to be a major predictor of positive relationship outcomes (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). All of this is, of course, speculative, and yet it suggests that future research regarding intra- and intercultural self-disclosure and relationship development would strongly benefit from the inclusion of personality variables. In particular, future studies may more carefully look at how personality intersects with culture to predict self-disclosure and the relationship outcomes of self-disclosure.

Type of self-disclosure may also be an important dimension to consider in future research. The current study looked only at overall rates of self-disclosure (sometimes referred to as a "breadth" approach), yet the findings may be better explained by using a



“depth” approach (Tardy, 1988). In other words, understanding *what* participants self-disclosed rather than simply *how much* they self-disclosed may explain some of the patterns that were revealed. For example, individuals naturally have different comfort levels regarding conversation topics, and so it would be informative to investigate how specific topics, intimate and casual, are approached in intercultural versus intracultural friendships and acquaintanceships. Perhaps some participants had equivalent inter- and intracultural levels, yet closer analysis would show that the intimacy level of topics differed significantly. This may also be a dimension that was distributed differently across samples, because culture tends to dictate what conversation topics are appropriate to broach at different stages of a relationship (e.g. Korn, 1993).

This study also has limited generalizability to other types of dyadic relationships, such as clinician-client, male-female, or romantic pairings. Much of the literature on multicultural psychology has touted the importance of attempting to match ethnically diverse clients to same-ethnicity therapist (e.g., Ziguras, Klimidis, Lewis, & Stuart, 2003), and yet if the findings from this study generalize across relationship types, it appears that language proficiency and other cultural variables interact with ethnic match to impact an individual’s willingness to self-disclose in interpersonal relationships.

The extension of these findings across other relationship types is particularly important given the consequences and potential outcomes of self-disclosure. While the current study investigated what factors influence self-disclosure, the state of the literature would be greatly improved by the addition of more studies showing what factors are influenced *by* self-disclosure, particularly in relationships where each person has a different set of cultural lenses. Being able to recognize what levels of self-disclosure are

appropriate in different cultural settings is tricky, particularly because too little self-disclosure can keep people at too great a distance for a relationship to progress, yet too much self-disclosure will lead to boundary violations and premature termination of potential relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). A meta-analysis by Collins and Miller (1994) that compiled studies showing how self-disclosure affects relationship development suggested a complex and dynamic interpersonal system wherein multiple factors influence whether or not self-disclosure leads to greater intimacy. It is possible that an “inverted-U” pattern of appropriate self-disclosure (hypothesized by Cozby, 1973) exists across cultural contexts and relationship types, but that the “normality point” is drawn in different places. For example, an important extension of this study would be the investigation of what constitutes appropriate levels of disclosure for individuals in different roles, such as teacher-student, particularly when each individual comes from a different cultural background. What factors strengthen or undermine a potential relationship? Are the important moderating variables that influence self-disclosure and the consequences of that self-disclosure in a friendship the same as those that are important in a romantic relationship, a teacher-student relationship, or a clinician-client relationship?

Future studies would also be improved by the addition of a measure or clarifier to ensure that the relationships being studied are truly bicultural. Because culture is a complex, multifaceted concept, the current project could be argued to have merely studied bi-ethnic relationships, since ethnicity (Latino and White American), was the defining characteristic upon which relationship partners were chosen. It is highly possible that some of the relationships were in fact interethnic but still intracultural, or intraethnic

but still intercultural, for example Chicano participants from highly acculturated American families who have both White American friends with whom they share culture and recently immigrated Mexican friends with whom they share ethnicity. These issues could be addressed by directly gathering family and cultural background information in an attempt to clarify what participants consider inter- and intracultural relationships.

A final consideration for understanding the limitations of the current study and mapping directions for future research is the need for multiple self-disclosure data points. As stated in the literature review, a shortcoming of the JSDQ and most other self-disclosure self-report scales is a lack of support for predictive validity (Himmelstein & Kimbrough, 1963). In the current study, a self-report measure was used because it provided a way to investigate individuals' perceptions of how much they disclosed in different relationships. To develop a more comprehensive picture of what occurs in inter and intracultural relationships, it will be important to combine the current methodology, which has both strengths and weaknesses, with various other methodologies. In particular, investigating relationship development using observational techniques, particularly ones in which actual self-disclosure by both parties, as well as perceived self-disclosure can be coded and measured (see Tardy, 1988, for a review of measurement methods). By plotting as many data points as possible from different angles, a more informative picture of self-disclosure and the factors that both influence and are influenced by self-disclosure in various cultural context can be developed.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A:  
Recruitment Letter

## Recruitment Letter

### **Why am I getting this email?**

Hello! My name is Audrey Oldham and I am a graduate student at Utah State University. I am working with Dr. Renee Galliher and Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodriguez, psychology professors at USU, and we would like to **invite you to participate in a research study** designed to explore the different friendship experiences of Latino/Hispanic men and women.

The goal of our research is to develop a better understanding of the relationship experiences of Latino/Hispanic adults who live in the United States. We invite you to participate in our study if you are of Latin American descent (this includes individuals who were born in a Latin American country or territory such as Puerto Rico, as well as individuals who were born in the U.S. but whose families are from Latin American countries), and have both Latino/a and White American friends.

### **What would I have to do?**

Your participation would involve completing an anonymous online survey about your cultural background and communication preferences with different friends. This should take you between 25-45 minutes. All survey responses will be confidential and anonymous.

### **What is in it for me?**

You may choose to submit your email address to be entered into a drawing for one of three \$75 prizes given away in 2008. Email addresses for the drawing will be held in a separate database, and survey responses will not be traceable to specific email addresses. In addition, you can choose to receive a summary of the study results by email.

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me, Audrey Oldham at 541-910-1361 or at [audreyliz@aggiemail.usu.edu](mailto:audreyliz@aggiemail.usu.edu). You may also contact my faculty advisors, Renee V. Galliher, Ph.D. at (435) 797-3391 or [Renee.Galliher@usu.edu](mailto:Renee.Galliher@usu.edu), or Melanie Domenech Rodriguez, Ph.D. at (435) 797-3059 or [Melanie.Domenech@usu.edu](mailto:Melanie.Domenech@usu.edu). Thanks!

**To participate, please follow the link below:**

**<http://websurvey.usu.edu/latino>**

Appendix B:  
Letter of Information

## Letter of Information

### Latinos' Communication in Intercultural and Intracultural Friendships and Acquaintanceships

**Introduction/Purpose:** Dr. Renee Galliher and Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodriguez in the Department of Psychology and graduate student Audrey Oldham are in charge of this research study. We would like you to be in the study because we want to know more about how much Latino/a individuals disclose of themselves to their friends from different ethnic backgrounds. To participate in this study, you must be a Latino/a individual with at least one Latino/a friend, one Latino acquaintance, one White American friend, and one White American acquaintance. About 150 people will complete this questionnaire.

**Procedures:** Participation will require you to complete a series of online forms which are estimated to take between 25-45 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your cultural background, the type of personal information you share with your friends, and a few questions about personal values and beliefs. Your responses will be collected into a database and scored by the graduate student researcher.

**Risks:** There is some risk of feeling uncomfortable in this study. Some individuals may not want to share personal information with the researchers. Please keep in mind that all responses will be kept confidential and will in no way be associated with identifying information. You can choose not to answer survey questions that relate to personal or difficult issues, although it will help us most if you honestly answer all questions.

**Benefits:** By participating in this study, you will be contributing to a growing body of research assessing unique friendship experiences which have rarely been studied or observed. We hope that you will also find this study enjoyable and useful as you reflect upon your experiences and self perception.

**Explanation and Offer to Answer Questions:** If you have any questions, please contact Audrey Oldham at [audreyliz@cc.usu.edu](mailto:audreyliz@cc.usu.edu). You may also ask Dr. Renee Galliher at (435) 797-3391 or [Renee.Galliher@usu.edu](mailto:Renee.Galliher@usu.edu), or Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodriguez at (435) 797-3059 or [Melanie.Domenech@usu.edu](mailto:Melanie.Domenech@usu.edu).

**Payment:** When you finish this research, you will have the option to submit your email address to be entered into a drawing. Three participant email addresses will be drawn upon completion of data collection, and each person will receive a \$75 gift certificate to an online store. Upon completing the final question of this survey, you will be taken to a new webpage where you can enter your email address. Clicking the "Submit" button at the bottom of the page will enter your information so you can be entered into this drawing. Your email address will be stored in a separate data base and, when your answers are downloaded they will not be linked to your email address in any way.



**Voluntary Nature of Participation and Right to Withdraw without Consequences:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time during the study without penalty.

**Confidentiality:** Consistent with federal and state rules, all responses will be kept private. All information will be stored in a secure database accessible only by Audrey Oldham, Dr. Galliher, and Dr. Domenech Rodriguez. No other individuals will have access to the data. Additionally, because your IP address will be invisible, it will be impossible to identify your computer. If you choose to submit your email address for entry in to the drawing, this information will not be associated with **any** of your responses, and will be stored in a separate database. All email addresses will be destroyed as soon as the compensation has been dispersed.

**IRB Approval Statement:** The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects at Utah State University has approved this research project. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights you may contact the IRB Office at (435)797-1821.

**Copy of Consent:** Please print a copy of this consent for your personal files.

**Investigator Statement:** “I certify that the research study has been presented to the participant by me or my research assistant. The individual has been given the opportunity to ask questions about the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with participation in the study.”

Audrey Oldham  
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**Participant Consent:** If you have read and understand the above statements, please click on the “CONTINUE” button below. This indicates your consent to participate in this study.

Appendix C:  
Questionnaires

## Demographics Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  
2. What is your age?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What is your country of origin?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If you are a student, what year are you in school?
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Graduate Student
  - f. Not in school
  
5. What is your relationship status?
  - a. Married/Committed partnership
  - b. Divorced or separated
  - c. Single not dating
  - d. Single and dating
  - e. Widowed
  - f. Other
  
6. How long have you been in the United States?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
  
7. How long do you plan to live in the United States?
  - a. Under 1 year
  - b. 1-2 years
  - c. 2-5 years
  - d. 5-10 years
  - e. 10-20 years
  - f. More than 20 years
  - g. Indefinitely

## Brief Acculturation Scale

1. In general, in what language do you read and speak?
  - a. Only Spanish
  - b. More Spanish than English
  - c. Both Spanish and English equally
  - d. More English than Spanish
  - e. Only English
  
2. What language do you usually speak at home?
  - a. Only Spanish
  - b. More Spanish than English
  - c. Both Spanish and English equally
  - d. More English than Spanish
  - e. Only English
  
3. In what language do you usually think?
  - a. Only Spanish
  - b. More Spanish than English
  - c. Both Spanish and English equally
  - d. More English than Spanish
  - e. Only English
  
4. What language do you usually speak with your friends?
  - a. Only Spanish
  - b. More Spanish than English
  - c. Both Spanish and English equally
  - d. More English than Spanish
  - e. Only English

## Disclosure Questionnaire

### Instructions:

People differ in the extent to which they let other people know them. We want to learn more about what people tell others about themselves.

The following questionnaire is designed to measure the amount of information you have shared with four specific people in your life. You will be asked to select four people: a close Latino/a friend, a close White American friend, a Latino/a acquaintance (e.g., colleague, classmate, neighbor), and a White American acquaintance, who are all the same gender as yourself (i.e., if you are a female, please select only female friends and acquaintances). Now, think about each of these people and answer the questions below.

The initials of my close Latino/a friend are: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the intimacy, or closeness, of your relationship with this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Not close	Neutral	Somewhat close	Close	Extremely close

How long have you known this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than one year	One to two years	Two to three years	Three to four years	More than four yrs

How often do you see this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

How often do you communicate with this person (e.g., e-mail, phone)?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

Please indicate how much you have shared about yourself with this person regarding the following topics. Use the following scale to indicate your answers:

0 = This person *doesn't know me* in this respect right now, because I haven't shared this information.

1 = This person has a *general idea* of how I am now, of what is true in this respect, but his/her idea of me is not complete, or up-to-date.

2 = The other person *fully knows* me as I now am in this respect, because I have talked about this topic to him fully in the recent past, and things have not changed. I have kept him/her fully informed about this aspect of me.

X = I *would not confide* this information to this person even if that person asked me to reveal it.

1. What you like to do most in your spare time
  2. The kind of party or social gathering you enjoy most
  3. Your usual and favorite spare-time reading material
  4. The kinds of music that you enjoy listening to most
  5. The sports you engage in most, if any
  6. Whether or not you know and play any card games
  7. Whether or not you drink alcoholic beverages and, if so, your favorite drinks
  8. The foods you like best and the ways you like food prepared
  9. Whether or not you belong to any church; if so, which one, and the usual frequency of attending
  10. Whether or not you belong to any clubs, fraternities, or organizations; if so, the names of these organizations
  11. Any skills you have mastered
  12. Whether or not you have any favorite spectator sports; if so, what they are
  13. The places that you have traveled to, or lived in during your life
  14. What your political sentiments are – your views on government policies of personal interest to you
  15. Whether or not you have been seriously in love during your life; if so, with whom, what the details were, and the outcomes
  16. The names of the people in your life whose care and happiness you feel in some way directly responsible for
  17. The personal deficiencies that you would most like to improve, or that you are struggling to do something about at present
  18. Whether or not you presently owe money; if so, how much and to whom
  19. The kind of future you are aiming toward, working for, planning for – both personally and vocationally
  20. Whether or not you are now involved in any projects that you would not want to interrupt, either socially, personally, or in your work; what these projects are
  21. The details of your sex life, including whether or not you have had or are having sexual relations, whether or not you masturbate, etc.
  22. Your problems and worries about your personality, that is, what you dislike most about yourself, any guilts, inferiority feelings, etc.
  23. How you feel about the appearance of your body, what you dislike and what you accept about your appearance, and how you wish you might change your looks to improve them
  24. Your thoughts about your health, including any problems, worries, or concerns that you might have
  25. An exact idea of your regular income or savings
-

The initials of my close White American friend are: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the intimacy, or closeness, of your relationship with this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Not close	Neutral	Somewhat close	Close	Extremely close

How long have you known this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than one year	One to two years	Two to three years	Three to four years	More than four yrs

How often do you see this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

How often do you communicate with this person (e.g., e-mail, phone)?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

[Insert 25 self-disclosure topic questions]

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The initials of my Latino/a acquaintance are: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the intimacy, or closeness, of your relationship with this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Not close	Neutral	Somewhat close	Close	Extremely close

How long have you known this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than one year	One to two years	Two to three years	Three to four years	More than four yrs

How often do you see this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

How often do you communicate with this person (e.g., e-mail, phone)?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

[Insert 25 self-disclosure topic questions]

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The initials of my White American acquaintance are: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the intimacy, or closeness, of your relationship with this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Not close	Neutral	Somewhat close	Close	Extremely close

How long have you known this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than one year	One to two years	Two to three years	Three to four years	More than four yrs

How often do you see this person?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

How often do you communicate with this person (e.g., e-mail, phone)?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than once per year	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day

[Insert 25 self-disclosure topic questions]

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## Collectivism Scale

### Instructions:

Please rate your endorsement of the following statements on a 5-point scale.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither disagree nor agree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

1. I don't feel that I'm a success unless I've helped others succeed as well.
2. I want the opportunity to give back to my community.
3. I'm the type of person who lends a helping hand whenever possible.
4. I consider myself a team player.
5. My major mission in life is striving for social justice for all.
6. My heart reaches out to those who are less fortunate than myself.
7. If another person can learn from my mistakes, I'm willing to share my ups and downs with that person so that he or she can do better.
8. It feels great to know that others can count on me.
9. I have an important role to play in bringing together the peoples of the world.
10. I believe in the motto, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall."

### Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

People come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, American Indian, Mexican American, Caucasian or White, Italian American, and many others. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

**(4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree**

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
- 3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
- 7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
- 8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.
- 9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
- 12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.
- 13- My place of origin is
  - (1) Mexico
  - (2) Puerto Rico
  - (3) Dominican Republic
  - (4) South America
  - (5) Central America
  - (6) Spain
  - (7) Cuba
  - (8) Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_
- 14- My father's place of origin is (use numbers above)
- 15- My mother's place of origin is (use numbers above)