The Intersection of Race and Ethnicity Among Hispanic Adolescents:

Self-Identification and Friendship Choices

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Abstract

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a nationally representative sample of youth in 7-12th grades, we examine how race and ethnicity overlap among Hispanic adolescents. We examine both self-identification and the choices of first-listed friends to evaluate the relative proximity between race and ethnic identifiers among Hispanics. Similar to previous work, we find a large contingent of Hispanics who choose Other Race, and smaller proportions who choose white or black as their racial group. However, we also find that one-third of Hispanic youth chose no racial identifer, which supports the notion that Hispanic is a meaningful panethnic label. Empirical analyses suggest that the racial identification of other students at school has significant impact on the odds of choosing particular racial identifiers. We also find evidence that both ethnicity and race are distinct stratifiers among Hispanics as evidenced by their friendship choices. Overall, our findings support the notion of a panethnic label, but also find that race and ethnicity are important and meaningful dividers among Hispanic youth.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

According to figures released from the 2000 U.S. Census, Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States. They comprise 12.5% of the population in the United States, and their numbers are expected to grow at a much faster rate than that of the general U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). From 1990 to 2000, they grew by 58 percent, compared to 13 percent for the U.S. as a whole. Their relative size, younger age structure, and their higher fertility suggest that by 2010, they will account for an even greater proportion of the population in the U.S.

Despite their size, Hispanics are a relatively understudied population. Hispanics are roughly defined as those of Spanish Origin; this leads to some linguistic homogeneity among its members but they may have little else in common. The label "Hispanic" has always been problematic for Hispanics themselves and for social science researchers. This group encompasses enormous diversity along both ethnic and racial lines, and the diversity within the Hispanic population is on the rise. In the United States, while most Hispanics are Mexican (59% in 2000), Puerto Rican (9.6% in 2000), or Cuban (3.5% in 2000), the relative share of the three largest groups is down from the levels in 1990. From complex historical migration patterns to and from Spain, Mexico, and Latin

America, Hispanics can be white, black, Asian, Native American, or Other Race. Despite the relative ambiguity of the term, Tienda and Ortiz (1986) argue that there is a meaningful and coherent group under the umbrella term; what is less apparent is how racial and ethnic identities of Hispanics intersect and segregate the Hispanic community.

In this paper, we examine the overlap of racial and ethnic identification among a nationally-representative sample of Hispanic adolescents. We then examine the relative salience of race versus ethnicity by examining their friendship choices. Finally, we investigate how school context and the identities of other Hispanics in the school shape the identification and friendship choices of Hispanic adolescents. We conclude by suggesting that both race and ethnicity are meaningful distinctions for Hispanic adolescents. We also find the dominance of Hispanic adolescents who choose no other race, suggesting that "Hispanic" by itself is a meaningful and distinctive racial categorization.

Theoretical Considerations

Race and ethnic labels have considerable consequences not only for the self-identification of minorities, but how they are perceived can have dire consequences for their socioeconomic outcomes. In Latin America, there is the perception that "money bleaches" – thus higher socioeconomic standing is associated with lighter skin color. Certainly, this can be said of the United States, where money and privilege is associated with being white, while poverty and disadvantage is associated with being black. Even among African Americans, there is empirical evidence that suggests that skin color is associated with socioeconomic attainment (Keith and Herring, 1991). Specifically, Keith

and Herring (1991) found that skin color not only predicted educational and occupational attainment as well as income of blacks, but that it was a better predictor than parental socioeconomic status. Since Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in the late 1960s, Hispanics have been associated with being more similar to blacks than to whites.

Because the largest Hispanic ethnic group is the Mexicans, who also comprise the majority of today's immigrant population, many of the images associated with Hispanics stem from stereotypes of Mexican Americans. However, the reality of experiences may be more complex. The treatment of Hispanics who are phenotypically similar to African Americans may be different from those whose physical appearance more closely resembles that of Europeans. Certainly, first generation Argentines or Spaniards may receive vastly different treatment by youth at school compared to Puerto Ricans who "look black." Alternatively, being Hispanic may trump physical appearance that links them to blacks and whites. Our paper explores the extent to which race and ethnicity are meaningful barriers within the Hispanic populations as well as whether racial identity is associated with having more or less friends who are white or black but non-Hispanic.

Data and Methods

We use data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (hereafter Add Health), a nationally representative sample of 90,000 adolescents in grades 7-12 in 1994-95 (Bearman, Jones, and Udry 1997). We use data from the Wave I In-School Sample. Data was collected from students of 80 high schools that were randomly selected from a database of U.S. schools. The schools are stratified on size, region, urbanicity, school type, racial mix, and grade span. For each school a feeder

school was also selected with probability proportional to its student contribution to the high school. The school based sample therefore has a pair of schools in each community and it includes a total of 134 schools, which varies from less than 100 students to over 3,000 (Bearman et al. 1997).

The In-School Questionnaire was administered to every student in grades 7 to 12 who attended the selected school on a particular day between September 1994 to April 1995. Each participating school provided the study with a roster of its students. Identification numbers to the names on the roster were assigned, then copies of the roster were made and provided to students to use in identifying their friends in the course of filling out the In-School questionnaire. The In-School Questionnaire was completed by more than 90,000 adolescents, so that over 80% of all enrolled students participated.

Add Health uniquely suits our research interests in several ways. First, because it allows youth to answer a question about Hispanic identification separately from that of race, we can differentiate between white, black, Asian, Native American, and Other Race Hispanics. We can also include youth who said they were Hispanic but did not choose another racial identification. In addition, Add Health allowed youth to choose between Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central/South American, and Other Hispanic ethnicity.

Finally, respondents were asked to select their friends from the school roster provided by the school. Respondents could nominate up to five male and five female friends, both from the roster or out of school friends. If the friend was in the roster and also completed the questionnaire we can identify characteristics of these friends such as race, ethnicity, gender, etc. For this paper we are using information on first-listed

opposite-sex friend. We are using opposite-sex friends to avoid confusion between friendship and potential romantic partners. If the first-listed friend was not in the roster we were unable to find his/her racial/ethnic information. In this case we turned to the second friend. If the respondent did not choose first or second friend or both were not in the school roster, this adolescent does not have an assigned friend. Over 55% of the respondents choose an identifiable friend of a different gender to his/her own.

This paper uses logistic regression models to evaluate the relative proximity between race and ethnic identifiers among Hispanics. We predict both self-identification and the choices of first-listed friends. This version does not account for the clustering of the data and does not include weights. The subsequent version of the paper will include both weighted estimates and will account for the clustered nature of the data.

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 presents the intersection of racial and ethnic identity of respondents. What is most striking here is that the vast majority of Hispanic youth chose "Other" or "No Race" as their racial identity. In fact, the "No Race" Hispanics comprise 32% of the Hispanic population compared to 35% for Other, 20% for white, 8% for black, 3% for Asian, and 4% for Native American. These descriptive tabulations are consistent with the argument that being Hispanic is a meaningful panethnic categorization, rivaling that of white, African American or Asian American. Most Hispanics do not have a "racial" identity, since 67% chose "No Race" or "Other."

[Table 1 about here.]

Our sample is fairly similar to the U.S. population – about one-half of our Hispanic respondents are Mexican, compared to 9% who are Cuban, 10% who are Puerto Rican, and 33% who are Central/South American or Other ethnicity.

In terms of the intersection between race and ethnicity, Mexicans were more likely to choose No Race, Native American, or Other; Cubans were more likely to choose white; Puerto Ricans were more likely to choose Asian, and Central/South/Other were more likely to choose white, black, or Asian. Still, a sizable proportion of all of these ethnic groups does choose "Other" or simply do not make a choice of any racial group.

We are interested not only in the professed identity of Hispanics, but how their identification may manifest itself in terms of friendship selection. In Table 2, we examine the ethnicity of respondents by the ethnicity of their first-listed in-school friend who is also Hispanic. Overall, there is a high likelihood of choosing same-ethnic friends among Hispanics. About 90% of Mexicans who choose a Hispanic best friend choose another Mexican, while this figure is 66% for Cubans, 54% for Puerto Ricans, and 64% for Central/South/Other Hispanics. Of course, these figures do not account for the fact that Mexicans are more likely to attend schools with other Mexicans; thus, part of the higher odds of choosing a same-ethnic friend stems from the effects of each school's racial and ethnic composition. In subsequent empirical models, we control for school ethnic composition.

[Table 2 about here.]

Table 3 presents the race of Hispanic respondents by the race of their Hispanic first-listed friend. The same-race choices are highlighted in bold. Overall, there is a tendency for Hispanics to choose friends of the same racial background. This is even

more apparent when we examine the percentages relative to their shares in the population of first-listed friends. For instance, while only 15% of the friends nominated were Hispanic-whites, 40% of Hispanic-white respondents chose a first-listed friend who also identified as a Hispanic-white. Fifty-five percent of Hispanic-blacks who chose a Hispanic first-listed friend chose one who was also Hispanic-black, and 48% of Hispanic -No Race who chose a Hispanic best friend chose one who also did not choose another race.

[Table 3 about here.]

Recall that because we directly link responses of friends to those of respondents, there is a smaller likelihood of bias in reports of friend's race. Note that in most surveys of friends, respondents are asked directly about the racial composition of friends – this leaves much room for error both in determining the group of friends who are considered in determining the composition of friends but also in the determination of racial identification of specific friends.

Table 4 presents logistic regression estimates of the effects of ethnicity, parental SES, and school characteristics on the odds of choosing particular racial identities. For the sake of brevity, we only present odds ratios. Values greater than 1 suggest that the background characteristic increases the odds of choosing a particular racial identity while values less than 1 suggest that the characteristic decreases the odds of choosing that racial identity. The dependent variable in Model 1 presents the results for predicting the likelihood of choosing an "Other Race." Similarly, Model 2 examines the odds of not choosing a racial identifier; Model 3 examines the odds of choosing white; Model 4 examines the odds for choosing Native American; Model 5 estimates the odds for

choosing black; and finally, Model 6 examines the effects of background characteristics on the odds of choosing Asian.

[Table 4 about here.]

In all of these models, we control for the effects of generational status, gender, age, parental education, and school characteristics. Under school characteristics, we specifically examine the urbanicity, size, and the racial composition of schools. For each model, we control for the proportion of youth at school who chose the same racial identifier. The most striking finding is that the racial identity of other youth at school has significant effects on the likelihood of choosing that race, controlling for all other individual background characteristics. We also found that both the percentages of Hispanics who chose white and non-Hispanic students who chose white are significantly related to the odds that a Hispanic student will choose white as his/her racial identity (see Model 3). The same is true for Model 5, where we examine the odds of choosing black as a racial identity – both the percentage of Hispanics and non-Hispanics who chose black at school have significant positive influences on the odds of choosing black. This also holds for Model 6, where we examine the odds of choosing Hispanic-Asian. For Native Americans (Model 4), the effect of other Hispanics choosing Native American was significant and positively associated with the odds of respondents choosing that identity, but the proportion of the school whose students were non-Hispanic Native-Americans was negatively correlated with the odds of choosing that racial identity.

To examine ethnic differences, we examine the relative odds that Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central/South Americans choosing each racial identity relative to Mexicans. In Model 1, we find that Puerto Ricans and Central/South/Other Hispanics are more

likely to choose "Other Race" than Mexicans. Compared to Mexicans, Cubans are much more likely to choose white or black as their racial identifier, but much less likely to choose Native American.

Interestingly, immigrant youth (1st or 2nd generation youth) are more likely to choose Other, No Race, or Asian as a racial identifier. We will further explore these results in the subsequent draft of this paper.

Table 5 examines the importance of ethnic homophily among Hispanics. The dependent variable of interest in Model 1 is the odds of choosing a Mexican best friend. Subsequent models examine the odds of choosing a Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central/South American, non-Hispanic white, or a non-Hispanic black friend. Again, school racial composition has the largest effects on the odds of choosing a best friend of any particular ethnic group. However, we find that in general, there is evidence of a preference for same-ethnic friends. This is especially true of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Central/South Americans.

[Table 5 about here.]

Table 6 presents data on a logistic regression for the races of the best friend. It examines the odds of choosing a Hispanic best friend of a particular race. In Model 1 we predict the odds of choosing a Hispanic-Other Race best friend, Models 2 through 8 predict the odds that you chose a Hispanic-No Race, Hispanic-White, Hispanic-Native American, Hispanic-Black, Hispanic-Asian, non-Hispanic White, and non-Hispanic Black friend. As in the previous tables, the most striking predictor of the race of one's best friend is the proportion of students that share Hispanic racial group at school. Controlling for all other individual background characteristics, racial identity of other

youth at school has significant effects on the likelihood of choosing that race. All these models show the tendency towards racial homophily among Hispanics. In Table 5 we demonstrated the tendency towards ethnic homophily among Hispanics. Table 6 shows the same pattern towards racial homophily selection of Hispanics. Model 5 and Model 8 measure the odds of choosing a Hispanic Black friend and a non-Hispanic Black friend. These two models show how race is a very salient predictor to choose best friends among these adolescents.

[Table 6 about here.]

Conclusion

Overall, we find that both racial identification among Hispanics to be extremely complex. Unlike previous research, we find that there is a substantial number of Hispanics who are unhyphenated racially – that is they do not identify as white, black, Asian, Native American, or Other. This group comprises one-third of our sample, and identify simply as Hispanic. When one combines this group with the the Hispanics that identify as "Other," they total two-thirds of the Hispanic population in Add Health. These findings are consistent with the idea that Hispanic is a meaningful panethnic category – in fact, it may be more meaningful than other categories such as "Asian."

Our findings also point to the importance of both race and ethnicity among Hispanics in determining their friendship choices. While school racial and ethnic composition are the most important determinants in friendship selection, we still find remnants of both ethnic and racial homophily among Hispanic youth. In the next draft of this manuscript, we will explore our findings in greater detail.

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Table 1
Racial and Ethnic Identity of Respondents

	Percentage	Race/Ethnicity of Respondent			
		Mexican	Cuban	Puerto Rican	Central/South Other
Race ofRespondents:					
Hispanic-White (N=2586)	19.28	0.23	22.16	9.47	45.51
Hispanic-Black (N=1051)	7.83	10.37	2.38	9.42	77.83
Hispanic-No Race (N=4255)	31.72	63.64	6.04	10.46	19.86
Hispanic-Asian (N=351)	2.62	24.79	6.55	14.25	54.42
Hispanic-Native American (N=541)	4.03	67.65	1.48	7.39	23.48
Hispanic-Other (N=4631)	34.52	55.80	5.55	10.08	28.57
Total N					
Percent in Ethnic Group	100.00%	48.04%	8.52%	10.03%	33.40%

Table 2

Race/Ethnicity of Same Sex Best Friend, by Hispanic Respondents

			Percent with a Friend of a Given Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	N	Percent	Mexican	Cuban	Puerto Rican	Central/South and other
Percentage	3549	100.00%	54.04%	12.09%	7.19%	26.68%
Mexican	1905	53.68	**89.40**	0.47	1.99	8.14
Cuban	434	12.23	1.84	**66.36**	3.23	28.57
Puerto Rican	256	7.21	16.41	6.25	**54.30**	23.05
Central/South and other	954	26.88	17.30	12.16	6.71	**63.84**

Table 3
Race of Hispanic Best Friend by Race of Hispanic Respondents

Race/Ethnicity of R			Percentage with a Friend of a Given Race/Ethnicity					
					Hispanic			
	N	Percentage	H-White	H-Black	No Race	H-Asian	H-Nat.Amer.	H-Other
Total	3806							
Percentage		100.00%	14.90%	1.81%	38.44%	1.10%	3.52%	40.23%
Hispanic-White	618	16.24	**40.13**	1.62	25.40	0.97	2.10	29.77
Hispanic-Black	58	1.52	6.90	**55.17**	15.52	1.72	3.45	17.24
Hispanic-no race	1383	36.34	10.56	0.80	**47.94**	0.87	2.82	37.02
Hispanic-Asian	41	1.08	12.20	4.88	21.95	**29.27**	4.88	26.83
Hispanic-NA	133	3.49	10.53	0.75	38.35	1.50	**18.80**	30.08
Hispanic-Other	1573	41.33	9.54	0.83	36.49	0.57	3.37	**49.21**

Table 4
Logistic Regression Estimates of Racial Identity Among Hispanics

Dependent Variables:	Model 1 Other		Model 2 No Race		Model 3 White		Model 4 Native Am.		Model 5 Black		Model 6 Asian	
Ethnicity												
Mexican (baseline)												
Cuban	1.02		1.65	***	118.78	***	0.52		136.16	***	9.93	***
PR	10.71	***	9.58	***	33.15	***	7.21	***	114.66	***	21.15	***
Central/South	4.83	***	3.18	***	62.51	***	4.57	***	480.04	***	21.67	***
Generational Status												
1st	3.08	***	1.97	***	0.54	***	0.79		0.07	***	3.11	***
2nd	3.37	***	3.36	***	0.66	***	0.83		0.21	***	3.64	***
3rd (baseline)												
Missing Generation	2.03	***	2.35	***	0.79		0.83		0.55	**	2.64	**
Female	0.86	***	0.95		0.98		1.01		1.12		1.04	
Age	0.92	***	1.03	*	0.97		0.98		0.95		1.04	
Parental Background												
Education	0.82	***	0.84	***	0.99		0.85	***	1.03		1.06	*
School Characteristics												
Urban	2.49	***	3.23	***	1.47	**	3.89	**	1.01		0.52	
Suburban	2.35	***	3.25	***	1.28	*	3.01	**	0.89		0.81	
Rural (baseline)												
Large	0.87		0.88		0.77	**	0.95		0.81		0.24	*
Medium	0.74	*	0.79		0.77	**	0.92		1.05		0.27	*
Small (baseline)												
School Racial Compostion												
% H-Other (M1 only)	>999.999	***										
% H-No Race (M2 only)			>999.999	***								
% H-white (M3 only)					62.04	***						
% H-NA (M4 only)							>999.999	***				
% H-black (M5 only)									>999.999	***		
% H-Asian (M6 only)											>999.999	***
% nH White (M3 only)					4.86	***						
% nH Black (M5 only)									32.69	***		
% nh Asian (M6 only)											33.21	***
% nH Nat. Am. (M4 only)							<0.001	*				
-2 Log Likelihood	17345.18		16644.33		11542.79		3596.61		3450.06		2146.83	

Table 5
Logistic Regression Estimates for Ethnicity of Best Friend

Dependent Variable:	Model 1 Mexican		Model 2 Cuban		Model 3 Puerto Rican		Model 4 Cental/South		Model 5 White		Model 6 Black	
Ethnicity												
Mexican (baseline)												
Cuban	0.18	**	3.81	***	1.14		0.63	**	0.57	**	0.39	*
PR	1.29		2.03		5.95	***	1.64	**	0.51	***	1.10	
Central/South	1.08		0.92		1.65	**	3.85	***	0.65	***	1.23	*
Generational Status												
1st	1.95	***	1.24		0.98		1.67	***	0.47	***	0.51	***
2nd	2.76	***	1.51		0.94		1.31	**	0.67	***	0.44	***
3rd (baseline)												
Missing Generation	1.37	*	0.80		0.77		1.14		0.95		1.08	
Female	0.91		1.08		0.77	**	0.91		1.01		1.15	***
Age	0.98		1.07		0.99		0.95	**	1.03	***	1.04	**
Parental Background												
Education	0.78	***	1.04		0.93	***	0.95	***	1.08	***	1.00	
School Characteristics												
Urban	3.42	***	2.80		2.05	***	0.91		1.19	***	1.60	***
Suburban	4.13	***	2.43		1.38		1.18		1.08		1.18	*
Rural (baseline)												
Large	0.76	*	0.20	***	0.86		1.18		0.94		1.18	
Medium	0.75	*	0.32	*	1.02		1.11		0.95		1.07	
Small (baseline)												
School Racial Compostion												
% Mexican (M1 only)	>999.999	***										
% Cuban (M2 only)			>999.999	***								
% PR (M3 only)					>999.999	***						
% Central/South (M4 only)							>999.999	***				
% nH white (M5 only)									141.88	***		
% nH black (M6 only)											>999.999	***
-2 Log Likelihood	10727.45		1769.65		4607.54		11041.10		40064.81		21396.59	

Table 6
Logistic Regression Estimates of Races of Best Friends Among Hispanics

Dependent Variable:	Model 1 H-Other		Model 2 H-No Race		Model 3 H-white		Model 4 H-Nat.Amer.		Model 5 H-black		Model 6 H-Asian		Model 7 White		Model 8 Black	
Race																
H-Other (baseline)																
H-No Race	1.88	***	4.43	***	1.54	**	1.70	***	0.56		1.25		0.45	***	0.43	***
H-White	0.99		1.91	***	1.98	***	1.23	*	1.16		0.60		1.11		0.19	***
H-NA	0.86		3.28	***	1.13		9.58	***	0.73		2.56		0.38	***	0.95	
H-Black	0.79		0.78		0.36		1.76		2.42	***	1.26		0.10	***	6.28	***
H-Asian	1.06		1.12		1.06		2.28		1.75		3.99	***	0.39	***	0.82	
Generational Status																
1st	2.20	***	1.63	***	1.20		0.90		0.33	**	2.39	***	0.45	***	0.57	***
2nd	2.11	***	1.77	***	0.99		1.16		0.69		2.56	***	0.68	***	0.49	***
3rd (baseline)																
Missing Generation	1.64	***	1.32		0.89		1.40		0.49		0.27		0.96	***	1.11	
Female	0.83	***	1.05		0.85	*	0.69	*	0.97		0.83		1.02		1.15	***
Age	0.94	**	1.03		0.96		0.94		1.00		1.08		1.03	***	1.04	***
Parental Background															.	
Education	0.87	***	0.87	***	0.97	*	0.85	***	0.97		1.01		1.07	***	0.99	
School Characteristics																
Urban	2.52	***	2.44	***	1.28		13.36	***	1.83	**	0.86		1.21	***	1.64	***
Suburban	3.10	***	2.10	***	1.45	*	8.97	***	1.09		0.83		1.08		1.18	*
Rural (baseline)																
Large	0.78		0.87		0.81		0.67		2.19	**	2.29		0.94		1.21	*
Medium	0.69	*	0.76		0.87		0.79		2.51	***	4.10		0.95		1.08	
Small (baseline)																
School Racial Compostion																
% H-Other (M1 only)	>999.999	***														
% H-No Race (M2 only)			>999.999	***												
% H-white (M3 only)					>999.999	***										
% H-NA (M4 only)							>999.999	***								
% H-black (M5 only)									>999.999	***						
% H-Asian (M6 only)											>999.999	***				
% nH White (M7 only)													136.60	***		
% nH Black (M8 only)															986.38	***
-2 Log Likelihood	10013.77		9559.53		8581.32		1849.25		3669.99		1547.03		39859.5		21135.07	