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# "MORE THAN JUST A BOX": THE CO-CREATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY WITHIN HISPANIC-CAUCASIAN MULTIETHNIC FAMILY SYSTEMS

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"MORE THAN JUST A BOX":
THE CO-CREATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY WITHIN HISPANIC-CAUCASIAN
MULTIETHNIC FAMILY SYSTEMS

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DISSERTATION
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Brandi N. Frisby, Associate Professor of Instructional Communication
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

"MORE THAN JUST A BOX":
THE CO-CREATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY WITHIN HISPANIC-CAUCASIAN
MULTIETHNIC FAMILY SYSTEMS

Approximately 15% of all new marriages in the United States in 2010 were between spouses that shared different racial or ethnic backgrounds from one another. Socha and Diggs (1999) began to examine race as both an outcome of family communication as well as a factor that influences children's communication development in families because of the social pressure multiethnic families endure to fit a nuclear family model. This study utilized dyadic interviews of eleven multiethnic parent couples (N = 22 individuals; 11 dyads) in order to gain a deeper understanding of Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems.  Communication in families plays a foundational role in many aspects of society and socialization of the young. However, slim research has addressed how communication in families affects the understandings of ethnicity and the formation of social identities as a social construction (see Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Socha & Diggs, 1999; Socha, Sanchez-Hucles, Bromley, & Kelly, 1995).

Researchers in the social sciences, especially in communication, must recognize that the sanctuary of the home may be generating the keys to understanding problems concerning social identity formation and diversity. Thus, there is a need for communication research at the crossroads of ethnicity, family, and identity. This dissertation highlights family factors that may influence Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic children's social identities as well as family communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. This study explicates multiethnic families through the lens of communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973), social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987), explicitly overviewing the intersection of interpersonal and intergroup communication (Giles, 2012).

This study provides insights to both theoretical expansion and practical application within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. Ultimately, this study

addresses questions such as: a) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems communicate surrounding topics of race and ethnicity, b) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families discuss components of social identity (e.g., ethnic identification for multiethnic children), and c) What challenges are unique to Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems?

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03/22/2019
Date

## DEDICATION

*For my parents, Jim and Ronda Beck*

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I knew I wanted to pursue my doctorate degree when I decided to go to graduate school in August 2012. It was my last semester at UNC-Greensboro and I knew I wanted to get out of student housing and teach. During my Master's program at West Virginia University I started researching top instructional communication PhD programs. I will forever be thankful that my advisor at the time, Dr. Keith Weber, introduced me to outstanding WVU alum, Dr. Brandi Frisby at the NCA Conference in November 2013. Brandi told me all about the new instructional PhD program at the University of Kentucky and I knew I had to apply. After being accepted to the program at UK, I asked Brandi to be my "guide" on the road towards the PhD my first semester. Thank goodness she agreed!

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through, but I appreciate that you asked, and always acted interested, even if you might not have known exactly what to say when I shared my frustrations with you.

At one point I believed writing this dissertation was impossible. This document is a labor of love and my own personal exercise in vulnerability, persistence, endurance, and self-sacrifice. Thank you everyone who shared in this project and journey. I have learned throughout this process that victory is a mindset and it is only when we believe we can reach our full potential and lean on others for support and guidance that together we can make the impossible, possible.

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CHAPTER 1.  INTRODUCTION

Approximately 15% of all new marriages in the United States in 2010 involved spouses that shared different racial or ethnic backgrounds from one another. According to Wang (2012), this demographical statistic more than doubled the percentage of interracial and multiethnic marriages since 1980 (i.e., 6.7%). Consequently, because of this increasing percentage of interracially married couples, there has also been an increase in interracial children. In fact, one-in-seven babies born in the United States in 2015 (i.e., approximately 14%) were multiethnic or multiracial (Sesin, 2017). However, when conducting analyses over a series of 2016 Census Bureau reports, Cohn (2016) found that not all interracially married parents checked more than one race box for their young children, even though they are genetically comprised of more than one race. Different groups varied in their responses and how they chose to report their child's race (i.e., either alone or in combination with another racial classification). Allowing parents to decide the racial or ethnic classification of their children can cause children to feel pressure to adapt or conform into the new racial categorization their parents choose for them (Cohn, 2016).

The social pressure that interracial and multiethnic families endure to fit a nuclear family model is unlike any mono-racial family unit (Socha & Diggs, 1999). Even though *nuclear* families, defined by Marcotte (2014) as "the idealized white, middle-class, 1950s family image of two parents, two kids, and a dog" (para. 1), may not be as idealized as they once were, multiethnic families can still benefit from communication surrounding race and ethnicity within their family system. Socha and Diggs (1999) began to examine race as both an outcome of family communication as well as a factor that influences children's communication development within their families. Katz (1978) explains family

communication is an essential source of information about members of ethnic and racial groups outside of one's own, as well as a context for learning about how to communicate with people from different ethnic groups. For the purpose of this dissertation, ethnic groups are defined as individuals who relate to each other similarly based on common ancestry, culture, language, or societal history (People & Bailey, 2010). Multiethnic families have a unique position - in that their children are exposed to increased cross-ethnic dynamics - which gives them a more robust view of family interactions regarding race and ethnicity (Socha, Sanchez-Hucles, Bromley, & Kelly, 1995; Ward, 1990).

Even though all interracial and multiethnic family systems would add a unique perspective for investigation, within this dissertation, I decided to specifically look at the communication surrounding ethnic identity in Hispanic and Caucasian relationships. This dissertation is the first study, to my knowledge, to examine multiethnic parents as a dyad. I felt it best to keep the sample as homogeneous as possible regarding multiethnic families in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Hispanic Caucasian multiethnic dyad before expanding my research to include all multiethnic families. I chose to focus on Caucasian and Hispanic relationships for several reasons.

First, I chose this multiethnic typology because the Hispanic population in the United States accounts for more than half of the national population growth since 2000 (Flores, 2017). There are nearly 58 million Hispanics in the United States. According to Flores (2017), Hispanics accounted for 18% of the nation's population in 2016, which made Hispanics the second-largest racial or ethnic group behind Caucasian individuals. Flores (2017) projects that if the Hispanic population continues to grow steadily, Hispanics will account for the majority ethnic group by 2030.

Second, parents from diverse cultural backgrounds face unique challenges. For example, Cooper (2006) noted school personnel vary in their perceptions of how Hispanic parents can become involved with their children's education. An educator's lack of cultural sensitivity may result in family alienation or lack of direct involvement in a child's education. Some schools and communities will welcome the diverse family forms represented by their local students; if that is not the case, children face messages that discount or challenge their family experiences (Galvin, Braithwaite, & Bylund, 2016). Furthermore, these cultural differences could influence communication development stemming from the parents' communication surrounding identity as well as how they communicate identity to their children.

Third, previous research supports severe implications of miscommunication concerning multiethnic identity within the Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic population. Uttal's (1998) study of Mexican working mothers reported the difficulty of finding day-care providers who do not racially insult their children or put them down for their cultural differences. In fact, speaking Spanish was often not permitted by caretakers in the majority of day-care centers. This reality affected communication and required the mothers to reduce stress by explaining to their children "about race relations with white society and how to navigate them" (Uttal, 1998, p. 605).

Lastly, even though communication in families plays a foundational role in many aspects of society and socialization of the young, minimal research has addressed how communication in families affects the understandings of *ethnicity* and the formation of social identities as a social construction (see Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Socha & Diggs, 1999; Socha et al., 1995). According to Socha and Diggs (1999), the content and

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meanings of family communication about other races and social identity that takes place inside families bind them to some understanding of themselves and society. Researchers in the social sciences, especially in communication, must recognize that the sanctuary of the home may be generating the keys to understanding problems concerning social identity formation and diversity. Thus, there is a need for communication research at the crossroads of race, family communication, and identity. This dissertation will highlight family factors that may influence the co-creation of Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic children's social identities as well as family communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. The overarching research questions guiding this dissertation are as follows: a) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems communicate surrounding topics of race and ethnicity, b) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families discuss components of social identity (e.g., ethnic identification for multiethnic children), and c) What challenges are unique to Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems?

The following literature review explicates multiethnic families through the lens of communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973), social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987), explicitly overviewing the intersection of interpersonal and intergroup communication (Giles, 2012). Using SIT as a lens through which to examine existing literature regarding Hispanic-Caucasian families' communication surrounding their child's multiethnic social identity, this dissertation specifies the importance of reconstructing social identity when analyzing Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families compared to homogenetic families. Utilizing additional intergroup theories (i.e.,

communication accommodation theory and self-categorization theory), the following

literature review conceptualizes Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems and how

they use communication to foster a co-creation of social identity. To examine this

phenomenon, I conducted separate dyadic interviews with Hispanic-Caucasian

multiethnic parents about how they communicate as a couple about their own ethnic

identity and then how they communicate with their children about their children's ethnic

identity. The influence this dual-identity has on Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family

systems as a whole is then assessed using social identity theory as a lens into Hispanic-

Caucasian multiethnic parent-dyadic communication.

CHAPTER 2.  LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1    Conceptualizing Multiethnic Family Systems

Family systems theory outlines four basic assumptions that help establish a

theoretical ground for examining identity formation for multiethnic children. These

assumptions are: (1) the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, (2) circular causality

guides behavior, (3) feedback loops guide behavior, and (4) family types are based on the

rigidity of family boundaries (Smith & Hamon, 2012). The first basic assumption

explains that family systems work better when all members work towards a greater good

for the family unit, instead of the child trying to figure out their social identity

individually (i.e., multiethnic parents coming together to define their multiethnic

children's social identities). Barn and Harman (2013) discuss how mothers of multiethnic

children often may experience and endure critical questioning from others of their own,

or another race. While this may prove challenging for mothers of multiethnic children,

when mothers and fathers come together as a unified family to tackle issues of racism,

they can help define racial and ethnic boundaries for their adolescent children in order to

create resilience within the family system itself (Boyd-Franklin & Karger, 2012; Bratter

& Heard, 2009).

Furthermore, Britton (2013) found that when interviewing white mothers of

multiethnic children, it was necessary to them that their children understood how they

were not alone as a multiethnic child; they were a part of a multiethnic family. While

some mothers were concerned their children would experience identity issues, others

were grateful that they had the chance to openly discuss issues of white privilege with

their children as a family. These interactions are an example of how parents could

address ethnic socialization of multiethnic children using not only the first basic assumption of family systems but also the second basic assumption of family systems theory: circular causality (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

In contrast to linear causality (e.g., focusing on the content of a message), Smith and Hamon (2012) state the second assumption, circular causality, assumes forces are moving in many different directions simultaneously. The central focus of circular causality is how repetitive patterns of interactions intersect, regardless of topic. For multiethnic children, ethnicity acts as a point of cooperation between the multiethnic child and his or her parents (Gaither, 2015). When children realize the issue of ethnicity (e.g., how others perceive their ethnicity, how their parents have different ethnic socialization, and how they have a different ethnic classification than either one of their parents), they may be able to cope with any negative stigma associated with a multiethnic couple or as a multiethnic family. Multiethnic families must acknowledge the diverse experiences that they have to create positive circular causality of interactions (Robinson-Wood, 2011). Whether or not the circular causality of interaction is negative or positive can have a significant impact on the overall socialization and identification of a family unit.

This impact on the overall socialization and identification of a family unit leads to the third assumption of family systems theory: feedback loops. Feedback loops, regardless of polarity, guide behavior. In other words, the communication templates in multiethnic and mono-ethnic family systems remain constant to help form patterns of behavior and family communication. Robinson-Wood (2011) interviewed white mothers of non-white children and found seven significant themes that emerged from her

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interview notes: (a) looking like a family and looking alike, (b) mothering as a vulnerability, (c) teen daughters' perceptions of black men as undesirable and frightening, (d) exposing children to culture, (e) children and mothers' experiences as "other", (f) hostility from Black women, and (g) not talking about race.

Overwhelmingly, throughout each theme pulled from Robinson-Wood's interviews, the communication patterns were consistent. When one mother felt a child was asking questions about race she could not address, it created a negative feedback loop within her family system (Shome, 2011). Instead of creating an environment that could foster negative feedback loops (e.g., sass or giving "the look") parents should be encouraged to create a rewarding response for children showing interest in discussing race and ethnicity. If a multiethnic child asks his or her parent to talk about ethnic socialization, even if race and ethnicity are typically not discussed within the family, it is essential to focus on having a quality conversation about that topic, especially in multiethnic family systems. It is vital to avoid negative feedback loop patterns where parents do not feel comfortable openly discussing race and ethnic categorization with their children. Snyder (2012) claims that family members receive positive feedback for behaviors that stay within the rules of a family system. One of the significant regulations within a family system is that family types stem from the fourth assumption of family systems theory: the rigidity of family boundaries.

Kantor and Lehr (1975) identified three basic family types, based on the rigidity of family boundaries and rules: open families, random families, and closed families. Open families are democratic, where the rights of individuals and interactions with outsiders are freely permitted when multiethnic children come from open family systems;

they often feel comfortable communicating about race within their families and with others outside of their families (Orbe, 1999). This helps multiethnic children define their own ethnic identity. Random families have almost no boundaries. Often, children take this level of freedom from their parents as a sign of lack of love and concern (Smith & Hamon, 2012). Finally, multiethnic children in closed family systems, or those with rigid boundaries, are overly involved in each other's life, which limits interactions with outsiders. This proves problematic for multiethnic children because they might have an even more difficult time creating their ethnic categorization if their parents enmesh them (Orbe, 1999). Regardless of family type, for multiethnic children to avoid negatively perceived identify formation, it is imperative that they redefine their social identity and communicate thoroughly about ethnic socialization as a family. According to Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, and Freeman (2010), for any one person (i.e., a multiethnic child) to handle negative or misconstrued identity formation, the entire family system must work together to promote open communication and create a positive, color-inclusive environment. One way this occurs within multiethnic family systems is by holding communication surrounding ethnicity constant within their homes. Throughout this dissertation, I examine communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems through communication accommodation theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory.

2.2   Understanding Multiethnic Family Systems as both an Intergroup and Interpersonal
        Communication Process

        Soliz, Thorson, and Rittenour (2009) found that when communication surrounding race and identity is kept as an open dialogue, forming family identity led to

overall group satisfaction and salience for multiethnic families. Regardless, if a multiethnic child experiences positive or negative identity formation, communication about ethnicity and ethnic socialization helps children go through the cognitive process of social categorization, which facilitates a positive social identity (Branscombe & Wann, 1994). Brunsma (2005) discussed how mixed-race persons have greater social concerns in "American society because of the challenge they pose to the racial order" (p. 1132). However, because of the growing number of multiethnic families, there has been an increased amount of social acceptance toward these individuals (Barn & Harman, 2013). Even though ethnicity can be a touchy subject for some individuals, Burton et al. (2010) discuss that one of the major issues of society today is that people think there should be a focus on being colorblind. In contrast with racial expectations of the past, "new racism" (Collins, 2004, p. 5) is associated with the emergence of a new "colorblind" framework which portrays essential sameness between racial and ethnic groups, despite their unequal social locations and unique backgrounds (Frankenberg, 1993). Historically, multiethnic families have had to deal with negative stigma and unique identity development issues (Csizmadia, Leslie, & Nazarian, 2015; Daniel & Daniel, 1999).

Communication about ethnic socialization is the critical mediation variable missing when multiethnic children try to form their own social identity. The unique individual and group dynamics between members of a multiethnic family unit highlight the need to study multiethnic family communication as both an interpersonal and intergroup process (Diggs & Clark, 2002; Soliz & Rittenour, 2012). In this dissertation, interpersonal communication is defined as instances in which multiethnic family members place value in their unique characteristics, focusing conversations surrounding

their dyadic or family relationships. Intergroup communication is categorized as communication in which a participant's ethnic identity or any group categorization becomes salient. There is also the notion of intragroup communication. Intragroup communication is defined as communication within a small group (Palomares, 2008), such as a family.  Multiethnic families utilize intragroup communication when they discuss intergroup and interpersonal phenomenon as a family system (Palomares, 2008). Intragroup communication allows multiethnic families to negotiate their multiethnic family identities as a group and come up with their socialization process (Ali, 2014; Socha & Diggs, 1999).

Within intergroup communication, it is most often an individual's most salient social membership and not their characteristics that shape their communication (Giles, 2016). Communication is not only an interpersonal but also an intergroup phenomenon. Many intergroup communication scholars adhere to the belief that the majority of our communication is in some way intergroup (where groups include, for example, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or political party).  Scholars view communication as a dynamic process where each speaker's cognitions, emotions, and motivations influence communication behavior in interactions (Giles, 2012). This is different from interpersonal communication, which exists as communication between two individuals. Past intergroup communication scholars viewed the intergroup – interpersonal space along a continuum. Meaning that past research conceptualized communication as falling somewhere between completely intergroup (i.e., focused on group classifications and dynamics) to entirely interpersonal (i.e., personality and individual traits distinct from outside group members, i.e., "others").

However, recent intergroup scholars disagree with the notion of intergroup communication and interpersonal communication lying on a continuum, and instead, advocate for viewing intergroup and interpersonal communication as two orthogonal continua, which form four distinct quadrants of intergroup-interpersonal communication (see Giles, 2016; Giles & Maass, 2016). Giles (2016) explains some interactions may not be either interpersonal or intergroup, but at times an interaction may be both high intergroup and high interpersonal. The four distinct quadrants laid out within Giles (2016) are as follows: low intergroup-high interpersonal interactions (e.g., siblings reflecting on a memory from their childhood), high intergroup-high interpersonal interactions (e.g., partners in a multiethnic marriage discussing cultural differences), high intergroup-low interpersonal interactions (e.g., two passionate sports team fans arguing about who's team will win a big game), and low intergroup-low interpersonal interactions (e.g., mindless interactions with service personnel). Explicitly, this dissertation adopts the perspective that communication can simultaneously be high or low on both the intergroup and interpersonal dimensions (Giles & Hewstone, 1982; Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005). Guided by this quadrant view of communication, I analyzed the narratives from interviews with multiethnic parents when their interactions fall within Giles' top quadrant (i.e., high interpersonal and high intergroup or when both individual characteristics and group categorization became salient via participant's conversations) throughout this dissertation. Specifically, Diggs and Clark (2002) explain multiethnic families are in a unique position where their interpersonal interactions (i.e., interactions between individual family members) may be salient at the same time as intergroup processes (i.e., ethnic classifications). I plan to delve into this pertinent cross-section of intergroup and

interpersonal contexts utilizing communication accommodation theory, social identity

theory, and self-categorization theory in multiethnic family systems.

2.3    Communication Accommodation Theory

Speech accommodation theory, later referred to as communication

accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973) explains how and why we adjust our

communication behaviors to the actions of others. CAT confirms the common

observation that communicators often mimic one another's linguistic behavior. The act of

accommodation (i.e., adjusting our practices to resemble others) is considered one of the

key factors for reducing social or relational distance, as it enhances interpersonal or

intergroup similarities and thereby reduces uncertainty about others (Giles, Coupland, &

Coupland, 1991). Similarly, accommodation could also dismantle social barriers and

conflict between outgroup members. When an individuals' communication shows

similarity, it is called convergence. According to Giles (2012), convergence plays a

crucial role in CAT because accommodative acts are often a function of an individual's

social power. Others considered to lack social power are accommodated less frequently

than others with high social influence (i.e., those considered to associated with the

majority societal ingroup).

The opposite—divergence—or moving apart, happens when speakers begin to

exaggerate their differences. Divergence has been mostly attributed to intergroup

encounters where interlocutors feel they are representing different groups, cultures, and

communities with which they strongly affiliate, and where their ingroup language or

communication style is a fundamental part of their social identity (Giles, Reid, &

Harwood, 2010). Divergence is one form of nonaccommodation (Gasiorek, 2016).

Maintenance is a construct from early CAT and refers to the absence of accommodation (Bourhis, 1979). Instead of deliberately diverging from outgroup members behavior, Bourhis (1979) explains maintenance simply refers to instances in which interlocutors decide not to accommodate to the desires of others. Discrimination of outgroup members can fuel further distance between individuals of different backgrounds and both convergence and divergence occur within multiple communication behaviors (e.g., accents, the rate of speech, volume, vocabulary, grammar, voice, and other gestures). Ultimately, CAT operates on the assumption that managing accommodative practices and dilemmas, especially when one's partner is perceived to veer in non-accommodative directions, might be an essential component for long-term relational satisfaction (Harwood et al., 2005).

Even though minimal research has examined multiethnic relationships utilizing CAT as a theoretical framework, Soliz et al. (2009) examined relational satisfaction in multiethnic families using CAT as their conceptual framework. Additionally, Harwood, Soliz, and Lin (2006) position CAT as a theoretical framework that would work well in understanding family interactions where group-based discrepancies may manifest. Soliz et al. (2009) explain how CAT has evolved into a theory that addresses more than just linguistic shifts but also a way individuals may "appropriately accommodate communication behavior to the expectations or standards of others as a way of seeking approval" (p. 821). Therefore, accommodative behaviors may be utilized in multiethnic families as a means to create solidarity between partners who originally come from different intergroup backgrounds.  For example, Soliz et al. (2009) describe how accommodative behaviors led to more personalized romantic relationships among

multiethnic couples, where nonaccommodation highlighted the intergroup distinction between partners, subsequently perceived more negatively. Soliz et al. (2009) call for further investigation into the phenomena of identity accommodation in multiethnic families because multiethnic families are in a unique position where accommodation may not only be used to better their relationships with their partner but also their partner's family. Within this dissertation, I analyze objective acts of (non)accommodation. While (non)accommodation may be subjective in nature, I decided to look at participant's reactions to their partners objective acts of (non)accommodation. Whether or not a family decides to accommodate or practice nonaccommodation, and their reactions to their partner's (non)accommodation ultimately affects how they shape their social identity as a family system

2.4    Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979) assume that the self-concept is comprised of two components, personal and social identity. Personal identity, defined as our ability to form a sense of self through our interaction with particular (i.e., specific people who impact our lives), and the generalized other (i.e., societal influences on our group categorization and social identity; Bergen & Braithwaite, 2009) both contribute to an individual's sense of self. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed social identity theory in which three cognitive processes stood out as relevant to a person being a part of an ingroup or an outgroup: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorization is the cognitive process an individual experiences when deciding to which social group he or she, or another person, belong (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Minto, Hornsey, Gillespie, Healy, and Jetten (2016) explain social identification refers to how

we self-define our group memberships. At times particular social identities are salient (e.g., our profession, religion, or gender), our sense of self is determined by the normative attitudes and behaviors of our identity; particularly, if we associate ourselves as an ingroup member of that identity categorization (Tajfel, 1972). Throughout the past few decades, social identity has been used to describe (a) an individual's relation to the broader social structure (Breakwell, 1993); (b) self-concepts of individuals as they adhere to categorical memberships (Stryker, 2000); and (c) the dynamics within intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The third process in social identification is social comparison. Social comparison takes place when individuals compare themselves to others. Social comparison can also be interpersonal or intergroup in nature, depending on which identity is salient. Individuals compare themselves with others in two ways. First, they decide whether they are similar or different to other people, based on biological sex, color, religion, and age. Assessing similarities and differences are tools individuals use to decide with whom they fit (Wood, 2016). Pettigrew (1967) explains we tend to gravitate toward others we perceive as similar to us. The second way individuals compare themselves to others is by measuring themselves and their abilities in relation to others (e.g., Am I as smart as my brother?, Am I as attractive as my friend?). In multiethnic family systems, multiethnic children may feel torn between which peers to compare themselves to, especially if they feel isolated from one specific ethnic categorization (Byrd & Garwick, 2006).

Members of multiethnic families are not the only people who that categorize others into ingroup or outgroup members; this is a primary, fundamental aspect of social cognition. However, multiethnic families are in a unique position where two ethnic

identities may be salient at the same time (Davilla, 1999; Diggs & Clark, 2002). Often, multiethnic children feel like this dual-identity causes them to be an outgroup member of both their parent's ethnic groups (Caprariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Leslie, 2015). Being able to use communication to create a sense of social categorization individually is important for multiethnic families because it is ultimately how they determine their own social identity.

Csizmadia et al. (2015) found positive identity development to be the most significant therapeutic intervention when working with multiethnic family systems. However, identity development for multiethnic children can also mean that they are expected to deny their multiethnic identity by identifying with only a single ethnicity, or creating an identity that is not recognized by broader societal norms (Csizmadia et al., 2015; Laszloffy, 2008). Either way, multiethnic families are expected to use communication to understand their social categorization in order to ultimately define their social identity, which helps each member of the family create their overall self-concept. Not being able to directly identify as having specific ethnic socialization can cause multiethnic children distress (Jacobson, 2010).

According to Kroger and Marcia (2011), many multiethnic individuals use social comparison to enhance or detract from their perception of not only their self-concept, but also their identity and self-esteem. Multiethnic couples utilize and discuss their family histories, how they experience their life together, and how the dominant and subordinate discussions that they use in negotiating their ethnic differences hold weight in their overall relationships to enhance their perception of self-concept (Kenney & Kenney, 2013; Killian, 2002). Ultimately, Tajfel and Turner (1979) accepted that we live in a

world that is alive with the possibility of prejudice or discrimination. However, they did not see groups as being negative, in fact, they saw group categorization as positive, because they could give means to ethnic socialization and in cooperation, outgroup and ingroup members could work together to seek or improve their position as individuals and as a group. Social identity theory and self-categorization theory work in tandem to help multiethnic families understand how the co-construction of family social identity may help multiethnic children fit into a broader ingroup.

2.5    Self-Categorization Theory

Self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987) describes the cognitive processes underlying social categorization. Both SIT and SCT have broader implications for understanding the human mind, self-concept, and the self-process. As discussed when overviewing SIT, the concept of self is a multidimensional process of internalizing and acting from our social perspectives (Wood, 2016). In the early beginnings of SCT, the development of the theory involved three main steps: a distinction between personal and social identity, the evolution of the different levels of self-categorization, and the systematic program of research surrounding self-concept and stereotyping.

The first step in SCT development stemmed from Turner's distinction between personal and social identity. While SIT is concerned with why subjects discriminate against outgroup members, SCT addresses why individuals identify with groups at all and why their group identities matter to them (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). The theory seeks to explain how and when people will define themselves as members of a group and to clarify the implications for this kind of self-perception. The new distinction of SCT apart

from SIT started a new framework for understanding intergroup behavior. Turner (1982) proposed a theory of group behavior to explain communication as an intragroup process. Extending SIT, SCT shifts the focus more directly toward the categorization process (Harwood et al., 2005).

This leads to the second step of SCT: the categorization process utilized to form personal and social identities (Turner, 1987). The personal-social identity distinction reformulated as levels of self-categorization where individuals can define or categorize themselves at different levels of abstraction (Turner & Oakes, 1997; Tuner & Reynolds, 2012). At the interpersonal level, the self is described as a unique individual relative to others. The intergroup level of abstraction defines self as being a group member in contrast to other relevant groups. Finally, the superordinate level defines self as a human being in comparison to other lifeforms. Multiethnic families have to consider when their personal and group categorizations are salient while developing their unique social identity (Turner & Reynolds, 2012).

When personal identities and unique individual qualities are salient, communication between multiethnic partners is interpersonal. However, when individuals are cognizant of group categorization (e.g., when individuals start focusing on attributes that make them part of a social group), their social identities come to the forefront of an interaction (e.g., acknowledging cultural differences in multiethnic families). As social identities become more salient, self-perception is depersonalized (Haas, 2012). Depersonalization is a change in self-conceptualization and our basis of how we perceive others (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995). Furthermore, depersonalization refers to a

mental state where individualized, personal attributes no longer seem to matter, where individuals conform completely to ingroup norms (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002).

Finally, the third step of SCT acknowledges that stereotypes exist amongst individuals and include cognitive mental cues we have stored in our brains that are activated when exposed to a stimulus. At the height of depersonalization, individuals begin to only categorize others as prototypes. The notion of prototypes (i.e., defining and stereotypical attributes of a social group) is a central principle of self-categorization theory (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Instead of thinking of prototypes as a checklist of characteristics, prototypes of a particular group are group members that represent qualities that characterize groups and distinguish them from other groups (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Prototypes are highly context-dependent and can be modified based on how an individual perceives the particular outgroup's prototype (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). These interpersonal categorizations can help form a broader picture of what characteristics each group member has based on an individual's perception of the prototype of that group. The difference between attitudes and stereotypes according to SCT is attitudes have a valence (i.e., positive or negative) and stereotypes alone do not have valence. The third component of SCT is acknowledging the process of discrimination (i.e., communication of prejudices that harm outgroup members). Attitudes, stereotypes, and discrimination work together to form how we feel about individuals in our ingroup as well as our outgroups.

Two processes within SCT determine which identity becomes salient: comparative and normative fit. Comparative fit is assessed before ingroup or outgroup membership becomes salient (Turner, 1985). An individual's categorization will depend

on whom they associate and which identities they deem salient. For predicting whether a group will categorize someone as an ingroup or outgroup member, members may gauge the degree to which they feel similar to the other members in their group (Turner, 1999). This context could change depending on who they are comparing. For example, if outgroup member characteristics are not cognitively present (i.e., individuals do not have other outgroup or ingroup members to compare someone to), individuals are less likely to categorize an individual as belonging to a specific group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Where comparative fit is concerned with category structure (i.e., where category boundaries are and where individuals fall within those boundaries), normative fit is concerned with category content (Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991).

Normative fit refers to the content of cognitive categories we use to understand group identifications and how well these categories reflect the features of category members and stereotypes surrounding those members (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). If an individual can only be labeled using normative fit, they fit into what is deemed normal or prototypical attributes of that category. In other words, an individual's normative fit to his or her group categorization examines how well they echo the stereotypes surrounding their group. Multiethnic families do not necessarily have a normative fit into their separate ethnic ingroups compared to that of a monoethnic family (Butler-Sweet, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial for multiethnic families to form their unique self and group categorizations to help conceptualize their unique social identities.

For multiethnic couples, ethnicity is a more significant part of their categorization than monoethnic couples because multiethnic individuals do not fit into one particular group (Diggs, 1999). While SIT overviews intergroup relations, SCT provides us with the

answer of when ethnicity becomes salient. If a person shifts from understanding the self as a unique, independent entity to an interchangeable member of a salient ingroup, then the person would depersonalize his or her own self-perception in order to create a sense of self through their group categorizations (Davies, Steele, & Markus, 2008; Turner, 1999). Multiethnic couples' families and friends may find categorization individuals in multiethnic families difficult, since multiethnic families may not adhere to specific normative or prototypical categories. Individuals in multiethnic relationships are both members of the same ingroup (a multiethnic couple) as well as members of separate outgroups (i.e., different ethnic backgrounds). In order to make the distinction between outgroups seem smaller, individuals in multiethnic couples may try to frame their perception of their partner as different from other outgroup members to make their fit as a couple seem more similar (Oakes et al., 1994). It is not only essential to analyze the perceptions of how partners in multiethnic families feel their friends and family members categorize them but also whether or not members of multiethnic families think they have to act in different ways depending on if they are spending time with their partners' families compared to their interactions with their nuclear family.

2.6    Chapter Summary and Research Questions

This chapter overviewed the major interpersonal and intergroup communication theories from which this dissertation stems. This study dives into the communication practices of multiethnic families and the benefits and challenges these unique family systems experience. Using communication accommodation theory, I can understand both partners' perspectives on how their current family either accommodates or chooses not to accommodate to the experiences they had growing up in their nuclear families. Keeping

the three main components of social identity theory in mind (e.g., social categorization, social identification, and social comparison), I asked participants how they conceptualize their family system, and how they perceive other individuals that conceptualize their family. Multiethnic families together co-create social identity for their multiethnic child(ren). Finally, self-categorization theory helps guide discussion with participants surrounding their personal and social identity as members of a multiethnic family. Within this dissertation, I utilized dyadic interviews to grasp a full picture of the interpersonal and intergroup communication interactions that take place throughout parents' conversations within their multiethnic family systems. My four research questions are as follows:

> **RQ1: a) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners react to accommodative behaviors?**
>
> **b) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners react to nonaccommodative behaviors?**
>
> **RQ2: a) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents discuss their ethnic categorization as a couple? b) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents discuss their ethnic categorization as a family, as well as their children's ethnic categorization?**
>
> **RQ3: What do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners' friends and families communicate with them surrounding their definition of family?**
>
> **RQ4: What unique challenges do individuals in a multiethnic family express?**

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

Chapter three consists of an overview of the methods guiding this dissertation.

First, details encompassing my recruitment strategies and inherent characteristics of

participants are presented. Second, the procedures utilized throughout this study are

explained. Third, details about data collection procedures (including the participant

demographics questionnaire and narrative interview protocol) are described. Finally, I

explain how I analyzed the data utilizing narrative analysis to pull the emergent themes

found in chapter four.

3.1    Participants

Participants in this dissertation stem from dyads composed of two parents of

different ethnicities with at least one multiethnic biological child. Since  have a

biologically multiethnic child, multiethnic parents who have adopted a child did not

qualify for the present study. Following approval from the institutional review board, I

utilized purposive sampling to recruit participant dyads where one partner was Hispanic,

and one partner was Caucasian. I posted online notices on my personal social media

pages (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and national social media pages of interracial

couples support group organizations (e.g., The Hispanic League Website, Interracial

Couples & MixedRace Happy Families Worldwide Facebook, Beautiful Interracial

Relationships Facebook, and the Institute of Family Diversity and Communication

Facebook). I also contacted individuals in multiethnic relationships, social workers, and

community members using email messages, phone calls, and face-to-face conversations

to spread word about the study and ask if they would solicit potential participants. When

participants contacted me, I informed them of purpose of my research (i.e., to learn about how parents in multiethnic relationships discuss social identity and family identity with their children) as well as the activities involved in participation (i.e., engaging in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview that were expected to last approximately 60 minutes).

The final sample (N = 22 individuals) was composed of 11 multiethnic parent dyads. I collected data face-to-face in North Carolina for 19 of my 22 participants. One couple lived in New Hampshire, so I conducted a their interviews via FaceTime interview with them instead of face-to-face. Another one of my participants currently lives in Mexico City, Mexico, so I conducted his interview via FaceTime as well. I chose to conduct the three interviews with FaceTime instead of over the phone because I was hoping to be able to read nonverbal responses and to receive as close to a face-to-face interview as possible despite the distance. The parents' average age was 38.64 years old (SD = 9.38, range = 22 – 57) while their children's average age was 11.5 years old (SD = 9.6, range = 1 – 32). The parents had anon average of 2.45 children (SD = 1.07, range = 1 – 4). Participants identified as Caucasian (n = 11) or Hispanic (n = 11). Specific Hispanic nationalities included Mexican (n = 3), Salvadorian (n = 3), Venezuelan (n = 2), Colombian (n = 1), Cuban (n = 1), and Puerto Rican (n = 1). The participants had a total of twenty children. Their children's ethnic identification was Hispanic/Caucasian (N = 20). The children's gender was reported as male (n = 14) and female (n = 6). Participants' relationship status was also assessed. Dyadic partners identified as dating (n = 2), married (n = 18), or separated/divorced (n = 2). Participants' religious affiliations included none/other (n = 8), non-denomination Christian/Protestant (n = 7), and Catholic (n = 7). Participants' education level varied as follows: some high school (n = 1), high

school diploma (n = 5), some college (n = 6), Associate's degree (n = 2), Bachelor's

degree (n = 5), and Master's degree (n = 3).


3.2    Procedure

I asked participants to choose a date and time that was most convenient for them,

and I asked that they select a relatively private location (e.g., my campus office) where

they felt comfortable having the interview. Before beginning any interview, each

participant was given a comprehensive description of the project and taken through the

informed consent process. The informed consent process was acquired using a document

providing participants with a description of the study, the benefits and risks of

participants, and a clear explanation of the voluntary and confidential nature of

participation. Participants were once again reminded of the purpose of my research, what

types of questions we would discuss, and that their interview would be audio-recorded.

Participation in the study consisted of three tasks. First, participants individually

completed a short questionnaire that was used to collect demographic and survey

information (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire did not contain any directly-identifying

information. However, in order to keep in line with the dyadic nature of the study, I did

have to link each participant's responses to his or her partner's reactions. For this reason,

I created a list containing documentation of individuals' names and their corresponding

identification number (e.g., 01A, 01B, 02A, 02B). This list was recorded to link the

partners and kept in a secure location. Questionnaires and the notes I took during the

interview process were marked with the participant's identification number, and were

assigned a pseudonym that I would be able to use to keep each couple connected while

reporting the findings of the study (i.e., "Agustin" and "Amber" both were given

pseudonym's that began with the letter "A" so readers would know they were a couple. Their son was given the pseudonym of "Aiden" so that readers would be able to know which child went with which parent dyad).

Second, in an attempt to thoroughly engage with these multiethnic parents' unique familial experiences, I encouraged participants to share their responses through the open-ended process of narrative elicitation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This allowed for dynamic and rich data I was able to pull apart during the analysis process. Each partner engaged in a private one-on-one, in-depth, face-to-face (or FaceTime) interview that followed an open-ended narrative interview protocol (see Appendix 2). These interviews lasted an average of 39 minutes each (ranging from 13 to 89 minutes), and were audio recorded with the participant's permission for verbatim transcription.

In this study, interviewing each participant separately allowed participants to discuss information they may have deemed as sensitive without having their partner influence what they had to say (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). Since both partners were interviewed individually, I was able to discover where their stories complemented, opposed, or expanded their partner's narrative responses. Although having isolated interviews permitted each partner to tell the story of his or her familial experiences from their perspective, transcripts for each dyad were examined together to reveal a dyadic view providing insight into where individual narratives may overlap or contradict (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). This practice strengthens the reliability of the data because the multiple sources of information could be considered a form a data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While one partner was interviewed, the partner not currently being interviewed was asked to not be present. This was harder to guarantee with the two

participants I had to interview via FaceTime in New Hampshire, but they assured me that the other was out of the room during the interview process, and I could not see them on the phone screen. Participants were asked if they were aware of other dyads that might be interested in participating in this study to promote snowball sampling. In either case, I provided participants with my contact information and printed descriptions of the study that they could pass along to potentially interested dyads.

3.3    Measures and Instruments

There are a variety of ways an individual could examine how multiethnic couples communicate their collective identity. Since narrative interviews often depend on the development of close, long-term relationships with participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), I wanted to showcase narrative competence (i.e., skill at eliciting narrative data effectively) throughout the interviewing process. According to Plummer (1995), my narrative interviews needed to fall within a balance of providing structure to the participant's narrative and providing open-endedness to elicit rich narrative data. Not using subtle nudges or follow-up questions would have resulted in an elicited narrative that offers little to no insight into the broader scope of my investigation. As a narrative interviewer, I was prepared to give a large amount of control over to the interviewee to provide opportunities for the storyteller to share comprehensive accounts of his or her experience. Riessman (2008) explains that it is a narrative interviewer's job to make sure he or she is collecting the participants' detailed accounts of events instead of providing brief answers or general statements.

Furthermore, prompting rich and detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences was the first step in me establishing a trusting relationship between myself

and the participants (Butler-Kisber, 2010). It was imperative that the respondents felt comfortable throughout the interview process. Therefore, I encouraged the respondents to select a setting they found agreeable. I also worked to utilize my empathetic listening skills as well as establish a sense of rapport; attempting to not only get participants excited about my research but also to establish that I was a credible investigator (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Interpretive methods were selected to originate gain insight into multiethnic couples' social experience of raising their multiethnic child(ren) through the participants' own words. Data were collected through one-on-one, face-to-face narrative interviews, which allowed me to gain important details and clarify participant responses. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix 2), which helped provide a comprehensive view of both parents' interpersonal and family communication processes. As such, the protocol stemmed from interpersonal and intergroup communication concepts that emerged in the existing psychosocial literature on identify formation (i.e., social identity, social comparison, convergence, divergence).

Participants were first asked to complete a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix 1). I collected information about both dyadic participants' gender, current age, highest level of education completed, religious affiliation, relational status with their dyadic partners, number of children, ethnicity, and current status of their individual relationship (i.e., single, dating, married, divorced). Participants were also asked to disclose information about their children (i.e., their children's ethnic composition, as well as children's assumed gender). During the narrative interview, participants were then asked to recall their experiences being in multiethnic relationships in general, before and

after the birth of their first child together. The interview questions were designed to prompt precise examples from participants (e.g., "Can you tell me about a time when…") about their attempts to navigate their social relationships and engage in communication surrounding family identity formation and social identity formation for their multiethnic children. Specific topics covered with the interviewer included participants' stories of how they interacted with their family of origin, as well as their partner's family of origin, how they attempted to (co)construct social identity with their children, how they interacted and communicated with each other and outside parties surrounding topics of race and various cultural differences, as well as making sense of discrimination and the ultimate "What are you?" question often posed towards their children. I also asked follow-up questions while still allowing participants to generate their narratives (Riessman, 2008).

3.4    Data Analysis

During this study, I used a narrative analysis approach when evaluating my data. Personal narrative data allows participants to divulge unique, individual stories and allows the opportunity for me as a researcher to see how individual perspectives come together to form one overarching story. Narrative analyses have two predominant purposes: a means to capture full picture stories and the ability to understand how people analyze who they are through their everyday interactions. An advantage of narrative analysis is the researcher having the opportunity to begin to understand how a participant's narrative fits together with other anecdotes and stories as a whole. According to Plummer (1995) the contingencies that shape story making are: the who, what, where, when, why, and how of narratives. Plummer (1995) argues that narratives can be

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answered on four inter-connected levels: socio-historical (i.e., how the narratives are situated in relation to broader historical factors and patterns in that society), cultural (i.e., what cultural frames and dominant assumptions shape how narratives are constructed and told), contextual (i.e., to what audience and in what sort of encounter is the narrative being related), and personal (i.e., what are the specific motivations, experiences, and reflections that shape the stories being told).

I first analyzed the narrative interview texts by overviewing the talk from digital audio recordings onto the page by transcribing the interviews word-for-word, including any communication fillers (e.g., coughs, laughs, long pauses). The goal of utilizing word-for-word transcription was to provide an accurate representation of what the participants addressed during their interviews by transforming their spoken word into narrative text (Riessman, 2008). According to Gubrium and Holstein (2008), the downside of this process is one may lose an essential portion of the narrative's social dynamics (e.g., visual qualities, nonverbal assessments, speech cadence). However, throughout the transcription process, I did my best to replicate laughter, pauses and increased pace. To ensure analytical control over the data, I transcribed all 22 interviews individually and listened to each audio recording again after transcription was complete to account for subtle vocal interpretive insights and nonverbal context cues that I recalled from facilitating the interview.

Taking a note from Saldaña (2009), I also kept detailed memos after each interview to chart immediate, interpretive insights and tag nonverbal context cues that occurred during the interview process. I also kept notes on how I related to the participants and the phenomenon, including factors influencing early interpretations of

the data, as I explored links between emergent themes and a priori concepts (Saldaña, 2009). Markham (2009) notes how important this process of reflexivity is to qualitative data analysis since it allows researchers to describe their perspectives, better understand the populations they are studying, and develop interpretations to the data that are more sensitive to develop a more in-depth analysis.

In this study, I utilized thematic narrative analysis (Williams, 1984), which is often used when researchers want to emphasize the stories that are told (i.e., what the narrator reported in regard to main events and turning points in their experiences, rather than how the story was told). In other words, the focus should be placed on interpreting the meaning that participants attribute to their experience. Saldaña (2009) explains that narrative analysis is uniquely appropriate in exploring interpersonal skills allowing for a better understanding of the human condition through story. Therefore, my role as the investigator in the narrative's co-construction remained largely unaffected in the development of thematic categories. I did not want my influence to alter or change their willingness to share their experiences.

However, it is of the utmost importance that I recognize the boundaries of what makes up a narrative unit, mainly because, according to Riessman (2008), an investigator does not always know what comprises a narrative unit until he or she begins reading over the text several times. Since each interview brought up unique stories based on my open-ended questions, I decided to focus on the personal stories established within each interview instead of looking at the interview as a whole to be its own narrative unit. Following the procedure dictated within Bulter-Kisber (2010), I did take time to compare the responses from each participant and their partner. I made notes when their individual

stories coincided and when participants shared information that diverged from their partner's story line. Utilizing dyadic data allowed me to compare and contrast participants' responses to my interview questions and build unique narratives across each partner's dyad.

Participants' demographic information was collected to provide context behind the participants' narratives and help me draw further inferences throughout the analysis process. Using the age of not only my participants but also their children, I was better able to grasp what conversations might understand why conversations about ethnicity may or may not have occurred (e.g., depending on the child's level of cognitive ability), as well as the couple's romantic status (e.g., dating, engaged, married, or divorced). I was also attentive to taking into consideration how many children the participants had, as well as if they had children from previous marriages that may not have fit the requirements for the study (i.e., were not multiethnic Hispanic-Caucasian).

As discussed in the literature review, I used Williams (1984)'s a prior method and generated new categories of this study based on those a priori concepts. These categories emerged from utilizing communication accommodation theory (Giles, 1973), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987) as lenses to understanding communication within multiethnic family systems. In total, five thematic categories emerged from this study. The thematic findings are discussed in detail within chapter four.

Eisikovits and Koren (2010) argue that the dynamics within the relationships of romantic partners are well suited to being studied through dyadic analysis. I was excited to be able to examine not just "one side" of my participants' stories. Having the ability to

look at both partners' experiences separately allows researchers the opportunity to learn about the relationship or a series of events from various angles. While I enjoyed having the ability to see a clearer picture of both parents' experiences, it was a little overwhelming to determine the best way to tackle the interpretation process. I constructed my codebook utilizing major tenets from communication accommodation theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory to see what stood out in the individual interviews, as well as when I compared the interview of each member of the dyad (see Appendix 3).

First, I read through each interview in its entirety to grasp the full narrative presented by each participant. Then, I started highlighting text that corresponded with the codebook developed to located information from each of the significant research questions in my dissertation. As I went through each interview, I made notes about the fidelity and coherence of each participant's stories to determine whether or not their stories stayed consistent throughout the interview process. I also annotated whether or not there were discrepancies or consistency with the story shared from each dyad, looking for thematic contrasts or thematic overlaps in the account each participant shared. Additionally, I highlighted high frequency words and phrases. After generating a list of themes that emerged and listing how each of the conversations occurred as a couple and as a family, my colleague provided an external assessment of the validity of categories worth further analysis. After receiving her help, I read through each interview again in its entirety to see if new themes emerged after taking her thoughts and the demographic information of participants into consideration.  Ultimately, the codebook showcased five overarching themes that emerged from the four research questions (see Appendix 3). For

(non)accommodation, I analyzed reactions to objective acts of accommodation (i.e., where participants were directly converging to meet their partner's nuclear family's needs), as well as acts of objective nonaccommodation (e.g., instances in which participants described utilizing either maintenance or underaccommodative behaviors). In theme two I overviewed instances in which couple's chose whether or not to discuss ethnic categorization as a couple or as a family. Theme three showcases *what* Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems choose to discuss. Within theme four I analyzed both neutral and negative questions and comments made by participant's friends and family members and looked at how these comments may have affected their family identification. Lastly, theme five describes unique challenges Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners endure. Findings are described fully in the subsequent chapter.

3.5    Reflexivity and Positionality Statement

According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), reflexivity in qualitative research is imperative to fully understand the context of knowledge construction, especially the affect of the researcher throughout every step of the research process. Therefore, in keeping with the interpretive tradition, I utilized reflexivity throughout my dissertation process from the beginning of data collection to its finalization.  After conducting the first few interviews, I made a point to review the notes and memos scribed during the interview process to ensure each participant was addressing the research questions. Since reflexivity is the process of examining not only oneself as a researcher but also the research relationship, I also made a point to reflect on my link to each respondent and how any rapport built may have affected the dynamics between me and the participants and their responses to the interview questions that they were presented (Hsiung, 2010).

It would be a disservice not to acknowledge my own connection to my participants. The topic of social identity in multiethnic family systems is crucial to me because I am a Caucasian woman married to a Hispanic man. The Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic familial dyad is one with which I have personal experience, so it was significant throughout the interview process that I did not let my participants know I had this background to not interfere with any information they felt comfortable sharing with me. I went into this study with the knowledge of personal challenges my husband and I have experienced based on our own negative experiences (e.g., confrontations with family members stemming from our cultural differences and our plight with the current immigration system in the United States). Even though we do not have any children, I was aware that similar challenges might exist for my participants. I did not ask participants any direct questions about immigration, but it was mentioned on more than one occasion as a challenge they face.

Based upon an understanding of Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families concerns from the broader intergroup communication and sociology literature, an *a priori* use of Giles' (1973) communication accommodation theory, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, and Turner's (1985) self-categorization theory were used to gather initial interpretation of the most salient themes that emerged from the data. After my first round of analysis, I quickly realized that emergent codes were not fitting as easily into the regimented themes on which I had initially wanted to focus on (i.e., sectioning off each research question to describe what (non)accommodation occurred, what parents talked about concerning social identity, and outside influence on identity formation). As a result, I discovered that each research question and each thematic analysis was more complex

and much broader than I originally anticipated. Broadening each theme and what I was

pulling out of each interview helped reflect a more unique process of accommodation,

identification, and categorization within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems

than I originally anticipated.

CHAPTER 4.  FINDINGS

Throughout this dissertation, I examined communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems via dyadic narrative interviews of parents in Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families. Utilizing communication accommodation theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory as a guide, five themes emerged during narrative analysis. Mirroring my four research questions, each theme represents a unique facet of the intersection of intergroup and interpersonal communication theories within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. The first theme stems from research question one, outlining how multiethnic partners react to their partner's patterns of (non)accommodation. While there was minimal difference in how multiethnic partners discussed their ethnic categorization as a couple compared to discussions of ethnic categorization as a whole family unit, themes two and three describe whether or not families choose to discuss ethnic categorization and what families talk about respectively. Theme 4 provides answers to research question three by overviewing topics Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners' friends and families bring up surrounding their family's identity and their definition of family. Finally, the fifth theme answers research question four by describing unique challenges multiethnic partners experience compared to individuals in monoethnic relationships. The five emergent thematic findings are described below.

4.1    Theme One: Reactions to (Non)Accommodation toward Nuclear Families

The first theme to emerge from the narratives the participants shared overviews the reaction of Hispanic-Caucasian partners in multiethnic families towards acts of

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accommodation (i.e., converging to their nuclear family's expectations) and nonaccommodation (i.e., diverging from their nuclear family's expectations). Stemming from research question one, the first theme provides insight to both positive and negative reactions to accommodative and nonaccommodative behaviors. Participants described various experiences in which they accommodated to fit their partner's nuclear family or times in which they displayed nonaccommodative behaviors. For the most part, the findings from this dissertation support previous quantitative research (see Soliz et al., 2009). Giles et al. (1991) posit the act of accommodation reduces social barriers and the relational distance between outgroup members. Nonaccommodative behaviors typically elicit a feeling of divergence (Giles et al., 2010). Within theme one, there were three distinct subthemes that surfaced. These subthemes include positive reactions to accommodation, negative reactions to nonaccommodation, and positive reactions to nonaccommodation. The majority of participants reported positive reactions to their partners' accommodative behaviors and negative reactions to their nonaccommodative behaviors. It should be noted, these acts of accommodation or nonaccommodation were labeled as objective acts (i.e., accommodation can be subjective and up to individual interpretation, but throughout analysis acts of accommodation and nonaccommodation were distinguished based on objective acts). Extending previous multiethnic family communication research, this dissertation also found that some participants experienced a positive reaction to their partner's nonaccommodative behaviors. The three subthemes are further described below.

4.1.1 "She's been really helpful; she's been trying to learn my culture": Positive Reactions to Accommodation

Consistent with previous research on communication accommodation, seven participants (made up of four of the eleven couple dyads) reacted positively when they felt like their partners were accommodating to their nuclear families' behavior or felt like their partners were trying to accommodate their behavior to reflect their nuclear families expectations. Participants expressed positive reactions frequent cultural accommodation as well as when they tried to understand what their families valued.

Amber (a 26-year-old Caucasian female) expressed how exciting it has been for her to "learn about an entirely new religion, culture, language, [and country]":

> At this point – I am an advocate for Humanitarian aid and assistance in his country – not even mine [laughs]. Umm […] I'm on the board of directors for a local non-profit that's specifically geared towards Venezuelans helping them in Venezuela and in this area. I speak Spanish now – which I didn't when I met him. I would say that I have changed a lot since meeting him. I think I've kind of merged it into one multicultural experience and I'd give that experience to anyone I meet now.

Amber and her husband, Agustin (a 35-year-old Venezuelan male), have been together for over seven years, and they both expressed appreciation for the fact that the other showcases a desire to adhere to the culture and family lifestyle in which they were raised. Amber feels that changing her behavior to fit into Agustin's culture is a vital part of their relational satisfaction. Agustin explains how grateful he is that Amber was so willing to not only embrace his culture and where he comes from but also help him learn English. He feels like they have both changed for the better in order to be more inclusive and more accommodative to each other's needs and expectations. He expresses his appreciation for Amber:

She's been really helpful; she's been trying to learn my culture. I immigrated. I've been here for 12 years, but even though I'm Hispanic, I've been here for so long that I feel more American than her. I feel like she's more Hispanic than me [laughs]. Except for the food […] I'm always craving the Hispanic food. Sometimes she's usually craving a burger, but yeah […] for the most part we've changed a lot to make the other person happy, but we're happy too.

Ralph (a 40-year-old Caucasian male) discussed that his wife Rosalina (a 39-year old Mexican female) seems to appreciate him "trying to do things and celebrate things that [he] wouldn't normally celebrate to make [her family] happy […] Like quinceañeras and things like that." Additionally, Tina (a 45-year-old Caucasian female) brings up the importance of learning Spanish in order to connect with her husband, Tirzo (a 42-year-old Puerto Rican male). Tina says she "wanted to be in touch with things that made him Puerto Rican – so [she's] tried learning a little Spanish." Tirzo explains that he "knew that she loved [him] when she was willing to try and learn Spanish. I know she did that for me and it makes me love her even more."

Apart from embracing their partner's culture, a few participants expressed how not only their partners but also their partners' families appreciated them trying to accommodate to their nuclear families' expectations. Rosalina admits that her family is "pretty loud" compared to Ralph's, and even though she and Ralph have been together for almost 20 years, she does her best to "try to be more reserved or more respectful […] I try to keep it down and I try not to yell as much" when she's around his family. She believes that this interaction has made her mother-in-law "love her more." Max (a 34-year-old Caucasian male) and his wife, Maria (a 34-year-old Cuban female) have been together for 15 years. Max talked about the fact that while it's easier to be himself around his family "with her family I tend to tone it down":

I don't want them to think I'm not sane in the head but honestly, I mean – her dad – I mean we grew up with a different dynamic, so I get it. I try to be respectful of her family's dynamic, and they seem to appreciate it.

While the above participants discussed times when accommodation occurred, the majority of couples described times when they purposefully did not change to meet their partner's families' expectations. While acts of accommodation echoed previous literature surrounding communication accommodation theory (see Soliz et al., 2009; Soliz & Bergquist, 2016; Soliz & Giles, 2014), acts of nonaccommodation resulted in both positive and negative reactions.

4.1.2 "I think she got more upset with me because I didn't care": Negative Reactions to Nonaccommodation

Ten of the twenty-two participants (made up of six of the eleven couple dyads) reported instances where their partner's acts of nonaccomodation caused them or their family members to have negative reactions. Amber and Agustin experienced tension in their relationship with their respective mothers-in-law due to nonaccommodation. Amber did not even realize that her mother-in-law was upset with her behavior until Agustin pointed it out to her. She was not aware of the fact that it is typical in Venezuelan culture to "kiss each other on either side of the cheek" and not adhering to this common custom upset her mother-in-law from the beginning of their relationship:

One of the first couple times I was near his mom I couldn't communicate with her at that point – I didn't speak Spanish then – and so it's all via translator (via his sister or him) and then when leave I was like "okay – bye – it was nice meeting you." And I just walked to the car. Not knowing that that's offensive. And so, then she's almost like instantly offended by me one of the first couple times I meet her.

While not knowing her mother-in-law's native language was an issue, the more substantial reason her mother-in-law was upset was that Amber did not take the time to

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learn about her mother-in-law's customs before meeting her. Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Wiemann (1988) caution that underaccommodation is a type of nonaccommodation that occurs when a communication behavior does not meet the level of implementation desired for successful interaction. By not researching Venezuelan culture before meeting her mother-in-law, Amber was engaging in the nonaccommodative behavior of underaccommodation. Agustin had similar issues meeting the expectations of Amber's mother – except he spent his time trying to help his mother-in-law understand his culture. For example, instead of trying to change himself, he decided he was not going to change based on who Amber's mother "thought he should be" and even cautioned Amber not to share information with her mom that he felt her mother would use against them.

He describes how that situation "brought a gap between Amber and her mom. She didn't trust her Mama anymore. And I told her – I don't think you can share information with your mom because she might be using it for some other things". He also expressed to Amber his need to have a break from his time with her mother. He said to Amber, "I cannot see your mom for a little bit. Especially if she's thinking I'm that bad. I don't want to be like having dinner with her." Even though it was hard feeling that his mother-in-law did not accept him, Agustin ended up just telling his mother-in-law that "I don't pretend to be your favorite. If you like me, cool. If you don't, it doesn't matter because Amber likes me." Emphasizing the fact that Amber's opinion mattered more to him than hers, Agustin brought a little tension on his interpersonal relationship with his mother-in-law, but as he put it, "I started a relationship with your daughter because I really like her. If you don't like me I don't really care."

Ethan (a 35-year old Caucasian male) and Emilia (a 41-year-old Colombian female) have been married for ten years. They were both married before, and both have older children from previous marriages. Emilia expressed similar notions to those described by Agustin, at the end of the day she wanted to make sure that Ethan's family knew she was true to herself by telling them directly, "I'm just myself. I'm not gonna be somebody else." With an expression of certainty and determination in her voice, she told me, "I realize that she [her mother-in-law] hates me and that all those people [Ethan's family] hate me because I won't be who they want me to be. I don't really even deal with them anymore."

Rosalina and Oscar experienced tension in their relationships because their partners struggled with learning Spanish and connecting with their parents because of the linguistic barrier. By Ralph and Olivia choosing not to learn Spanish when their in-laws encouraged them to do so, they are engaging in acts of nonaccommodation because they are not meeting their in-law's expectations. Rosalina says that Ralph "tries his hardest to learn" but as Ralph explains:

> I took a Spanish class and then they start saying everything in Spanish and it just doesn't work. I just can't learn it. I've tried […] Sometimes if I have a hard time understanding – our oldest son would help me. He understands a lot of Spanish so he would help me learn a word or two in Spanish to help me say it to my father-in-law. My oldest was really interested in learning Spanish so he tried really hard in school to learn it. We didn't really use it at home because I don't speak Spanish and I never really learned it.

However, even though Ralph mentioned to his in-laws that he could not seem to grasp the language, he laments that "everybody in Rosalina's family expects me to know Spanish because we've been together for so long and I've been to Mexico so many times… every time I see them they're always asking why I don't speak Spanish [laughs]." While the

language barrier has created a little tension, and Ralph is still underaccommodating in this instance Rosalina explains "it wasn't a deal breaker. My family would love for him to know Spanish, but they still love him. They just would like him a little more if he learned Spanish [laughs]."

Oscar thinks that Olivia's unwillingness to learn Spanish and adhere to the Mexican culture is one reason they ended up getting divorced. Oscar (a 57-year-old Mexican male) and Olivia (a 53-year-old Caucasian female) divorced almost 20 years ago. They have three children together (ages 24, 30, and 32) and were together for ten consecutive years from 1989 until 1999. Oscar describes their relationship as "doomed from the start" and says the language barrier was one of their most significant problems:

> She doesn't speak Spanish that good so I don't know I think she always felt a little out of place, but my family has no problems with her really. But I don't know. She wasn't ever as happy here [in Mexico] as when she was with her family or in the States. I guess it wasn't good. She never really tried to fit in here. She never wanted to fit in here though. She could've if she wanted.

Olivia echoes Oscar's sentiment but explains that cultural differences may have had more to do with the end of their relationship instead of just language barriers. Either way, Oscar made it very clear that he expected Olivia to try to learn Spanish. Olivia admits this act of underaccommodation by confessing:

> I didn't make an effort to learn the language or to I don't know [pause] try to be a part of his culture. It might've had a lot to do with what led to the divorce. I don't know though.

While Oscar, Olivia, Rosalina, and Ralph had tension created from Olivia and Ralph not understanding Spanish, Tina used her knowledge of Spanish against Tirzo's family. She never wanted them to know she spoke Spanish so she deliberately chose not to accommodate to their family expectations:

Tirzo's parents will only speak Spanish when we go over to their house but they like refuse to speak any English with me even though I know they can speak some English […] I speak a little Spanish and I don't tell them what little I know because quite frankly they can be mean and I don't want to talk to them so I don't. Why should they know I speak Spanish? It's not my fault they assume I don't.

Tirzo acknowledges that these acts of deliberate nonaccommodation from not only Tina but also his parents have really "made life hard":

I love Tina more than anything. It's hard because I know my parents want her to learn Spanish and she won't tell them about the Spanish she speaks because she knows when they are speaking Spanish it's usually because they don't want her to know what they're talking about. It's just hard. I don't really know how to make it better because they both have good reasons for keeping things to themselves. [long pause] They can't seem to agree on anything really. I just wish Tina and my parents would both try to be better towards each other. They just don't seem to care.

Even though the majority of these instances of nonaccommodation created tension, Daniella (a 37-year-old Salvadoran female) loves the fact that her boyfriend David (a 34-year-old Caucasian male) refuses to change based on whom her parents think he should be. They have been dating for seven years, and Daniella could not say enough nice things about David. She describes him as "completely different from my culture. He's very nice and neutral as far as gender. He's not one way or the other as far as thinking one is better than the other. He's just in the middle. He's perfect." Even though she loves that this is David's personality, she goes on to talk about how her family sometimes uses his personality traits against him:

My dad sometimes uses it against him saying things like "What is wrong with you? The man is supposed to do that and be better." But I think that they've accepted it – they're fine…but I think sometimes they question it. My mom, I think especially more questions like certain things that men should do like change the oil or something – those little small things and she's like "Why can't he do that?" and like because he didn't grow up that way – it's different. Gender roles are hard for them to understand but I hope that eventually, they will just love David for David like I do.

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The intersection of gender stereotypes and role expectations can create different norms based on culture and the intersection of one's upbringing and worldview (Marecek, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). David not meeting Daniella's father's expectations is still an act of nonaccommodation because even though David and Daniella's father are from different cultural backgrounds, David is still psychologically divergent from Daniella's father's expectations. Since David knows this underaccommodation is occurring, Gasiorek (2016) would classify this behavior as nonaccommodative in nature.

Whether intentional or accidental, these acts of nonaccommodation have created tension in six of the eleven dyads interviewed. While the majority of participants felt acts of nonaccommodation created tension either amongst themselves as a couple, or amongst their partner's families, some participants felt they never experienced negativity related to their nonaccommodation. Before interviewing my participants, I thought nonaccommodation would only result in creating tension between and within family systems, but six participants (representing four of the eleven couple dyads) described instances when their partners' nonaccommodation created positive outcomes.

### 4.1.3 "It was okay that she didn't want to learn": Positive Reactions to Nonaccommodation

Even though Emilia and Ethan have not made any large effort to change who they are to fit either of their nuclear families' cultural expectations, Emilia explains that her mother actually likes Ethan more because he "seemed like he has his life together" and "he's a good, all-American white boy":

> My mother is kind of prejudice – I mean, I don't want to say racist, but she never liked for me to be with Hispanics even though I'm Hispanic. Hated me being with the black guys […] I mean that's just her perception so when I started dating Ethan I mean she just kind of treated Ethan like he was a God.

Ethan echoes Emilia's sentiment that it is okay for them to "be who they are" and describes how he loves to be with her family even if he does not always know what is going on:

> With Emilia's family, it's fun to be around them even though they speak Spanish the whole time. Like – I don't have a clue what's going on and I don't know […] We're always like cooking or fixing something to eat. It takes a long time […] like it takes all day, but I think it's fun. Like they have their moments where there's drama, but I guess that's what makes everything even much more fun […] I never have to be anyone but myself around them.

Ironically, even though Max described how he feels like he does change around his in-laws, his wife, Maria, does not think he accommodates or changes for anybody. That is one of the things she "loves most about him":

> Max is one that never changes himself for anybody. He's very – you get exactly what you're going to get. It doesn't matter who you are – stranger walking down the street or someone he's known for 20 years. He's never going to fluff himself up to make you feel better at all – and he'll give you all of him exactly how he is. I've never met someone so true to himself. It's wonderful.

While Max feels like he acts differently around Maria's family, he does not believe it is necessary for her to feel like she has to change who she is around him. He believes Maria fits in and acts the same around her family and his family:

> Her family she fits in with no problem and my family she loves them. We just stopped by to see my mom in Miami and she brought out the old photo album and they were getting in it together and she fits in so well with my family. Anyone would love her though. She doesn't have to change or act different around anyone. She fits in with anyone and everyone. She's just one of those people.

Aside from deliberate nonaccommodation or a refusal to change or try to fit into their partners' nuclear family system, Ben (a 54-year-old Caucasian male) and Juan (a 49-year old Salvadoran male) described situations where it not only did not matter that nonaccommodation occurred but also that accommodation itself was not necessary. Ben has been married to Bibiana (a 43-year-old Venezuelan female) for ten years and wants to

make sure it is understood that the importance of family reigns supreme to familial

expectations. He never felt like he had to change any part of himself:

> Hispanics – if you've done these interviews before – you know…the families tend to be very tightknit. They always accepted me even when we were just dating as if I'd been around for twenty years. I never felt like I had to do anything to make them love me. They just accepted me as I was because she loves me.

Similarly, Juan never felt like his wife, Jessica (a 47-year-old Caucasian female) needed

to learn Spanish or try to be anyone other than herself. He recalls that Jessica "always

said that she was American and I was in America so why would she need Spanish. It

never mattered to me though. It was okay she didn't want to learn."

Expanding previous studies utilizing CAT as a framework to examine

relationships, this dissertation provides further insight into the idea that acts that may be

objectively nonaccommodative may be subjectively accommodative. These subjective

accommodations may yield positive reactions within multiethnic families. Furthermore,

these results showcase positive reactions to the nonaccommodative act of maintenance

(i.e., deciding not to manipulate behavior to match outgroup norms). Emilia and Ethan

explained that not accommodating to either of their families' wishes allowed them to stay

true to themselves and create a unique identity as a multiethnic family. Not only did

participants mention their positive reactions to their partners acts of nonaccommodation

but they also shared stories highlighting their nuclear family members reacting positively

to these acts of objective nonaccommodation as well. The second and third emergent

themes discuss Hispanic-Caucasian parents' communication surrounding the ethnic

categorization of their children and family as a whole.

4.2   Theme Two: Hispanic-Caucasian Parents' Choice to Discuss Ethnic Categorization
as a Family

Research question two asked how Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents

discussed their ethnic categorization as a couple, as well as their children's ethnic

categorization as a family. Ultimately, there were not large discrepancies as to how

Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners discussed their ethnic identification as a couple

compared to how they discussed their child(ren)'s ethnic identification as a family.

However, research question two did elicit two unique themes: if they chose to discuss

ethnic identification at all, and if they did, what were the topics of their discussions.

Instead of there being significant differences between how Hispanic-Caucasian

multiethnic parents discussed their ethnic categorization as a couple and how they

discussed it as a family, the first emergent theme stemming from SIT answered the

question of if they chose to discuss ethnic categorization at all. One of the most

considerable differences for participants was whether they had discussed ethnic

categorization as a family. All participants had discussed ethnic categorization as a

couple, even if briefly, but talking about ethnic categorization as a family seemed to

unleash a new perspective and dynamic some had not yet discussed.

Even though all couples had discussed race or ethnicity, only five of the eleven

dyads had discussed their ethnic categorization as a family (i.e., with their child or

children). Theme two showcases Hispanic-Caucasian partners' decision whether or not to

explicitly discuss ethnic categorization with their children. If participants were one of the

five couples that had never discussed ethnic categorization as a family, they claimed to

either be waiting for their child to initiate the conversation with them or that they planned

on speaking with their child when their child was older (e.g., ages ranged between 4 and 10).

### 4.2.1 "I don't recall us ever talking about race": Have Never Discussed Ethnic Categorization

In line with previous research utilizing SIT to examine multiethnic relationships (see Kenney & Kenney, 2013; Killian, 2013), partners may have found it easier to discuss their ethnic identification individually instead of as a family because they did not want to engage their children in conversations surrounding ethnicity. For this reason, it was unsurprising eight of the twenty-two participants (representing five of the eleven couple dyads) had never discussed ethnic categorization as a family. Bringing up discussion of race or ethnicity with their kids seemed to create a tension they did not want to acknowledge quite yet. Emilia joked that she and Ethan have "never really discussed race with them unless it's been a problem – which is probably a problem." Fran (a 27-year old Caucasian female) and Fernando (a 30-year-old Salvadoran male) were the one couple that had not only not discussed it with their three boys, but Fran says "We actually didn't even talk about it at all. We've never talked about it." They were the only couple who claimed they had never discussed race or ethnicity at all with each other. Interestingly, even though Fran says they have never discussed race or ethnicity as a couple, both she and Fernando elaborated on instances later on in their interviews describing ways in which they have handled negative comments surrounding race and identity with their family and friends. It seems looking back on their whole interview as a narrative script; Fran and Fernando have discussed topics surrounding race and ethnicity, even if they have not discussed race and ethnicity directly.

Jessica and Juan described similar circumstances to those of Fran and Fernando. Jessica explains that the discussion of race and ethnicity is something that "never came up. It never was anything that bothered me or that mattered to me." Even though Jessica and Juan have discussed race and ethnicity as a couple, Juan agrees with Jessica saying, "I don't recall us ever talking about race or – I don't ever recall ever talking about it with the kids. We just never talked about it. It never came up." Since Juan and Jessica's children are between the ages of 14 and 24, they do not know if the conversation is "ever going to come up" with their kids. Jessica hopes that their kids did not "experience negativity and just not talk to them" but she feels that "if they had had any issues they would've brought it up. [She doesn't] know if it's really a bad thing that they never talked to [her] about it."

Olivia and Oscar also never talked about race or ethnicity with their kids. Their *children* are now all adults, the youngest being 24-years-old and their oldest daughter is 32-years-old. Olivia does not think it was necessarily a bad thing never to bring up conversations of race or ethnicity:

> I just don't think I had a lot of race issue talks with them. Unless something came up where somebody said something around them – and they're just now telling me little stories here and there about things that would come up at school or things people would say. But I had no idea that kind of stuff was happening I mean – until recently and now they're grown telling me about it.

Even though her kids have mentioned "little stories" to her from time to time, Olivia says she has never asked her kids "further questions" and she says she does not "really think they had issues big enough to need to talk about it." Oscar acknowledges that they never discussed race or ethnicity, but they probably should have. Unlike Olivia, he believes that each of them taking the time to discuss the issue further could have saved their marriage.

According to Oscar, "We probably should have talked about it more. We might not be divorced. Nobody really talked about it back then." Even though Oscar and Olivia decided not to have discussions surrounding race and ethnicity with their children, hindsight is always clearer. Oscar believes that not discussing cultural differences surrounding race and ethnicity hurt his marriage with Olivia and the dynamic of their family as a whole.

Unlike Olivia and Oscar, Maria and Max do not believe it is something individuals in a multiethnic family necessarily have to discuss. Max says it depends on where the family lives:

> Growing up in Miami you're so exposed to so many different ethnicities and cultures that you don't even think about it. Her family is Cuban and you look at her immediate family and most of her cousins are dark Cuban, their wives are all light Hispanic so you get both that. It was never one of those things […] it was just […] they were family. I mean […] my mom and dad are white Bohemian but I mean their families were like the colonists and then all of my brothers and sisters and I and all of my aunts and uncles like we all married into different ethnicities and different races […] so my parents both being white was kind of an anomaly in our family. Being different is good. It's not something I feel like I need to address with my kids because they're exposed to so many different ethnicities when we visit Miami.

Maria agrees with Max that "it's never been a topic really […] ever." She feels a little guilty that she has never brought it up with their sons. She cannot quite figure out if she is glad they have never discussed race and ethnicity or if it is something she should have done but have not:

> I kind of felt like a bad mom because we've never really talked about it. But at the same time that's kind of great that we've never really focused on it and we've never really felt like we had to talk about it. You know […] it's never been something that even the kids have brought up. So, either we've shielded them to the point where they don't even know that there are differences […] I mean obviously you can visually tell that there are differences between people, but I don't know we've never made it aware that they see those differences […] It's something we've never talked about and I kind of have mixed feelings about this.

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I'm not sure if that's a good or a bad thing. I mean [*laughs*] have I gotten them to the point where they don't see it […] where they don't see those differences between people. I don't know.

Either way, Max and Maria both agree that they will discuss multiethnic identity as a family someday even though they have not at this point. Their oldest son, Mario, is 13-years-old, Max believes Mario may initiate these conversations "within the next year".

Of the five participant dyads who had never discussed race or ethnicity with their children, four of them plan to discuss race and ethnicity in the future. They cannot seem to agree on how they would want these conversations to take place. The two routes parents seem to debate between are whether or not they should wait for their child to initiate to conversation first or whether or not they should initiate the conversation when the child gets older.

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4.2.1.1   "Honestly, I wouldn't want to initiate it": Waiting for the child to initiate the conversation.

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Max and Maria both agree that they want to wait to talk to their boys (ages 13 and 8) until the boys initiate the conversation. Maria says that she "wouldn't want to initiate it unless something came up":

> I don't want to fully shield them. I would think that – my oldest son – he's in 8$^{th}$ grade this year and he's going to high school and he may start experiencing a little bit more because as kids grow up they become more educated so they become a little more aware of their surroundings and less about their own selfish needs and what not. But I honestly wouldn't want to initiate it.

Max agrees with Maria but believes his oldest son will likely bring up the conversation soon. He explains that it is different from the environment he and Maria had growing up in Miami because "we're not in Miami. This is North Carolina":

> There are still people here that really have issues with mixing races, ethnicities; I don't know [*chuckles*]. It's fucked up but it's true. There are times when I know my oldest identifies with Hispanic culture – but he also understands the negative

stereotypes associated with Hispanic culture up here and he understands that being ethnic is more than just clothes, shoes, being cool; being different on Instagram […] I mean I don't bring it up. I'm not going to bring it up. So, when that time comes – or when he has to deal with that kind of discrimination from a girl or from her parents we need to figure out how to approach that situation once it happens. I don't want to make him self-conscious of it and him begin to judge himself or segregate himself to a certain group or a certain ethnicity when I mean […] it's not how the world works. He's better off to learn to interact with everybody now while he's young and not have to be worried about the race and ethnicity stuff in the back of his head. Because if not it just limits yourself as you get older in life.

Fran and Fernando also do not want their kids to feel any differently by them initiating the conversations that raise awareness to the fact their children might feel like outsiders. Fernando does not want to make his children feel "insecure in who they are by making it seem like they don't fit in with other people." He provides his rationale for this behavior by saying "other parents don't tell their white kid they're white kid so why should we bring it up with ours." Fran says that she does not plan to bring it up to her three boys (ages 2, 4, and 9) herself, but "if they have questions when they're older we'll just have to handle it the best we can." Fernando agrees with his wife, explaining that "unless the kids say something to them at school – but they haven't yet. After that, we'll probably have a conversation with them, but we haven't yet cause I don't want them to feel any different before they have to."

One couple, Amber and Agustin, did not have the same answer when asked how they planned to address the issue with their one-year-old son, Aiden. Amber, like Maria, Max, Fran, and Fernando, think it is best to wait until Aiden initiates the conversation. She wants it to feel as natural as possible and expects Aiden to bring up the conversation on his own time. She recalls bringing questions about others race and ethnicity to her parents and notes that she is sure:

It will come up […] I don't think that will be a conversation I have with him unless he brings it up. I think more than that it'll be *prep* for whatever the next step is. Meaning that if we're starting daycare after he starts talking […] I really love the idea of reading a book to introduce or do something. I do have a couple books that talk about that. So maybe reading a book before daycare to talk about it as a step for preparing for school. Maybe that will encourage him to bring it up on his own. Introducing that at school you'll have friends that look like this and friends that look like this and friends that are all different. And maybe just kind of having different conversations as he grows about accepting everyone in his class.

While Amber wants the conversation to be in Aiden's hands, Agustin is planning to

initiate the conversation with Aiden himself.

### 4.2.1.2 "I do intend to speak to him when he's older": Parents plan to initiate the conversation when the child gets older.

Unlike Amber, Agustin explains, "we'll probably talk to him first":

Just because his family is already multicultural we'll probably talk to him and say you know what […] not all the families are white, not all the families are black, not all the families are Asian, there's mixtures […] like your house. I mean I'll tell him I'm Latino and your mom is from here. I'll tell him that his grandfather has some Irish, Polish, German heritage as well. There is a very big blending of cultures in this country that is going to be very complex, but maybe you don't have to understand every bit of it maybe you should just enjoy it […] I'd say when he's like between 5 and 8 years old is when he's going to start understanding more of what's going on around him.

David knows that he wants to initiate the conversation with his two-year-old son

Derek, but he says "probably when he's older. Probably before kindergarten […] like four

or five years old." Carrie (a 26-year-old Caucasian female) and Carlos (a 22-year-old

Mexican male) have been together for 7-years. Even though their son, Carson, is only a

year old, they also both believe they would like to initiate the conversation with Carson

one day. Carrie says that they "want to initiate the conversation with him":

We'll probably bring it up around five or six. Either right before he starts school or sometime around there. I mean […] he's going to see kids that are white and kids that are Hispanic and he might never think there's anything different between

anyone, but I think it's an important conversation to have. He's still too young to have those conversations now, but I think they're inevitable.

Even though Carlos agrees that they should talk to Carson about it when he gets older, he thinks it is more likely they will bring it up "around ten-years-old":

> I'm going to let him know he shouldn't have to feel like he fits in anywhere or is a part of a group just based on his culture or like identify with any group too strongly. We'll probably start having those talks around ten-years-old. It's right around […] it's before puberty and its right when kids really start to focus on certain things and start to notice different things. I guess it's when they're closer to mental or racism starts to show I guess you could say.

While five of the eleven parent dyads had not yet had conversations with their children concerning race or ethnicity, six of the dyads had discussed race and ethnicity on some level with their children.

### 4.2.2   "We're in a very open, outspoken household": Parents Have Discussed Ethnic Categorization

Of the six couples that have discussed ethnic categorization with their children, the child always initiated the original conversation. The parents might have discussed race and ethnicity with the child after the initial conversation, but each of the participants claimed that their child initiated the conversation for one of two reasons; they either brought it up because they were starting to label people or question their identity, or they brought up the conversation because someone else had asked them the *what are you* question.

#### 4.2.2.1   "He's starting to label people": Child initiates conversation.

Daniella's 11-year-old son, Dominic, started to bring up conversations surrounding ethnicity within the "past couple years". It occurred when he started to notice the differences between his friends:

He'll say […] for example for his birthday he wanted pizza. And I was like, "Okay. That's cool. We'll get you pizza." But then he came back and his best friend is Mexican American and his family is Mexican and so Dominic came home and is like, "Oh Mom, I don't want to have pizza anymore because Ian's Mexican so he'll want Mexican food." And I was like, "Well […] baby […] they probably eat Mexican food every day that doesn't mean that they want Mexican food for every time." So, you have to like get away […] or I have to have those conversations because just because you're Chinese doesn't mean you eat Chinese food all the time. And then he starts to question like where he came from or why he's different. Like he's asked, "why is your skin darker than mine?" Like he's asked things like that. I mean it's just questions like that or he's like, "My friend speaks Spanish so they're Mexican" And I'm like, "Baby […] they're not all Mexican" He has those sort of […] he's starting to label people so I'm starting to have those conversations with him because he brings them up to me.

Daniella is also expecting Dominic to start questioning his social identity amongst his group of friends, exploring his own personal background, and to wanting to know more about his culture, and ethnicity in the following years. She sees him "questioning where he falls." Olivia experienced similar questions with her children during their adolescent development. Even though she cannot recall any specific conversations she has had with her kids, she does remember that they would always say, "They don't know where they fit in. You know […] they say they're not Mexican enough for the Mexicans and not American enough for the Americans [*laughs*]. That's how they explain it now that they're adults."

Ralph and Rosalina have three kids (ages 15, 11, and 4). While they have not discussed race or ethnicity with their four-year-old son or eleven-year-old daughter yet, they have had multiple discussions surrounding ethnicity with their 15-year-old son, Ronald. Ralph recalls initial conversations surrounding race and ethnicity occurring around the time Ronald started middle school:

I mean […] he's the youngest in his class because we started him early and he was born in January […] but it started where he would start asking questions about "Where is mom is from?" And like […] he was raised in California a lot more so

he understood the Mexican culture a little more but I mean, age-wise they probably started around middle school. I'm sure our daughter will have some soon.

Rosalina says that both Ronald and his younger sister, Rowan, have asked her "how come they look different" and that she "usually respond[s] with *It would be boring if we all looked the same. It's more fun that we're all different and that's okay. You're different and that's okay. I'm different and that's okay*." Rosalina does her best to "try and encourage them to be themselves." Mostly, participants' children usually initiate conversations due to people asking, "*What are you?*" Even though Ralph has yet to discuss race or ethnicity with his daughter, he believes that "she will have some soon. She's going into 6th grade in the next school year. But even she still gets questions from her friends…like they'll see me and be like, *Is that your dad?*"

4.2.2.2 "His classmates, in preschool, were having a discussion about *what he was*": Outsiders asking the "What are you?" question.

Even though Fernando cannot exactly recall having conversations with his sons about race or ethnicity, he does admit that if they have come up, it is because "someone asks one of my kids like, *what are you* or something stupid and then they'll bring it up." Rosalina jokes that when people ask Rowan the "*what are you* question she says, 'I'm Californian' [*laughs*]:

> I don't know. I think I feel […] I hate […] I think part of it is racism and part of it is I don't know but I think that the main thing is not knowing […] ignorance. If you educate somebody on it they'll be okay.

Rosalina thinks the "*what are you* question started probably around school time […] like around 4, 5, or 6 years old" but she cannot quite remember the first time she talked to

either of her kids about it. Ralph recalls one day Rowan came home from school and

asked him:

> "Where am I from?" And I told her, "Well […] you were born in California but
> I'm from Arizona and your mom was born in California." And she said that
> somebody in her class had asked her if she was from Africa [*laughs*] and I just
> told her "Well […] no […] if somebody asks just tell them that your dad is from
> Arizona and your mom is from California and that's all they need to know.

Ralph's son, Ronald, has also been confused while trying to fill out school forms:

> He'll ask people or he'll have people ask him what he is or on those school forms
> he would ask me what he should fill out and I would tell him, "I mean […] check
> the boxes for this and this" which is normally the boxes are Hispanic and
> Caucasian […] but the issue is a lot of times the boxes with Caucasian will say
> *Non-Hispanic* and then he doesn't know what to do. It actually makes it really
> confusing.

> Tina encourages all parents to talk to their kids before they start school about race

or ethnicity. She never imagined that she would need to start having conversations with

her five-year-old son, Tommy, as early as she did:

> Last year he was in pre-school and he came home asking if he was white. And I
> was like "Why are you asking me if you're white?" And apparently his
> classmates, in preschool, were having a discussion about *what he was*. Even
> though he knows he's Puerto Rican […] he didn't put Puerto Rican in a
> distinction from being different from white versus non-white. And his classmates
> just thought he had a tan. And I told him that Puerto Ricans were darker and that
> he could look at his dad and his cousins […] so that it's not […] I was like […] I
> mean you are white but you're not. I mean you can't necessarily tell from the
> color of your skin […] but you're Puerto Rican.

Not only had participants decided whether to discuss ethnic identification with

their children but also it was fascinating to learn where these conversations progressed

once they started.  Even if couples only had conversations as a couple instead of as a

family, there was still overlap between what participants chose to discuss. Three distinct

topics emerged from what Hispanic-Caucasian parents wanted to address when they

discussed ethnic categorization as a couple or with their children.

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4.3     Theme Three: Hispanic-Caucasian Parents Address What They Discuss
        Surrounding Ethnic Categorization

Whether they were discussing ethnic categorization as a couple or as a whole family, three distinct topics repeatedly occurred from the eleven Hispanic-Caucasian parent dyads surrounding the topic of ethnic categorization. These three topics all directly relate to ways in which Hispanic-Caucasian parents subconsciously want their children to form their social identities. The first main topic added to previous research of multiethnic family identity formation (see Socha & Diggs, 1999; Socha & Yingling, 2010), where participants first described an inherent need to make sure their children understand their family history and where they fit regarding the broader social structure (Breakwell, 1993). Minto et al. (2016) highlighted how participants may have used social identification to help define their group memberships. The second main topic discussed was the acknowledgment of language barriers.  According to Wood (2016), the choice parents made to help their child become bilingual tends to influence the ethnic categorization they may want to emulate. For example, Pettigrew (1967) explains we tend to gravitate toward others we perceive as similar to us. Parents that push their children to be bilingual may inherently be making the choice of ethnic categorization for their children without realizing it. Finally, the last topic Hispanic-Caucasian families discussed were how to define their family's ethnic categorization as a whole. Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, and Draper (2002) describe the importance of parents from different ethnic backgrounds educating their children to the realities of racism, discrimination, and their own ethnic identification.

4.3.1    "I want him to raised at least understanding where he comes from":
        Acknowledging the Importance of Children Understanding Their Family History

The first topic that 10 of the twenty-two participants (representing six of the

eleven dyads) brought up during their interview was how important it was for them to let

their children know where they came from, their cultural history, and their ethnic

background. Amber and Agustin both want to make sure that their one-year-old son,

Aiden, understands his Venezuelan roots. Amber knows that "Agustin has certain things

that he's passionate about from his culture that he wants to show to Aiden I tell him to go

for it":

> We have Venezuela all over our house. You can't see the Venezuela shelf because
> it's covered with decorations right now, but we have Venezuelan stuff all over our
> home. We have a map of his hometown in Aiden's room. We both want Aiden to
> know where he comes from on both sides. I want him to understand what's
> important to my family but also that he's from Venezuela and all the things going
> on in Venezuela.

Agustin wants to make sure that Aiden understands his Venezuelan background. Agustin

wants Aiden:

> To know about our culture, our food, I know he's going to be very close with our
> food. My mom sent him some native Venezuelan shoes that are very colorful […]
> He's going to wear them at least once or twice because I wore them when I was a
> little kid."

Even though Agustin and Amber have not been able to discuss ethnic categorization with

Aiden since he is so young, they look forward to helping him learn about his heritage.

Carrie and Carlos also have not been able to discuss ethnic categorization with

their son, Carson, because he is also only one-year-old. Like Amber and Agustin, Carrie

and Carlos have discussed how important it is to make sure Carson knows his Hispanic

heritage and the history of both his families. Carlos believes that Carson "should embrace

both, but if he relates to one side that's completely fine, but he should still acknowledge

the other and he should never be ashamed of either way – of being Mexican or being from the United States." Carrie not only agrees with Carlos but also thinks all couples should talk about ethnic categorization before their multiethnic child is born:

> Carlos and I talked about the fact that it would be important for us to blend both of our cultures and to make sure that Carson knew he was Mexican and knew he was American and didn't feel like he was half of some whole. Because he's not […] I don't really like the expression that mixed kids are mixed […] they're a whole person. Carson is Mexican and American but he's not half Mexican and half American […] he's a whole part of each culture. I don't like the connotation behind how being half of something sounds. I think it kind of sets mixed kids up for failure. If you're only half of something how are you supposed to ever feel like a whole? I want Carson to know that he's Mexican and he's American. Period. We're hoping he's able to embrace both cultures equally.

Olivia and Oscar's children have reached adulthood, but they both made an effort while they were growing up to make sure all three of their children embraced whom they were. Even after Olivia and Oscar's divorce, Olivia "always wanted to make sure [*her*] kids knew their father's side":

> You know […] they still go visit him some and my sister lives in West Virginia with their father's brother and they go and visit them some too. It's important to me they know their family and they understand where both sides of their family comes from. Their grandmother on his side is there all the time so they can still see their grandmother. That was important to me for their own well-being. […] I've always told them to be proud of who they are. All along I've just taught them to love their dad and his family.

Even though Oscar and Olivia divorced almost 23 years ago, Oscar agrees with Olivia that he wants their kids to "just be proud of who you are and be proud of where you come from."

Tina and Rosalina also note the importance of their children learning about their Hispanic culture and ethnic background. Tina says she does her best to make sure that her 5-year-old son, Tommy learns about Puerto Rican traditions. They celebrate holidays like "Three Kings Day […] because that's important to Tirzo […] and explaining it to

Tommy, so he knows what's going on and why it's important." Rosalina and Ralph wanted to give their oldest son, Ronald, an authentic Mexican experience. Rosalina remembers the last time they were in Mexico:

> We took our oldest to a bullfight when he was visiting with my family in Mexico last year […] I mean we do what we can. We want them to know that they are Mexican. That's important to me. That's important to mine [*my family*]. I feel like we do the best with what we've got. We don't have a lot of access here in North Carolina but we do the best with what we have and do our best to make sure they know where they come from and what's important to their Mexican roots.

Maria and Max elaborate on differences regarding their boys, mentioning that holidays are always a little different in their household. They always go down to Miami for the holidays. Max explains "we never do the typical American thing for Thanksgiving or Christmas.":

> My brother married a Jamaican so I mean it might be like […] I want a jerk or a bit of lamb this Christmas or Thanksgiving. My kids are more American just because that's what they're exposed to. We do our best to make sure they know their history and their past […] like there's a lot of Cuban cuisine that Maria will cook in our home […] we try to make sure they're going to see family in Miami and we want them to know where they come from and to understand where they come from and especially Cuba and where Maria comes from and their family history and their family backgrounds and dynamics.

Maria loves being down in Miami because it is when they can "do everything like all the traditions":

> We have a lot of great food, a lot of family. That's the biggest thing – is gathering for parties. Food is on both sides. Max's family is multiethnic too – not Max – but his cousins and outside family – so we're all a big happy blended family and it's great. I would say we try to keep our family on an even playing field – I mean our kids know they're Cuban and American. It's important they know both.

A facet of understanding where they come from also includes deciding whether they want their children to learn to speak Spanish.

### 4.3.2 "We both want him to be bilingual": Acknowledging and Addressing Mono or Multilinguistic Decisions

Something unique to the Hispanic-Caucasian dyads compared to some other multiethnic couples is the impact of language as a part of their ethnic identification. The second major topic of conversation was the decision to live in a bilingual household or the decision to choose to speak only English within their home. Of the eleven couples, six couples choose to speak both English and Spanish within their household. Learning to speak Spanish, may inadvertently lead Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic children to gravitate toward other Hispanic relatives and friends that also speak fluent Spanish. According to Socha and Diggs (1999), even though multiethnic families are in a unique position where two ethnic identities may be salient at the same time, the choice parents make from a young age may indirectly influence which ethnic identification becomes salient over time. Interestingly, the decision on whether or not children became bilingual rested entirely with the Caucasian parent's effort to learn Spanish. Bibiana explained that it is much more difficult for children to learn another language if they do not hear it from both their parents. She says her eight-year-old daughter, Beth, is not bilingual because:

> Ben cannot speak the language so we can't really raise her to be bilingual. I mean […] I try speaking some Spanish to her but I mean […] actually I'm just not disciplined enough to do so on my own.

Daniella's eleven-year-old son, Dominic, has also had difficulty learning Spanish. She did "try to push Spanish on him but it was difficult when you don't have a two-Spanish speaking home":

> He would ask like "Why do I need to learn Spanish?" But then when my parents come he sees the relationship as to why […] because my parents only speak Spanish. They try to speak English but it's hard to understand them and so he's like […] "Okay I get the relationship now" Like he sees why it matters, you know? And he's made fun of because he has an accent in Spanish from his

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Hispanic friends and he's like "I can't help it I speak like this." You know? It's hard. He's starting to notice differences.

David knows the struggle that Dominic goes through, and because of that, he is trying to learn Spanish so their two-year-old son, Derek, has an easier time learning Spanish and to help Dominic with the little Spanish he already knows. David knows that Dominic has "been embarrassed to speak Spanish because he doesn't speak it that well":

> His Hispanic friends will make fun of him so he'll be embarrassed sometimes to speak Spanish but we're trying to help him become bilingual…That's why I'm trying to learn to help him with speaking it so he'll be more comfortable. There's a dual immersion school down the road so we're thinking about sending him there to help him get better at his Spanish. We're going to start Derek at that school so he has an easier time learning than Dominic did.

> Even though Carlos and Carrie's son is only one-year-old, Carrie explains they

have already agreed to "always speak Spanish whenever [they're] home so Carson is always exposed to Spanish." Carlos explains that he has "been very on top of making sure that we're speaking both languages around our child so that he grows up and knows both languages." Amber and Agustin also want their one-year-old son, Aiden to grow up understanding both languages fluently. Agustin seems to have the same plan as Carlos. Agustin and Amber conversed about the fact they want Aiden to be bilingual before he was even born. According to Agustin, "we said that our kid needs to speak Spanish so what we're going to do is […] in our home we're going to do our best to speak Spanish because he's going to learn English for sure in school." Amber knows that it might be difficult for her to speak Spanish 100% of the time, but she feels like they will be on a "70 Spanish 30 English scale in their home":

> We both want Aiden to be bilingual, so we speak predominately Spanish at home. Probably like 70/30 […] 70 Spanish 30 English because we have my family helping babysit a lot, so he hears all English from them and then we know

whenever he starts school he'll hear all English unless we decide to put him in an emersion program […] like a bilingual school.

While the decision of whether or not their children should be bilingual was one topic of conversation for Hispanic-Caucasian parents, perhaps the most frequent debate participants shared was how they planned on classifying their family ethnic categorization as a whole. The majority of participants wanted to make sure their children know they are members of both their parents' ethnic groups. Caprariello et al. (2009) caution multiethnic children may associate this dual-identity with being an outgroup member of both their parents' ethnic groups, but Leslie (2015) explains it is the best-shot multiethnic parents have of creating a sense of social categorization.

### 4.3.3 "We'll tell him he's half and half": Discussion of Their Children's Ethnic Categorization

Over half of the participants (13 participants representing 7 of the eleven dyads) had discussed their children's ethnic categorization and were under the agreement that the best way to define their ethnic categorization as a family would be that they are keeping an even split where both cultures and ethnicities have equal representation within their households (e.g., preparing food from both cultures or utilizing both Spanish and English in their households). Maria describes her relationship with Max as "a unit" and that they "do [their] best to make sure that [their] kids know where they are from." Within their home, Maria and Max have discussed their family unit, as well as their children's ethnic identity as "Caribbean-American."  Emilia and Ethan both brought children from previous marriages into their relationship. Emilia points out even though they consider their four-year-old daughter, Emery, "mixed", they have not had the discussion of ethnic categorization with her yet. However, Emilia and Ethan both categorize their family as

"blended." Emilia says she would "categorize our family as *blended* like *for real blended*. Not just his, hers, and mine, but culturally you know I'm from the north, he's from the south so we have so many flavors." Ethan completely agrees. He believes their family should be a prime example of "the true blended family. We're not just blended because of divorce but because we bring in new things from all sides of culture and life experiences."

Similar to Emilia and Ethan, Rosalina and Ralph also define their ethnic categorization as a family as "an even split." Rosalina explains that within their home "it's all mixed" and she "wouldn't want it any other way." Ralph says a lot of the way they define their ethnic categorization stems from the holidays they choose to celebrate:

> I think it's an even split. When it comes to like holidays, I feel like we celebrate 4th of July, Thanksgiving, all of that. We do all of that. When it comes to New Year we do all of that. When it comes to my birthday […], it falls on Kings Day […], which is a Mexican holiday. I mean we ascribe to a lot of Mexican traditions. We introduced them to the fair with their Mexican family. When CoCo the movie came out now they're all interested in the Day of the Dead and I mean they were asking why we don't celebrate that. We want them to be as immersed as possible with both cultures, so they know who they are on both sides.

Olivia and Oscar also wanted their children to experience both cultures growing up so they would never question that they were from both ethnicities. Olivia said that even after her and Oscar's divorce she "made sure that every year the children got to go down there and spend time with him […] We tried to make sure they had both Mexican and American experiences growing up." Oscar notes that ethnic categorization can be hard to classify. He believes their kids are "American, but they're Mexican […] I don't really think about it. It's like when they're there [in the United States] they're American but when they're here [in Mexico] with me they're *Mexicanos* [Spanish word for Mexicans] and that's it."

Amber and Agustin have not been able to have conversations with their one-year-old son, Aiden, about his ethnic categorization, but Amber says she thinks, "we'll tell him he's half and half […] So I guess we'll just tell him he's half American and half Venezuelan […] I think that's how we'll approach that. Going with the whole countries instead of specific races." Agustin agrees that they are "going to try and make it 50/50." Carrie and Carlos agree with Agustin and Amber's point of view. Carrie believes they want to define their son Carson's ethnic categorization as "a pretty solid 50/50." Carlos says a big step they are taking to make sure Carson understands his ethnic categorization is letting Carson "spend as much time with both my in-laws as much as they do with my mother." Carrie says that they have to "work harder to make sure there is an even split in Carson's exposure to both cultures.":

> He's going to grow up knowing he's American. So, we do our best to make our household as Mexican as possible just so he is exposed to Mexican culture, Spanish language, and he'll understand that part of him and who he is. Ideally, we'd like for him to feel like an American and a Mexican. Especially because we plan on taking him to visit Mexico every summer when he's older.

Carlos believes that sometimes the most important thing they can do for Carson's ethnic categorization is to avoid labels altogether. Even though Carson is only one-year-old, Carlos says that he and Carrie have "definitely discussed being able to teach our child about racism":

> As well as the difference between the social classes or statuses and how that may affect the way people view you […] but ultimately what's important is being able to teach Carson to identify himself as just a human being and not necessarily rely on him having to feel like he has a certain label that he feels like he needs to fit in to.

Bibiana and Ben also try to avoid labeling their daughter, Beth. They have done their best to make sure Beth understands both cultures that make up her ethnicity without

having to have a discussion of ethnic categorization with her openly. Ben explains that even though "English is what we speak in the house. Food is a fusion. Depends on who's cooking that night pretty much, but I cook Venezuelan and Bibiana cooks American […] so it's a good blend." Bibiana believes that Beth "knows that she's half Venezuelan" but Bibiana is not sure that "she understands that there's a difference […] or what it means that she's half Venezuelan." Since Beth is only eight-years-old, Bibiana thinks "she hasn't really thought of her ethnic categorization yet. She just knows she is who she is."

While most participants want their children to feel like their ethnic identity stems from both their American and Hispanic heritage, eight of the participants mentioned that at the end of the day, their children were American and nationality matters more than ethnic identification to them. Jacobson (2010) states there is great value for multiethnic children to be able to identify as having specific ethnic socialization directly. When Hispanic-Caucasian parents decide to focus on nationality instead of ethnicity, it allows their children to associate with one ingroup of being American. Throughout all twenty-two participant interviews, participants referred to their children as being their particular Hispanic nationality (e.g., Mexican, Salvadoran, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Cuban, or Colombian) and American instead of Hispanic and Caucasian. The mixture of culture and nationality instead of the focus on ethnic identification are frequent themes within these multiethnic family systems.

4.3.3.1    "Primarily she's a typical American girl": Family

categorization leaning towards American.

When asked the question "How do you define your ethnic categorization as a family?", eight of the twenty-two participants (representing five of the eleven dyads) said

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they thought of their children and their family as American, regardless of their ethnic background. Carrie brought up the fact that instead of ethnic categorization in their family "it comes down to nationality instead of ethnic or cultural make up":

> Nationality wise my husband is Mexican and he's trying to get his American citizenship. I'm American because I was born here. Carson is American with Mexican ancestry. His ancestry doesn't change the fact he is American though. I just don't know why we have to have such a large stigma […] or not stigma but like […] why race matters so much in this country. It's really overwhelming and, in my opinion, and it's pretty damaging to our society as a whole [very long pause] But honestly, I don't think any amount of Mexican culture or the Spanish language is going to make them [their relatives in Mexico] feel like he's Mexican. He is […] ancestrally, but I mean […] he's an American

Jessica and Juan both feel they raised their children to "be Americanized." Juan says, "we were more Americanized," and Jessica says their family unit leaned "more towards American. We're pretty much Americanized around here." Fran and Fernando believe that their sons are "definitely more American." Fernando says a lot of that categorization has to do with the fact that he "was born here [in the United States]." Max feels the same way about his family. He feels like "if they were closer to Miami, they might lean more towards their Hispanic ancestry, but [his] sons are more Americanized just being where they are and being so far removed from family where that daily interaction is not there." Ben describes his daughter, Beth, as "a typical American girl." Daniella blames the lack of interaction with her side of the family on the fact her sons are "more American." She explains that her "parents are not here [in the United States] as much" so their family celebrates "more American traditions."

Regardless of ethnic categorization, many challenges the Hispanic-Caucasian couples and multiethnic families had to deal with stemmed from questions surrounding their children's ethnic categorization or their family from other family members or

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friends. More than just developing their ethnic categorization, participants mentioned the

impact messages from their family and the outside world. Social identity theory and self-

categorization theory work together to help multiethnic families understand how their

family and their children fit into a broader ingroup. Within self-categorization, two

processes determine which identity becomes salient: comparative and normative fit.

Themes four and five overview how participants handled questions about their family

identity from friends and family members as well as how participants felt they fit into the

broader structure of society.

### 4.4    Theme Four: Hispanic-Caucasian Parents Answer Questions from Family and Friends about their Family Identity

Theme four delved into questions Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents

received from friends and family concerning their family's ethnic identification.

Stemming from research question three, theme four overviews the types of questions and

comments parents within multiethnic families may have to deal with throughout their

children's development. These questions directly related to how multiethnic families may

create a concrete sense of self through group categorization (Davies et al., 2008; Turner,

1999). Overall, Hispanic-Caucasian dyads described several questions and comments

they received from family members throughout their relationship and ethnic

categorization as a family. While participants did mention their family members in

general were happy for them when they found out they were having children, when it

came to their family's multiethnic identity or how they planned on raising their children,

no participant mentioned any positive comments they received related to their

child(ren)'s ethnic identification. The questions and comments they have received over

the years fall into two main categories: neutral comments from family and friends and negative comments from friends and family.

### 4.4.1 "Some people ask questions, but I explain it to them": Neutral Questions and Comments from Family and Friends

This category is labeled as "neutral questions and comments from family and friends" because while the majority of comments and questions discussed by participants were inherently harmful, the remaining comments and questions brought up by participants did not seem to be positive, instead just on a neutral field. The following six participants (representing six of the eleven dyads) mentioned interactions with their family members they believe did not have negative connotations but were mostly from the fact they were trying to understand more about how their ethnic categorization as a family was going to work.

Carlos' family "wondered if it [their family ethnicity] was an even split or if it was skewed because we are in a different country that isn't Mexico. They didn't mean anything bad by it though." When Ben first told his family that he was dating Bibiana his family made a few "harmless jokes.":

> It was kind of out of the blue for me [dating a Hispanic woman]. Not that I'm a racist or anything […] but it was just that I've never [umm] dated outside my […] it was just out of the ordinary for me […] Sometimes they'll [his family] ask out of curiosity […] like a lot of people ask what language we use in the house.

Max's family also tackles it's cultural differences by "crack[ing] jokes":

> My brothers cracked jokes on my kids the whole time they were down in Miami and Maria's cousins will always not necessarily make fun of […] but give them [Max's sons] a hard time for being so white. I think it's funny […] Maria's cousin was trying to teach my oldest the *correct way* to eat a mango and I was just like […] "He's going to be a mess" […] But it was all in good fun. It's just a part of the culture and of growing up.

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Another question that came up among the participants' family members stemmed from them wondering what languages were going to be spoken within their home and them trying to understand cultural norms outside of their own. Oscar says his family wanted to make sure "they were going to speak Spanish because they [the kids] need to be able to talk with their a*buelita* [Spanish word for grandmother]." It can be interesting to teach outside family members about different traditions apart from their customs. David explains that he often has to reassure his mother that everything is okay when parties occur. He explained, "sometimes we have parties with plenty of Hispanic people here like for Dominic's birthday party or Tiago's birthday party":

> Sometimes my mom or some of her family members will come over and they won't understand some of the stuff that we do […] so some people ask questions about that or what's going on but I just explain it to them.

When Fran had her first child, her parents asked her in the hospital if she wanted to put "Hispanic or whatever on the birth certificate":

> She just asked me what was I gonna put and I said well I guess I'll put Hispanic. I mean […] he's half. The staff in the hospital said that you have to choose one so I just figured I should put Hispanic since we weren't allowed to put more than one on the birth certificate […] or at least that's what they told us in the hospital.

While these six participants described neutral comments or questions their family members made, other participants received negative comments from family and friends about their family social identity or their children's ethnic identification.

### 4.4.2  "Are you sure it's your baby?": Negative Comments from Family and Friends

Seven of the twenty-two participants (from 7 of the 11 dyads) described events where they received negative comments from their family and friends. Amber did not try to sugarcoat her experiences. She said that she and Agustin have encountered "racism from both sides":

When it was just him and I it would happen somewhat frequently and then you
know like looks or comments or like distant family members making comments
like "how's it feel to marry a wetback?" or like throwing racial slurs […] and I
mean on his side too. Like even hearing from certain Latino people being like "is
it boring being with a white girl – with a *gringa*?" […] My mom always says
things like "Do you guys have any white friends?" And I'm like "I'm sorry. I
don't know? It's just who we hang out with." Or every once in a while, my mom
or somebody might make a comment like "Aiden is going to speak to me in
Spanish and won't even understand English" or something like that […] but
whatever [*chuckles*].

Carrie has also received backlash from her family about whether or not her son, Carson

will be able to speak English. She says her "mom has gone on rampages talking about

how she's worried that he's not going to be able to speak English because we only speak

Spanish with him […] but like that's just stupid."

Several participants explained that their family members or friends advised them

to be in a relationship with someone from their ethnicity and cultural background. Carrie

says when she and Carlos first started dating her mother "talked about how I never look

for people *like me*. When I asked her what she meant by like me she wouldn't elaborate

[…] but I know she meant *white*." Carrie also says that Carlos' "brothers and a few of his

friends that are still in Mexico have given him some shit. Calling Carson a *gringo* [a

person, usually of North American decent, who is not Hispanic or Latin] and stuff like

that." Tirzo says his family "would prefer if Tina was Puerto Rican […] they've straight

up told me." Similarly, Daniella says that David had a "friend that advised him not to get

with me because of my race […] And that was really hard when he told me that. I was

like that kind of sucks because he doesn't even know me." After Ethan had been with

Emilia for a few months, his father told him "they more or less just tolerated Emilia."

This standoffish nature has escalated over the years and "as the years went on it was like

they just kept slowly each year one family member would start not showing up for holidays and it's getting to the point now where nobody invites us anywhere."

Olivia experienced tension when she first met Oscar's mom and felt like upon their first meeting "she was kind of skeptical." According to Olivia, "Oscar's mom told him not to have any more children with me. That was because she didn't think I was going to stay around long. She thought I was going to take them and leave." When Ralph told his mom that Rosalina was pregnant, he says his mom "was defensive right away":

> She made the comment, "Are you sure it's your baby?" And that didn't go over well. I mean I had just told her that Rosalina was pregnant with my baby and that was the response she had because she didn't really believe that it was happening I guess […] Anyway, but I said, "Yes. I'm sure it's mine." It was kind of disappointing that that was her reaction.

Fernando's friends and family members have also questioned whether his youngest son, Franklin, was his. Franklin has red hair, and Fernando says his cousin "asked me if I'd gotten a paternity test.":

> I mean […] we have nothing to really say to that. I mean […] my beard comes out and it's red sometimes but that's the only thing that I have that's red on me. But I know Fran didn't cheat and I know that Franklin's mine.

While theme four offers insights into what questions and comments Hispanic-Caucasian parents receive from their friends and family, theme five identifies greater challenges multiethnic families face from the broader social society. Hispanic-Caucasian participants described situations in which their families did not fit *normal* societal expectations. Utilizing normative and comparative fit from self-categorization theory, theme five expands on how Hispanic-Caucasian parents define the dual-identity and unique challenges they face to fit into what is deemed normal, or prototypical of their unique ingroup.

4.5    Hispanic-Caucasian Parents Perceptions of Their Unique Challenges as a
       Multiethnic Family

Finally, the last theme Hispanic-Caucasian parent dyads brought up during their in-

depth interviews answers the question posed from research question four. Research

question four asked what unique challenges multiethnic partners experience as a

multiethnic family compared to individuals in a monoethnic family. Socha and Yingling

(2010) found multiethnic families do not necessarily have a normative fit into their

separate ethnic ingroups compared to that of a monoethnic family. For multiethnic

couples, ethnicity is a more significant part of their self-categorization because they do

not feel their families fit the general mold of society (Diggs, 1999). The experiences of

participants in this study elaborated on these findings from previous literature in four

ways. Specifically, they explained the unique challenges they experienced in four

subthemes: negative comments from outsiders, issues stemming from immigration and

documentation towards obtaining their citizenship, understanding their unique cultural

differences, and not ascribing to societal expectations.

4.5.1    "The legitimately thought I was trying to steal my own child": Negative
                         Comments from Outsiders

Throughout theme four, participants described instances in which their friends

and family members made negative comments or asked inappropriate questions regarding

their family's ethnic categorization. Multiethnic families also have to endure comments or

questions from outsiders as well. For this first subtheme, outsiders are defined as any

person that the participant did not consider friends or family (i.e., any negative comment

or remark not mentioned as a part of theme four). Twelve of the twenty-two participants

(representing nine of the 11 dyads) experience receiving negative comments from

outsiders. The majority of these interactions consisted of (a) Caucasian partners noticing they were treated differently from outsiders, (b) outsiders questioning whether the parent was biologically related to their child, (c) outsiders bringing the "*what are you*" question to the parents' or children's attention, and (d) racially driven questions about immigration or documentation.

David, Ethan, and Fran have all noticed that at times they were treated differently than their Hispanic partners. David "didn't even really pay attention to it or see it" before he was with Daniella, "but sometimes she'll say people are rude to her":

> I think one time she went to a doctor's appointment and this lady was being rude to her and saying like "you don't know English" or just judging her skin color or race. I didn't witness that but she told me about that. I think we want to see the good in people but sometimes people will […] like with [Derek's real name] they will say "Is that some kind of Mexican name?" or something […] they'll judge him based on his name or they'll judge Daniella based off her skin color.

Ethan at times "can't seem to wrap [his] mind around the differences":

> One year we were at the beach and my wife and son [from previous marriage – Colombian and African American] went to the restaurant first and the server was very, very mean towards them and then like when I walked in they don't even know we're together and they're like sitting us down [him and daughter] and I'm like, "No – we're with them." And they've [the wait staff] been treating us like we're royalty and it's like, "Okay guys […] get up…we're leaving." I mean it's not like a pissing contest but like I just get so mad because I'm not going to be at a place where I have to pay and you give me bad service because my family is made up of different people.

For Fran, she has noticed slight differences in how she is treated because of her "Hispanic sounding last name":

> I'll go the doctor's office with the kids and stuff and I think they automatically assume because of our last name that we speak Spanish and we don't […] so they always have a translator person come in and she starts talking and I'm like, "We don't speak Spanish […] We don't need a translator" [*chuckles*] And they're always like "Oh […] okay." It's really strange honestly. They usually don't even ask if we need one. There's just one waiting for us in the room.

According to Fernando, Ralph, and Rosalina, the hardest challenge they have had to endure stems from outsiders questioning whether their children were biologically theirs. When Fernando went to pick up his son, Franklin, from his new daycare "they asked Franklin if [Fernando] was his dad":

> I mean […] Fran usually picks him up but I went to pick him up one day and they asked Franklin if I was his dad […] like they legitimately thought I was trying to steal my own child. I mean people just always question Franklin more than any of the others cause he's the lightest.

Ralph says that his daughter, Rowan, "still gets questions from her friends":

> Like they'll see me and be like "Is that your dad?" because I'm so white and I mean I have blonde hair and she looks like a tan girl with black hair and sometimes people just don't think that she's mine. That's what hurts the most sometimes. Or like if people see us [Ralph and his wife, Rosalina] together they will ask our daughter like "where's your dad?" and she's like "She's right there next to my mom" and it's just strange because a lot of times people just assume we aren't together. And people will ask her "Is that your biological dad?" and she'll be like "Yes…that's my dad". We've even overheard her say "I mean […] that's what I was told." She tries to educate her friends as much as possible and tries to take it in stride with a sense of humor and I feel like our daughter especially is really good at that but it still hurts.

Rosalina has had to go as far to try and convince an outsider that she is not just babysitting her kids. When she and Ralph first moved to North Carolina from New Mexico she "got asked if [she] was babysitting [*laughs*]":

> I said no, "I mean I don't know […] they're my kids but I don't think I would call it babysitting." And that same person said, "Those aren't your kids." And I said, "Yeah […] they are. They're my kids." And they were like, "Those aren't your kids." And I just kept thinking *Why am I wasting my time*? Like why would I waste my time explaining that they're mine […] sorry if you don't believe it […] but I just kind of walked away being like […] yeah […] they're mine. It's so frustrating. It's not something you should feel like you have to explain to someone.

When Rosalina and Ralph's oldest son, Ronald, was applying for a summer program in

Texas, his school counselor almost would not let him apply because it was "a summer

program for Hispanics":

> My oldest is about to go to Texas for this summer program for Hispanics that are
> interested in going into STEM fields and when he turned in the application to his
> counselor they were like, "This is for Hispanics." And he was like, "I am
> Hispanic" and the counselor acted surprised because my oldest is very clear and
> his last name is [Smith], so I guess they assumed he was white. And he was like,
> "Well my mom is Mexican. I'm Hispanic." And I had to call the school and it was
> a whole thing.

For some reason, outsiders feel the need to classify an individual's ethnic

identification. Subconsciously, this might be because outsiders are trying to define into

which ethnic category participants fit. Outsiders may have an issue placing multiethnic

children because multiethnic children do not seem to fit prototypical attributes of either

parent's ingroup (Socha & Diggs, 1999). Stemming from the discussion in theme two,

outsiders can influence children to ask their parents about their ethnic identification by

asking the "*what are you*" question. For Maria, Tina, Carlos, and Olivia, this question has

been painful to undertake and explain to their children.

Maria says that sometimes people do not even believe her kids are Hispanic. She

explains that "looking at [her] kids you might think they were mixed like Black and

White because [she's] so much darker.":

> I'm so much darker because my dad is Cuban but he's darker Cuban so
> sometimes people don't know that our kids are even Hispanic when they ask the
> "*what are you*" question. Which is really annoying for me because for one it's
> really none of their business but also because my background and my family
> means so much to me.

As mentioned earlier, Tina and Tirzo's 5-year-old son, Tommy, first brought up questions

about his race and ethnicity because "his classmates, in preschool, were having a

discussion about *what he was*." Around that same time, Tina recalls an instance when

"some obnoxious lady in Food Lion asked Tommy *what he was*":

> He was confused. He was like, "Human" and she was like, "No. No. No. I'm talking about your race." And I just watched her. She was an elderly lady so I didn't get mad but I mean […] Tommy was confused. What did he say? […] It was hilarious. She said, "Well […] you're not regular […] you're something else […] are you Indian?" And he looked at me and I said, "Honey, you're Puerto Rican." And Tommy looked at this old lady and patted her on her hand and said, "I'm Puerto Rican. It's okay." And the lady is like, "Oh. You're beautiful." [*Laughs*] My baby is such a sweet boy […] he doesn't understand.

Similarly to Tina, Carlos feels like it is going to be difficult to explain to a child why

someone is asking them *what they are*. Carlos has friends in multiethnic relationships that

have had to deal with people asking their children this question and he is not looking

forward to the discussion when Carson gets a little older. Carlos believes:

> There will be a little bit of trouble just with trying to explain to a child who is innocent about why people can be mean or rude about things is hard to understand or can be hard to understand why people can be malicious or why they even think asking a kid something like that is any of their damn business. Especially over something that they have never had a problem with themselves.

Olivia knows precisely the types of the difficulties Carlos is describing. She started to

notice how "nosy" people would act and how "forward" they would become in their

questioning after the birth of her second daughter. Olivia's oldest daughter "looked a lot

more like [her] so [she] could take her out, and nobody noticed":

> But my second daughter looks a lot more like her father's family [Mexican] and was a lot darker and it wasn't until I had her that I'd get people that would say, "Well, what are they" and I'd be like, "What do you mean? They're *girls*." It's just something you never think you'd have to explain to someone before it's happening to you. I wasn't prepared for it the first time someone asked me.

Of the four types of comments and remarks made from outsiders, Emilia believes

the hardest to deal with is when outsiders question positions of citizenship or

documentation. Emilia has been an educator for the past twelve years. The year she was

teaching leading up to her marriage with Ethan her students said things like "Miss […] you're getting married for your papers, aren't you?":

> And that was […] I don't know if you're from North Carolina, but the kids looked at me as a Latina and saw this white guy and automatically assumed I was getting my papers and that I needed to get married and I was like, "Papers?! I don't need papers I was born here." It's heartbreaking that they just assume everyone who's Hispanic isn't from here [the United States].

This problem does not exist only in the southern United States. Even though Jessica's children grew up in New Hampshire, she cannot recall them having many issues growing up, "the only thing that ever really came up was with the kids at school telling them to go back to their country":

> They did tend to get picked on because they were Hispanic. There aren't a lot of Hispanics where we live in New Hampshire, so I think they were kind of easy targets. My boys more so than my daughter. They were bugged about being Hispanic. It was just really sad because they felt like they had to defend the fact they were American.

The fact outsiders feel compelled to make comments about children's citizenship status is especially problematic because of how many issues regarding immigration ten of the twenty-two participants (representing six of the eleven dyads) brought up in their interviews.

### 4.5.2 "The immigration system is fucked on both sides": Issues Stemming from Immigration and Documentation towards Obtaining Citizenship

One challenge that consistently surfaced with regard to the participants was the difficult journey that encompasses becoming a citizen of the United States. While this challenge is not solely constrained to Hispanic-Caucasian dyads, it is likely that it came up more frequently than it would have compared to another typology of multiethnic families. Of the eleven couples interviewed, six Hispanic participants were once undocumented. One of the biggest misconceptions associated with the immigration

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process is how difficult the process can be for Hispanic individuals wanting to obtain their citizenship. *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends* (2013) found more than 93% of Hispanic immigrants who have not yet naturalized say they would if they could. According to Lopez, Bialik, and Radford (2018), there are several obstacles Latino permanent residents have to endure that stop them from completing their naturalization process; including, but not limited to: language barriers, financial barriers, and personal timelines (i.e., having to wait the 3 years to apply for their green card). Financial burdens placed on an undocumented immigrant to get through the naturalization process cost families an average of $15,000 per citizenship (*Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, 2013). Carrie does not sugar coat her situation with Carlos when she says, "the immigration system is fucked on both sides I guess.":

> It's horrible here [in the United States] to try and get your citizenship if you're Hispanic and it's horrible there [in Mexico] to even just have access to the United States. We take our ability to travel to other countries without visas as United States citizens really, really, for granted […] We don't understand how lucky we are. It takes a lot to get into the United States […] and even more to get citizenship if that's something you want. It drives me insane. Carlos isn't a citizen yet even though we've been married for almost five years. We're still going through the motions. The process is ridiculous and so, so, so, so time-consuming.

Carlos echoes Carrie's frustration and says it was "a big discussion" they had to have before they even talked about marriage. Carlos does not think Carrie understood "how difficult it would be":

> It was a topic we had to discuss just based on all the obstacles and you know […] things we have to overcome just because our […] or my color of skin […] or I don't know, just having a justice system that makes it very difficult for any immigrant to become a legal citizen in a lawful manner.

Agustin had a difficult time explaining how complex the immigration process was to Amber as well. He laughed as he explained how Amber wanted to "fix" his immigration issue:

> I said, "What? I don't have any paperwork. I came here on a tourist visa and they gave me six months to be in the country and I just stayed." And then like every other American person she was like, "Let's just fix that. We can fix it. We can face it. We can fix it real quick." And I was like, "Well […] no not really. It's a process." And she was like, "What do I need to sign?" And I was like, "You don't need to sign anything […] you can't do anything about it unless you marry […] and it's still a process. It doesn't guarantee anything." And she was like, "For real?" And so, she started doing some research […] she started checking online and she was like, "Wow…it is really complicated. I thought you could just send in an application and money order or something." And I was like, "Well, eventually we're gonna have to spend some money because it's all about money in this country, but no…it's not that simple."

When Amber first met Agustin she did not know he was undocumented. She says she felt like "the naïve white girl who like didn't even realize there were illegals that live in this state [*chuckles*]":

> We were dating for a little while before I found out that like he didn't have his paperwork […], he was here […] he had entered the country legally and then overstayed. So instead of leaving when his visa ran out he just stayed. So, once my family found that out […] cause at some point you've got to tell your family those things […] my mom was not happy she was like "the only reason he's talking to you is cause he wants to marry you and get his papers" and I was like, "that's really not it. Like, he's had numerous people offer that in the past and he never wanted to do a marriage business transaction" […] so my mom hated Agustin for a while […] And so that took us a couple years probably before we were […] before my mom finally realized like this isn't about paperwork. This is a genuine relationship.

Even though Agustin and Amber have been together for seven years, Agustin just recently obtained his residency. They plan to apply for his citizenship as soon as possible.

Taking the step from resident to citizen is critical according to Daniella. During our interview in 2017, she was on her third year as a resident and could not wait to apply for citizenship in July of 2019. The current political climate in the United States has taken

a toll on Daniella and David's relationship, especially when they are discussing immigration issues. David is scared because he feels like everything is out of his control with "people getting deported":

> I don't know I feel like it's scary and we just try to help out our friends as much as we can. Luckily, we haven't had any really close friends get deported but it's still one of those things that could happen. Daniella is only a resident so it could affect us and our family.

Even though David wants to be there for Daniella, she does not feel like he can really relate to how deeply she feels toward the political issues at hand. More than anything, she wishes she "could have him relate":

> He listens […] he's a great listener […] but sometimes I think I get a little frustrated or a little heated because I want some empathy from somebody that can't give it to me. For example, the whole debate with immigration right now and like the *Dreamers* not being able to stay […] or what's happening and I've become a little […] I guess aggressive with the topic and it shouldn't be directed towards him because he doesn't really know you know? I think it's more on my part than his part. Where I […] when I feel desperate to have someone understand and he doesn't. He just can't. It's not as real for him.

Rosalina is experiencing a similar struggle with her kids. The topic of immigration is "really difficult to explain to them [people who have never had to deal with the immigration system] because honestly, I feel like sometimes they just don't want to hear it":

> I don't know […] I hate not knowing […] like the people who just don't know and don't want to know. It bothers me because it's in the news all the time and I have to explain to my kids like […] my dad had to cross the border illegally but he now has Dual-Citizenship. He's a U.S. Citizen and he's a Mexican Citizen and he pays his taxes in two countries […] he votes you know? And I tell my kids […] that's where you come from. I don't like it when my kids say something bad about someone […] or say someone is here illegally because I mean […] those people are still people. The border crossed us. Most of the United States used to be Mexico so it's really dumb to say people are here [in the United States] illegally.

The challenge became too much for Olivia and Oscar. Olivia feels Oscar not being able to "get his citizenship" was one of the main reasons they got divorced. When their youngest was two-years-old they "took a bus and knew [they] were getting divorced and just decided to move on […] He stayed there [in Mexico] and he couldn't get his citizenship anyway and the marriage was done." Of the six couples who have struggled with the immigration process, Juan is the *only* participant who is finally a citizen of the United States. Jessica and Juan spent 17 years getting Juan's citizenship in order. Jessica's only word of advice to someone entering into a multiethnic relationship was to "know about the immigration stuff":

> It's very difficult. It's very expensive. A lot of it is […] a lot of paperwork […] a lot of office visits. You have to go and prove who you are what you're doing where you're living […] every two years you have to renew your paperwork […] and so that he could work [*coughs*] but he had been […] he became a citizen a few years back. So, he is now an American citizen but it was […] you know you're always worried that something's going to happen […] or that he'll get sent back. You know? But luckily, we were able to get him to be a citizen so we don't have to worry about that anymore.

Juan goes on to say the most significant challenge they faced when Jessica found out she was pregnant with their first child was that they "weren't married and [he] wasn't even legal in this country.":

> It was hard on her because she didn't know I was illegal or if I even was going to be able to stay in the country. She was […] she was really upset because I could have been sent away. She would say things like, "I don't want to have a child with no father being around." So that was hard […] but we got through it.

While immigration was undoubtedly a big topic of discussion for Hispanic-Caucasian parents, it only represents one cultural difference unique to multiethnic families

### 4.5.3   "Tirzo called my parenting style 'white' and we ended up arguing": Dealing with and Understanding Cultural Differences

Participants mostly fell into two distinct categories when it came to how they handled the challenge of coming from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than their partners. Participants either let cultural differences create tension and negatively impact their relationship as a couple or they tried to acknowledge their cultural differences through humor and a positive lens. The hardest part about being with someone from a different cultural background is understanding the other person's point of view.  Seven of the twenty-two participants (representing six of the eleven dyads) elaborated on how these differences could create tension within their relationship.

One of the biggest fights Tina remembers getting into with Tirzo was about their parenting styles. Tina laments "Tirzo called [her] parenting style *white*, and it was meant as a negative and we ended up arguing":

> It's because Tommy did something wrong and I sat him on my knee to explain to him what he did wrong, and Tirzo didn't like that. He said, "Don't do that." And I said, "Yes […] do that." And he was like "First of all […] he's too young to understand, and that's a totally white thing to do and blerh [*imitates yelling*]" And I was like "Oh God" [*rolls eyes*]. Sitting down and talking about it and explaining it he thought it was a white parenting style because they [white people] do it too young. He said it was pointless to do that [explain what the child did wrong] until they were old enough to understand. And quite frankly […] his parents are still using the "Because I said so" variety even though Tirzo's an adult. And so, I said to him that that wasn't a good style and he said, "Well neither is yours." And it was just annoying.

Jessica and Juan have also encountered disagreements about what was best for their kids. Jessica explains it was always difficult for her and Juan because they constantly had different priorities. For instance, Jessica says "Juan didn't really go to school.":

> He worked to eat […] where here in America we don't really so much have to worry about that or do that. So […] growing up in that way he had a different perception on how to raise children […] do you understand? Where here in

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America we're just like […] the [children] go to school, they have fun; we provide for them. They don't have to provide for themselves. You know […], So that was a little bit of a conflict we had. There were little conflicts we had between the way that he was raised and the way that I was raised with our two different cultures.

The majority of challenges Daniella and David experienced surrounding their cultural differences stemmed from how they were raised. According to Daniella, "there are things I think are *different* from what I grew up with.":

> I feel like they [David's family] worry about everything versus my family who worries about nothing and living carpe diem every day. You know? They're [Daniella's family] just flying by the seat of their pants. I don't know […] they're just two different extremes and I feel like we're [David and Daniella] the middle. One is […]his parents are a little thrifty, and my parents are like not […] you know? It's just […] the values are very different. We [Daniella's family] value family a lot and I don't think […] well it's not that I don't think they [David's family] value family […] they do but like I feel like there's not one person who is actually bringing them together. You know what I mean? It's not solidified.

Not surprisingly, David said there were similar differences when he talked about their families, but his word choice was a little different that Daniella's. David believes:

> My mom is very loving and caring and nice, and she can be a bit of a worrywart but her family [Daniella's family] is like the opposite like they don't worry about anything and they're kind of mean. Like they cut each other down to bring them up kind of thing. But that's how her dad is […], but maybe that's just a personality thing.

Amber agreed with David that some of Agustin's family members seem to be "raised to be like […] bullies:

> There's no such thing as being "P.C." there [in Venezuela]. There's no such way of being like […] they're always like whatever […] get a tough skin kind of thing. That was really hard for us in the beginning because I'm very much like […] I'm very much equality for all and like grace and like we're all the same, and we all should have the same chances and never put each other down.

For Oscar and Agustin, the most prominent cultural difference they experienced was the fact Olivia and Amber could never understand why they sometimes felt like they

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wanted to be back in their "home country." Oscar says Olivia never seemed to understand

why he "wanted to go back to Mexico":

> I needed to go home. That was really what led to the divorce. I don't know if that had to do with being multiethnic or whatever […] but it was a thing for sure. I don't know. It was what it was. A part of me was always there when I was in the States. I never felt whole.

Amber had similar difficulties in understanding Agustin's point of view. Agustin explains

that "for American people […] this is your home. There is nothing different for you.":

> Some days believe it or not […] an immigrant can wake up and say, "I miss my house. I miss my life a little bit there [in Venezuela]. I miss my breakfast at grandmas. I miss walking around the neighborhood like I used to. I miss the little vendor that comes with a bicycle selling whatever that you can buy fresh." There's no sanitation score down there […] you don't worry about getting salmonella or anything [*laughs*]. We didn't […] we grew up […] we're alive. So somedays I wake up, and I'm just like "Man, I just want to eat an arepa or I want to go dance salsa, or I want to go do some traditional Venezuelan thing that I don't have here." And she tries very hard to understand […], but an American just can't understand what it feels like to miss your home country […] even if they want to.

Additionally, Agustin says Amber still does not quite understand why he has a constant

need to "fix things":

> Part of the American culture you can have whatever you want you just trade it in and get another one. But I try to fix things. She gets mad at me cause she's like, "Why are you trying to fix it?" And I'm like, "Well […] I'm trying to fix it. If it can fix it, then I can fix it. We can save 20 bucks." American culture I believe they are used to easy fix […] I can get it right away […] Christmas is like 1000 presents for everybody, especially the kids get like 20 toys. That's something we [Hispanics] just don't have in our countries. You might be able to get one present at Christmas time, and Amber doesn't understand like at the beginning she was buying like 3 presents a piece and I told her […] she's been to Venezuela, she's been to the Dominican Republic on a mission's trip, so she understands that not many people have what we have here [in the United States]. So […] if we can save 20 bucks and buying some extra presents and save them for sending stuff to Venezuela […], or we can use it as funds to send funds to the Dominican Republic […] she's got a friend […] a family friend that's a pastor there and he works to build school or give shoes to kids that don't have shoes. Sometimes we're out and I tell her […] let's just go out and walk around, and she'll see a pair of shorts, and she'll be like, "These are your size […] why don't you buy them?" And I'm like, "Because I don't need them." I have everything […] I have twenty pairs

of shorts I don't need anymore. We just try to help people. Right now, in my country [Venezuela] we have a big problem with the government and everything is controlled by the government and there is little food supplies for the country. There is food shortages everywhere so we try to send food for my family at least […] I hate just cooking for the heck of it and then you're just going to throw it away. And then finally after six years, she started cutting more recipes in half, and she's finally on board with just using what we need. Sometimes it's even more expensive for us to just use quarter size casserole dish than it is to make a big one […], but it's not about the money […] I just don't want to waste the food. Little things like that.

Carlos has also gotten frustrated with Carrie because she also tends to waste food. Carrie says she asked him one time "why it bothers him that [she throws] away bananas when they go bad […], and it goes into this whole debate about him growing up poo and that I never had to worry about that so I wouldn't understand."

### 4.5.3.1 "We sometimes joke about it a lot": Acknowledging cultural differences through humor and a positive lens

While the majority of participants explained that dealing with cultural differences can add an extra level of stress onto any relationship, four of the twenty-two participants (representing three of the eleven dyads) wanted to make sure that couples in multiethnic families knew that cultural differences could be a great thing. Emilia says it is all about a person's "perspective.":

We have a lot of cultural differences, but that's what makes us great. We sometimes joke about it a lot. Like if we're going to a party, I'll say "is it a white party?" And Ethan will be like, "What's a white party?" And I'll be like, "Where you only get chips and cake – and maybe a hotdog." [*chuckles*] Obviously […] what is that called when you classify a race [*pause*] stereotypes! It's just because all the parties I've been to that are white the biggest food is a hotdog, and everyone eats Cheetos and cake [*laughs*].

Ben agrees that joking is often the best way to confront differences in a positive manner. He says he often "picks at Bibiana":

I'll pick on her with pronunciation […] even though she's the English major. I'll pick on her cause she'll say something that sounds funny. What was it she said the

other day? […] Something about pan […] oh […] panda something […] she was talking about pumpkin put she said it fast, and it sounded like panda, and I said, "There's not panda in the bread." It's just fun joking.

Bibiana loves the fact that she and Ben can learn from each other and grow from their cultural differences. She says "the cool thing about us is we've always taken our cultural differences as an enrichment process." Amber agrees that even though she and Agustin are "very aware" they are a part of a "multicultural, multi-ethnic family" they "think it's fun. Some people are like, '*Oh […] that's got to be hard.*' But we like to think of it as a fun challenge." Overall, the easiest way to tackle challenges the Hispanic-Caucasian couples faced, was not to care what other people may think. This leads into a common subtheme found in theme five where Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families created a unique sense of normalcy, making sure they only meet standards set by themselves.

### 4.5.4 "We do our own thing": Not Ascribing to Societal Norms or Expectations

Instead of feeling as if they have to subscribe to what others deem *normal,* six participants (representing six of the eleven dyads) seemed to attempt to create their societal expectations. Maria feels that she "mostly gets positivity from others.":

> In a "funky, weird way where they'll be like, "*Oh, you have a mixed family with these beautiful mixed children*." Stuff like that […] It's not that way they're saying isn't nice it's just that it can be kind of weird that people feel the need to comment on it at all. That's why we just try to do our own thing and not worry about what other people think.

Carrie and Emilia echo Maria's sentiment that "it doesn't matter what others think." Carrie says that she does not think "society has had any impact with how [she views] her family. Maybe how other people see us and what they think is normal or not normal, but it doesn't really matter to me what other people think." Emilia says when someone says something or tries to advise her or Ethan they are "more like fuck that.":

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Or we just do the opposite or we do what we want to do. It's why we're so perfect for each other because I get so pissed off and he always brings me back like he just puts into perspective what's important. Like we both just want to be happy. We both came from these two marriages that were miserable and we thought that's how we had to live because we're two loyal ass people […] but that's not how you have to live. You can't live your life trying to live up to other people's expectations or what other people think is right.

Tirzo, Fernando, and Rosalina all have similar feelings toward living up to typical social norms. Tirzo explains that at the end of the day it was always just most natural for him and Tina to "do [their] own thing.":

We don't fit either side of our family because quite frankly either side of our families wouldn't be good families to want to be in. We don't really talk too much to her family or my family anymore because we live over five hours away from them so we're kind of our own family unit. Our ideas are just […] when we're together we're home and that's all we need.

Fernando agrees that if you are in a multiethnic family, you cannot afford to "pay attention to any of that [what society thinks]." Rosalina does not "care what other people expect or think because [she feels] like [their] situation is not your typical situation […] And [they] knew that from the get-go."

4.6    Summary

In summary, theme one overviewed the various reactions Hispanic-Caucasian partners had to both accommodative and nonaccommodative behaviors. Supported by previous literature on accommodation in multiethnic families (see Soliz et al., 2009), this dissertation found Hispanic-Caucasian partners reacted positively to accommodative behaviors and negatively to nonaccommodative behaviors. The final sub-theme showcased findings in which participants also reported having positive reactions towards objectively nonaccommodative behaviors deemed subjectively accommodative. In fact,

these acts of objective nonaccommodation at times helped them form a unique identity separate from their nuclear families.

The second theme provided insight into Hispanic-Caucasian parents' decision whether or not to discuss ethnic categorization as a family. The five couples who have not yet discussed ethnic categorization with their children are waiting for their children to initiate the conversation or they are waiting until their children are older for these conversations to occur naturally. These age ranges typically fell between 4-years-old and 10-years-old. The six couples who have already discussed ethnic categorization with their children did so because their children brought up the conversation with them. The majority of these discussions occurred when children had to answer the what are you question.

Perhaps the most relevant theme when dealing with communication is theme three. Theme three explicates what parents talked about as a couple and with their children concerning their family's ethnic categorization. The three main topics participants chose to discuss were how their children should understand their family history, how they acknowledged and addressed the decision to speak only English or English and Spanish within their homes, and the discussion of their family and children's ethnic categorization as a whole. Hispanic-Caucasian parents wanted to make sure their children understood their cultural history as well as their Hispanic heritage. While the discussion of whether or not children would grow up in a bilingual household was most prevalent with parents as a dyadic conversation, the discussion of their family's ethnic categorization as a whole was the most frequented topic of conversation for small group communication within the family.

Theme four utilized self-categorization theory to answer research question three. Participants described instances in which they had to handle questions and comments from their friends and family members. Participants either received neutral or negative questions and comments from their family and friends. Neutral comments included behaving in a joking manner, questioning whether or not they planned to live in a bilingual household, and what cultural traditions the participants planned to participate. Participants also described negative comments and questions where friends or family members expressed they would rather participants be with someone from their same ethnic background or that they were skeptical about their relationship and how their family life would be as a whole. The negative comments found in theme four presented one of many challenges multiethnic families have many monoethnic families do not.

Finally, the fifth theme elaborated on the other unique challenges Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners endure as barriers to self-categorization and family communication. These challenges presented themselves in four distinct ways. Aside from participants having to endure negative comments from friends and family, participants also described instances in which they received negative comments from individuals they considered outsiders, including questions such as asking participants if their children were biologically theirs, outsiders asking their children the "what are you" question, and racially driven questions about immigration and documentation. Participants also described tensions and challenges caused by the arduous immigration process. Furthermore, participants elaborated on instances in which their cultural differences made an impact on their relationship satisfaction. Often, these differences led to misunderstandings or misinterpretations that presented obstacles for multiethnic partners

to overcome. Even though participants acknowledged some individuals might see the fact their family does not ascribe to societal norms as a challenge, several participants explained the best solution is not to care what others think and create their expectations in the process.

CHAPTER 5.  DISCUSSION

Although communication plays a foundational role in families, few studies have addressed how communication in families affects their understanding of ethnicity and the formation of social identities as a social construction (see Hecht et al., 1993; Socha & Diggs, 1999; Socha et al., 1995). There is a need for communication research at the crossroads of race, family, and identity. This dissertation seeks to provide awareness of family factors that may influence Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic children's social identities as well as family communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. This study explicates multiethnic families through the lens of communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973), social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987), explicitly overviewing the intersection of interpersonal and intergroup communication (Giles, 2012). Providing insights, theoretical expansion, and practical application within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems, this dissertation sought to address questions such as: a) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families communicate surrounding topics of race and ethnicity, b) How do Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families discuss components of social identity (e.g., ethnic identification for multiethnic children), and c) What challenges are unique to Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems?

In this study, I elicited narratives from eleven Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parent dyads to gain insight into the co-creation of social identity and ethnic categorization within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. I used thematic narrative analysis to determine how Hispanic-Caucasian partners reacted to acts of

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accommodation and nonaccommodation, what Hispanic-Caucasian partners

communicate concerning their ethnic and social identity as a family system, and what

challenges Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners may face. The findings in Chapter 4

demonstrate the ways that Hispanic-Caucasian partners co-construct social identity

within their multiethnic family system as well as successful strategies utilized to manage

challenging situations related to their ethnic family categorization.

To summarize, the main findings within this dissertation stem from five emergent

themes. The first theme showcased how Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners reacted

positively to acts of accommodation (e.g., "I appreciate his trying to do things and

celebrate things that he wouldn't normally celebrate to make my family happy") while

there were both positive and negative reactions to actions of nonaccommodation. Positive

reactions to nonaccommodation included participants mentioning sentiments that it was

okay for their partners to "be who they are" and not change things about themselves to try

to fit with their nuclear family. Negative reactions regarding nonaccommodation included

statements such as "It's hard because I know my parents want her to learn Spanish and

she won't tell them about the Spanish she speaks…it's just hard". Theme 2 found that,

while all participants had discussed ethnic categorization as a couple, only six of the

eleven couples chose to address their ethnic classification with their children. The five

parental units who had not yet discussed ethnic categorization with their children were

waiting for their children to initiate conversations about their ethnic identity or, they were

expecting to have the conversations as their child ages (e.g., ages ranged between 4 and

10).  Even though there seemed to be no substantial difference concerning how Hispanic-

Caucasian partners discussed their ethnic categorization as a couple or as a family,

research question two provided further insight to perhaps a more interesting question: *what* conversations took place within multiethnic families. Theme 3 expounded these topics of conversation. The three main topics participants chose to discuss were how their children should understand their family history (e.g., "We both want Aiden to know where he comes from on both sides"), how they acknowledged and addressed the decision to speak only English or practice multilingualism within their homes (e.g., "I've been very on top of making sure that we're both speaking both languages around our child so that he grows up and knows both languages"), and the discussion of their family and children's ethnic categorization as a whole (e.g., "I think we'll tell him he's half and half").

Finally, research questions three and four offered further information into the unique challenges Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents experience. Research question three asked about the way participants' friends and family may influence their definition of family and their family ethnic categorization. The findings in theme 4 display family and friends of participants either asked neutral questions about their family ethnic identification (e.g., "Sometimes my mom or some of her family members will come over and won't understand some of the stuff that we do so they ask questions about that to understand") or made inappropriate negative comments questioning their relationship and family as a whole (e.g., "Family members making comments like *how's it feel to marry a wetback?* or like throwing racial slurs in general"). Finally, the answer to research question four addressing what challenges multiethnic family members face are developed via the findings from Theme 5. Participants described not only having to handle negative comments from their family and friends but also having to endure negative comments

from outsiders (e.g., "I went to pick him up one day from daycare and they asked Franklin if I was his dad […] like they legitimately thought I was trying to steal my own child"). The other main challenges Hispanic-Caucasian families face include issues regarding immigration and documentation (e.g., "It's horrible here [in the United States] to try and get your citizenship if you're Hispanic and it's horrible there [in Mexico] to even just have access to the United States") and distinct cultural differences from their partners (e.g., "We have a lot of cultural differences and like how we handle things is just different because of how we were raised"). Lastly, the majority of participants said the best way to handle these types of challenges was by not ascribing to societal norms or expectations (e.g., "You can't live your life trying to live up to other people's expectations or what other people think is right").

5.1   Theoretical Implications

Within this dissertation, communication accommodation theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory were used to understand the co-creation of social identity within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. This investigation informs and contributes to a fuller theoretical understanding of communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic relationships. Throughout the theoretical implications section, I will describe how the findings recorded in Chapter 4 work to support, contradict, and extend theories of communication accommodation, social identity, and self-categorization. The following theoretical implications of this dissertation are described below.

Harwood et al. (2006) recommend communication accommodation theory as an informative framework for guiding scholarship concerned with communication within

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families. Soliz et al. (2009) also recommend communication accommodation theory as a framework to highlight communication within multiethnic families and encourage further examination of this communication phenomenon. Notably, multiethnic parents see communication accommodation as a tool that may positively enhance their relational satisfaction (Soliz et al., 2009) and perhaps enhance communication within multiethnic family systems. Previous communication literature (see Giles et al., 1991; Giles, 2012) supports the notion that acts of accommodation reduce social barriers and the relational distance between outgroup members (e.g., members of different ethnic backgrounds). Conversely, acts of nonaccommodation typically provoke adverse reactions as individuals may sense a feeling of divergence (Giles et al., 2010). These acts of (non)accommodation might also influence intergroup salience (i.e., when ethnicity becomes salient within a multiethnic family). Nonaccommodative actions could illuminate these intergroup differences.

The findings from Theme 1 support this literature by reiterating that multiethnic partners react positively to accommodative behaviors (i.e., trying to learn Spanish or to participate in activities stemming from Hispanic culture). This also aligns with previous literature from Barker et al. (2001) who found individuals taking action to learn a second language to varying degrees of native-like proficiency as accommodative in nature. Unsurprisingly, the findings from Theme 1 also support previous literature by finding partners typically react negatively to nonaccommodative behaviors (i.e., not wanting to learn Spanish or not trying to change to fit their nuclear partner's family's expectations). Additionally, the findings in Theme 1 provide evidence that multiethnic partners not only react negatively to acts of nonaccommodation but may also respond positively to

objective acts of nonaccommodation. Thakerar, Giles, and Cheshire (1982) distinguished

linguistic accommodation as being either objective or subjective in nature. For example,

acts that appear objectively divergent may be perceived as accommodating, or as if these

individuals were subjectively converging. This could explain the reason six of the

twenty-two participants reacted positively to acts of objective nonaccommodation. What

one partner may deem as underaccommodation or overaccommodation, someone else

may subjectively appreciate as someone trying to be genuine and inherently unique.

In their recent review of CAT, Dragojevic, Gasiorek, and Giles (2016) explained

individual's expectations about what constitutes appropriate or desirable accommodation

is subjective to their unique interpersonal and intergroup histories, as well as their

idiosyncratic preferences. It is plausible that Hispanic-Caucasian partners would find the

acts of nonaccommodation showcasing the need of individuality as subjectively

accommodative because both American and assimilated-Hispanic cultures value these

qualities (Rudolph, Michel, Harari, & Stout, 2014; DelCampo, Jacobson, Van Buren, &

Blancero, 2011). Specifically, Rudolph et al. (2014) found Hispanic immigrants tend to

adhere to their home cultural orientations while second generation Hispanics are more

likely to acculturate to the individualistic culture of United States. While Rudolph and

colleagues examined organizational behavior, this dissertation provides evidence that

Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family may also value individuality and the need to be

unique apart from their nuclear families.

Ultimately, nonaccommodative and accommodative strategies may influence how

multiethnic parents choose to co-construct their family's ethnic identity. Vignoles et al.

(2011) define social categorization as the cognitive process that an individual experiences

when deciding to which social group he or she belongs. Minto et al. (2016) note the importance of the social identification process regarding how we determine our group memberships. Brunsma (2005) describes childhood as a whirlwind of exploration, decision-making, and the means to which individuals discover their self-identity. While forming self-perceptions may be difficult for some, multiethnic children encounter unique challenges of identity formation: finding and defining their ethnic classification (Bratter & Heard, 2009; Burton et al., 2010). The theoretical implications pertaining to social identity theory are that multiethnic parents provide a safe place for discussion to take place so that multiethnic children have the opportunity for identity exploration, whether they mean to or not. Theme 2 overviewed the decision multiethnic parents made whether to discuss ethnicity with their children. Participants in this dissertation were split between whether or not they felt they should discuss ethnic identity as a couple or as a family. If parents do not address their child's ethnic identification, they leave room for outsiders to bring up questions concerning their race or ethnicity when their children are asked the *what are you* question.

Family communication literature is consistent with the need to engage in difficult conversations (e.g., drugs, sex, bulling) during the early years of a child's life (see Petronio, Ellemers, Giles, & Gallois, 1998; Caughlin et al., 2000). Petronio et al. (1998) describe the impact having these otherwise taboo topics with children can have in reducing miscommunication within families as a whole. However, minimal communication research has addressed the importance of inviting difficult conversations about race and identity into family discussions. Researchers in early childhood education suggest that many white teachers have a difficult time discussing issues of race with their

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students (Brown, Bloome, Morris, Power-Carter, & Willis, 2017; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Willis, 2003). Even though these conversations may prove difficult, Tatum (1997) found children need to discuss issues of race and ethnicity because when teachers fail to acknowledge race, they reinforce the perception that discussions of race are taboo. Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) explains that by the time students entered first grade (i.e., approximately the age of six) they were not only cognitively ready to have discussions about race and ethnicity, but they also welcomed the discussions of difference and were more likely to embrace others' differences and their own unique qualities after an adult facilitated these difficult conversations.

Even though all participants had discussed ethnic identity as a couple, some parents were hesitant to bring up the discussion of ethnicity or social identification with their children. Within this dissertation, the majority of parents who had yet to address ethnicity with their children were waiting on the children to initiate those conversations. However, it follows that it may be difficult for children to understand what questions to ask when forming their own social categorizations and figuring out to which social groups they belong. Of the six parent dyads that had addressed ethnic identification with their children, the children initiated conversations surrounding race or ethnicity before the age of six. These conversations were initiated because someone else brought up the topic of race or ethnicity with their children, typically by asking the child *what they were*. Willingly, some multiethnic parents may wish to initiate conversations about race and ethnicity with their children before the age of six in order to help their children co-create their social identity without allowing their children the opportunity to be questioned by outsiders before being cognizant of their social belonging.

Theme 3 provides further insight into why the co-creation of social identity is paramount in multiethnic family systems and supports previous literature describing the overall benefits individuals may receive by understanding their social identification (Kenney & Kenney, 2013). While social categorization is mostly an automatic, fundamental aspect of cognition, multiethnic parents may experience a desire to discuss social identification as a way to make sure their multiethnic child does not feel like an outgroup member of both their parents' ethnic groups (Brown, 2007; Caprariello et al., 2009). While previous literature describes social identity as a tool that a person uses to relate to a broader social structure (Breakwell, 1993; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995; Deaux, 2000; Tajfel, 1978), over half of the participants disclosed that they wanted their children to think of themselves as members of both their ethnic groups.

Parents' innate desire to help their children form their ethnic identification extends current literature by noting unique necessities that multiethnic parents may require in the process of helping their children co-create their ethnic identification and ethnic identification as a family. Even couples that have yet to address ethnic identification and social identity as a family had discussed the importance of their child understanding both parents' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Theme 3 provides additional awareness of how parents in multiethnic families conceptualize their social identity. Individually being able to create a sense of social categorization is important for multiethnic children because it is how they determine their own social identity. Participants highlighted the fact multiethnic parents may want to help their children become self-aware of their social identity as a family unit (i.e., a co-creation of social identity and family ethnic categorization). With the insight Theme 3 provides on why

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multiethnic parents' may desire to co-create social identity with their children, scholars can more precisely explore how multiethnic family systems communicate social categorization and social identification as a family unit when intergroup interactions are salient (e.g., ethnicity becomes a topic of conversation). Looking at social identity as a fluid process allows communication scholars to expand SIT within multiethnic family systems by examining which identities become salient as they interact with different family members within their unique family system. For example, the ethnic categorization participants deemed salient within this dissertation stemmed from conversations with how others seemed to categorization the couple and their family system. This notion of the need for the co-creation of social identity provides an extension of SIT, which is previously defined as a subconscious, individualized process (Tajfel, 1978).

Perhaps the most interesting theoretical implication stems from which group membership all twenty-two participants subconsciously expressed as important to them. Turner and Reynolds (2012) express that self-categorization theory addresses why individuals identify with groups at all and why their group identities matter to them. Even though each participant was asked interview questions about their own ethnic categorization as well as "how do you define your ethnic categorization as a family", each participant responded to the interview questions in terms of how their nationality was salient over their ethnicity. Regardless of how the question was posed, each Caucasian participant referred to themselves as American, and their child's "ethnic identification" as American. Similarly, each Hispanic participant referred to themselves in terms of their nationality or their family's original country of origin (i.e., Mexican,

Venezuelan, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Colombian, or Salvadoran). When describing their children's ethnic classifications, each participant referred back to whole countries instead of using broader ethnic categories (e.g., Hispanic or Caucasian). It follows that the group membership most salient for Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families is closely related to the notion of biculturalism instead of ethnicity within the identification process. This provides communication scholars with new areas for future research focusing on the importance of nationality to Hispanic immigrants and non-immigrants. Future scholars should further investigate the differences between Hispanic parents with different nationality backgrounds to see if there are discrepancies between cultural values between Hispanic countries. Arias and Hellmueller (2016) provide insight to why future research on Hispanic-and-Latinos in the United States are prevalent, but even they do not distinguish the difference or emphasis many Hispanic individuals may feel to be categorized by their nationality instead of their ethnicity.

Self-categorization theory exists simultaneously with social identity theory to help multiethnic parents understand how the co-construction of family social identification may help multiethnic children fit into a broader ingroup. In Themes 4 and 5 participants recount when ethnicity becomes a salient topic of conversation between participants' family, friends, and the outside world. In other words, when do interactions that participants have experienced turn from interpersonal to intergroup in nature? When participants are able to speak as a couple, and focus on their qualities as unique individuals, they are likely to have interactions that are more interpersonal in nature. These interactions would be consistent with interpersonal interactions within any monoethnic couple. An implication for multiethnic families comes from the fact

multiethnic family members not only have interpersonal interactions but interactions that are intergroup in nature occur when members of multiethnic families are forced to note their group memberships and how they might differ from their other family members ingroup and outgroup categorizations. The questions and comments participants received from their family and friends often put their group categorization (i.e., their ethnicity) into light.

The consequences of having these conversations that are inherently intergroup nature stem from the fact that these discussions can create tension between multiethnic family members and their friends and family. Over half of the participants could recall instances in which their family members or their friends outline how important their family ethnic identification was to them. This supports communication literature on depersonalization (i.e., the mental state where individual, personal attributes no longer seem to matter and social identity becomes salient and a basis for self and other conception; see Postmes et al., 2002) to the multiethnic family context. Multiethnic family members may experience depersonalization as their friends and family try to fit them into categories that make sense to them. This became apparent when participants expressed exasperation at individuals outside of their multiethnic family system wanting to categorize their family to fit *one* level of ethnic categorization. Fran even mentioned having to choose whether she would classify her children as Hispanic or Caucasian on their birth certificate. There is a societal level preference for *one* box to be checked, when multiethnic families do not fit this prototypical notion of one ethnicity per family unit.

Notably, this dissertation overviews the challenges multiethnic family systems may experience when their identity becomes salient. As described in Theme 5, one

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problem multiethnic parents have to endure is receiving negative comments from outsiders. Oakes et al. (1994) explain how individuals develop cognitive categories to understand group identifications. As outsiders are trying to determine where members of multiethnic family members fit into their cognitive schemas, they may be bold enough to ask parents (or children) *what they are* to learn how they fit into their typical personal constructs. Since multiethnic parents may have different schemas of ethnic categories, they will likely have different perceptions of what constitutes normative fit. Coinciding with previous communication research on interracial family experiences, Diggs (1999) explicates numerous people feel the need to create cognitive schemas and find where multiethnic family members fit within their organizational structures. This can cause multiethnic parents' problems when they are trying to form their family ethnic identification since they may have different categories for ethnic identification than monoethnic couples.

Hispanic-Caucasian couples may experience heightened intergroup interactions when immigration status and citizenship are salient as group categorizations. Couples fighting the extensive immigration system may not only feel as ethnic outgroup members, but their nationalities and citizenships may further establish their outgroup memberships. Even though Davies et al. (2008) claims individuals create a more concrete sense of self through their group categorizations, the fear of the unknown and the challenge Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic couples experience from issues with immigration can affect not only their sense of self but also their sense of how their family fits into the broader realm of *American society*. It may be difficult for individuals in multiethnic families to feel as if they are members of American society if they see themselves as different from the

broader population, especially if one partner is having extreme difficulties obtaining citizenship.

Remarkably, the best way participants expressed handling the unique challenges they experience as a multiethnic family was primarily a means to develop their boundaries for how others' chose to label their family identity. Participants described the best way to handle the tension created by these challenges as creating their own process of what they deemed as normal. Six participants explained the best way to handle any challenges they have faced from outsiders was by not trying to meet any expectations anyone outside of their multiethnic family system may have for them. The findings of this dissertation posit multiethnic couples utilize communication to their advantage by acknowledging that neither parent is similar to their nuclear ingroup or their nuclear outgroup ethnic categorization. This expounds previous literature explaining why individuals may be less likely to feel they belong to a specific group if outgroup members characteristics are not cognitively present to the context of multiethnic family systems (see Turner et al., 1987). By comparing themselves to outgroup members, multiethnic partners cannot only tackle challenges but also frame their perception of how their family fits into societal expectations. While these theoretical implications add to current communication studies scholarship, it is essential also to note practical implications for individuals within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families.

5.2    Practical Implications

Since this dissertation was grounded in both intergroup and interpersonal communication theory, it follows that the findings may hold practical value for interpersonal interactions (e.g., communication between Hispanic-Caucasian partners)

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and intergroup interactions (e.g., Hispanic-Caucasian partners' communication with family and outsiders). These dissertation findings may also be used practically to inform the development of resources utilized by couple and family therapists working with multiethnic parents who may have questions about best practices in talking about race, ethnicity, and identity as a family unit. Even though this dissertation looked at Hispanic-Caucasian dyads, further investigation may find experiences of Hispanic-Caucasian families are similar to those of other multiethnic families. Each theme provided unique information both Hispanic-Caucasian partners and therapists can utilize from a practical standpoint.

First, multiethnic partners have been shown to struggle to try and fit into how their partner's nuclear family expects them to behave (Socha & Diggs, 1999). This dissertation expanded previous knowledge on familial interactions by providing insight into the fact some partners had positive reactions to acts of objective nonaccommodation. Practically, Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic parents should understand it might serve to benefit them to embrace who they are as an individual, or at minimum, to acknowledge that accommodation is not always necessary or possible. Even though some participants mentioned the tension created due to nonaccommodation, individuals who are in Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic relationships and mainly have interactions that are interpersonal in nature (i.e., where their relational identity is salient over their ethnic identities) can utilize the findings from Theme 1 to create an open dialogue with not only their partners but also their partner's nuclear family members. The tension between partners and family members dissipated when family members tried to make sure partners felt accepted regardless of what family expectations or traditions their nuclear

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families upheld. Several participants also eased tension created by nonaccommodation by expressing their appreciation for their partner's individuality. Family therapists can use this insight to develop popular-press-books aimed at multiethnic family members to help foster a sense of identity in multiethnic family systems.

Findings from Theme 2 certainly serve a practical purpose by showcasing how parents miscalculate when conversations surrounding ethnicity and race will take place. The conclusions of Theme 2 established the discussion of race or ethnicity will likely occur before a multiethnic child turns six. For those parents hoping to begin discussions with their children surrounding race and ethnicity, they might want to know the participants who had discussed ethnic categorization with their children did so before the age of six. Acknowledging this can help multiethnic parents avoid the challenge and anxiety felt when a stranger asks their child the "*what are you*" question. Race and ethnicity are topics of conversation that family practitioners may find following similar patterns to those of other age appropriate conversations (e.g., discussions about drugs, sex, or bullying). For every multiethnic family that had discussed ethnic classification, their children initiated the conversations. When multiethnic parents employ putative protection without eventually addressing race or ethnicity with their children, the couple misses opportunities to hold potentially important discussions about the development of their child's personal and social identity. Missing this opportunity with their child may also cause them to miss out on fostering a more secure sense of self within their multiethnic family system. Delaying these conversations until the last minute, or until an outsider has questioned their child's race or ethnicity, could leave parents feeling ill-equipped to deal with the necessary and inevitable conversations surrounding race and

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ethnicity that occur later in their child's life. It could also leave children unequipped to handle conversations with outsiders for which their parents have not prepared them, or conversations that their parents may be unaware are occurring.

*When* conversations take place is not the only relevant question multiethnic parents have to face. Theme 3 delved into *what* parents were likely to discuss with their children surrounding the topics of race or ethnicity. This holds practical value for parents wondering what types of conversations they may have to address with their partner as well as their children. The most frequent conversations Hispanic-Caucasian couples discussed included a) the importance of their children acknowledging where they come from, b) addressing language barriers or the decision to raise their child in a bilingual household, and c) the discussion of their child's ethnic categorization as a whole.

By detailing the nature of frequent conversations that occur between multiethnic parents, therapists and psychosocial practitioners may also be better able to converse with multiethnic parents and anticipate their needs. While family therapists generally may struggle to pinpoint the exact challenges multiethnic partners experience when addressing ethnicity and race as a family system (Dein, 1997), the findings in Theme 3 may be used in therapeutically driven education programs to train providers to modify their approach in communicating with multiethnic parents and understanding what topics of conversation may be addressed. For example, the findings in Theme 3 allow practitioners to be more aware of instances in which Hispanic-Caucasian parents may be more interested in nationality compared to the discussion of ethnic categorization or social categorization. When asked how they would classify the ethnic make-up of their homes, participants overwhelmingly referred to their houses being their specific nationality of

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Hispanic origin (e.g., Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Mexican, Cuban, Venezuelan). Additionally, none of the participants referred to themselves as Caucasian throughout our interviews. All of the Caucasian participants referred to themselves as American. It follows that for Hispanic and Caucasian couples, nationality and cultural background has a more significant impact than race or ethnicity. However, this may also be in part because many people often confuse the definitions of nationality, ethnicity, and race (Morning, 2008).

In Theme 4, Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners described both neutral and negative comments and questions they received from their friends and family concerning their children and their family's ethnic categorization. Specifying the types of questions and comments often received from friends and family members help practically illustrate how multiethnic parents should manage inherently negative questions or comments they may receive from their friends and family (e.g., fundamentally racist remarks deemed skeptical by multiethnic couples). In other words, it may be helpful for individuals in multiethnic family systems to know they are not alone if they have experienced negativity from their family members. Understanding the difference between neutral and negative comments or questions holds practical value.

Family therapists can utilize the findings from Theme 4 to help members of multiethnic family systems handle the unique challenge of family identification they may experience when interacting with family members and friends. It may also be valuable for therapists to work with individuals in multiethnic relationships to determine whether jokes made by family members stem from a malicious or affable place. Family members and friends of individuals in multiethnic family systems may also benefit from realizing

their comments and questions can be ill-received even if they do not intend for the multiethnic couple to perceive their behavior as discriminatory. Therefore, findings from Theme 4 should be used practically to assist Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners' friends, family members, and peers in becoming more sensitive to the challenges multiethnic families face and how they prefer to be addressed and questioned by family and friends.

Finally, the findings from Theme 5 provide practical insight into the particular challenges Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic families face. The three main challenges participants described included a) negative comments from outsiders, b) issues stemming from immigration and documentation towards obtaining citizenship, and c) understanding and managing cultural differences. The final category participants described in Theme 5 overviewed their opinion of the best way to handle these conflicts as a multiethnic family system. Aside from participants enduring negative comments from their friends and family, participants also expressed the challenge of having to receive negative comments from people they did not know. Members in multiethnic families and family therapists may use the findings in Theme 5 to gain insight to challenges multiethnic parents face including outsiders questioning whether their children are biologically theirs or their children being asked the *what are you* question anywhere and everywhere. Knowing what types of comments and questions may occur help both therapists and members of multiethnic families prepare for negative experiences they may encounter from anywhere such as at school to other public domains such as the supermarket.

The immigration system in the United States is broken, especially for Hispanic immigrants (Hwang & Parreñas, 2010). The cases of anxiety linked with the problematic

immigration process increases exponentially each year (Gutiérrez, 2010). The current political environment creates fear for even citizens with residency credit. The practical application for the findings in Theme 5 showcase couples that have survived the turmoil of the immigration system, and come out on the other side having formed pathways to citizenship for their loved ones. Individuals in multiethnic relationships that have to withstand the challenging immigration system can find solace in the fact others know what they are going through and want the best for them. Unfortunately, without support from the justice system, the immigration system in the United States is unlikely to be fixed anytime soon (Kerwin & Warren, 2017), so individuals in multiethnic relationships can do their best to find practical ways to keep pushing through and not give up hope until their family can be together without fear and doubt being an overwhelming stressor in their lives.

Perhaps the most frequent challenge mentioned by participants: understanding their partner's diverse background and the circumstances in which they were raised can have a tremendous impact in relational satisfaction and in what parenting tactics individuals in multiethnic relationships deem appropriate. Family therapists and psychosocial practitioners can utilize the findings in Theme 5 to help individuals in multiethnic families create their compromise as to what parenting styles are best and to build their sense of normalcy. The majority of participants acknowledge that even though some might see it as a challenge that their family did not ascribe to societal expectations, the best way to combat these challenges is to work together as a family unit and create a unique definition of what is normal or what expectations their multiethnic family should meet. Family therapists and psychosocial practitioners can use these findings to help

multiethnic partners create their ethnic categorization as a family and to acknowledge that there is no *norm* they should feel they have to emulate.

5.3    Limitations

Despite the thoughtfulness and intentionality of the research design executed in this project, challenges of recruitment, the definition of population, and my presence as a researcher limit the explanatory power of the results. First, the challenges faced throughout the recruitment process yielded a small sample size. Notwithstanding the efforts detailed in the methods section, Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners were mainly unresponsive to appeals via social networks and personal contacts, which ultimately led to a smaller sample size than initially anticipated. The decision to limit my sample to one specific typology of multiethnic relationships (e.g., Hispanic-Caucasian parents) made recruiting more difficult due to the lack of an easily-accessible population. Despite this limitation, I reached theoretical saturation and saw enough consistency across the entire data set after eleven dyads to feel confident that the results that emerged in this dissertation would be insightful across the larger Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic population. However, having additional couples would help solidify my results to make sure the data represented within this dissertation represents the broader population.

The second limitation of my study was that I found several differences between different ethnic make-ups of Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners. This made saturation more difficult to obtain, because there would be saturation amongst the Mexican-Caucasian dyads, but not necessarily the Puerto Rican-Caucasian and Salvadoran-Caucasian dyads. The definition of Hispanic ethnicity proved to be a much broader category than initially predicted. For example, while Mexican, Salvadoran, and

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Venezuelan participants described issues of immigration and documentation, Puerto Rican participants do not have to worry about obtaining citizenship. Even though I reached saturation, the cultural differences between each nationality of Hispanic ethnic group proves a limitation to the explanatory value of this dissertation. By including all Hispanic individuals regardless of nationality, this dissertation does not account for experiences or challenges that may be unique to each Hispanic nationality. Future studies should perhaps break up Hispanic ethnicities by specific nationalities to see if further investigation is worth understanding particular Hispanic-Caucasian typologies of multiethnic family systems. In fact, future scholars may want to do a cross-sectional design if they are able to identify more than just these three sub-groups of Hispanic nationalities.

Third, because of my original hope to elicit face-to-face interviews, I was primarily limited to recruitment in North Carolina. While this was not necessarily problematic from an experiential standpoint because many of the participants were geographically dispersed across the United States before the time of their interview, three of my twenty-two interviews ended up having to take place via Skype (i.e., a technology providing me the opportunity to talk in a face-to-face manner from a great distance). One of the participant dyads (Juan and Jessica) resided in New Hampshire, and one of the participants (Oscar) currently lives in Juarez, Mexico. While I was not able to pick up on specific nonverbal cues provided in a face-to-face setting, utilizing Skype still afforded me the chance to see the majority of nonverbal interactions I would have missed if I had only been able to talk to participants via the telephone. Still, future studies should aim to

collect all dyadic interviews in a face-to-face setting, so the richness of cues remains consistent among all participants.

While the three interviews outside of North Carolina added to data saturation, another limitation of this dissertation is that the data could be skewed because nineteen of the twenty-two participants were currently living in North Carolina. The fourth limitation stems from the geographical location of participants. Several participants mentioned the fact they live in North Carolina might have influenced the fact they had experienced some challenges that were unique to living in the southern United States. For example, Ralph mentioned that "the biggest problem [was] that [they're] in North Carolina." He believed that if they were back with their friends and family in Arizona or California, they would be less likely to experience some of the challenges they currently experienced in North Carolina (i.e., "it would be a lot easier for them to experience more of their Mexican heritage"). Max is worried that his son will experience issues with dating a Caucasian girl specifically because they live in a place where it is not as widely accepted to date outside of one's race or ethnic category. Max says, "We're not in Miami. This is North Carolina. Things are different here." Fernando explains that his life was completely different when his family moved from California to North Carolina. He worries for his kids because:

> In California, you can't even tell what race is what because everybody spoke Spanish and English. It was just growing up there and going to a school where you were just kind of taught both, and I don't know. Then coming to North Carolina, it's a little different because now everybody's Mexican, American, African [...] They separate it. Going from California to North Carolina [...] it's all divided here.

Future researchers may want to combat this issue by gathering data from a more geographically diverse sample. Without gathering a sample from a diverse geographic

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landscape, it is hard to determine whether the results surrounding identity issues are underrepresented or magnified by the majority of participants residing in North Carolina. Even though saturation was met within this dissertation, it is a limitation that this data may only represent Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic partners living in North Carolina.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this dissertation came from the various ages of the participant's children. Only six of the eleven couples had discussed race and ethnicity with their children. The majority of participants (four of the five couples) who had yet to discuss race and ethnicity with their children had children all under the age of three. Even though some of the participants mentioned their children bringing up conversations surrounding race and ethnicity at age four, five, and six, it seems that the majority of participants who had yet to initiate these conversations had children who were much younger (i.e., two of the couples had one-year-old children). Because of the challenging experience I had with recruitment, I chose not to put age restrictions on participants' children. Future researchers may benefit from making sure participants' children are at least six years of age. This will help make sure more participants have had the opportunity to already discuss race or ethnicity with their children before the study. Since one of the research questions overviewed whether or not these conversations took place, it was not as crucial in this dissertation. Future scholars would benefit from being able to interview more parents who have already had discussions surrounding race or ethnicity with their children in order to gain a better picture into what conversations take place for more than six couples.

Finally, while I was able to gather rich data using face-to-face interviews, my presence as a researcher may have created face threatening situations for participants. It is

possible that participants were not as comfortable sharing their narrative stories with me, primarily if they felt the information they were asked to share was sensitive (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Additionally, according to Riessman (2008), the nature of interviewing does not always allow participants enough time to engage in intentional or productive thought processes that enable them to adequately reflect on their experiences as they would have if they had been able to write their responses to their questions ahead of time. Future researchers may wish to allow participants a period to know questions ahead of time or leave a debriefing period of reflection at the end of the interview, allowing participants to reflect on their interview as a dyad and send in any edits, changes, or further comments they would like to share as a family unit.

Taken together, this study speaks to personal experiences of Hispanic-Caucasian parents and the co-creation of social identity within their unique multiethnic family systems. Refining recruitment procedures through formalized interpersonal relationships with Hispanic-Caucasian support groups, accepting and refining the definition of Hispanic ethnicity based on cultural background and traditions, restricting data collection based on the age of their children, and seeking opportunities to expand current knowledge through interviewing multiethnic families as an entire family unit would add to current scholarship regarding communication within multiethnic family systems, the co-creation of social identity, and extend Soliz et al.'s (2009) evaluation of accommodation within multiethnic families. Despite these limitations, the results of this study contributed to existing literature by (a) expanding our theoretical knowledge of multiethnic partners' reactions to (non)accommodation, (b) increasing the understanding of the co-creation of social identity in multiethnic family systems, (c) providing insight into the intersection of

intergroup and interpersonal communication theory applied to the context of multiethnic family systems, and (d) revealing practical application for how multiethnic family members can manage challenges in their unique family system. In short, while this work extends the use of communication within multiethnic family systems to explore how multiethnic families co-create social identity within their family and provides some support for conceptualizing ethnic identity as a co-constructed process, there are still several avenues future communication scholars can explore in order to expand our current knowledge and understanding of communication within multiethnic family systems.

5.4     Future Directions

This dissertation provides a foundation for understanding how communication manifests in multiethnic relationships, but there are several capacities for research stemming from this study. Hispanic-Caucasian partners and multiethnic family systems have been scarcely researched within the field of communication studies. After all, the last communication book dedicated to communication within interracial families was published 20 years ago. Even though the idea of researching interracial and multiethnic families has been prevalent in the discipline for twenty years, few scholars have made an effort to expand the original insights provided by Socha and Diggs in 1999. In order to add to this body of literature, future communication scholars should consider (a) interviewing entire family units in order to gain the child's perspective as well, (b) interviewing Hispanic-Caucasian typologies from one homogenous Hispanic nationality, (c) recruiting on a larger scale so information can be applied to a broader population and comparison between ethnic groups can be distinguished, and (d) utilizing other intergroup

and interpersonal communication theories in order to delve further into the intersection of interpersonal and intergroup communication within multiethnic families.

First, scholars might explore a more authentic systems perspective by considering interviewing the entire family system (i.e., getting the children's perspective as well). If researchers focus on interviewing family units where children are between the ages of 5 and 10 (where the majority of these conversations seem to occur), scholars would be able to gain insight to not only parent perspectives of their child's co-creation of social identity but would be able to ask multiethnic children to reflect on their own experiences. Additionally, having access to observational or recorded family conversations may be beneficial for future researchers to evaluate conversations within the family as they naturally occur.  For another perspective, future scholars could also interview in-laws for their perspectives of how they feel about the objective acts of (non)accommodation of their adult children's partners. Notably, parents may have one perspective of their children's experiences, but scholars will never know the full picture until an effort is made to interview entire family systems.

Second, future scholars should consider the different experiences individuals with Hispanic ethnicity might endure. In this dissertation, some participants expressed different challenges based on their nationality, not necessarily their Hispanic ethnicity. While some experiences did overlap within the findings of this dissertation, not all Hispanics have similar backgrounds and cultural traditions. Researchers may benefit from interviewing Hispanic-Caucasian couples from each homogenous Hispanic origin (e.g., all Mexican participants, all Venezuelan participants). Hitlin, Brown, and Elder (2007) provide further investigation on how individuals who classify as Hispanic may not

adequately fall into one group. Similar to how not all Caucasian individuals (i.e., people from the United States and England, etc.) may have different life experiences, the life experiences of individuals from various Hispanic nationalities may vary depending on country of origin, time in the United States, as well as citizenship status. Future scholars should consider further investigation of each of these Hispanic nationalities until reaching saturation.

While this is one avenue for further exploration, an additional way to increase sample size would be to extend this study to include all interracial and multiethnic couples. Even though one of the strengths of this study is that communication within Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic relationships has seldom been examined, recruiting on a larger scale would allow scholars to provide inferences to a broader population. This would enable future scholars the ability to distinguish comparisons between ethnic and racial groups. Socha and Diggs (1999) mostly examined communication within African-American and Caucasian interracial family units; communication scholars have the opportunity to continue diving into the unique experiences of other interracial and multiethnic dyads. The broader our understanding of communication within multiethnic and interracial communication dyads, the more in-depth analysis we can make between different multiethnic and interracial dyad typologies.

The fourth way future scholars could expand upon the data found within this dissertation would be to further explore when and how children initiate conversations about multiethnic identity with their parents. Recorded family conversations would be one way to showcase how children originally brought up the discussion surrounding their social identity with their parents. The developmental position of the children (e.g., age,

where they are brought up, and life experiences) may greatly impact how and when they choose to ask their parents about their ethnic identification. These coming of age conversations are vital for communication scholars to understand.

Finally, future scholars should utilize other intergroup and interpersonal communication theories to delve further into the intersection of interpersonal and intergroup communication within multiethnic families. One sociological theory that communication scholars may find interesting to use as a lens for examining interactions within multiethnic family systems is symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1962; 1973). Symbolic interactionism is a way of thinking about the mind, self, and society that has significantly contributed to the sociocultural paradigm of communication theory (Ballis Lal, 1995; Manis & Meltzer, 1978). With its foundations in the field of sociology, symbolic interactionism (SI) explains how people come to form shared meaning after spending a significant amount of time with others. These shared meanings are created by using specific terms and actions which causes them to understand events in particular ways. SI may prove interesting to communication scholars wishing to dive deeper into how multiethnic partners create social identity and come to a shared definition of their family ethnic identification.

Additionally, future scholars may also consider using the common ingroup identity model (CIIM; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) as a lens to gain insight into communication within multiethnic family systems. The premise of the CIIM is that individuals will go through a decategorization and recategorization process to help define and understand members from an outgroup based on four antecedents. These antecedents include pre-contact (i.e., if the individual has ever had contact with a member of their

outgroup before), environmental factors (i.e., what status comparisons or ecological/situational factors in which the individual has contact with the outgroup member may be at play), similarities to groups/individuals (i.e., the similarities the individual and the individual outgroup member share), and interdependence (i.e., how both the individual and the outgroup member work to benefit each other). While I chose not to focus on this intergroup communication model in this dissertation because of time and resources, future scholars may want to utilize the CIIM to understand how multiethnic families may decide to create their unique ingroup.

5.5    Conclusion

This dissertation helps to extend intergroup communication and interpersonal communication research into the realm of Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems. Practically, these findings indicate a clear need for the development of theory-based communication interventions, educational programs, and support groups for multiethnic family members that are questioning how, why, or when they should engage in conversations surrounding ethnicity with their children from a young age. Future researchers may also consider how these findings can be used to ease important supportive communication and everyday interactions with romantic partners, family members, friends, and peers to address individuals in Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family systems when discussing social identification and their family's ethnic identity. It is also important to note that Hispanic-Caucasian partners may want to manage confrontation or unique challenges they experience as a multiethnic family by creating their own sense of normalcy by trying not to ascribe to societal norms.

In general, family communication may be difficult to navigate; Hispanic-Caucasian multiethnic family members experience distinctive challenges monoethnic families do not have to endure. It is unwise for family members to act like these challenges do not exist, since the majority of participants found their children were asked the *what are you* question by the age of six. Utilizing open communication within multiethnic family systems and acknowledging that the best course of action is sometimes to tackle conversations surrounding race and ethnicity from a young age is the first step Hispanic-Caucasian partners need to take to create their sense of normalcy. Communication scholars are well positioned to conceptualize, measure, and apply communication in multiethnic family systems research. My hope is communication scholars will seize the valuable opportunity to extend the intersection of intergroup and interpersonal communication theory to improve the challenging experiences multiethnic families endure.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your age? _____

What is your biological sex?
Male _____
Female_____
Other_____

How many children do you have? _____

How old is/are your child/ren?  _____

What is your ethnic background/race (please select all that apply)?
_____ African American / Non-Hispanic
_____ Caucasian / Non-Hispanic
_____ Hispanic*
_____ Asian / Pacific Islander
_____ American Indian / Alaskan Native
_____ Other (Please specify: _____ )

*If Hispanic please specify: _____

What is your highest education level? _____

What is (if any) your religious affiliation?  _____

What is your child(ren)'s ethnic background/race (please select all that apply)?
_____ African American / Non-Hispanic
_____ Caucasian / Non-Hispanic
_____ Hispanic*
_____ Asian / Pacific Islander
_____ American Indian / Alaskan Native
_____ Other (Please specify: _____ )
*If Hispanic please specify: _____

What is your child(ren)'s sex? *For multiple children please write out each child's sex (i.e., 2 female)
Male _____
Female_____
Other_____

How long have you/were you and your partner been a couple?_____

What is your current relationship status with your partner?
_____ Single/Not Together     _____ Dating _____ Married          _____
Separated/Divorced*

*If divorced/separated, please indicate your current custody arrangement _____

What is your current individual relationship status?

_____ Single _____ Dating          _____ Married          _____Separated/Divorced

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APPENDIX 2.  PARENT NARRATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*First, I'd like to learn a little about your experience with your partner. Please try to think as broadly as you can about your experience thus far.*

1. Can you start by telling me the story of how you and your partner met? (Probe: Did you ever decide to become exclusive? If so, when did you decide to become exclusive? Was there anyone you told first? Anyone you avoided telling? Why?)

2. Can you tell me about your family members? How do they get along with you? How do they get along with your partner? Was there any feedback (positive or negative) when you started dating your partner?

3. Can you tell me about your partner's family members? How do they get along with your partner? How do they get along with you? Was there any feedback (positive or negative) when you started dating your partner from your partner's family?

4. Can you take me through the big "stages" of your relationship? When did you find out you were going to have a child with your partner? Can you tell me about that experience? (Probe: What, if anything, did you discuss about your child being interracial/ethnic before it was born? Did your friends or family bring up any questions about identity?

*Now, I'd like to talk to you about your experience as a parent and how you talk about your experience of being an interracial/ethnic family with your child(ren) and with others.*

5. What is your definition of family?

6. Can you tell me about your reaction to finding out you and your partner were pregnant? How did your friends and family react to the news? Was there any feedback (positive or negative) when you told others you were going to have your first child?

7. How do you define your racial/ethnic categorization as a family? How does that compare to how you perceive your friends and family members' define your families racial/ethnic categorization? What about how your partner's friends and family members define your families racial/ethnic categorization?

8a. When does race become a salient topic of conversation? What conversations (if any) have you had with your partner about racial/ethnic classification?

8b. Who started the conversation? How do these conversations progress once they start? Do you or your partner change the way you talk? What were you or your partner trying to achieve throughout these conversations? What do you talk about?

9a. What conversations (if any) have you had with your child(ren) about racial/ethnic classification?

9b. Who started the conversation? How old was the child when conversations started? When did they emerge? What do you talk about?

10a. If you have had conversations surrounding the topic of racial/ethnic classification, how have these conversations gone? Did the child initiate conversation or did you? Did the child ask questions? Have you had more than one conversation? Do you feel the(se) conversation(s) went well or poorly? Please explain.

10b. If you have not had conversations surrounding the topic of racial/ethnic classification, what barriers do you believe have prevented these conversations from taking place?

11. Have you experienced any challenges as an interracial or multiethnic couple? Have you experienced any challenges when helping your child form his or her social identity? Do you believe there are challenges you or other interracial/multiethnic couples could experience in the future when discussing racial and social identity with your/their children?

12. How has your family identity (if at all) been shaped by societal outcomes and expectations?

*We're almost done – I just have a few final questions for you:*

13. What would you say to an interracial or multiethnic couple that just found out they were expecting their first child? Any advice you'd like to give them?

14. What questions do you have for me?

15. What else should I know about the topics we've discussed today?

APPENDIX 3. CODEBOOK

## Theme I: RQ 1: CAT → Convergence & Divergence from Nuclear Families Expectations

| Communication Accommodation | Description of Reactions | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| *Positive Reactions to Accommodation* | The partner or participant expresses changing to fit in with nuclear family expectations and there being a positive outcome associated with said change<br><br>Include adopting new language, culture, acknowledgments of appreciation | "I appreciate his trying to do things and celebrate things that he wouldn't normally celebrate to make my family happy"<br><br>"I wanted to be in touch with things that made him Puerto Rican so I've tried learning a little Spanish. He says he loves that about me."<br><br>"She's been really helpful; she's been trying to learn my culture." |
| *Negative Reactions to Nonaccommodation* | There are negative reactions (i.e., tension created) to the partner or participants wanting to stay true to themselves or not change in any way to fit into their partner's family dynamic<br><br>Focused on tension created due to nonaccommodation (i.e., overaccommodation or underaccommodation) or a lack of effort to change | "I think she [mother-in-law] got more upset with me because I didn't care"<br><br>"I realize that all those people [partner's family] hate me because I won't be who they want me to be."<br><br>"It's hard because I know my parents want her to learn Spanish and she won't tell them about the Spanish she speaks…it's just hard." |
| *Positive Reactions to Nonaccommodation* | Even though the partner or participant wants to stay true to themselves or not change in any way to fit into their partner's family dynamic this is okay<br><br>Allowing the participant or partner to embrace who they are as an individual or acknowledging that accommodation is not always necessary | "It never mattered to me though. It was okay she didn't want to learn"<br><br>"They always accepted me…I never felt like I had to do anything to make them love me. They just accepted me as I was"<br><br>"She doesn't have to do anything. Anyone would love her. She fits in with anyone and everyone" |

**Theme II: RQ 2: SIT → Discussion of ethnic categorization as a couple/family (Part I: Did it occur?)**

| Types of Comments/ Questions | Description of Comments/Questions | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| *Neutral Questions and Comments from Family and Friends* | Participants described comments and questions from their family and friends that were inherently neutral (i.e., not positive or negative).<br><br>These usually included behaving in a joking manner, questioning what language was being spoken in the home, and what cultural traditions the participants considered "normal" in their families. | "Sometimes my mom or some of her family members will come over and they won't understand some of the stuff that we do so they ask questions about that but I just explain it to them."<br><br>"Maria's cousins will always not necessarily make fun of […] but give them [their kids] a hard time for being so white. But it's all in good fun. It's just a part of the culture and of growing up."<br><br>"They were wondering if they were going to speak Spanish because they need to be able to talk with their *abuelita* [grandmother]." |
| *Negative Comments from Family and Friends* | Participants described comments and questions from their family and friends that were inherently negative and often times racist in nature.<br><br>These included family members or friends mentioning they would rather participants be with someone that was from their same ethnic background or that they were skeptical about the relationship as a whole. | "Family members making comments like "*how's it feel to marry a wetback?*" or like throwing racial slurs in general."<br><br>"Mom has gone on rampages talking about how she's worried that he's not going to be able to speak English because we only speak Spanish with him."<br><br>"My family would prefer if Tina was Puerto Rican […] they've straight up told me." |

**Theme III: RQ2: SIT → Discussion of ethnic categorization as a couple/family (Part II: What did they talk about**

| Whether or not the discussion has occurred | Description of Choice | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| *Have Never Discussed Ethnic Categorization* | While all couples may have touched on the subject of race/ethnicity as a couple, several parents had not yet had that discussion with their children<br><br>Two subthemes include parents waiting for the child to initiate the conversation and parents who plan on initiating the conversation when the child is older | "We've never really discussed race with them unless it's been a problem – which is probably a problem"<br><br>"I guess if they have questions when they're older we'll just have to handle it the best we can but I'm not planning on bringing it up unless they do."<br><br>"We want to initiate the conversation with him. We'll probably bring it up around five or six. Either right before he starts school or sometime around there." |
| *Parents Have Discussed Ethnic Categorization* | Parents that had discussed race/ethnic categorization with their children did so because the child initiated the conversation.<br><br>Brought up based on the child initiating the conversation on their own or because outside family members asking the child the "What are you" question | "Our kids initiate most of our conversations about it."<br><br>"They don't know where they fit in. You don't know – they say they're not Mexican enough for the Mexicans and not American enough for the Americans [*laughs*]. That's how they explain it."<br><br>"Last year he was in pre-school and he came home asking if he was white. And I was like "Why are you asking me if you're white?" And apparently his classmates, in preschool, were having a discussion about *what he was*." |

## Theme IV: RQ 3: SCT → Family and Friends Questioning Identity

| What Type of Information was Discussed | Description of Conversation | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| *Acknowledging the Importance of Children Understanding Their Family History* | Hispanic-Caucasian parents wanted to make sure their children understood their cultural history as well as their Hispanic heritage<br><br>These conversations occurred both within couple dyads and conversations with the Hispanic-Caucasian family as a whole | "We have Venezuelan stuff all over our home […] We both want Aiden to know where he comes from on both sides."<br><br>"Just be proud of who you are and be proud of where you come from"<br><br>"He should embrace both, but if he relates to one side that's completely fine, but he should still acknowledge the other and he should never be ashamed of either way – of being Mexican or being from the United States." |
| *Acknowledging and Addressing Language Barriers* | The discussion of whether or not children would grow up in a bilingual household was most prevalent in the couple stage of Hispanic-Caucasian parent dyad conversations<br><br>These conversations occurred for the most part before their first child was born and continued throughout the child's developmental stages | "I've been very on top of making sure that we're speaking both languages around our child so that he grows up and knows both languages."<br><br>"We both want Aiden to be bilingual so we speak predominately Spanish at home."<br><br>"Ben cannot speak the language so we can't really raise her bilingual." |
| *Discussion of Children's Ethnic Categorization as a Whole* | Hispanic-Caucasian parents have decided to either try to make their households an even 50/50 or to become more Americanized<br><br>Often brought up with the notion of blending the family and blending cultures or discussions of how to connect children to their history | "I think we'll tell him he's half and half"<br><br>"I would like to say it is a pretty solid 50/50"<br><br>"I categorize our family as *blended* like *for real blended*. Not just his, hers, and mine, but culturally you know I'm from the north, he's from the south so we have so many flavors" |

**Theme V: RQ4: SCT → Challenges/How the family feels they fit into society?**

| Type of Challenge/ Way to Handle Challenge | Description of Challenge/Way to Handle Challenge | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| *Negative Comments from Outsiders* | Aside from participants having to endure negative comments from friends and family, this subtheme includes any negative comment made by someone the participant did not consider to be a friend or family member.<br><br>Participants brought up that Caucasian partners were treated differently from outsiders, whether or not the parents were biologically related to their children, outsiders bringing up the *what are you* question, and racially driven questions about immigration and documentation. | "I think one time she went to a doctor's appointment and this lady was being rude to her and saying like "you don't know English" or just judging her skin color or race."<br>"Fran usually picks him up but I went to pick him up one day and they asked Franklin if I was his dad […] like they legitimately thought I was trying to steal my own child."<br>"I'd get people that would say, "Well, what are they" and I'd be like, "What do you mean? They're *girls*." It's just something you never think you'd have to explain to someone before it's happening to you." |
| *Issues Stemming from Immigration and Documentation Towards Obtaining Citizenship* | Participants described tensions and challenges caused by the difficult immigration process.<br><br>Including the difficult paper process, how long the immigration process lasts, participants feeling outcast, and Hispanic partners feeling like their Caucasian counterparts could not relate to their situation. | "Having a justice system that makes it very difficult for any immigrant to become a legal citizen in a lawful manner."<br><br>"It's horrible here [in the United States] to try and get your citizenship if you're Hispanic and it's horrible there [in Mexico] to even just have access to the United States."<br><br>"I feel like it's scary. Luckily, we haven't had any really close friends get deported but it's still one of those things that could happen." |

| *Understanding Cultural Differences* | Participants described instances where their cultural differences made an impact in their relationship. These differences often led to misunderstandings or misinterpretations that presented a unique challenge for multiethnic partners.<br><br>For example, being able to relate to one partners experiences or understand their point of view, why immigrant participants may miss their home country, or discussions on how participants were raised. | "Some days believe it or not […] an immigrant can wake up and say, *I miss my house. I miss my life a little bit there* [in their home country] but an American just can't understand what it feels like to miss your home country."<br><br>"My mom is very loving and caring and nice and she can be a bit of a worrywart but her family [Daniella's family] is like the opposite like they don't worry about anything and they're kind of mean. Like they cut each other down to bring them up kind of thing."<br><br>We have a lot of cultural differences but that's what makes us great. We sometimes joke about it a lot." |
|---|---|---|
| *Not Ascribing to Societal Norms/Expectations* | Even though participants acknowledged that some might see it as a challenge that their family did not ascribe to societal norms, the easiest way to combat this challenge is to not care what others think.<br><br>Participants being able to create their own expectations and what standards they deemed normal. There was also a lot of mention about not caring or paying attention to what outsiders had to say. | "It's not that way they're saying isn't nice it's just that it can be kind of weird that people feel the need to comment on it at all. That's why we just try to do our own thing and no worry about what other people think"<br><br>"We do what we want to do […] You can't live your life trying to live up to other people's expectations or what other people think is right."<br><br>"I don't care what other people think because I feel like our situation is not your typical situation […] and we knew that from the get-go." |

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    *cultural understanding* (pp. 51–70). New York: Teachers College Press.

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    Cengage.

# ANNA-CARRIE H. BECK

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## EDUCATION

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**M.A., West Virginia University, Communication Theory & Research, August 2014**
Department of Communication
Emphases in Interpersonal and Instructional Communication

**B.A., University of North Carolina, Greensboro, December 2012**
Communication Studies, Minor in Business Administration and Economics

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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**Full-time Faculty Member, Coastal Carolina Community College,** January 2018 – *present*

**Advisor, Coastal Carolina Community College,** January 2019 – *present*

**Instructor of Record, University of Kentucky,** August 2014 – December 2017

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky,** August 2015 – December 2016

**Instructor of Record, West Virginia University,** January 2014 – May 2014

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, West Virginia University,** August 2013 – Dec. 2013

## PUBLICATIONS

### Published Refereed Journal Articles

Dragojevic, M., Tatum, N. T., **Beck, A. C.,** & McAninch, K. (2018). Effects of accent strength expectancy violations on language attitudes. *Communication Studies, 69,* pp–pp.
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Frisby, B. N., Sexton, B. T., Buckner, M. M., **Beck, A. C.,** Kaufmann, R. (2018). Peers and instructors as sources of distraction from a cognitive load perspective. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 12*, Article 6, 1–10.
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Frisby, B. N., Kaufmann, R., & **Beck, A. C.** (2016). Mediated group development and dynamics: An examination of video chatting, Twitter, and Facebook in group assignments. *Communication Teacher, 30*, 215–227.
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### Published Refereed Book Chapters

Tatum, N. T., **Beck, A. C.,** & Frey, T. K. (2017). Apples to apples: Connecting disconnected ideas. In J. S. Seiter, J. Peeples, & M. L. Sanders (Eds.), *Great ideas for teaching students (G.I.F.T.S.) in communication.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Frey, T. K., Tatum, N. T., & **Beck, A. C.** (2017). Is it really JUST Twitter?!: Agenda setting in social media. In J. S. Seiter, J. Peeples, & M. L. Sanders (Eds.), *Great ideas for teaching students (G.I.F.T.S.) in communication.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

Dissertation Year Fellowship, College of Communication and Information, UKY, 2017-2018

Outstanding Scholarship in Interpersonal Communication, CGSA, University of Kentucky, 2017

Instructional Communication Research Fellow, University of Kentucky, 2017

Interpersonal Communication Research Fellow, University of Kentucky, 2017

Attendee of NCA's 2016 Teaching Institute for Graduate Teaching Assistants in Communication

Travel Award, The Graduate School, University of Kentucky (IARR 2016)

College of Communication and Information Graduate Teaching Excellence Award, 2015-2016

Presidential Graduate Fellowship Nominee, University of Kentucky, 2016

Interpersonal Communication Research Fellow, University of Kentucky, 2016

Instructional Communication Research Fellow, University of Kentucky, 2015

Travel Award, Department of Communication, West Virginia University (NCA 2013)

Lambda Pi Eta: National Communication Association Honor's Society, Lifetime Member

National Society of Leadership, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Lifetime Member

National Society of Collegiate Scholars, UNC, Greensboro, Lifetime Member