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COLORISM AND ACCULTURATION: DISCRIMINATORY EFFECTS ON LATINX ADOLESCENTS

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COLORISM AND ACCULTURATION: DISCRIMINATORY EFFECTS ON LATINX

ADOLESCENTS

By

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A Capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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ABSTRACT

The current study examined associations between risk contexts (i.e., immigration discrimination, classism, colorism), acculturation (i.e., assimilation, separation, integration, marginalization), and adjustment (i.e., school belonging, substance use, GPA) among U.S. Latinx adolescents. Additionally, we considered how gender may moderate study associations. Participants for this study include a subsample of Latinx adolescents from a larger study with two public high schools in the western United States (N=703, M_{age}=15.93 (SD=1.22); 51.3% male). Preliminary results revealed that experiencing more colorism, classism, and immigrant discrimination was associated with a higher inclination for *separation* and substance use (e.g., tobacco, cannabis, alcohol). Specifically, Latinx adolescents were more likely to reject U.S. culture and form stronger ties with the culture and values of their country of origin, as well as engage in substance use, when they experienced higher levels of risk contexts. Regarding differences by gender, bi-variate associations revealed that higher levels of *separation* were linked with higher GPA for Latinx female adolescents only. Male adolescents, on the other hand, were more likely to report higher levels of *assimilation* to U.S. culture, in conjunction with higher levels of colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination. Follow-up analyses will include testing how components of the acculturation process mediate associations between each risk context and adjustment, as well as differences by gender. Findings have implications for how Latinx adolescents navigate risky contexts and the critical role of acculturation processes in relation to healthy adjustment.

Keywords: Latinx adolescents, acculturation, colorism, mental health, substance use

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Introduction

The U.S. Latino/a, Latinx, Hispanic population has become the nation's largest racial/ethnic minority group, comprising 63.7 million people, accounting for 19% of the total U.S. population, and has steadily increased over the past few decades with projections estimating a Latino/a, Latinx, Hispanic population of 98 million people by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). While this is informative of the overall population growth, it's imperative to consider that the population of young Latinx adolescents will also continue to majorly expand in the coming years. Therefore it's crucial to create a space that not only accounts for the growth of this population, but it's also vital to create an environment that fosters opportunities for Latinx adolescents to flourish and positively develop as they will increasingly make up a substantial portion of the U.S. population.

To create these positive environments, it's essential to gain an understanding of how social risks such as colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination may impact the acculturative of Latinx adolescents in the United States, as previous scholars have found that adolescents are specifically vulnerable to the detrimental impacts of discrimination considering that adolescence is a time where major identity development is occurring (Kiang et. al, 2020). In relation to the acculturative process, these instances of othering may also have implications for the adoption, rejection, or blending of U.S. culture and Latinx adolescents' culture of origin. The adjustment of Latinx adolescents depends on the trajectory of their acculturative process, as certain subtypes of acculturation are linked to risky behaviors (Schwartz et. al., 2013). It's imperative to unveil this, as previous scholars have addressed that Latinx adolescents are especially likely to develop mental health difficulties and risky behaviors (Kapke et., al., 2016).

Background

Colorism

Colorism has previously been conceptualized as discrimination stemming from a difference in skin tone; where individuals with lighter skin tones are privileged in society, however those with darker skin complexions face systemic inequalities and oppression in their everyday lives (Centeno et al., 2023 & Hunter, 2013). It's imperative to mention that colorism plays a major role when it comes to the differing levels of discrimination people experience, as people of color with darker skin tones tend to report facing more discriminatory experiences compared to those with lighter skin tones (Hunter 2007). It's also important to note that the present study conceptualized colorism according to the Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index (ADDI); a 15-item measure intended to assess adolescent distress in relation to perceived discriminatory experiences due to race (Fisher et. al., 2000). For the current study, participants were asked questions from the original scale according to experiences based on their skin color. Furthermore, this scale distinguishes discrimination experiences into three subcategories; *institutional discrimination*, *educational discrimination*, and *peer discrimination*. *Institutional discrimination* relates to ethnic minority racial discrimination stemming from foundational organizations and/or establishments in society, this can look like a bias toward one's country of origin, language, etc. (Lim et. al., 2022). *Educational discrimination* refers to racially motivated discrimination in the education system (e.g. having assumptions made about one's intelligence based off of their ethnic/racial identity). Lastly, *peer discrimination* encapsulates racial discrimination coming from people who share similar characteristics (e.g. age, socioeconomic

status, etc.) with one. For the current study, subscales were renamed to *institutional colorism*, *educational colorism*, and *peer colorism* to better reflect the colorism measure.

Within the context of Latinx communities, there has been a call to action in recent years for more research on colorism, as Latinx communities have historically been grouped with other ethnic minorities, despite their differing cultural contexts (Crutchfield et. al., 2022; Delgado, et. al.; Fuentes et. al., 2021). Even then, much of the research still tends to focus on impacts on adults, presenting a need for more literature on the impacts colorism has on Latinx adolescents (Centeno et. al. 2023). However, available literature has informed the field that Latinx adolescents with darker skin tones are less likely to complete high school, and are viewed as less intelligent within and outside of their ethnic communities (Ryabov, 2016). Previous work has also revealed that peer and adult discrimination is linked to lowered self-esteem and depressive symptoms for Latinx adolescents (Kiang et. al., 2020). Additionally, literature on the impacts of colorism on Hispanic adolescents' health has indicated that having a darker skin tone is associated with poorer self-reported health, a higher chance of becoming obese, and a higher body mass index (BMI); compared to Hispanic adolescents with lighter skin tones (Perreira et. al., 2019). Furthermore, studies also show the importance gender has on implications for Latinx adolescents' experiences with colorism, as gender was found to mediate the relationship between peer discrimination and depressive outcomes in that female Latinx adolescents experience higher rates of depressive symptoms (Kiang et. al., 2020). Lastly, a recent study on colorism and substance use among Latinx adolescents has illustrated that experiencing colorism within the community and at school is linked to Latinx adolescents' use of tobacco and illicit substances (Centeno, et. al., 2023). While the literature on colorism and its effects on Latinx adolescents has

provided significant findings, it continues to be an understudied subject, hence the need for further research in this area, and the consideration of its possible impact on the acculturative experiences of Latinx adolescents.

Classism

Classism is described as discrimination based on social class, commonly relating to discrimination towards individuals and groups from low-income backgrounds (Limbert and Williams, 2014). Classism was conceptualized through Fisher's Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index, however key phrases (e.g.,. "r*acially* insulting names" was changed to "called insulting names") relating to race in the original scale were removed from questions in the current study (Fisher et. al., 2000). Furthermore, the survey prompted participants to answer the questions according to experiences influenced by their parents' education, jobs, and financial capital to encapsulate the relation of participants' answers towards experiencing classism. Similarly to the colorism scale, classism was further categorized into three subscales to capture varying sources of classism, including; *institutional classism*, *educational classism*, and *peer classism*.

Previous literature on the effects of classism on Latinx adolescents suggests that while lower parental socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to worse Latinx adolescent mental health, relative to discriminatory experiences, higher parental SES is linked to Latinx adolescents reporting lower self-esteem and more depressive symptoms (Rios-Salas & Larson, 2015). Additionally, under-resourced schools, violence, and poverty have been linked to hindering Latinx adolescents' educational attainment, physical and mental health, and overall life outcomes (Azmitia, 2021). Consequently, Latinx adolescents are more likely to experience added stressors

brought about by classism and discrimination (Edwards et. al., 2014). Overall, Latinx

adolescents from low SES backgrounds, are likely to experience more mental health and

educational attainment difficulties.

Immigration Status Discrimination

Immigration status discrimination is based on the inequalities and unfair treatment of

individuals based on their immigration status (or U.S. citizenship status); which includes housing

segregation, access barriers for quality healthcare, and workplace exploitation (Szaflarski &

Bauldry, 2019). Immigration status discrimination was also operationalized from the Adolescent

Discrimination Distress Index, however, questions were asked in relation to identifying as an

immigrant, and racial contexts from questions on the original scale were also removed (Fisher et.

al., 2000). Similarly to the two previous scales, immigration status discrimination was also

subdivided into *institutional immigration discrimination*, *educational immigration

discrimination*, and *peer immigration discrimination.*

Prior studies have revealed that discrimination based on assumed immigration status, in

particular being perceived as a foreigner, is linked to negative effects on Latinx adolescents'

academic and career aspirations, along with their expectations to experience more barriers

throughout time about their desired future occupations (Constante et. al., 2021). While

ethnic-racial identity, cultural knowledge, and familism have been revealed as protective factors

for foreigner objectification (assumed foreigner or immigrant status based on ethnic-racial

group), institutions tend to push for the assimilation of Latinx adolescents in the U.S. rather than

encouraging their cultural socialization and traditions (Cavanaugh et. al., 2017). Moreover,

Latinx adolescents also experience higher rates of discrimination according to their parent's

immigration status, indicating that they experience immigration discrimination both directly and indirectly related to their own immigration status ([Edwards et. al., 2014](); [Cordova et. al., 2010]()). This further exposes Latinx adolescents to stressors related to experiencing immigration discrimination and, thus perpetuates a cycle of detrimental outcomes on their well-being and overall development ([Torres et. al., 2022]()).

Acculturation

Acculturation is broadly defined by the cultural, psychological, and behavioral changes associated to the interaction between two or more cultural groups; in which either cultural group or both cultural groups see changes to their culture of origin ([Sam & Berry, 2010]()). However, it is frequently observed that non-dominant ethnic groups undergo the most change to their culture of origin in response to interacting with dominant cultures. Furthermore, we based the conceptualization of acculturation on Berry's Model of Acculturation, which categorizes the acculturative process into four points of analysis ([Berry, 1997]()). This includes *assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation* is described as the process of adopting the culture and values of a dominant culture that is different to one's ethnic culture. While scholars have previously used the terms "*acculturation*" and "*assimilation*" interchangeably, Berry's model notes that acculturation is a general process, while assimilation is a more nuanced subcategory or phase of acculturation ([Sam & Berry, 2010]()). *Separation* relates to sustaining and rejecting the broader dominant culture. *Integration* refers to the incorporation of traits from the dominant culture while continuing to uphold traits from one's own culture. Lastly, *marginalization* pertains to the rejection and lack of connection to both the dominant culture, and to one's ethnic culture. Importantly, the notion of a dominant culture can vary throughout

differing geographical contexts, however, in this current study, the dominant culture refers to the general American culture in the United States.

Considering these varying points of analysis when discussing the acculturative process is necessary, as this alone offers insights into the complexities and multifaceted nature of the acculturative process. The intricacies of this process also become more niche when considering the adaptation of ethnically minoritized groups in the United States, and how this process affects these communities. This is precisely why it is imperative to use an intersectional lens to understand the acculturative processes the growing Latinx community undergoes, and why it's specifically important to address the impacts acculturation has on the development of Latinx adolescents; and the future of the Latinx community.

Previous literature has revealed that differences in Latinx adolescents' immigration status (ex. being born in a foreign country or the U.S.) is linked to the trajectory their acculturation process takes and therefore can be indicative of differing developmental outcomes ([Hale & Kuperminc, 2021](#)). This indicates that despite Latinx adolescents resonating with a specific acculturative adaptation strategy (e.g. assimilation, separation, etc.), the developmental outcomes vary due to differing immigration contexts. For instance, U.S.-born Latinx adolescents who report more *assimilation* tend to have lower academic expectations and motivations, leading to lowered academic achievement compared to immigrant Latinx adolescents ([DeCarlo Santiago et. al., 2014](#)). Similarly, higher *assimilation* is associated with substance use, alcohol use, risky sexual behavior, and internalizing issues (ex. depressive symptoms) for U.S. born Latinx adolescents ([Hale & Kuperminc, 2021](#)). Despite these varying negative outcomes, U.S.-born Latinx adolescents also displayed more school belonging with higher *assimilation* ([Lawton &

Geredes, 2014). While immigrant Latinx adolescents also face a fair share of negative acculturative outcomes, studies have addressed U.S. Latinx adolescents' poor acculturative outcomes to a loss of protective factors such *familismo* and traditional cultural values that may be more salient for their immigrant counterparts (Azmitia, 2021; Pina-Watson, et. al., 2019). Lastly, studies hint towards biculturalism, or *integration* being the desired acculturative path (regardless of country of birth), as it is linked to having higher self-esteem, academic outcomes, etc. for Latinx adolescents and is thought to be a protective factor for their acculturation to the United States (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014).

Gaps in Literature

Previous studies have yielded mixed findings on the directionality of the relationship between acculturation and colorism, as well as discrimination experiences. While most have adopted the model of acculturative processes influencing perceived colorism and discriminatory experiences (Afable-Munsuz et. al., 2006; Hale & Kuperminc, 2021; Lawton & Gerdes, 2014), there has recently been a call for the development of a new relationship directionality between acculturation, colorism, and discriminatory experiences (Capielo Rosario et. al., 2019). It's been previously established that colorism impacts the acculturation of Latinx communities, however a recent study on the acculturation of Puerto Ricans in Florida disclosed a need for addressing new models in acculturation studies; including considering ethnic-racial discrimination as either a determinant or covariate of acculturation and exploring the influence of colorism on the acculturation of Latinx communities (Capielo Rosario et. al., 2019; Montalvo, 2005).

Additionally, although acculturative literature has considered gender as an influencing factor in shaping Latinx adolescents' acculturative experience, to our knowledge, studies have

yet to consider the implications gender may have on the associations between colorism and acculturation.

The Current Study

Therefore, this current study aims to unravel the interactions between risk contexts (e.g. colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination) and acculturative processes to understand their impacts on the adjustment of Latinx adolescents. To do this, we proposed three hypotheses. Based on previous literature on acculturation, we hypothesized that risks would be associated with Latinx adolescents' acculturative process (Hale & Kuperminc, 2021; Kiang et. al, 2020; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). We specifically predicted that Latinx adolescents experiencing higher risks would show higher associations with *marginalization* and *separation* they would experience. Secondly, we assessed the associations between acculturation and developmental outcomes among Latinx adolescents and predicted that higher *assimilation* to the U.S. would be linked to more substance use, lower self-rated health, and lower GPA. Lastly, we predicted that gender would moderate the association between risks and acculturation. Particularly, Latinx males would report higher levels of risks, ultimately relating to their acculturative experiences. For Latinx adolescent females, it was hypothesized that there would be higher levels of *separation* as previous findings allude to increased parental involvement preventing female Latinx adolescents from spending too much time away from their homes, hence infringing on their *assimilation* (Kiang et. al., 2020). Ultimately, findings will reveal protective factors and strategies for salient outcomes (e.g.school belonging, substance use) for the growing population of Latinx adolescents.

Method

Participants

Recruited participants include adolescents (aged 13 to 18 years old) from two public high schools in western California during the Spring of 2022. High school 1 included a total of 1,500 participants (77% low-income; 50% female; 83% Latinx, 7% African American, 8% Asian American, and 2% European American; 40 % immigrant). High school 2 yielded 1,200 participants (20% low-income; 50% female; 37% European American; 32% Asian American,17% Latinx, 5% African American/Black, and 10% mixed; 6% immigrant). The survey for the study received a 68% response rate. The subsample for the current study (*n*=703) was taken from the larger study (N = 1,678; High School 1: *n* = 797; High School 2: *n* = 881), and includes adolescents who solely identified as Latino/a, Latinx, or Hispanic (41.84%). The subsample had an average sample age of 15. 93 years (*SD*$_{age}$=1.21). Genders included 51.3% male and 48.77% female. Participants' immigration status was established through a single open-ended item that asked for their country of birth (with 16.93% of participants being immigrants).

The following include reported countries of birth: Chile (0.14%), North Korea (0.14%), Panama (0.14%), South America (0.14%), Guatemala/Nicaragua (0.14%), Venezuela (0.14%), Colombia (0.28%), Spain (0.57%,), Brazil (0.57%), Dominican Republic (0.28%), Nicaragua (0.28%), China (0.43%), Honduras (0.85%), Guatemala (2.84%), Mexico (4.55%), El Salvador (5.12%), United States (68.42%), and missing response (14.94%). Despite reported birth country, participants reporting as Latino(a), Latinx, and Hispanic were included in the study. Furthermore, participants not included in the study are from the following ethnic/ racial groups: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.60%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.01%), Black

or African American (5.66%), European American (13.95%), Asian American (18.30%), other

(3.69%), multiple groups (10.61%), and no response (4.35%).

Measures

Colorism.

Items for the colorism scale were assessed through the adaptation of Fishers Adolescent

Discrimination and Distress Index ([Fisher et. al., 2000](#)). Colorism was measured through a

15-item scale with response options ranging from 1 (*Rarely*) to 5 (*Often*). Participants were asked

to respond to the items according to "How often have you experienced each of the following

<u>because of your skin color</u>?*"*. On the adapted scale, item 11 was altered to "*You were called*

insulting names." instead of "*You were called racially insulting names.*" from the original scale.

Additionally, items were categorized as *institutional colorism* (items: 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14),

educational colorism (items: 1, 2, 3, and 6), and *peer colorism* (items: 4, 5, 8, 11, and 15).

Classism.

Similarly to the colorism scale, the classism scale was adapted from Fisher's

Adolescent Discrimination and Distress Index ([Fisher et. al., 2000](#)). Classism was assessed

through a 13-item scale with response choices ranging from 1 (*Rarely*) to 5 (*Often*). Items 2 and

9 were excluded from the original scale were excluded from the adapted scale. Participants were

asked to answer items on the scale based off of "How often have you experienced each of the

following <u>because of the money, schooling, or jobs your parents have</u>?". Additionally, subscales

of classism include *institutional classism* (items: 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13), *education classism* (items:

1, 2, 3, and 6), and *peer classism* (items: 4, 5, 8, and 11).

Immigration Discrimination.

The conceptualization of immigration discrimination was also adapted from Fisher's Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index and Way's Adult and Peer Discrimination Measure ([Fisher et. al., 2000](#); [Way, 1997](#)). The adapted scale consists of 19 items that address participants' frequency of discriminatory experiences according to their immigrant status. However, items 16 to 19 were not used in the Participants were specifically asked to indicate their responses according to "Please indicate how often in the past year you experienced discrimination because you are an immigrant (if this applies to you).". Response options ranged from 1 (*Rarely)* to 5 (*Often*). An additional response, "*Does not apply to me*" (6), was later recoded as a missing value due to it not being informative on the degree of discriminatory immigration experiences. Furthermore, items were then subcategorized into: *institutional immigration discrimination* (items: 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13), *educational immigration discrimination* (items: 1, 2, 3, and 6), and *peer immigration discrimination* (items: 1, 2, 3, and 6). Items 16 to 19 were excluded as they were meant to assess sources of adults (teachers, school staff, and other adults in the community).

Acculturation.

Acculturation was assessed through the Acculturation, Habits, and Interests Multicultural Scale for Adolescents (AHIMSA), which includes a total of 8 items (e.g. "I am most comfortable being with people from…", "My favorite music is from…", etc.). Response choices included *The United States* (1), *The country my family is from* (2), *Both* (3), or *Neither* (4). Each response option was related to a specific sphere of acculturation. Response 1, "*The United States"*, relayed to *assimilation*. Response 2, "*The country my family is from*", indicates

the participants' level of *separation*. Response 3, "*Both*", refers to participants' *integration*. Response 4, "*Neither*", was related to participants' *marginalization*.

Substance Use.

We analyzed the use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, among other illicit substances. Available response choices included *yes* (1) and *no* (2). The overarching goal was to test for general substance use, rather than frequency of substance use, therefore a total of 10 items were used to assess substance use. Tobacco use was analyzed through the use of e-pens, cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco. Alcohol use included a single item; "Have you ever had a whole drink (more than a sip or taste) of an alcoholic beverage?". Cannabis use also included a single item; "Have you ever used marijuana, weed, hash, blunt, or other cannabis?". Lastly, substances such as stimulants, sedatives, tranquilizers, hallucinogens, and opioids were analyzed through two items.

School Belonging.

School belonging was conceptualized through an 8-item scale (e.g. "At this school, I feel like I belong", "At this school, students of all genders are treated the same", etc.) indicating participants' degree of belonging at school. Response choices included "*Strongly Agree*" (1), "*Disagree*" (2)*,* "*Agree*" (3), and "*Strongly Agree*" (4). Participants' overall school belonging was determined by creating an average based on their responses to the eight items.

Health.

Participants' overall health was measured through a one-item scale; "How would you describe your overall health, on a scale from 1 to 9*?*". Response choices ranged from 1 (*Very Poor Health*) to 9 (*Excellent Health*).

Study Controls

In the current study, we controlled for include gender, grade level, and skin tone. Furthermore, we included skin color, country of origin, and grade level to test for possible external effects on the associations between risks and acculturation.

Procedure

Data was obtained from two high schools in the western United States. Trained researchers gave recruitment speeches, and materials for the study were then relayed to interested students. This includes a parental consent form, an assent form, and the survey for the study. Participants completed the survey individually and on their own time, then they returned their survey to the research team at their high school. Participants were given individual envelopes for surveys and consent forms to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, participants received a compensation of twenty dollars. The procedure was approved by the institutional review board affiliated with the San Francisco State University (H20-010). Data was then analyzed through SPSS.

Results

Associations Between Risks, Acculturation, and Developmental Outcomes with Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. (male) and Table 2. (female) demonstrate the associations between risks, acculturation, and developmental outcomes with demographic characteristics of our sample of Latinx adolescents. Analyses were conducted to establish whether the colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination subscales were associated with acculturative processes (*assimilation*, *separation*, *integration*, and *marginalization*) and developmental outcomes (e.g. substance use,

health, school belonging, and GPA). This also included demographic characteristics; grade level, country of origin, health, and skin tone.

Pearson correlations indicated that male Latinx adolescents experiencing more *separation* were linked to facing more risk contexts (e.g. colorism, classism, etc.), higher school belonging, more cigarette, chewing/smokeless tobacco, and stimulant/hallucinogen use. However, those experiencing *more separation* were more likely to face higher rates of *peer immigration discrimination*. Additionally, those facing more *institutional* and *educational immigration discrimination* were linked to *assimilating less* to U.S. culture, and instead reported higher levels of *marginalization*. Lastly, male Latinx adolescents with *more integration* to the U.S. were less likely to use stimulants/hallucinogens. There were no significant associations among skin tone, grade level, country of origin, or health for male Latinx adolescents.

For female Latinx adolescents, Pearson correlations also showed that experiencing more risk contexts (e.g. colorism, classism, etc.) was linked to *more separation*. However, *higher separation* was also related to *higher* GPA. Experiencing *more peer colorism* was associated with *less acculturation*. Female Latinx adolescents with *higher* rates of *assimilation* reported *higher use* of cigars, cigarillos, and blunts. Additionally, those with lighter skin complexions were more likely to *integrate* into U.S. culture. Lastly, foreign-born female Latinx adolescents were more likely to experience increasing *separation* and *marginalization*.

Independent Samples T-Test

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare *overall acculturation* and *integration* among male and female Latinx adolescents (see Table 3.). There was a significant difference in *overall acculturation* scores among male (M=2.36, *SD=0.65*) and female

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(M=2.41, *SD=0.53*) Latinx adolescents. Results show that gender was linked to Latinx adolescents' *overall acculturation*. These descriptives indicate that male and female Latinx adolescents experience significant differences, which are linked to their *overall acculturation* to the United States.

There was also a significant difference for *integration* in the scores for males (M=4.52, *SD=2.96*) and females (M=4.47, *SD=2.53*); t(542.12)= 0.22, *p* =0.42. Results indicate that gender (male/female) may inform Latinx adolescents' *integration*, such that male Latinx adolescents are more likely to report high levels of *integration* in comparison to female Latinx adolescents. This specifically suggests that Latinx adolescents' acculturation is more nuanced and that males and females have significant differences influencing the association to their *integration*.

Discussion

This study examined associations among risk contexts, acculturation, and the key implications they have for Latinx adolescents' overall adjustment. Specifically, the primary aim was to examine whether colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination influenced the acculturation of Latinx adolescents; if this resulted in differences in adjustment, and whether demographic characteristics further influenced these associations.

Bivariate correlations revealed gender differences in the link between risk contexts and acculturative processes. First, we found that for both male and female Latinx adolescents, the more risks they experienced, the more they rejected U.S. culture and instead adopted their own ethnic culture. Females were specifically less likely to *assimilate* if they particularly experienced high colorism from their *peers*; meaning that they presented a higher likability to adopt U.S.

culture if they experienced skin tone discrimination from their peers. However, male Latinx adolescents were *less likely to assimilate* in association with experiencing more discrimination from *institutions* and *educational* settings; based on their *immigration status*. Furthermore, male adolescents facing more *immigration status discrimination* from their *peers* experienced *less separation*; less likely to reject U.S. culture. A key finding for male Latinx adolescents includes the association between higher levels of *immigration discrimination* within *academic* settings and experiencing more *marginalization*; indicating that a higher rejection of both U.S. and their own ethnic culture is linked to more *immigration status discrimination* within *academic* settings. This is specifically interesting considering that previous speculations suggest that the frequency at which male Latinx adolescents experience discrimination may be linked to being granted more freedom by their parents, therefore increasing their exposure to American culture (Kiang et. al., 2020; Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012). This may have potential implications as to why male Latinx adolescents' experiences in risk contexts resulted in higher levels of *marginalization* in contrast to female Latinx adolescents, who did not present associations between risk contexts and *marginalization*. Overall, these findings aligned with our hypothesis that higher risks would show higher associations with *marginalization* and *separation*. However, we also found that this was more nuanced considering that associations varied amongst gender. Lastly, it's worthwhile to mention that associations for risk contexts were not found for male Latinx adolescents in relation to their *integration*. For Latinx female adolescents, there were no associations between risk contexts and their *integration* or *marginalization* in the acculturative process. Associations support our initial hypothesis that gender would moderate the association between risks and acculturation.

Additionally, bi-variate correlations also showed associations between risk factors and Latinx adolescent outcomes. Among both genders (male/female), colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination were linked to higher substance use. This indicates that regardless of gender, exposure to more risk factors is associated with higher substance use. However, it's important to note that male Latinx adolescents reported higher links to overall substance use in comparison to female Latinx adolescents. Additionally, male Latinx adolescents showed higher associations between risk factors and stimulants/hallucinogens.

In relation to associations between acculturative processes and Latinx adolescent outcomes, male Latinx adolescents with higher school belonging were linked to experiencing less *separation*. This indicates that less rejection of U.S. culture is associated with more school belonging. While there were no associations to school belonging for female Latinx adolescents, higher *separation*, the rejection of U.S. culture, and simultaneous adoption of one's ethnic culture, were linked to having higher GPAs. For substance use, male Latinx adolescents reporting more *separation* were associated with higher use of cigarettes, chewing/smokeless tobacco, and stimulants/hallucinogens. Contrarily, males who had higher *integration*, and adoption of both the U.S. and their own ethnic culture, were less likely to use stimulants/hallucinogens. This is particularly important because it shows *integration* as potentially being linked to the decreased use of opioids for male Latinx adolescents. For females, a higher *assimilation* to U.S. culture was associated with a higher use of cigars, cigarillos, and blunts. This indicates that the more they adopt U.S. culture, the higher likability they have to use cigars, etc., portraying negative associations of *assimilation* for female Latinx adolescents' substance use. While this partially aligns with our hypothesis that higher *assimilation* to the U.S.

would be linked to more substance use, this was only associated with female Latinx adolescents. However, we did not find associations for self-rated health, and GPA, for overall Latinx adolescents.

Lastly, there were a few associations between demographic characteristics and acculturative processes among female Latinx adolescents. Females with lighter skin tones were linked to increased *integration* into U.S. culture, showing how gendered colorism is a potential determinant in the acculturative process for female Latinx adolescents. Furthermore, foreign-born female Latinx adolescents were associated with experiencing more *separation* and *marginalization*. Implications for this association suggest that foreign-born/immigrant female Latinx adolescents are more likely to reject U.S. culture, and either reject or further adopt their own ethnic culture; indicating that female Latinx immigrants have an increased tumultuous acculturative journey. This supports previous findings that explain the difficulties immigrant Latinx adolescents face as they navigate their daily lives in the United States (Coulter et. al., 2023; Nair et. al., 2021).

Lastly, an independent samples t-test supported predictions that gender would have overall significant associations for Latinx adolescents' acculturative process. While this was linked to the general acculturation of Latinx adolescents, gender was specifically associated to differences in Latinx adolescents' *integration*. While a definitive cause for this difference cannot be determined at this time, this provides support for the need of intersectionality within the context of Latinx adolescent acculturative studies.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of this study included the skin tone and health variables. Skin tone was a self-reported measure, indicating that it reflected participants' perceptions of their own skin color, however, this does not consider others' perceptions of their skin tone. This is likely to account for skin tone not being significant in relation to most variables. Furthermore, health was also a self-reported measure, consisting of one item, "How would you describe your overall health, on a scale from 1 to 9?". While this item is useful in understanding participants' perceptions of their health, future studies should consider creating multiple-item health scales to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Latinx adolescents' overall health. Lastly, colorism was conceptualized through Fisher's Adolescent Discrimination Index Scale, originally created to measure racial discrimination, and it is unknown whether this was fully indicative of Latinx adolescents' discriminatory experiences based on colorism (Fisher et. al., 2000). Therefore, future research should include the creation of a scale on colorism for Latinx adolescents.

Ultimately, our cross-sectional study cannot speak to the causality of associations among risks, acculturative processes, and outcomes for Latinx adolescents. It reinforces previous findings that recommend creating new models to assess associations between risks and acculturation (Hale & Kuperminc, 2021). This includes models suggesting a bivariate association between colorism and discriminatory experiences (e.g. discrimination based on classism, immigration status, etc.), and the suggestion of including colorism as a predictor of Latinx adolescents' acculturative processes.

Conclusion

The current study examined bi-variate associations among risk factors (colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination), the acculturative process, and the adjustment of Latinx adolescents. Preliminary bivariate associations revealed that experiencing more risks was linked to higher substance use and *separation* among Latinx adolescents. Furthermore, female adolescents experiencing higher levels of *separation* were linked to higher GPA scores. On the contrary, male adolescents were more likely to report higher levels of *assimilation*, along with higher levels of colorism, classism, and immigration discrimination. Additionally, an independent samples t-test indicated that there are indeed significant differences based on gender in Latinx adolescents' overall acculturative process (and more specifically their *integration*). Our study has broadened the scope by highlighting associations Latinx adolescents navigation of risky contexts and the vital role of acculturation processes in correspondence to their healthy adjustment in the United States.

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Table 1.

Correlations for Risk Contexts, Acculturation, and Outcomes for Male Latinx Adolescents

Correlations for Risk Contexts, Acculturation, and Outcomes for Male Latinx Adolescents

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Inst. Colorism	1																				
2. Educ. Colorism	.73**	1																			
3. Peer Colorism	.89**	.77**	1																		
4. Inst. Immig. Discrim.	.74**	.56**	.69**	1																	
5. Educ. Immig. Discrim.	.67**	.57**	.65**	.80**	1																
6. Peer Immig. Discrim.	.76**	.62**	.75**	.94**	.87**	1															
7. Inst. Classism	.76**	.67**	.76**	.72**	.64**	.69**	1														
8. Educ. Classism	.55**	.65**	.59**	.57**	.61**	.61**	.71**	1													
9. Peer Classism	.78**	.67**	.78**	.70**	.64**	.72**	.91**	.72**	1												
10. Assimilation	-.06	-.12	-.10	-.21*	-.15	-.24**	-.07	-.05	-.06	1											
11. Separation	.17**	.18*	.21**	.20*	-.19*	.23**	.28**	.23**	.22**	-.16**	1										
12. Integration	-.07	.00	-.06	.02	-.05	.16	-.11	-.10	-.09	-.71**	-.83**	1									
13. Marginalization	.03	.02	.03	.06	.20*	.12	-.07	-.02	-.01	.16**	-.01	-.20**	1								
14. Country of origin	-.10	-.04	-.06	-.03	-.21*	-.12	-.06	-.01	-.10	.04	-.01	-.02	-.05	1							
15. Grade level	.13*	.11	.16**	.23**	.15	.20*	.17**	.10	.14*	-.16**	.13*	.05	.00	.01	1						
16. School Bel. Avg.	-.36*	-.24	-.12	-.09	.10	-.18	-.24	-.20	.06	-.10	-.54**	.33	-.30**	-.02	-.23	1					
17. Cigarette	.25**	.14*	.27**	.42**	.31*	.41**	.23**	.15*	.20**	.00	.17**	-.10	-.06	.05	.15*	-.51**	1				
18. C.S. Tobacco	.22**	.15*	.20**	.31**	.27**	.28**	.30**	.23**	.30**	-.06	.20**	-.07	-.02	-.01	.10	.00	.30**	1			
19. Alcohol	.17**	.06	.15*	.19*	.13	.14	.09	.06	.06	-.03	.12	-.09	.12	.14*	.17**	-.55**	.36**	.18**	1		
20. Cannabis	.14*	.06	.13*	.27**	.24**	.21*	.14*	.05	.10	-.01	.00	.03	-.05	.08	.18**	-.29	.43**	.30**	.42**	1	
21. Stim. & Halluc.	.30**	.13*	.26**	.33**	.14	.24**	.18**	.13*	.21**	.07	.16*	-.14+	-.06	.11	.13*	-.30	.31**	.23**	.20**	.37**	1

Note. Inst = Institutional; Educ = Educational; Immig = Immigration; School Bel. Avg = School Belonging Average; C.S Tobacco=Chewing Smokeless Tobacco; Stim. Halluc. = Stimulant Hallucinogen; Country of origin; U.S (1), foreign (0). *p<.05, **p<.01.

Table 2.

Correlations for Risk Contexts, Acculturation, and Outcomes for Female Latinx Adolescents

Correlations for Risk Contexts, Acculturation, and Outcomes for Female Latinx Adolescents

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Inst. Colorism	1																		
2. Educ. Colorism	.71**	1																	
3. Peer Colorism	.82**	.72**	1																
4. Inst. Immig. Discrim.	.62**	.51**	.62**	1															
5. Educ. Immig. Discrim.	.57**	.49**	.52**	.74**	1														
6. Peer Immig. Discrim.	.60**	.57**	.58**	.90**	.86**	1													
7. Inst. Classism	.76**	.61**	.72**	.75**	.56**	.72**	1												
8. Educ. Classism	.57**	.60**	.62**	.53**	.33**	.48**	.74**	1											
9. Peer Classism	.64**	.57**	.77**	.76**	.55**	.69**	.81**	.77**	1										
10. Assimilation	-.10	-.07	-.13*	.01	-.17	-.09	-.07	-.07	-.10	1									
11. Separation	.16**	.17**	.17**	.08	.11	.17	.13*	.16**	.20**	-.37**	1								
12. Integration	-.01	-.06	.00	-.04	.08	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.07	-.57**	-.57**	1							
13. Marginalization	-.10	-.06	-.08	-.10	-.05	-.07	-.10	-.11	-.06	-.12*	-.57**	.05	1						
14. Country of origin	-.04	-.03	-.08	-.06	-.15	-.12	-.06	-.02	.09	-.12*	-.25**	.16*	-.12*	1					
15. Skin Tone	.04	-.06	.00	-.04	-.13	-.12	.00	-.06	-.01	.11	.03	-.12*	.16*	-.01	1				
16. School Bel. Avg.	-.44**	-.47**	-.32*	-.39	-.32	-.41	-.34*	-.25	-.20	.00	-.20	.21	-.12*	-.15	-.04	1			
17. GPA	-.12*	-.08	-.05	-.02	-.06	.00	-.07	-.02	-.06	-.05	.15*	-.09	.06	-.09	-.03	.32	1		
18. Health	-.01	.00	-.06	.08	-.09	.08	-.04	.10	.05	.13*	-.04	.02	.00	-.16**	.05	-.10	.06	1	
19. Cigar, Cigarillo, Blunt, or Little Cigar	.08	.06	.06	.04	.03	.10	.07	.10	.05	-.04	-.10	.04	-.04	.01	.25	-.06	.00		1

Note: Inst = Institutional; Educ = Educational; Immig = Immigration, School Bel. Avg = School Belonging Average. Country of origin, U.S. (1), foreign (0). Skin tone, Very Light (1), Very Dark (5). *p<.05; **p<.01.

Table 3.

T-Table Comparing Latinx Adolescents' Gender on Overall Acculturation and Integration (N= 703)

	Female (N=362)		**Male(N=305)**				
	n	M (*SD*)	n	M (*SD*)	*t(df)*	*p*	Cohen's d
Integration	312	4.47 (*2.53*)**	275	4.52 (*2.96*)**	.22(*542.12*)	.42	2.74
Acculturation Average	312	2.41 (*0.53*)**	275	2.36 (*0.65*)**	-.90(*530.12*)	.19	.59

Note: Acculturation= Assimilation to U.S. culture and values. *Integration*= Adopting both U.S. and ethnic culture. M=Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation.**p<.001.