



Influences of Early Relationships in Latinx College Students



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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims to analyze and better understand how the quality of earlier relationship influences later relationships in emerging adulthood for Latinx college students. This phenomenological investigation analyzed focus group data to explore Latinx culture through thematic analysis. Results revealed that secondary themes such as cultural values, closeness, cultural expectations, and parental expectations on sibling relations are closely involved in influencing our primary theme, factors influencing identity, which seems to be salient in sibling relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The project will qualitatively examine Latinx college students' concepts of sibling relationships. Specifically, this research project has four main purposes:

1. To better understand the nature of Latinx college students' concepts of sibling relationships during the period of emerging adulthood.
2. To paint a qualitative picture of sibling relationships from their early memories through emerging adulthood
3. To analyze and better understand early relationship quality in emerging adulthood
4. To examine and contextualize the nature and relevance of sibling relationships of Latinx college students in emerging adulthood.

The current study examined the distinct sibling relationships of Latinx college students and explored the unique characteristics of Latinx culture through qualitative inquiry. The present research design analyzed thematic themes centering on the concept that Latinx culture is influential in the participants' sibling relationships during the emerging adulthood, as well as in their personal lives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Participants were four college students ranging from ages 19-22 with multiple gender identities (two women, one man, and one non-binary person) who all self-identified as Latinx with at least one sibling. Participants were originally recruited through the State University of New York at Geneseo-specific outlets, such as the class year email listservs (e.g., Class of 2020), the Latinx Student Association, and the Access Opportunity Programs for Phase I of this project presented in 2019. An electronic questionnaire asking for students' demographic information was required prior to eligible participant selection. The survey asked a series of questions pertaining to the individual's perception of how in touch they, their parents, and their siblings are with their Latinx culture. For Phase II, four of seven participants from Phase I agreed to participate in individual interviews. Participants were asked a series of identical questions, plus additional follow-up questions pertaining to the responses provided by the participants during the interviews.

Standardized Individual Interview Questions

- What does Latinx culture mean to you?
- Did your parents or sibling(s) act as role models to help maintain or strengthen your understanding of your culture?
- What do you think your parents' thoughts are on sibling relationships in your culture?
- How have your parents affected your relationship(s) with your sibling(s)?
- Could you tell me about how your cultural values affect your family system?
- Can you elaborate on your childhood and whether or not you had a different experience compared to your siblings?
- Who do you feel parented you the most? Why do you feel this way?
- What roles have your siblings specifically played in your life?

Example Follow-Up Questions

- How have the interactions you've had with your sibling(s) helped you navigate your Latinx identity?
- How do your parents encourage you to be close with your sibling(s)?
- Can you tell me more about the family roles and traditions in your household and how they may affect your Latinx culture and identity?
- How has being away at college affected your identity and relationships?
- What role does Spanish fluency play in your Latinx identity?
- Do you feel that your parents emphasized education? Why and how?
- Do you think that immigrating to the U.S. has impacted your parents' identities?
- Do you feel that your parents held you and your sibling(s) to different standards?

Data Collection and Preparation

For original recruitment, participants completed a demographics survey of information about their siblings and their family's cultural background. Participants were assigned an ID number based on recruitment year and their participant number to maintain confidentiality.

Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about what the session would entail, including audio and video recording. All participants signed informed consent forms for any personal and audiovisual data related to them. It was made clear that signing was

voluntary and that they may choose to cease participation at any time without consequences.

The individual interviews were held by at least four research assistants. The researchers set up the camera to clearly see each participant's

face. One researcher acted as an interviewer who would read the questions, provide typed versions of each respective question for easy

viewing, follow conversation, and ask follow-up questions. An additional researcher took notes and analytical memos behind the one-way

mirror, out of the participant's view.

At the end of the session, each participant was monetarily compensated with a gift card.

This procedure was standardized and was reran for each individual interview, although the specific researchers serving as the primary

interviewer or note-taker varied between interviews. Each interview was held for a maximum of forty-five minutes. The video and audio

recordings were digitized and subsequently transcribed. The transcripts and audiovisual data was coded into in-vivo and exploratory codes

in three cycles by a team of at least four of six researchers. These codes were analyzed and then organized into different thematic

categories. Analytical memos from the interviews were also analyzed alongside the transcripts for triangulation credibility purposes.

Factors that Impact the Identity of Latinx College Students

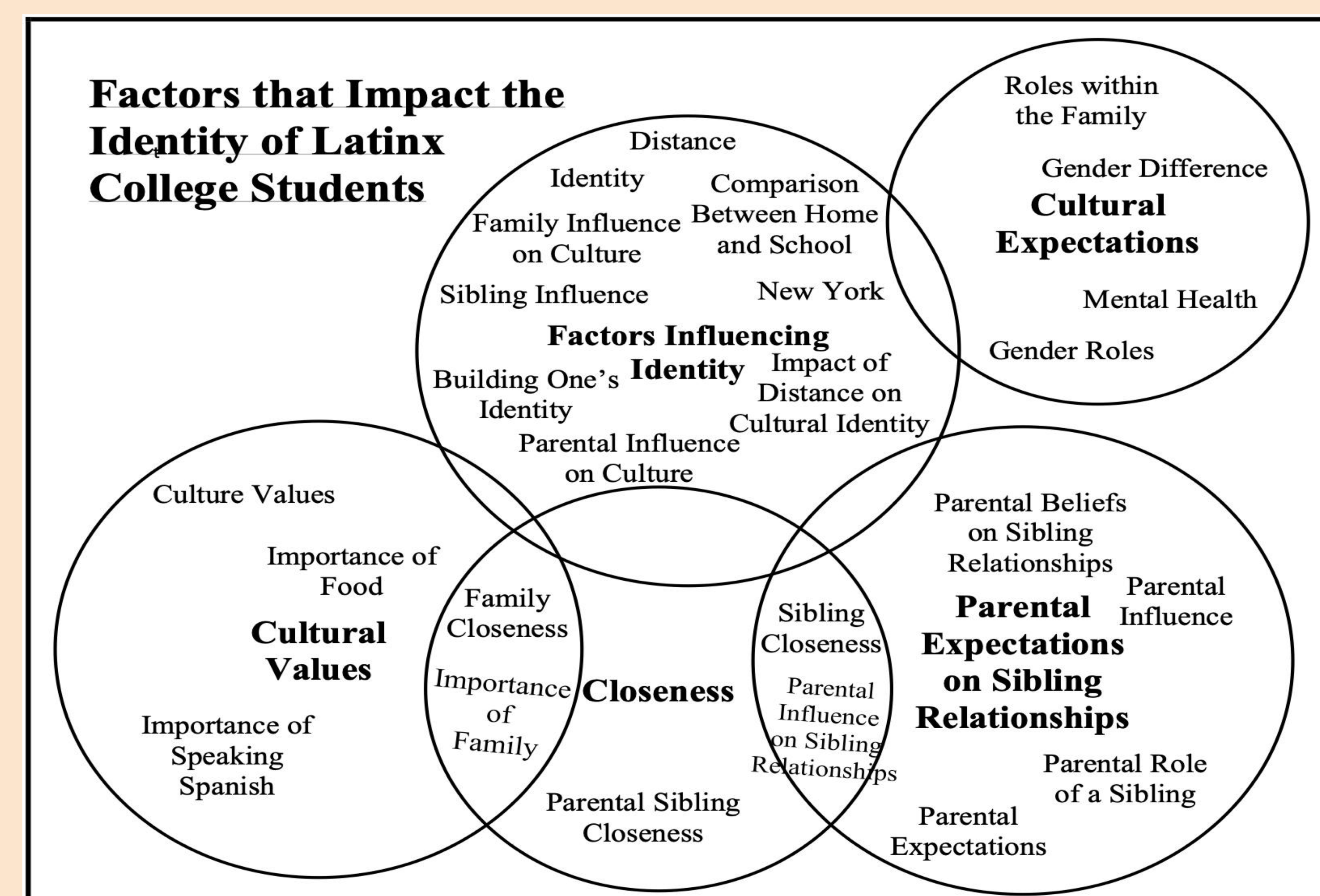


Figure 1. Latinx identities are heavily influenced by cultural values, closeness, cultural expectations and parental expectations on sibling relationships.

MATERIALS AND METHODS (cont'd)

Data Analysis

The methodological approach for the present study was qualitative interpretive phenomenology (Benner, 1994). Recent interpretive phenomenological work by Mahler and Sarvimäki (2010), also employing methods adapted from the work of Benner (1994), rigorously applied thematic analysis in interpreting their findings. The approach of this study used the process for thematic analysis posited by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a structure, in which to situate the inquiry of this present research. The specific analytic approach employed in this study was thematic analysis.

Coding Procedure

Phase 1: The transcript of each individual interview was coded separately, and it was determined that exploratory coding would be the most prudent method prior to first-cycle coding to select for the most appropriate coding method (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 63-64). During this exploratory coding procedure, the researchers tested two types of coding methods: initial and in-vivo coding.

Phase 2: Once done, it was decided that we should attempt to capture some of the participant's voices in the study; thus, initial coding was dropped and the first-cycle coding was performed using the in-vivo coding method. This was a calculated decision made in order to allow the participants to tell the researchers what their sibling relationships meant to them and how they were perceiving the relationship dynamics. As a result, a layer of in-vivo coding was applied to the primary data set. Following the first cycle coding methods, and in following the guidelines for Thematic Analysis proposed by Braun and Clark (2006, pp. 86-93) all of the codes were collated into "potential themes," as referred to by the researchers as thematic categories.

Phase 3: Six thematic categories (one primary, four secondary, and one tertiary) emerged from the codes. These thematic categories were constructed during group sessions in which a minimum of three researchers evaluated and sorted codes into evolving categories. This allowed researchers to meaningfully group data into units of analysis that would inform hierarchical theme-building.

Phase 4: Thematic categories developed from the data of all individual interviews were evaluated individually by magnitude and relevance to the proposed research question to develop salient themes. Themes that consistently emerged across the three focus groups were then compiled into one dataset. The most prominent of those were then able to be visualized in a conceptual model, including the primary emergent theme of "Factors Influencing Identity" and "Cultural Expectations," "Cultural Values," "Closeness," and "Parental Expectations on Sibling Relationships" as the corresponding secondary emergent themes. A conceptual model was developed to display these themes (Figure 1).

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RESULTS

Primary Theme #1: Factors Influencing Identity

Claim: Latinx adolescents' cultural identity are heavily influenced by their parental and sibling relationships in their household.

- "They [parents] try not to forget their roots and like, help us understand where they came from and so we could pass it on." (00866, pg. 11)
- "I mean she [sister] lives them [cultural identity]. She comes from where they're [parents] from.. And she can help me understand them [cultural values] in the way that I need to." (99221, pg. 23)

Secondary Theme #1 : Cultural Values

Claim: The importance of Spanish seems to be emphasized in Latinx culture, along with the importance of family.

- "Well I mean one thing we [family] always do every year, we always go back to Columbia to visit family." (99221, pg. 4)
- "Hearing a lot of my elders speaking to each other it's like you see it on the bus, everything, a lot of things are bilingual so it's just like okay let me just brush up and read this side of the pamphlet for fun." (00866, pg. 8)

Secondary Theme #2: Closeness

Claim: Latinx individuals may have complex relationships with their parents, siblings, and families, but tend to be closest with their siblings.

- "I consider her [cousin] in a sense an older sister cause she lived with us from when I was thirteen onwards, like prima-hermana." (00866, pg. 10)
- "She's [sister] not only like a role model or sister, but she's one of my closest friends." (99221, pg. 22)

Secondary Theme #3: Cultural Expectations

Claim: A general set of behavioral principles has developed in Latinx culture, which place various gendered and familial expectations on Latinx individuals and families.

- "If I were to go out with my friends, I would have to bring my brother or a parent with me.. But then my brother would go out on his own." (00861, pg. 24)
- "Things I do affect my family because in a way kind of like when it comes down to...like work or money, my parents own restaurants so they like me...being around in the summer is very crucial...because they need someone else to help out with work and stuff." (99221, pg. 12)

Secondary Theme #4: Parental Expectations on Sibling Relationships

Claim: The development of sibling relationships may be heavily influenced by parental expectations.

- "My mom thinks it's [sibling relationships] very important to have a strong relationship with your siblings." (99221, pg. 5)
- "You guys can't be fighting all the time.. They were always on us about having to care for each other and like, be there for each other." (00861, pg. 20)

DISCUSSION

In comparison to our first phase of this study, we did not group participants based on the level of the participants' Latinx identity (e.g. high, medium, low). We found that many of our participants highlighted the factors that influence their Latinx identity, as portrayed in Figure 1, rather than the extent to which they identify with Latinx culture. Participants discussed the "Factors Influencing Identity" with "Cultural Values," "Closeness," "Parental Expectations on Sibling Relationships," and "Cultural Expectations" mitigating the development of their Latinx identity. Our data also indicates an overlap between these factors. The secondary thematic categories of "Cultural Values" and "Closeness" have overlapping constructs such as "Family Closeness" and "Importance of Family" which clearly influence the existence of each other. In addition, secondary thematic categories "Closeness" and "Parental Expectations on Sibling Relationships" share the constructs of "Sibling Closeness" and "Parental Influence on Sibling Relationships," which is suggestive of an interplay between such secondary thematic categories. These shared constructs were noted as exploratory codes in the coding process.

A limitation we faced during our research was getting all seven participants from the previous study to return for the individual interviews. The goal of this phase of our study was to bring back those same participants, and ask each of them more focused questions. However, only four of the seven participants returned. Of those participants three were in the previous "low group" and one belonged to the "high group." With that being said, we were unable to make any distinctions between "high" and "low" participants because there were not enough returners from the "high" group. To strengthen the research, inviting the missing participants from the previous study and collecting their data could result in similar if not identical codes and themes.

Possible future studies may include a combination of the results from our previous study (parental pressure to take advantage in educational opportunities) and the results from our current study (the outside influences of Latinx identity) to compare how "high" participants and "low" participants identify as being Latinx in differing ways. Another future study could relate to the concept of mental health and how issues surrounding mental health are dealt with differently in the Latinx community, or more specifically between groups of varying levels of identification with their Latinx identity (such as high and low).

CREDIBILITY MEASURES

Triangulation of Data Sources. The purpose was to check for consistency and continuity across the primary data set. The following served as sources for triangulation: focus group transcripts, results from post-coding techniques, researcher notes, and original participant responses.

Negative Case Selection. During the final stages of the thematic analysis, the researchers began to label these cases within the data set and attached them to burgeoning themes in order to establish credibility of the data.

- "I'm gonna say off the bat, my siblings no because they also are in the same boat as me and they and they engage in lesser ways [referring to language]." (00866, pg. 4)
- "We haven't been there in like five years and then we won't go, like no interest in going back." (00721, pg. 10)
- "We [participant and sibling] avoid each other around the house whenever I go back like it's-it's not really clear set. It's messy." (00866, pg. 30)

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