Ethnic Identity and Well-Being

Erandi Herndon
Cynthia Willis-Esqueda, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Introduction

Ethnic Identity
- Defined as “An enduring, fundamental aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with that membership” (Phinney, 1996)
- Related to overall adjustment to society (Phinney, 1993)
- Provides a way to understand social life, the world, and our place in it (Nagel, 1994)
- Correlated with self-esteem in adolescents (Martinez & Dukes, 1997)

Purpose
- To examine the importance and role of adult ethnic identity in predicting life satisfaction and hope
- To provide evidence of the importance of connections between notions of self, ethnicity, and psychological issues

Research Questions
- Will those who have a strong ethnic identity also have a strong sense of well-being and life satisfaction?
- Is a person’s perceived well-being better predicted by their ethnic identity or sense of being an American?

Hypotheses: A strong ethnic identity will positively affect perceptions of life satisfaction and hope. However, the sense of being American will be a stronger predictor for life satisfaction, particularly for minorities.

Methods and Materials

Participants
139 participants (Latinos = 69, Whites = 70) via Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk); compensated for participation. Mean age was 30 years. Data was collected from European Americans (i.e. white) and Latinos

Procedures and Measures
Participants completed a survey online by following a link in Mturk to Qualtrics, an on-line survey site. All questionnaires were contained in the survey. The questionnaire items were measured with a 7 point rating scale (1 = not at all to 7 = very much so).

The following scales were used:
- ARSMA-II – Measures ethnic identity of Latino/a participants (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995)
- White Identity Scale – Measures ethnic identity of European Americans (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003)
- American Identity Scale - Measures how strongly one affiliates with being an American (Schildkraut, 2007)
- Hope Scale – Measures one’s beliefs in individual agency (Snyder et al., 1991)
- Life Satisfaction Scale – Measures satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

Results

White Sample

Latino/a Sample

Table 1

Significant Mean Expectations and Outcomes by Ethnic Group (N=139)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I expect to have a high paying job in the future</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to have sufficient funds for retirement</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to retire before the age of 65</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to acquire my dream house in future</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to pay for my children’s education</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to live a comfortable financial lifestyle</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect future involvement with the law</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had past involvement with the law</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * significant at p < .01

Discussion

As hypothesized, Latino and White ethnic identity did predict life satisfaction and hope. However, American identity did not predict life satisfaction. Latinos were higher in life satisfaction, compared to Whites, and Latino ethnic identity was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction compared to Whites. In addition, Latinos were more optimistic about future outcomes, including fewer expectations of involvement with law (even though national data suggest otherwise) and they reported a higher involvement with law in the past. Future research should examine individual items on the White Identity Scale as predictors of American identity and life satisfaction and why Latinos report more optimism.

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Cynthia Willis-Esqueda, Ph.D.
UNL Faculty Mentor, Department of Psychology
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