JOURNAL OF
Social Issues
A Journal of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 75, No. 4, 2019, pp. 1116–1138
doi: 10.1111/josi.12358

This article is part of the Special Issue "Research on Race and Racism;" Andrea L. Miller, Chadly Stern and Helen A. Neville (Special Issue Editors). For a full listing of Special Issue papers, see: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/josi.2019.75.issue-4/issuetoc.

How the Intersections of Ethnic and Socioeconomic Identities are Associated with Well-Being during College

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*For Latinx and other college students from minoritized communities, racial and ethnic group membership, socioeconomic status (SES), and multiple other social identities play important roles in their college experiences and well-being. How students perceive the intersection of their multiple identities is shaped by their own subjective understanding and by how other people and institutions perceive and position people who belong to those social groups. In the current study, we analyzed how the intersection of ethnic identity and SES identity is associated with well-being among 19- to 27- year old (*M = *22.4 years,* SD = *2.3) working-class Latinx college women. Consistent with previous research, feelings of uncertainty about SES were associated with lower psychological well-being, but this relationship depended on ethnic identity. Specifically, the relationship between status uncertainty and well-being was stronger for working-class Latinx college women who were high in ethnic identity resolution. Implications for the study of identity and higher education policy and practice are discussed.*

For students pursuing a postsecondary education, college entrance and attendance is an important and pivotal life course transition that is often fraught with challenge. At this particular time in the life course, changes associated with identity, in addition to interactions with peers, family, faculty, courses, and the

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The data collection for this study was made possible by funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Multidisciplinary Program in Education Sciences to Claudia M. Castillo (#R305B140042). Special thanks to Carol Lee for providing feedback on earlier drafts of this article, and to Shirin Vossoughi, Eric Brown, Ava Jackson, Heather McCambly, Y'Shanda Rivera, Carey Ryan, and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

broader context of college can have important implications for the psychological well-being of young people and whether they successfully navigate the first year and graduate from college (see Bowman, 2010). Risk and protective factors in the local environment of particular college campuses as well as the broader context of institutions of higher education and society help to partially explain the different experiences and trajectories of students during college.

For students from backgrounds that are sociopolitically positioned as nondominant, the role of various risk and protective factors during college is especially influenced by the ways that race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other social categories intersect with systems of oppression to uniquely shape their lived experiences (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989; Lee, 2009). The racial and socioeconomic climate of a college can pose a significant risk to the ways that students navigate the college context (Browman & Destin, 2015; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). In this new climate, students belonging to minoritized communities may find that the social identities that defined their sense of self back home are no longer congruent with the social and cultural norms of college. A growing awareness of multiple intersecting identities during this time and the ways other people, institutions, and society perceive and position people as belonging to those social groups becomes a critical factor for understanding college students' psychological well-being as they navigate college contexts (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

In the United States, college students who identify as Hispanic and/or Latinx represent one such community that lives at the intersection of multiple, often stigmatized, identities. Socioeconomic disadvantage, level of academic preparation, over enrollment in underresourced 2- and 4-year colleges, and other educational inequities (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) factor into the experiences of Latinx college students as they undergo this transition into college. Yet, Latinx college students represent a heterogeneity of backgrounds and identities that also shape the college experience.

In this article, we investigate how multiple aspects of students' identities are associated with the psychological well-being of working-class Latinx college women within the college environment, which is characterized by an array of risks and opportunities. The current study goes beyond analyses of single aspects of identities to investigate how intersections of multiple identities are associated with well-being during college. We adopt principles of intersectionality, an analytical framework articulated by Crenshaw (1989), the Combahee River Collective (2001), Collins (2002), and other feminist scholars of color, to highlight how the unique intersections of race, ethnicity, and SES can shape the experiences of working-class Latinx college women.

Intersectionality and Heterogeneity

Intersectionality has provided one lens with which to understand the complexity of multiple identities in context. Though there is a growing interest in psychology to incorporate intersectionality theory into the study of human development, psychological research that interrogates links between the intersection of multiple identities and experiences, the social context, and well-being remains in its infancy. Scholars of intersectionality have highlighted important challenges regarding the use of intersectionality in psychology and fundamental assumptions that do not align with how the theory was originally conceptualized and studied by Black feminist scholars (see Cole, 2009; Syed & Ajayi, 2018). Yet, current research also incorporates important contributions to the study of intersectionality made by Moraga and Anzaldúa (2015) that speak to intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, immigration, and sexuality of Latinx and Chicanx groups. One example of research that takes an intersectional approach to understand these associations finds that connection to family, Mexican American peers, and Mexican culture in addition to the relative proximity of the university to the U.S. Mexico border uniquely shaped perceptions of well-being and belonging to a higher social class (i.e., upper class) for Mexican American men attending a Hispanic-serving institution (Ojeda, Piña-Watson, & Gonzalez, 2016). This unique intersection of identities, experiences, and context not only influenced well-being but is critical to our understanding of experiences during college that might translate to increased college retention and attainment. In response to a growing body of work exploring intersectionality and the experiences of Latinx students in college, the current study employs quantitative psychological research to explore the interaction between ethnic identity, socioeconomic identity, and psychological well-being in a manner that pays special attention to the ways that working-class Latinx women engage with and respond to the college context and their position therein.

In studying this question among Latinx college students and in particular among working-class Latinx women, we aim to look at populations often excluded to both expand populations of focus in psychological studies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) and to encourage the study of heterogeneity among members of nondominant communities. Though this research does not directly address important aspects of the social context associated with interlocking systems of oppression that are important to an intersectional analysis, it contributes to a growing body of work that explores the challenges, complexity, and richness of an intersectional understanding of human development (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008; Santos & Toomey, 2018).

Status Uncertainty as an Aspect of Socioeconomic Identity

The intersection between SES and the socioeconomic context and climate of college can pose a significant obstacle to the college experience of working-class and/or first-generation college students (Browman & Destin, 2015; Stephens, Brannon, Markus, & Nelson, 2015; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). For example, when working-class college students are cued to think that their college does not support socioeconomic diversity, they find less motivation to do well in school (Browman & Destin, 2015). College students are, therefore, receptive to signals associated with SES that are reinforced within the college environment. Moreover, categories, such as low income, working-class, and first-generation, represent objective measures of a student's socioeconomic position within social structures (Diemer & Rasheed Ali, 2009; Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Reimers, 2012) that have historically been associated with gaps in attainment and achievement for members of minoritized communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2009). These labels also represent real and tangible realities for working-class students facing both financial hardship and experiencing psychological barriers that are often exacerbated and reproduced within the college context (Jury et al., 2017). In light of the role played by SES within the context of college, it is important for postsecondary institutions to understand the subjective ways college students make sense of and are affected by socioeconomic changes that come to shape their college experience in intersection with other marginalized identities.

To understand how working-class Latinx college women interpret their SES during college, we investigated how experiences of status uncertainty are associated with psychological well-being. Status uncertainty refers to the degree to which views about one's own SES feel clear and stable or ambiguous and difficult to articulate (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2017). Status uncertainty can be especially relevant during periods of socioeconomic mobility, such as college, and it has implications for well-being (Destin & Debrosse, 2017). For students from working-class backgrounds, experiences of social mobility in college predict feelings of uncertainty about their social status that are associated with lower psychological well-being (Destin et al., 2017).

While many measures of SES focus on objective indicators of wealth, income, education, and occupation (Diemer & Rasheed Ali, 2009; Diemer et al., 2012), status uncertainty instead focuses on how people perceive and make sense of their status in society. This form of socioeconomic identification is likely to interact with other important identities within the college context that have important implications for the psychological well-being of minoritized college students (see Ostrove & Cole, 2003).

Ethnic Identity as a Protective Factor

Research has also demonstrated the important role that ethnic identity plays in the ways that Latinx college students negotiate their social identities during college (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Syed, Azmitia, & Phinney, 2007). Ethier and Deaux's (1994) longitudinal study of Latinx students during their first year of college showed that strong identification with their ethnic background prior to entering college was associated with increased identification with their ethnic group during college through group-related activities. Strong ethnic group identification in this instance made it less likely that Latinx students would perceive their ethnic identity as under threat or incompatible with the new predominantly White college context. However, Latinx students who did not have a strong identification with their ethnic group prior to college were less likely to become involved with their ethnic group in college and were more likely to perceive threats to their ethnic identity in college, which was associated with lower self-esteem.

Given the importance of a strong ethnic identity, in this study we focus on an aspect of ethnic identity that measures the degree to which people feel that they have made sense of or resolved what it means for them to be members of their ethnic group (see Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004). For Latinx college students, a sense of ethnic identity resolution signals a deeper understanding of their ethnic identity within the college context. Having a strong or high ethnic identity resolution does not preclude young adults from having both negative and positive feelings about their ethnic identity; it also does not mean that students have stopped exploring their ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). What it does represent is a greater sense of confidence about the role ethnic identity plays in a person's life, which can lead to proactive coping strategies in the face of discrimination (Umaña-Taylor, Vargas-Chanes, Garcia, & Gonzales-Backen, 2008). Additionally, though there are multiple dimensions of ethnic identity, ethnic resolution most closely aligns with status uncertainty as the potentially intersecting aspect of socioeconomic identity. More specifically, the simultaneous study of the intersection between these two conceptually related aspects of ethnic and socioeconomic identities of working-class Latinx college women may lead to an understanding of how ethnic identity resolution might serve as a moderator of the relationship between status uncertainty and psychological well-being within the context of college.

Ethnic and racial identity is also known to play a protective role in instances of discrimination and stereotype threat (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2016; Settles & Buchanan, 2014; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002) that are associated with greater psychological well-being (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Schwartz et al., 2013; Smith & Silva, 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). However, ethnic group membership may also have negative consequences when the group identity is important to the person's sense

of self (see Settles & Buchanan, 2014), and when the context or environment is not supportive of a person's multiple identities (Albuja, Gaither, Sanchez, Straka, & Cipollina, 2019; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). In some instances, for people who identify with two or more cultures (i.e., Mexican American), environmental cues that deny their bicultural identity lead to increases in stress (Albuja et al., 2019). So, although ethnic identity can buffer the negative effects of discrimination and is positively associated with aspects of psychological well-being, its effects depend on the ways people, institutions, and the broader society view people as belonging to those communities (Sellers et al., 1998).

The Current Study

Research about the intersection of multiple identities of students from nondominant communities can lead to a better understanding of context-dependent contributors to psychological well-being. The current study pays special attention to the unique experiences of working-class Latinx college women and the intersections of their identities within the college context. Consistent with previous research on status uncertainty (Destin et al., 2017), ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004), and their individual associations with psychological well-being, we hypothesized that increases in status uncertainty would be associated with lower psychological well-being as they navigate the college context. We also hypothesized that greater resolution about one's ethnic identity would be associated with greater psychological well-being. Additionally, we hypothesized an interaction such that high ethnic identity resolution would buffer decreases in psychological well-being associated with high status uncertainty during college.

Methods

Participants

The present study is part of a larger study analyzing the intersection of multiple identities during young adulthood for Latinx college students. Self-identified Hispanic and/or Latinx individuals who were between the ages of 19 and 27 and attending a 2- or 4-year college were recruited via a Qualtrics (2019) panel. We focus here only on those women from the larger study who reported having a family income of less than $50,000 per year, which we considered working class.

Though all participants initially indicated that they were attending a 4-year college and were between 18 and 25 years of age, demographic questions at the end of the survey revealed that participants had attended both 2- and 4-year colleges and were between 19 and 27 years of age. We included all cases ($N = 98$) because they represented the multiple trajectories of Latinx college students

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Selected Sociodemographic Variables

Variables	*M* or (%)	*SD*	Range	*N*
Age (years)	22.36	2.33	19–27	92
Nativity status	2.23	0.77	1–4	84
Immigrant—first generation (1)	(11.90)			
U.S. Born—second generation (2)	(61.90)			
U.S. Born—third generation (3)	(17.86)			
U.S. Born—fourth generation (4)	(8.33)			
Class year	2.58	1.44	1–6	97
Freshman (1)	(29.90)			
Sophomore (2)	(24.74)			
Junior (3)	(17.53)			
Senior (4)	(17.53)			
Fifth and sixth year (5, 6)	(10.31)			
College status	1.27	0.44	1–2	98
Full-time student (1)	(73.47)			
Part-time student (2)	(26.53)			
First-generation college student	0.75	0.43	0–1	97
MacArthur SES ladder	4.81	1.70	1–10	98
Household income	2.65	1.08	1–4	98
Less than $15,000 (1)	(16.33)			
$15,000 to $25,000 (2)	(31.36)			
$25,000 to $35,000 (3)	(22.45)			
$35,000 to $50,000 (4)	(29.59)			

Note. Total $N = 98$.

pursuing a postsecondary education (see Carnevale & Fasules, 2017). A power analysis suggested that this sample size provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $r = .27$.

Demographic characteristics are reported in Table 1. Most participants (75%) were the first in their family to attend college while approximately 88% of participants indicated they were born in the United States. Additionally, most participants were full-time students. Nearly half (47%) said they lived with their parents; 24% lived with a significant other, 22% lived with other students, 10% lived alone, and 5% lived with noncollege roommates.

Prior to completing the survey, all participants indicated both their ethnicity and race. Participants could select more than one ethnicity, which included Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadorian, African American, Chinese, Latina/o/x, Chicana/o/x, White/Caucasian/European American, Hispanic, American (i.e., Mexican–American, Cuban–America), unknown, and other. Half (50%) of the participants selected more than one ethnicity, which ranged from 2 to 7

ethnicities, with a mean of 2.85. Regardless of whether participants selected more than one ethnicity, 54% identified as Mexican (see Appendix for full breakdown of participant ethnicities).

Participants also had the option of choosing from more than one of the following races: Asian, Black, or African American, White, American Indian/Native American; Hispanic or Latina/o/x Origin—(refers to people from multiple races who identify as Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Argentinian, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadorian, and so on); and other. Nearly all (90%) participants chose Hispanic or Latinx as their race. Of the 73% who selected only one race ($n = 72$), 63 students selected Hispanic or Latinx, five selected White, two Native American, one Black, and one participant wrote in "Mexican." Of the 27% who selected more than one race ($n = 26$), 25 students selected Hispanic or Latinx in combination with one or two other races.

Procedure

Participants received an email invitation to the survey and those who elected to participate were directed to the online consent form that provided information about the study and inclusion criteria. After reading the consent form and agreeing to participate, students were directed to the survey. Three attention checks were included throughout the survey (beginning, middle, and end), and all participants provided sufficiently thoughtful responses.

Measures

Participants completed a variety of measures. We describe below only those measures that are relevant to the present study.

Ethnic identity. Ethnic identity resolution was assessed using a subscale of the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004), which consisted of four items assessing the degree to which a person has resolved or found clarity regarding what it means to be a member of one's ethnic group (e.g., "I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me"). Participants responded on a scale of 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 4 (*describes me very well*). Responses were averaged ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .71$, $\alpha = .90$) with higher scores indicating higher levels of ethnic identity resolution. Scores were centered prior to analysis.

Status uncertainty. Participants responded to 11 items (e.g., "I spend a lot of time wondering about where I stand in society"), measuring the extent to which their understanding of their SES felt clear or ambiguous (Destin et al., 2017). Responses were provided on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

and were averaged ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.15$, $\alpha = .89$) with higher scores indicating higher levels of status uncertainty. Scores were centered prior to analysis.

Psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was assessed using measures of self-esteem and satisfaction with life. We included a single-item self-esteem measure, which has predictive properties that are similar to the Rosenberg self-esteem scale ("I have high self-esteem," $M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.76$, Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Participants also responded to five items (e.g., "I am satisfied with my life"), which measure cognitive assessment of one's satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses were averaged ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.44$, $\alpha = .87$) with higher scores indicating a higher level of satisfaction with life.

Covariates. To account for key factors that may be related to status uncertainty and ethnic identity, we measured participants' subjective understanding of where they place themselves in U.S. society using the MacArthur scale of subjective social status (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). Participants were shown a ladder and responded on a scale of 1 (bottom of the ladder) to 10 (top of the ladder) with a lower score indicating that they were "worse off" in terms of income, jobs, and education ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.7$). We also measured nativity status (0 = born outside of the United States, 1 = born in the United States and second, third, fourth + generation immigrants; see Harker, 2001), first-generation college student status (0 = parents obtained a 4-year college degree or higher, 1 = students are the first in their family to go to college; see Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012), and year in college (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, fifth year, sixth year in college; see Bowman, 2010).

Results

The simple correlations (see Table 2) indicated that status uncertainty was negatively associated with both indicators of psychological well-being. That is, as predicted, greater status uncertainty was associated with lower self-esteem and satisfaction with life indicating that status uncertainty can represent a particular risk to well-being for working-class Latinx college women in college. In contrast, ethnic identity resolution was not associated with either indicator of psychological well-being.

Next, we conducted a multiple linear regression, including status uncertainty, ethnic identity resolution, and their interaction as predictors of each indicator of psychological well-being (see Table 3 for self-esteem and Table 4 for satisfaction with life). The interaction between status uncertainty and ethnic identity resolution was marginally significant for self-esteem and not significant for satisfaction with life. However, when first-generation college student status, nativity status, year

Table 2. Bivariate Relationships Among Main Study Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Status uncertainty	4.22	1.15								
2. Ethnic identity resolution	3.29	0.71	−.19 [−.38, .01]							
3. Self-esteem	3.98	1.76	−.50** [−.63, −.33]	.07 [−.13, .27]						
4. Satisfaction with life	3.9	1.44	−.28** [−.46, −.09]	.06 [−.14, .25]	.49** [.32, .63]					
5. Socioeconomic status	2.65	1.08	−.02 [−.22, .18]	−.17 [−.35, .03]	−.02 [−.22, .18]	.09 [−.11, .29]				
6. MacArthur SES ladder	4.81	1.7	−0.1 [−.30, .10]	−0.1 [−.29, .10]	.16 [−.04, .35]	.33** [.14, .49]	.14 [−.06, .33]			
7. Nativity status	0.88	0.33	−.12 [−.09, .33]	.25* [−.44, −.03]	−.17 [−.37, .05]	−.17 [−.37, .04]	.07 [−.14, .28]	−.21 [−.41, .00]		
8. First-generation college student	0.75	0.43	−.06 [−.25, .14]	.08 [−.12, .28]	.01 [−.19, .21]	.02 [−.18, .21]	−.1 [−.29, .10]	0 [−.20, .20]	−.01 [−.23, .20]	
9. Year in college	2.58	1.44	0 [−.20, .20]	−.07 [−.27, .13]	.07 [−.13, .27]	−.07 [−.27, .13]	.09 [−.11, .28]	.15 [−.05, .34]	−.24* [−.43, −.02]	−.16 [−.35, .04]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.
*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

Table 3. Regressions of Self-esteem on Predictor Variables with and Without Controls

	Without control variables			With control variables		
	b	95% CI	*p*	*b*	95% CI	*p*
Intercept	3.93	[3.62, 4.23]	<.001	4.26	[2.97, 5.56]	<.001
Status uncertainty (SU)	−0.70	[−0.98, −0.43]	<.001	−0.57	[−0.88, −0.25]	<.001
Ethnic resolution (ER)	0.12	[−0.35, 0.59]	.61	0.36	[−0.20, 0.92]	.199
MacArthur SES ladder				0.17	[−0.03, 0.38]	.098
First-generation college student				−0.05	[−0.87, 0.76]	.896
Nativity status				−0.3	[−1.48, 0.88]	.611
Year in college				0	[−0.26, 0.26]	.994
SU*ER	**−0.35**	**−0.70 to 0.00**	**.053**	**−0.47**	**[−0.86, −0.07]**	**.023**
Observations		98			83	
R^2/adj. R^2		.279/.256			.313/.249	

Table 4. Regressions of Satisfaction with Life on Predictor Variables with and Without Controls

	Without controls			With controls		
	B	95% CI	*p*	*b*	95% CI	*p*
Intercept	3.85	[3.57, 4.14]	<.001	4.25	[3.12, 5.39]	<.001
Status uncertainty (SU)	−0.31	[−0.56, −0.05]	.019	−0.21	[−0.49, 0.07]	.147
Ethnic resolution (ER)	0.14	[−0.29, 0.57]	.527	0.33	[−0.16, 0.82]	.184
MacArthur SES ladder				0.28	[0.10, 0.46]	.003
First-generation college student				−0.03	[−0.75, 0.69]	.936
Nativity status				−0.41	[−1.44, 0.63]	.434
Year in college				−0.08	[−0.31, 0.15]	.48
SU*ER	**−0.26**	**−0.59 to 0.06**	**.105**	**−0.34**	**[−0.69, 0.01]**	**.06**
Observations		98			83	
R^2/adj. R^2		.106/.077			.244/.173	

in college, and subjective social status were controlled, the interaction between status uncertainty and ethnic identity was statistically significant for self-esteem and marginally significant for satisfaction with life.

We decomposed the interaction between status uncertainty and ethnic identity resolution, analyzing the simple slopes predicting each indicator of psychological well-being (see Figure 1). Contrary to predictions, status uncertainty was a *stronger* negative predictor of both self-esteem and satisfaction with life for those who

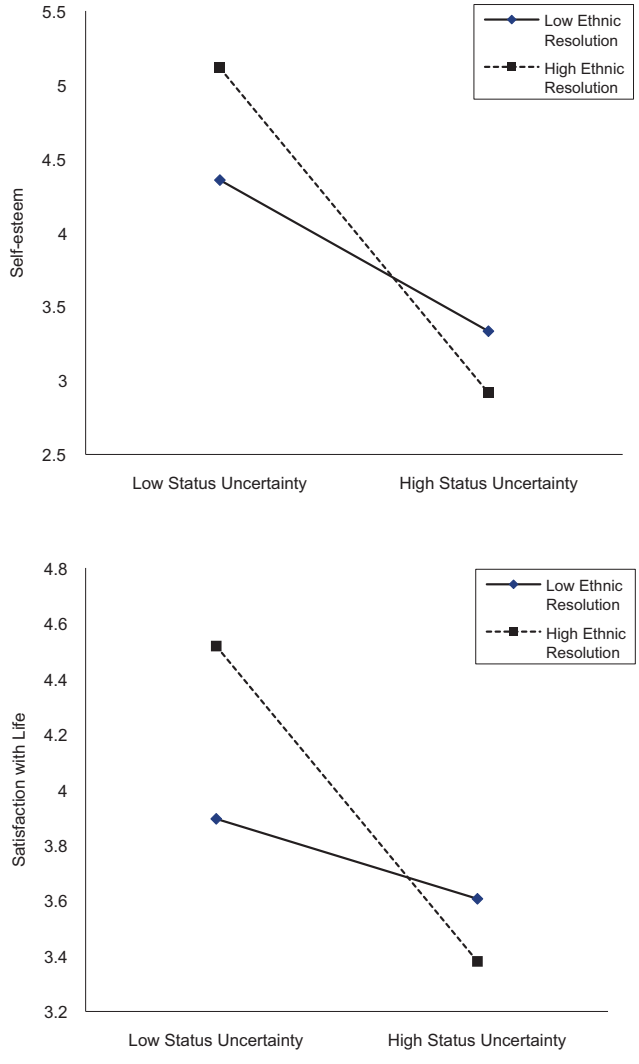

Fig. 1. Self-esteem (upper) and satisfaction with life (lower) of working-class Latinx college women by status uncertainty and ethnic resolution. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

were *high* in ethnic identity resolution. For those who were *low* in ethnic identity resolution, status uncertainty had a weaker or nonsignificant relationship with psychological well-being. That is, having a stronger ethnic identity amplified (rather than buffered) the negative relationship between status uncertainty and well-being. The pattern also indicates, however, that those with a combination

of a strong ethnic identity and low status uncertainty had the highest levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with life.

Discussion

The intersection of ethnic identity and status uncertainty plays a critical role in the ways working-class Latinx college women express high or low psychological well-being in college. Given the racial and socioeconomic climate of college (Browman & Destin, 2015; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solórzano et al., 2000) and the educational disparities experienced by Latinx college students (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; Solórzano et al., 2005) and other minoritized communities, university administrators and researchers must wrestle with ways to explore how multiple important identities intersect in context. Contrary to our hypothesis, the present data indicate that high ethnic identity does not attenuate, but rather amplifies, the relationship that exists between status uncertainty and psychological well-being.

This main finding suggests that when ethnic resolution is high and status uncertainty is low, students experience a protective condition where the negotiation of both identities within the college context is associated with positive psychological well-being. In other words, working-class Latinx college women in the study are experiencing a boost to well-being when they have a clear and stable understanding of their own SES coupled with resolution about what their ethnic identity means to them. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it is possible that this group of students possess a dispositional clarity and resolution about the meaning of both identities. However, given the dynamic and context-sensitive natures of socioeconomic and ethnic identities (Destin et al., 2017; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Syed et al., 2007), it is likely that college environments that support ethnic and socioeconomic diversity play a critical role in the well-being of students who often experience marginalization in higher education (see Rendón, 1994).

The main findings also suggest, however, that the uncertainty associated with SES during college may constitute a unique risk to psychological well-being in combination with ethnic identification. While SES alone is associated with how women understand their college experiences and whether they feel that they belong in college (Ostrove, 2003), working-class Latinx women are experiencing possible threats to their identities as members of multiple minoritized communities (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). The current findings provide an example of the complex ways that important identities intersect to shape the well-being of working- class Latinx college women that parallels how intersectional scholars discuss the ways that systems of oppression intersect to uniquely shape the lived experiences of minoritized groups. The current finding suggests that feelings of security regarding one identity can conflict with feelings of ambiguity associated with another identity

in ways that amplify negative associations with well-being. Researchers studying ethnic identity and other potential moderators to threats and discrimination should consider ongoing tensions associated with the dynamic relationship that exists between marginalized identities that are often studied in isolation.

Contrary to previous findings, our results did not replicate past research showing a positive association between ethnic identity and psychological well-being (e.g., Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). The lack of a relationship may be because we utilized a narrow aspect of ethnic identity focused on resolution, which may not have been rich enough to capture the ways that ethnic identity independently relates to well-being. The measure of ethnic identity resolution, however, was well suited to conceptually interact with status uncertainty as a parallel aspect of socioeconomic identity. Further, strong ethnic resolution does not preclude students from having positive or negative feelings about their ethnic identity (see Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). For example, resolution and clarity about ethnic and socioeconomic identity could be shaped by negative and/or positive experiences associated with those identities during college. Yet research suggests that what matters for well-being is the extent to which people have explored or resolved those experiences associated with ethnicity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). In this case, it remains possible that the process of reconciling and resolving ongoing contradictions about what it means to belong to multiple marginalized communities is positively associated with well-being. These findings challenge researchers and college administrators to design programs and interventions that acknowledge ongoing contradictions associated with the intersection of multiple marginalized identities and that support minoritized students as they grapple with those tensions in different college contexts.

In light of the current findings, additional research is needed to understand how institutional policies within different college contexts (i.e., predominantly White institutions [PWI], Hispanic-serving institutions [HSI], 2- and 4- year colleges) uniquely support not just socioeconomic diversity or ethnic and racial diversity but also the unique combination in context (see Appendix for full breakdown of colleges and universities attended by participants). An intersectional approach also asks researchers and policy makers to more holistically examine how current policies perpetuate harm for students at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. With more than two thirds of Latinx students attending HSIs (HACU, 2019) there is now a growing push to explore not just diversity within a college campus but the ways in which institutions develop programs and establish missions designed to serve this population (see Garcia, Núñez, & Sansone, 2019). Moreover, caution must be taken not to further perpetuate deficit narratives that have historically conflated intersections between ethnicity, race, and SES about minoritized communities (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2009; Valencia, 2012). These considerations ask the research community to rethink the training of scholars conducting research with and about people belong-

ing to minoritized groups (see Neblett, 2019) in ways that more fully examine the context and intersectionality of researchers and participants alike.

Additionally, the main study findings point to two distinct risk and protective conditions that may be associated with strategies employed by students in order to navigate the college context. Rather than focusing on institutional responses alone, it is useful to also investigate the behavioral strategies that students from nondominant backgrounds proactively use to engage with opportunities in multiple cultural contexts and communities (Chang, Torrez, Ferguson, & Sagar, 2017; Nasir, Rosebery, Warren, & Lee, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) has theorized that students from minoritized groups leverage their own assets and community cultural wealth to navigate educational spaces. In this instance, it is possible that students either implicitly or explicitly try to resolve what their ethnic or socioeconomic identities mean to them in order to protect themselves from negative experiences during college. Though researchers have often overlooked the agency of members of minoritized communities in different cultural and ecological contexts (Lee, 2009; Yosso, 2005), their perspectives and experiences provide opportunities to actively redesign learning environments where students can "begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.148). As such, valuing and prioritizing student strategies, particularly at the intersection of multiple identities, plays a critical role in the development of college programs that advance justice and equity in educational spaces and college campuses.

Limitations

We did not explore how systems of oppression shape the college context; rather we have attempted to highlight how working-class Latinx college women experience their status, which contributes texture to the understanding of the intersection of multiple identities and experiences. According to Crenshaw, "my focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). In essence, we are afforded an opportunity to understand a feature, though not the full picture, of the dynamic relationship that exists between the individual and the "social world" within which Latinx working-class women explore and experience the intersection of their multiple identities. Thus, an important limitation of our work is that we did not critically examine the role of gender and nonbinary identity for this group of working-class Latinx students. A traditional quantitative approach also overlooks the role of other important identities in order to understand a particular interaction. Mixed methods would greatly enrich our understanding of important factors that might moderate and mediate psychological well-being.

Missing from this analysis are also tensions in the different ways Latinx students identify in terms of both ethnicity and race. This group of Latinx women predominantly identified as Mexican or Mexican American so the results cannot address the complex ways that ethnicity and race intersect for the women who participated in this study. Conceptions of race can also differ within ethnic groups (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), and these differences also exist within families where skin color may shape the way Latinx young adults think about their ethnicity, race, and status in society.

Further, the data are cross-sectional and correlational, so we cannot draw inferences regarding directionality and causality. We also cannot make inferences about the longitudinal and dynamic shifts that occur during college as Latinx college women continue to explore and resolve what their ethnic and socioeconomic identities mean to them. Longitudinal studies of identity development demonstrate that ethnic identity development is not linear and that it continues throughout emerging adulthood (Syed et al., 2007). Additional longitudinal studies could capture some of the dynamic ways in which ethnic identity and status uncertainty shift with potential implications for how to best support students from multiple marginalized identities within contexts that may include persistent identity threats and challenges. Future research might also investigate the experiences of students who identify as Afro-Latinx and Afro-Indigenous Latinx, paying close attention to regional variations, in an effort to both disrupt and honor the complex intersection of identities and experiences of Latinx students in the Americas and abroad.

This research is also limited by its capacity to explore how the ecology and context of higher education influences the psychological well-being of working-class Latinx college women. For example, while aspects of the college context are likely to directly influence psychological well-being, they might also moderate the associations between SES, ethnic identity, and psychological well-being. In this article, we conceptualized context in the ways it influences how working-class Latinx women experience and think about their ethnic and socioeconomic identities that have important consequences for psychological well-being during college. Future work might explore not just the different ways the context of higher education can shape well-being but the role of proximity to home and family, the type of high school, 2- or 4-year institutions attended, and other aspects of college culture and climate that bare relevance to the experiences of college students from nondominant communities.

Finally, the data for this study were collected between December 5, 2016 and December 9, 2016, which coincided with the election of Donald J. Trump as 45th President of the United States. Though not explored in this article, an examination of the sociohistorical and political context seems critical to understand the ways working-class Latinx women responded to the survey measures. For example, immigration status and the political climate play an important role in how Latinx

undocumented students navigate college (Chang et al., 2017). Additionally, young adults eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) describe experiencing deteriorating mental health and well-being as a result of their status (Siemons, Raymond-Flesh, Auerswald, & Brindis, 2017). Though most participants indicate they were born in the United States, we caution that the results presented in this article may have been shaped by feelings of uncertainty that were tied to anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric about Mexican American and other Latinx groups leading up to the election, and that continue to impact the well-being of students belonging to those communities.

Conclusions

As demonstrated in the study, particular combinations of experiences related to multiple identities, which are constantly shaped by the broader context, have a consequential relationship with how minoritized students feel about themselves and their life as a whole. The findings show complexity in the experiences of working-class Latinx college women that must be further understood in relation to multiple pathways leading to a postsecondary education. Last, the observed patterns highlight the importance of access to spaces that support ongoing changes, tensions, and contradictions to intersecting identities not just within college contexts and educational environments, but throughout young adulthood more generally.

Appendix

Percentage of Ethnicities Selected by Participants

Ethnicity	%	Ethnicity	%
Mexican	22	Puerto Rican, Dominican	1
Mexican, American	4	Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Latino	1
Mexican, Chicano	4	Hispanic	4
Mexican, Hispanic, Latino	3	Hispanic, White	2
Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, American, Chicano	3	Hispanic, American, White	1
Mexican, American, Chicano	2	Hispanic, Latino	1
Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, American	2	Hispanic, Latino, American, White	1
Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, Chicano	2	Hispanic, Latino, White	1
Mexican, Latino	2	Salvadorian	3
Mexican, White	2	Salvadorian, American	1
Mexican, African American	1	Salvadorian, Hispanic	1
Mexican, Hispanic	1	Latino	3
Mexican, Hispanic, Chicano, White	1	Honduran, Hispanic, Latino, American, White	1

Ethnicity	%	Ethnicity	%
Mexican, Cuban, Spaniard, Hispanic, Latino, American, Chicano, White	1	Nicaraguan, American	1
Mexican, Latino, American	1	Peruvian	1
Mexican, Latino, Chicano, White	1	African American, Latino	1
Mexican, Latino, White	1	American	1
Puerto Rican	12	Brazilian, White	1
Puerto Rican, African American	2	Chicano	1
Puerto Rican, Cuban	1	Cuban	1
Puerto Rican, Cuban, African American, American	1	Dominican	1

Colleges and Universities Attended by Study Participants (in alphabetical order by state)

College	State	College	State
Wallace Community College	AL	University of Illinois	IL
Pulaski Technical College University of Arkansas	AR	University of St. Francis	IL
Mesa Community College	AZ	Northwestern State University of Louisiana	LA
Pima Community College	AZ	UMASS Lowell	MA
University of Arizona	Z	Minnesota State University Mankato	MN
Azusa Pacific University	CA	Missouri State University	MO
California Baptist University	CA	A&T University	NC
California State University Channel Islands	CA	East Carolina University	NC
California State University of Bakersfield	CA	University of North Carolina at Greensboro	NC
California State University San Bernardino	CA	Southern New Hampshire University	NH
Cerritos College	CA	New Mexico State University	NM
Columbia College Hollywood	CA	Brooklyn College	NY
Los Angeles City College	CA	City College of New York	NY
Moreno Valley Community College	CA	Community College	NY
Mount Saint Mary's University	CA	Hunter College CUNY	NY
San Bernardino Valley College	CA	New York University	NY
San Jose State University	CA	Suffolk County Community College	NY
Sierra College (Community College)	CA	Fortis	OH

College	State	College	State
Sonoma State University	CA	East Stroudsburg University	PA
Stanford University	CA	Harrisburg Area Community College	PA
University of California Berkeley	CA	Northampton Community College	PA
University of California Davis	CA	University of Pittsburgh	PA
University of California Merced	CA	Antillean College Mayaguez	PR
Westech College	CA	Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico	PR
Colorado Mountain College	CO	University of Puerto Rico	PR
Front Range Community College	CO	Brookhaven College (Community College)	TX
Florida State University	FL	Houston Community College	TX
Keizer University	FL	Lamar State College	TX
Miami Dade College	FL	Sam Houston State University	TX
Nova Southeastern University	FL	San Antonio College	TX
University of Central Florida	FL	San Jacinto College	TX
University of Florida	FL	South Texas College	TX
University of South Florida	FL	Stephen F. Austin State University	TX
Georgia Military College	GA	Sul Ross State University	TX
Georgia State	GA	Texas A&M University	TX
Gwinnett Technical College	GA	Texas A&M University-Kingsville	TX
Kennesaw State University	GA	The University of Texas at San Antonio	TX
University of Georgia	GA	University of Texas	TX
College of Lake County	IL	University of Texas at Arlington	TX
East-West University	IL	Weber State University	UT
Northern Illinois University	IL	Virginia Tech	VA
Northwestern University	IL	Washington State University	WA
Oakton Community College	IL	Milwaukee Area Technical College	WI
Richard J. Daily City College of Chicago	IL	St. Norbert College	WI

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