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A Mixed-Methods Approach to Investigating Core Self-Evaluations, Ethnicity, and Perceived Discrimination Among Undergraduate Students

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A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH TO INVESTIGATING CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS, ETHNICITY, AND PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

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This research, guided by Yosso's (2005) social capital theory, delved deep into the lived experiences of individuals navigating spaces where they encountered perceived discrimination and how their core self-evaluations played a pivotal role in shaping their responses to such experiences. Through a meticulous process involving qualitative data analysis strategies such as coding and thematic analysis, the study unveiled larger themes and narratives that moved away from a deficit perspective, focusing instead on assets the individuals brought to the table including their aspirations, goals, and familial and social capital.

In the discussion section, focus group settings facilitated rich dialogues where participants shared personal narratives, shedding light on their daily encounters with discrimination and microaggressions. Despite facing challenges, many showcased a resilient spirit by refusing to let negative comments define their self-view, a perspective aligned with a anti-deficit mentality. The discussions revealed a common thread of individuals employing self-affirming strategies to maintain a positive self-view, demonstrating the power of core self-evaluations in mitigating the impacts of discrimination.

This research underscored the importance of shifting the lens from a deficit perspective to one that recognized and leveraged the strengths individuals brought to their environments. It

called for a more inclusive and empathetic approach in higher education settings, urging stakeholders to create spaces that nurtured self-affirmation and positive self-evaluations.

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I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my family for patiently waiting by my side as I completed this amazing process. To my amazing husband for believing in me and pushing me to strive for the best even when all I wanted to do was give up! Mari, you have been my role model and mentor. Thank you for being such a positive influence in my life and showing me what it is to be a strong independent Latina. To my mother for instilling the value of education at a young age and always cheering me on, “mi hija es bien chingona!” Lo sabes!!

Lastly, thank you to my committee members. Without your guidance and support, I would still be lost on the first page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of Problem

In today's polarization climate, race has surfaced as an especially antagonistic point of disagreement. From White identarian movements emerging in the wake of the Obama years to current Black Lives Matter protests in major urban centers, the 'color line' has proven to be an even more intractable problem than Du Bois (Degler, 1973) might have even envisioned. The issue is particularly frustrating as voices on both sides of the debate articulate such contrasting views of the opportunities and constraints in U.S. society. Anti-racist thinkers lament deep-rooted structures of systemic racism or white supremacy, which all but guarantee the continuation of the racial caste system (Patton & Haynes, 2020; Williams, 2016). Yet color-blind liberals and conservatives reaffirm the country's progress since civil rights.

In the context of higher education, the debate has centered on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion with discussion centered on if and how colleges and universities perpetuate racial-ethnic inequality in their everyday norms and practices. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have mushroomed on campuses throughout the country as university administrations have responded to the moment with measures they hoped would ensure fairness and retention among traditionally underserved students. However, in a report shared by Zhou and Zhou (2022), students were hesitant to talk with classmates and professors about issues surrounding politics, race, religion, and sexual orientation. "Conservative students have consistently reported that they feel more hesitant than liberals to share their points of view on prevalent societal and political

topics, and some fear that their self-censorship may erode free and politically diverse discourse on college campuses" (Anderson, 2021, p. 6).

Discussed but difficultly accomplished was the push to create more inclusive communities within the university environment that would retain students of color while providing a space to belong. About 63% of students who began a bachelor's degree at a four-year institution in Fall 2013 completed that degree within six years (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). However, a comparison between White students versus students of color highlighted the equity and achievement gap clearer. In a report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019),

> among students of different racial/ethnic groups who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010, the 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students was highest for Asian students (74 percent), followed by White students (64 percent), students of two or more races (60 percent), Hispanic students (54 percent), Pacific Islander students (51 percent), Black students (40 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (39 percent). (para. 1)

Failure to retain students of color continues to be a topic of discussion at universities and colleges. Studies continue to explore barriers to persistence and review efforts to improve retention and graduation rates for students of color (Banks & Dohy, 2019). However, research was continuously lacking in directly investigating students' racial experiences on campus related to ethnicity and their perception of discrimination. Student perceptions of self-worth with measures of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control, which construct the larger personality trait of core self-evaluations, have not been discussed within this context either.

This dissertation added to the research on core self-evaluations, perceived discrimination, ethnicity, and on-campus experiences. In this mixed-methods study, I aimed to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a general picture of the research problem. This multifaceted approach highlighted possible statistical relationships during Phase One. The qualitative Phase Two data further refined and explained the statistical results by exploring students' views and experiences (Creswell, 2002). Large data sets, able to be obtained through quantitative structure, could lead to less biased statements about the student experience. Findings in this type of study could have important implications for higher education administrators. For example, the results could highlight the potential for multicultural training needs across campuses. Programs could target faculty and staff on campus and educate them on how certain behaviors could be perceived as exclusive or discriminatory.

Definitions and Terms

Core Self-Evaluation. A personality trait that encompasses an individual's self-perception of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability.

Ethnicity. The state of belonging to a social group that has common cultural traditions. Ethnicity is broader than race and the term is used to differentiate among groups of individuals according to cultural expression and identification (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996).

Gender. How a person identifies on a broad spectrum and refers to socially constructed roles and behaviors that are culturally associated with sex categories (World Health Organization, 2019).

Perceived Discrimination. A person's perception of negative judgment or unfair treatment due to their specific characteristics (Banks et al., 2006).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods study was to evaluate students' core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and the relationship on perceived discrimination. The first phase encompassed statistical, quantitative survey results aimed at measuring students' core self-evaluations and perceptions of discrimination. The second phase then followed with self-identified individuals to conduct semi-structured focused groups to elaborate on the results of the quantitative phase and provide meaning and context. The research was guided by Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth (CCW) model that examined six forms of cultural capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. These six forms of cultural capital are further explored in this paper. Yosso's model explored students' talents and strengths and how they are used to help guide them through the college experience. In this study, post-positivism guided the quantitative phase and interpretivism guided the second focus group phase.

Research Questions

This study was guided by an overarching mixed-methods question, several quantitative questions, and one qualitative question.

The overarching mixed-methods question was:

Q1 In what ways do the qualitative findings expand upon the quantitative results in regard to core self-evaluations, ethnicity and perceived discrimination?

For the quantitative Phase One of this study, the guiding research questions were:

Q1a What is the relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination?

Q1b If a relationship exists, does it differ depending on ethnicity or gender?

Q1c Are there any group differences in the variables measured (core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination)?

For the qualitative Phase Two, the overarching research questions were:

Q1d How have students' core self-evaluations and ethnicity expressed themselves in their lived experiences?

Q1e How has cultural capital aided in the internal processing of perceived discrimination?

Theoretical Perspective

Yosso's (2005) CCW model included several aspects of social capital that incorporated individual traits, which could influence identity development. Her model shifted the research lens from a deficit model within communities of color and instead focused on the various skills, knowledge, and abilities that often go unrecognized: "Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Her model contested this way of thinking and suggested embracing cultural differences to acknowledge the unique skills marginalized students bring to the table.

Yosso (2005) outlined six forms of capital that compose community cultural wealth.

- Aspirational capital: an individual's capacity to remain optimistic regardless of what life throws your way; a positive outlook is the best way to defeat the negativity in your life.
- Linguistic capital: the ability to communicate in several languages.
- Familial capital: knowledge gained through interactions with family and familial support. Family interactions represent kinship ties and foster life lessons.
- Social capital: networks of the community are importantly referred to as the community of people that serves as support mechanisms for students. These can take shape as faculty, staff, or campus engagement relationships.

- Navigational capital: the skill used to navigate through institutional settings. Navigational capital "recognizes the resilience of students of color who strategically foster success despite situations that place them in vulnerable predicaments" (Patton et al., 2016, p.255).
- Resistant capital: skills obtained by questioning inequality, breaking down the barriers made by the dominant class and disrupting the negative narratives that threaten communities of color.

Yosso's (2005) CCW model provides a solid framework to guide research surrounding students' use of social networks and personal determination to leverage social capital to successfully navigate higher education and ultimately persist to graduation (Martin et al., 2020). Much of Yosso's work has been used to describe the forms of capital students of color use to navigate higher education and how they utilize their social capital to shape their relationships in the university setting. What was lacking within current research was Yosso's model applied to navigating perceived discrimination in higher education. This study aimed to use Yosso's model as guidance for explaining how students internalized perceived discrimination and how these experiences impacted their core self-evaluations and perceptions of self-worth. Students' lived experiences and how they engaged in this self-reflection were explored as part of the qualitative Phase Two of this study.

Leadership and Organizational Implications

A growing body of literature began to address the central question of the impact of diversity on the college campus. O'Keeffe (2013) found a student's ability to develop a sense of belonging within their institution was a critical factor in determining student retention. Fostering a campus community where students perceive elevated levels of discrimination could in turn

have detrimental effects on overall well-being, academic distress, personal competency, and impact overall retention rates for the institution (Palmer & Young, 2009). With many college institutions remaining predominantly White, students of varying ethnicities often felt marginalized and isolated (Comer et al., 2017). Hurtado and Carter (1997) found a negative campus racial climate could hurt Latinx students' sense of belonging and perceive unfriendly environments, which in turn were shown to cause student attrition. Family cohesion and peer support functioned as protective factors against the negative effects of racial discrimination experienced by ethnically diverse college students (Juang et al., 2016). In their study, Juang et al. found that while higher levels of perceived discrimination were related to lower levels of adjustment, peer support modified those relations with findings highlighting the important protective role played by family and peers. Social and cultural capital gained from relationships and interactions with family, peers, faculty, and administrators impacted college outcomes and students showed determination to succeed despite the circumstances (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). Students who socialized with diverse peers and discussed racial and ethnic issues outside of class reported higher levels of college satisfaction and intellectual and social self-concepts, which in turn all had positive impacts on retention and academic learning outcomes (Strayhorn, 2009). This study could highlight the importance of intervention programs designed to increase self-esteem if it found those to be correlated or predictors of perceived discrimination. Students could join an identity-based support network to help them gain the necessary skills to cope with their environment. Within this network, students could discuss their experiences with discrimination and the relationship between discrimination and their perception of self-worth or core self-evaluations. With institutions focusing on creating a welcoming environment to

increase student retention and graduation, more research is needed to evaluate the impact of perceived discrimination on students' evaluation of self-worth.

Overview of Chapters

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II provides an overview of literature related to core self-evaluation and perceived discrimination. Chapter III details the methodology used to conduct this study. The research problems and questions are restated. Additionally, a rationale for a mixed-methods approach is provided. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research including an interpretation and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative results. Finally, Chapter V presents a summary of the findings and discussion of implications for practice, limitations of the study, possible suggestions for future research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods study was to evaluate students' core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and the relationship on perceived discrimination. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature related to the problem. I provide an overview of research related to core self-evaluations and follow with research related to individual traits that encompass core self-evaluations. This includes research on self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability as they relate to students in the university environment. Next, I include research on perceived discrimination on college campuses. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Yosso's (2005) CCW model that guided this study.

Core Self-Evaluations

Core self-evaluations were coined by Judge et al. (1998) and defined as the "fundamental premise that individuals hold about themselves, and their functioning of the world" (p. 168). Core self-evaluations (CSE), a method of self-appraisal, include four personality dimensions: self-esteem or beliefs in one's self-worth, generalized self-efficacy or beliefs in one's capability to succeed, emotional stability or tendency to focus on negative versus positive aspects of the self, and locus of control or belief in the extent to which events are caused by internal or external forces. When studied alone, each trait's predictive power in job satisfaction is small; however, their predictive power increases when combined into the concept of core self-evaluations.

Judge et al. (1998) viewed core self-evaluations as a latent construct that encompasses personality traits and causes employees to view themselves as having high self-esteem,

generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and to hold an internal locus of control. The CSE trait was developed through the study of job satisfaction. Research conducted on core self-evaluations suggested that individuals with high core self-evaluations were motivated to achieve higher job performance (Judge et al., 2005). The traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control have each been individually studied concerning job outcomes. Judge et al. discovered that combining these four traits into the larger CSE trait could predict job performance and satisfaction much more effectively than exploring the traits individually. In later studies where core self-evaluation was being examined, individuals with high core self-evaluations were more likely to have higher job satisfaction and better job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Much of the research on core self-evaluations was conducted by Judge and his colleagues and focused on the relationship among core self-evaluations, goals, job performance, and job satisfaction. Similarly, Grant and Wrzesniewski (2010) were interested in core self-evaluations and job performance but also included other outside motivational forces that would influence job performance such as anticipated guilt and gratitude. Through three different studies, Grant and Wrzesniewski reported for employees with high levels of prosocial motivation, there was a positive relationship between core self-evaluations and performance. Only until recently have core self-evaluations moved into the academic setting.

To extend core self-evaluations into a university setting, Broucek (2005) applied the construct to student satisfaction, life satisfaction among students, and academic performance. Much like previous findings in the occupational setting, where higher core self-evaluations led to higher job satisfaction, in Broucek's study, core self-evaluations were significantly and positively correlated with both student satisfaction and academic performance. Debicki et al.

(2016) similarly explored the impact of core self-evaluations on academic performance and added a mediating effect of different types of goal alignments. As expected, students who considered themselves worthy of success and held higher levels of core self-evaluations also achieved higher academic performance. However, goal orientation only facilitated the negative impact aimed at avoiding performance rather than positive learning outcomes. In another undergraduate study specifically aimed at first-year students, Griggs and Crawford (2019) found racial differences in hope, core self-evaluations, and emotional well-being but no differences between genders. Other studies focused on core self-evaluations and socialization and engagement on campus (Medina-Craven et al., 2020) or looked at core self-evaluations and specific populations such as students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (DuPaul et al., 2017). Importantly, concepts that encompass core self-evaluations have individually been linked to retention amongst undergraduate students (Gifford et al., 2006; Nordstrom et al., 2014). However, none explored core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination. In the following sections, traits that encompass core self-evaluations are examined in relation to perceived discrimination.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is used to describe an individual's overall sense of personal value. Much of the research on self-esteem and perceived discrimination focused on children with disabilities or developmental outcomes for adolescents (Zhao & Ngai, 2022). Wei et al. (2008) focused on coping strategies and self-esteem as moderators between perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms. Researchers found that for international students faced with discrimination, their level of self-esteem interacted with specific coping strategies to predict depressive symptoms (Wei et al., 2008). Results showed self-esteem moderated the impact of stress on depression

when faced with stressors and those with lower levels of self-esteem were at greater risk for depression. Many of the studies were conducted in China or other international countries and lacked a research focus on undergraduate students in the United States. One of the few studies conducted with undergraduate females, Corning (2002) sought to examine the relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological distress among undergraduate women. Corning found an inverse relationship between self-esteem and psychological distress. Lower levels of self-esteem put people at greater risk for depression (Corning, 2002). While research existed that highlighted the benefits of self-esteem and/or its moderating effect on depression and anxiety when confronted with discrimination, perceived discrimination was seen as a predictor variable in every study. Lacking was utilizing self-esteem to predict how one perceived discrimination or how ethnicity played a role in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived discrimination.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy differs from self-esteem in that self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs in their abilities (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015) sought to examine the influence of child and adolescent racial microaggressions and ethnic identity on academic self-efficacy, substance abuse, and criminal intentions. In a sample of 409 young adults ages 18 to 35 enrolled at a public college, the study found as students' engagement in school increased, so did their level of competence in managing coursework and then impacted criminal intentions negatively. Additionally, ethnic identity was positively related to self-efficacy and inversely related to criminal intentions. However, this study did not include a measure of perceived discrimination and only included microaggressions as a predictor variable. Similarly, Aguayo et al. (2011)—in researching ethnic identity, acculturation, and self-efficacy—found acculturation

had positive effects on college self-efficacy among Mexican American college students. This study highlighted the importance of considering culture and acculturation since both significantly predicted college self-efficacy and reported greater confidence in being successful in college. Unfortunately, not much literature existed on self-efficacy and perceived discrimination.

Locus of Control

Defined in 1990 by Rotter, locus of control is the degree to which an individual believes the outcomes of their behaviors are determined by either external or internal factors. While not discussing perceived discrimination, Brown et al. (2017) explored internalized racial oppression and locus of control among African Americans and the value put by them on higher education. Results from their study indicated greater internalized racial oppression correlated with a lower valuing of higher education and a more external academic locus of control. Additionally, the analysis showed academic locus of control was an intervening variable in the relationship between internalized racial oppression and the value placed on higher education for men but not women. Other research on locus of control focused on the healthcare field such as the relationship between skin tone, blood pressure, and locus of control (Trevino & Ernst, 2012) or locus of control, racial identity, and perceptions of health among Black American women (Pieterse & Carter, 2010). Unfortunately, a gap continues to exist in the literature to address what role locus of control plays in perceived discrimination and the internalization of this experience in everyday situations.

Emotional Stability

As the last facet of core self-evaluations, emotional stability has to do with being even-tempered when faced with challenges. Emotional stability has been evaluated as a predictor of competence and aptitude (Bontempo & Napier, 2011). Similarly, emotional intelligence has been

linked to higher levels of life satisfaction (Palmer et al., 2002). In relation to perceived discrimination, minority status was found to be a positive predictor of well-being when faced with race-related adversity (Ryff et al., 2003). Additionally, perceived discrimination was found to be a negative predictor of well-being but such effects were gender-specific. When observing low levels of discrimination, males and females held similar levels of self-acceptance. However, once perceived discrimination increased, self-acceptance decreased at a significantly lower rate for males than for females. Therefore, when experiencing higher levels of discrimination, women reported lower levels of self-acceptance than their male counterparts (Ryff et al., 2003).

Perceived Discrimination

A study found high ethnic and racial group identity reduced the association among discrimination, psychological well-being, and overall life satisfaction (Cobb et al., 2019) among unauthorized Hispanic immigrants. Individuals with high ethnic/racial group identity found a sense of belonging and social support, which might protect them from the negative aspects perceived by discrimination. All individuals could perceive discrimination but most research surrounding perceived discrimination focused on the experiences of Latinx groups (Baldwin-White et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2020; Cobb et al., 2019; Cokley et al., 2017; Uzogara, 2020). In the context of higher education, perceived discrimination on college campuses might contribute to a negative racial climate for ethnic minorities. Literature on perceived discrimination reported on the effects on mental health and distress and how perceived discrimination positively predicted academic distress (Cheng et al., 2020). Students who reported higher levels of perceived discrimination also reported higher levels of academic distress. Experiences of perceived discrimination could negatively impact self-esteem.

In a study focused on the experiences of African American students, Gossett et al. (1998) found significant differences between the perceptions of African American students and their non-African-American peers. Specifically, African American students perceived significantly more discrimination from university administration, peers, and faculty. To mitigate or reduce perceived discrimination, African American and Latino students found themselves conforming to racial and ethnic stereotypes at a significantly higher level than their white counterparts (Ancis et al., 2000). However, students of color did not necessarily perceive discrimination consistently and it is important to account for these subtleties (Swim et al., 2003). Many studies focused on perceived discrimination among racial and ethnic minorities and the link between perceived discrimination and mental health but there was a need to examine additional constructs such as the interaction of perceived discrimination and self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control—the constructs that encompass larger core self-evaluations.

The concept of CSEs combines four personality traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control—to predict job performance and/or job satisfaction. Very few studies applied core self-evaluations to educational settings and none had added the context of ethnicity. Altogether, little to no research existed on perceived discrimination and its impact on self-worth and a much larger gap existed in the literature in terms of understanding the impact on core self-evaluations, i.e., how students assess their abilities and worthiness, and their interaction with ethnicity and perceived discrimination experienced.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) Model

Yosso's (2005) CCW theory is a groundbreaking framework that challenges traditional notions of intelligence and success and highlights the value of the cultural assets that people of color bring to their communities. Developed by Dr. Tara J. Yosso, the theory recognized that

communities of color possess unique forms of cultural capital that are often overlooked in dominant educational and societal models. Yosso's theory identified six forms of cultural wealth that are prevalent within communities of color: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance.

Aspirational capital refers to the dreams, aspirations, and hopes that students and families hold for their future. Linguistic capital encompasses the various language practices used in communities of color including bilingualism, code-switching, and the use of vernacular language. Familial capital refers to the supportive networks of family and extended family that provide emotional, financial, and social support to individuals. Social capital includes the informal networks and relationships people build with others in their communities, which could lead to access to resources and opportunities. Navigational capital refers to the skills and strategies individuals use to navigate unfamiliar systems and institutions such as schools or the legal system. Finally, resistance capital refers to the ways in which communities of color resist oppressive practices and ideologies and work toward social justice and equity.

According to Yosso (2005), these forms of cultural wealth are not only valuable in and of themselves but also have the potential to enhance academic and personal success. For example, students who are bilingual or who code-switch could use these skills to navigate different social contexts and communicate effectively with a wider range of people (Huerta-Macías & Quintero, 1992). Similarly, students who have strong familial and social networks might be more resilient in the face of adversity and might have access to resources and opportunities that could enhance their educational and career trajectories (Li et al., 2021).

The various bodies of literature related to core self-evaluations, perceived discrimination, and Yosso’s (2005) CCW are applied in Chapter V in the analysis of findings from the research.

This presentation of literature was intended to establish context and provide the reader with an overview of relevant constructs by which to evaluate and interpret the findings of this study. Chapter III outlines the methodology of this research study and is followed by the findings in Chapter IV and discussion in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods study was to evaluate students' core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and the relationship on perceived discrimination. This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology. It also includes a rationale for using a mixed-methods design, a description of the sampling strategy, and data collection and analysis procedures. Additionally, I include an overview of Phase One and Phase Two data collection procedures. This chapter concludes with the researcher's positionality statement and challenges to a sequential explanatory study.

Research Design

This study used a sequential mixed-methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) design, which is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2002).

The overarching mixed-methods question was:

Q1 In what ways do the qualitative findings expand upon the quantitative results in regard to core self-evaluations, ethnicity and perceived discrimination?

For the quantitative Phase One of this study, the guiding research questions were:

Q1a What is the relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination?

Q1b If a relationship exists, does it differ depending on ethnicity or gender?

Q1c Are there any group differences in the variables measured (core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination)?

For the qualitative Phase Two, the overarching research questions were:

Q1d How have students' core self-evaluations and ethnicity expressed themselves in their lived experiences?

Q1e How has cultural capital aided in the internal processing of perceived discrimination?

The rationale for utilizing a mixed-methods design was that relying solely on either quantitative or qualitative methods might not fully capture the trends and details of the problem when done alone. When used together, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis (Greene et al., 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In quantitative research, one relies mainly on numerical data and uses a positivist or postpositivist lens that supports making empirical observations to determine possible relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2014). Positivism being the dominant quantitative paradigm sets out to predict and control reality with a strong focus on cause and effect. Quantitative research is scientific, objective, fast, and focused. The ability to obtain large amounts of data and analyze it strategically minimizes biases. Additionally, larger amounts of data could lead to generalizability, which in turn could predict future results or guide the search for additional casual relationships.

Alternatively, qualitative research attempts to understand and explain human social realities. Interpretivism lives more comfortably 'in the gray,' focusing on the 'why' and 'how' of social phenomena with the underlying belief that a person's views of the world are undeniably linked to their own life experience (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology invites us to engage with the phenomena surrounding us and requires us to suspend our usual judgment of a situation (Crotty, 1998). The interview questions were strategically chosen to develop a full description of the students' lived experiences, and how they viewed their identities played a role in how they

interpreted their environment. Through rich and detailed descriptions, results from the student narratives provided valuable insight into how students made meaning of core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination. The capacity to develop a sense of belonging within the higher education institution has been identified as a critical factor determining student retention (O'Keeffe, 2013). Together, these results could shape the way we reimagine identity-based programming, a sense of belonging, and how to nurture an inclusive campus environment.

Mixed-methods are a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data within the context of a single study to further understand a research problem holistically (Tashakkori et al., 2021). A pragmatic approach aims to focus on 'what works' to address the problem and offers the flexibility and strengths of both quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Pragmatism's focus is on the consequences of the research and focuses on the importance of the question asked using multiple methods of data collection. A major tenet of pragmatism is that quantitative and qualitative methods should be compatible and thus both numerical and text data could help better understand the overall research problem.

This study used a sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods design consisting of two distinct phases. In the first quantitative phase, data were collected using a web-based survey. The goal of Phase One was to identify possible relationships between core self-evaluations, perceived discrimination, and ethnicity through a larger data set. In Phase Two, focus groups were used to collect qualitative data through group semi-structured interviews to explain why, if any, relationships existed. Additionally, the focus groups provided insight into how students process and make meaning of everyday discrimination. The qualitative focus groups allowed for further exploration into the results obtained by the survey analysis. The focus group questions were

guided and purposeful to dive into the lived experiences of undergraduate students and how they navigated and processed perceived discrimination. Focus groups served as an outlet to explore ideas in depth, were useful for understanding participants' reasoning and subjective meanings, and allowed for extensive probing (Tashakkori et al., 2021). The focus group setting also provided space for participants to interact and react to each other. A mixed-methods study provided the best of both worlds. This study obtained a large data set by which empirical observations could be made and followed up with rich and meaningful conversations with students that could explain the quantitative results. The qualitative phase allowed for the use of student stories to further explain the phenomenon being observed. These stories might help universities understand how perceived discrimination was processed by students of different ethnicities and identities and how these discriminatory experiences influenced their core self-evaluations.

Positionality Statement

Positionality is a researcher's worldview of the research topic acknowledging how our worldview shapes the scope of the study. As a researcher, I am aware of the biases and values I carry and must state those explicitly within the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a Hispanic female, currently employed in higher education, and pursuing a doctoral degree, I am aware of my lived experiences surrounding my perception of discrimination. I understand how my core self-evaluations and ethnicity play a role in my perception of discrimination. Thus, I employed the practice of bracketing—the process in which the researcher sets aside their assumptions and perceptions regarding the research question and approaches the results without prejudgment.

Challenges to the Explanatory Sequential Design

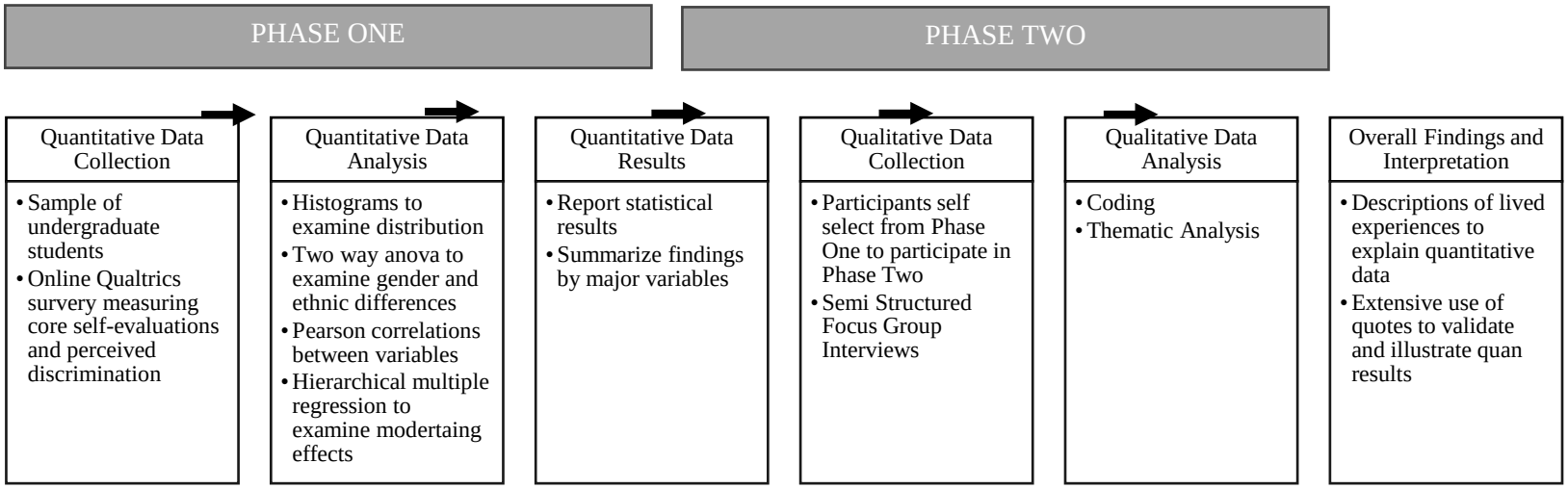
Four challenges to implementing a sequential explanatory design were outlined by Creswell et al. (2011): time commitment, obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), choosing which results to explain, and selecting the participants for the qualitative phase. This mixed-methods study took a considerable amount of time. I acknowledge there was participant melt between the end of Phase One and Phase Two. It was my intention to conduct both phases with a minimal time gap between the two; however, the IRB process took longer than expected. Phase One was pushed to end of Fall, with Phase Two then happening in Spring. Phase One participants expressed an interest in Phase Two but graduated so were unable to participate in Phase Two. As briefly mentioned, the IRB approval process was daunting. In the original proposal for this study, different institutions were selected to best represent a variety of environments. I had obtained initial approval for two additional institutions: a Hispanic-serving institution in the South and a private religious school on the East Coast. Unfortunately, the contact at the private religious school chose a different position and moved to another institution, which did not allow me to move forward at their location. The Hispanic-serving institution's IRB board went through an overhaul process and the approval took too long. I was able to submit the proper paperwork but the last signature was never obtained, and I was running out of time. Due to this time constraint, I decided to simply stay with one institution for the entire study. Future research should focus on additional institution types as this might provide further insight into students' lived experiences as they vary by location. It should also be noted that after the initial email invitation to the one student body population, I received a communication from the IRB representative at my home institution that stated I had missed the protocol to distribute my survey. The institution preferred that I did not send a reminder email, which was in my original

proposal. I acknowledge that not sending the two reminder emails as originally planned probably impacted the response rate. However, with just one email, I was able to obtain a sizable sample for the quantitative phase of this study.

The following section discusses the methods used for each phase of the study. A visual representation of the study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Mixed-Methods Flowchart Illustrating the Study Design



Phase One: Quantitative Component

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students attending a public four-year primarily White institution in the Midwest. Students were identified by pulling a roster of all enrolled undergraduate students. Students who were enrolled part-time or less than 12 credits were excluded from participating. An ideal sample size of 550 was estimated by using a G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) analysis with a small effect size, an alpha level of .05, and .80 power for multiple regression with three explanatory variables in the model. All identifiable information was removed from this initial list and only emails were retained. The survey invitation (see Appendix B) was sent out to 6,065 total students; 674 (11.11%) responded to the invitation. However, only 585 (9.65%) students completed the entire survey. Only completed surveys were included in the analysis. Students who completed the survey were entered in a drawing for a $50 gift card to Amazon that took place at the end of the Fall 2022 semester. The survey was available to students for four weeks from the initial email but unfortunately, due to university protocol, I was unable to send reminder emails. Research showed that sending reminder emails significantly increased response rates to questionnaires or surveys. Sammut et al. (2021) found that sending a reminder email increased response rates, reasoned that sending reminder emails helped create a sense of urgency, and shared additional strategies to improve web survey response rates.

Maintaining the protection of participants was of utmost importance. I did not ask students for identifiable information including but not limited to individual school numbers, names, and/or birthdays. A contact email was collected for the sole purpose of the gift card drawing but the data were not linked directly to any responses. Students wishing to enter the gift

card drawing were rerouted to a separate web page to include their contact information for the sole purpose of the raffle. Any e-mail lists used to recruit participants were not shared with others, were kept completely confidential, and were deleted after the research was completed to maintain anonymity.

In total, complete data were obtained from 410 (70%) females, 129 (22%) males, and 46 (8%) non-binary persons for a total of 585 undergraduate students. Ages varied from 17 to 51 years old (M = 22, SD = 5.80). Many students or 361(61.71%) self-identified as White/Caucasian. The remaining demographic breakdown was as follows: 31(5.3%) Asian/Pacific Islander, 40 (6.84%) Black/African American, 98 (16.75%) Hispanic/Latinx, 48 (8.21%) Multiracial/Biracial, and 7 (1.20%) Native American. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in Phase Two that would include focus groups. Of the 585 students who completed the survey, 176 (30%) answered with interest in participating in the focus group phase. Three weeks after the conclusion of the survey, all 176 participants were emailed with details on Phase Two. Participants were required to return a consent form (see Appendix C) and only those who returned the consent form were given the opportunity to sign up for the focus groups to take place in the Spring term.

Measures

Perceived Discrimination

Perceived discrimination was the dependent variable in this study. There were two independent measures of perceived discrimination and both were analyzed independently.

The Everyday Discrimination Scale (see Appendix D; Williams et al., 1997) is a nine-item self-report scale that assesses the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to have been treated unjustly during their everyday life. A sample item includes “People act as if they

think you are not smart." Responses range on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*Once a week or more*). Scores ranged between 0-36, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of perceived discrimination within the community. Cronbach's alpha for this sample was $\alpha = .85$.

Classroom Discrimination and Harassment is a nine-item self-report scale that assesses the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to have been treated unjustly in a classroom setting (see Appendix E). The Classroom Discrimination and Harassment Scale was adapted from McNeilly et al.'s (1996) Work-Based Discrimination Scale. In the original work-based discrimination scale, a sample item was "How often do you feel that you are ignored or not taken seriously by your supervisor?" Items on the work-based discrimination scale were modified to remove "supervisor" and replaced with "professor" or instead of using "coworker," I used "classmate." New sample items included "How often do you feel that you are ignored or not taken seriously by your professor?" Responses ranged on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 5 (*Almost every day*). Scores ranged between 0-40 with higher scores reflecting greater levels of classroom discrimination and harassment. Cronbach's alpha for this sample was $\alpha = .80$.

Core Self-Evaluations

The concept of core self-evaluations (CSE), which is related to self-worth, competence, and self-esteem, was the independent variable and was explored as a possible moderator variable. The CSE combines four personality traits: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control. Core self-evaluations (see Appendix F) were measured using the 12-item Core Self-Evaluations Scale developed by Judge et al. (2003). The scale uses a Likert-type rating scale anchored at 1 (*Disagree strongly*) and 7 (*Agree strongly*) to measure positive feelings about the self in terms of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional

stability, and locus of control. A sample item was “I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.” Scores ranged from 12 to 70 with higher scores suggesting greater levels of core self-evaluations. Cronbach’s alpha for this sample was $\alpha = .86$.

Demographic Data

Age, gender, and ethnicity were also collected. Age was collected by a simple question of “What is your current age?” and allowing the participant to input a numerical number. I chose to leave age as a continuous variable but reported mean age and age range. Gender was collected by asking “Gender: How do you identify?” Participants had the option to answer Male, Female and Non-binary persons. Lastly, ethnicity was measured with a categorical question of “What is your Ethnicity?” with responses being Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, White/Caucasian, and Multiracial/Biracial. Participants were not allowed to select several ethnicity responses.

Analytic Strategy

Predictors in this study included the measure of core self-evaluations and ethnicity while the outcome measured was perceived discrimination and classroom discrimination. Utilizing SPSS Software Package Version 27 to conduct all analyses, the normality of data, descriptive statistics, histograms, and variable distributions were examined. To address the research questions about the relationships among core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and perceived discrimination, Pearson correlations were conducted by using the correlate bivariate function in SPSS and looking for significance at the .05 level. Variables included core self-evaluations, perceived discrimination, and age.

To examine group differences among the variables of core self-evaluations, perceived everyday discrimination and perceived classroom discrimination, a two-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA) was conducted. Additionally, group differences were examined between gender and ethnicity.

Moderating effects of core self-evaluations were explored via hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Consistent with Aiken and West (1991) in computing the interaction, core self-evaluations and ethnicity variables were standardized to create variables tested as main effects. The standardized score of core self-evaluations served as the main moderator and was multiplied by each of the standardized scores of the predictor variables to create interaction terms. The regression was conducted hierarchically, such that the control variables (gender, age) were entered in Step 1, the main effects (core self-evaluations and ethnicity) were entered in Step 2, and the computed interaction term between core self-evaluations and ethnicity were entered in Step 3. If the regression analysis was found to be significant at the .05 level, the results were graphed using the Interpreting Interaction Effects by Jeremy Dawson (n.d.) that provided the ability to graph the moderating effects based on the SPSS output generated. Unfortunately, the regression analysis was not found significant so no graphing was made. The assumption of independence of observations was checked by examining the scatterplot between the residuals and predicted values.

Phase Two: Qualitative Component

The explanatory, sequential, mixed-methods design allowed the opportunity to understand and further explain the results of the quantitative data results by utilizing qualitative methods to dive deeper into the lived experiences of the participants of this study. In the second phase, five total focus groups were conducted in which students dove into their perceptions of discrimination and explored what role their core self-evaluations played in the internalization of that experience.

Participants

Of the 585 students who completed Phase One, 176 (30%) answered with interest in participating in the focus group phase. All students who indicated interest were emailed a consent form to return (see Appendix C). Only students with a completed consent form were invited to schedule a focus group time. A total of 27 students participated in Phase Two with the following demographic breakdown: 14 (51.85%) White, 7 (25.93%) Hispanic, 3 (11.11%) Multiracial, 2 (7.41%) Asian, and 1 (3.7%) Black. Students were not allowed to sign up for several focus groups. Lastly, focus groups were not assigned and were solely based on availability. Once a focus group time was full, participants could no longer select it as an option.

Data Collection

Recruitment for the focus groups took place at the end of Phase One—survey collection. The last question on the survey included an invitation to participate in 60–90-minute focus groups aimed at exploring core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and perceived discrimination; 176 students expressed interest in Phase Two. Three weeks after the conclusion of the survey, all 176 participants were sent an email with details on Phase Two. Participants were required to return a consent form and only once returned would they be given the opportunity to sign up for a focus group time. Five focus groups were scheduled from which students could choose. A total of 53 (30%) students returned the consent form at which point they were directed to a Google Form to choose a focus group time that worked best for their schedule. A total of 27 students participated in a focus group. Participant assignment within the focus groups was totally random and based on availability. Participants signed up on a first-come, first-serve basis and once a focus group reached capacity, it was no longer an option for other participants to select.

Focus groups were comprised of five or six students who had completed the Phase One survey and self-identified as wanting to explore core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination in further detail. The interview questions were chosen purposefully to develop a narrative of students' lived experiences and how their core self-evaluations were impacted as a direct result of perceived discrimination and/or their ethnicity (see Appendix G).

Semi-structured focus groups were chosen to allow the researcher flexibility as topics and information arose from the participants (Merriam, 2009). All interviews were conducted in English and were digitally recorded via Zoom©. Zoom is a popular video conferencing and online meeting platform that allows individuals to connect and communicate remotely. Zoom was chosen due to its real-time audio and video communication capabilities. Additionally, Zoom allowed for ease of use and no need for participants to create an account to access it. The focus groups did not last longer than an hour and a half. Informed consent was obtained before the focus group conversations commenced. Additionally, participants were not required to turn on their cameras to ensure confidentiality. Participants had time to review the informed consent and ask any questions prior to the focus groups and it was reiterated that participation was entirely voluntary. Interview questions were sent to participants for review prior to their scheduled time. All recorded focus groups were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Audio and video files will be destroyed within three years of the closure of the research project. Interviews were collected digitally through Zoom; no site permission was necessary to collect data. Zoom allowed for audio recording, which was downloaded on a password-protected personal computer and stored on a password-protected one-drive. Data included audio files, transcriptions, and notes. All data were stored in a password-protected computer and files were only accessible by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

To improve confirmability, the ability to validate findings to participant experiences, and minimize isolated researcher contributions (Shenton, 2004), each step of data collection and analysis was documented as a clear audit trail to ensure retention of accurate meaning and interpretation including informed consent, recorded interviews, transcripts, and interpreted themes (Morrow, 2005). To support the credibility of the research and data, the confidentiality of information gathered through the research process allowed participants to be more open and honest about their experiences. Dependability (Shenton, 2004) was supported by the consistency of data collection and analysis methods. The focus groups all began with the same introduction and same semi-structured interview questions to be consistent in eliciting information while also including follow-up questions to attempt to accurately capture the experience and phenomenon. Clear procedures were provided to improve reproducibility.

Participants were instructed to log in and change their visual name to their assigned pseudonym prior to entering the focus group meeting room. For all participants, places or identifying information on transcribed data were omitted. Any e-mail lists used to recruit participants were not shared with others, were kept completely confidential, and were destroyed after the research was completed in an attempt to maintain confidentiality. Participants signed their consent forms online prior to their focus group time and those signed consent forms were stored on a password-protected drive separate from the interview data. All data were accessible only to the researcher. Data from the research along with consent forms will be saved for three years from the date of data collection and then deleted. I did not have any vulnerable populations that required special arrangements during the focus groups. Participants had the option to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Thematic Analysis

Most qualitative analytic techniques include the creation of emergent themes (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Data collected during the focus groups were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Zoom automatically provided a transcription of a meeting as I recorded and provided a voice-to-text file. I began by simply watching the focus group recordings. I took brief notes on time stamps and which participant made a note-worthy or relevant comment. I then rewatched the recordings while reading the provided transcription alongside. At this time, simple adjustments were made to the transcriptions to capture participants' words more accurately. After the second review, I read the transcripts while watching the recording again to immerse myself in the data set and made notes alongside to capture initial broad impressions, significant statements, and phrases pertinent to core self-evaluations, perceived discrimination, ethnicity, and social capital. Several approaches to qualitative data analysis were proposed but this study followed recommendations by Tashakkori et al. (2021) that included several major strategies. I categorized the larger narrative data and rearranged it to produce categories to facilitate comparison, which led to a better understanding of the research questions and the ability to detect overarching themes and findings in the data. Each focus group had its own set of categories that emerged from the transcriptions. I categorized each focus group independently before merging the categories into larger themes. Contextualizing enabled me to interpret said narrative findings within the context of the study.

Coding, the process of labeling and organizing qualitative data to identify different themes and the relationships between them (Christians & Carey, 1989), is an important step in linking the elements back to the larger theory and/or phenomenon being studied. After the focus groups were completed, I oversaw transcribing the entirety of the focus group verbatim by

cleaning up the already provided transcription. After transcription, I conducted the initial content analysis categorizing, contextualizing, and the coding process. Coding allowed me to obtain overall larger themes and make comparisons to identify relationships within the data.

Lastly, I displayed strategies as visual representations of said themes that emerged from the data analysis, which allowed me to gain a clearer understanding of the participants' lived experiences and their interactions with perceived discrimination. Guided by Yosso's (2005) social capital theory, the thematic analysis of their narrative moved away from looking at their experiences from a deficit perspective and focused on what the students brought to the table, specifically how their aspirations, goals, motivation, familial and social capital helped them understand how their core self-evaluations interacted with their ethnicity and perceived discrimination. Through continued discourse during the focus groups, I aimed to dive into students' strengths and allowed them to realize how they had leveraged their social capital in the context of perceived discrimination and core self-evaluations.

After finalizing the categories, I began to group them between focus groups into larger codes based on their similarity. I reduced this larger set by relating concepts to each other in another round of pattern coding (Wicks, 2017). Four major themes emerged from the analysis, which are discussed in depth in Chapter IV:

1. Core self-evaluations evolve over time.
2. Core self-evaluations mitigate the damage of perceived discrimination.
3. Social capital and community influence one's beliefs and perceptions in both positive and negative ways.
4. Students' community cultural capital serves as coping mechanisms for discrimination.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods study was to evaluate students' core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and the relationship on perceived discrimination. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions related to core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination. The first phase of this study was quantitative and data were gathered through an online survey. In the second phase, I dove deeper into the quantitative results by conducting semi-structured focus groups with 27 students. In this chapter, I present the quantitative analysis results, introduce the qualitative participants, and present the qualitative analysis results.

The overarching mixed-methods research question was:

Q1 In what ways do the qualitative findings expand upon the quantitative results in regard to core self-evaluations, ethnicity and perceived discrimination?

For the quantitative Phase One of this study, the guiding research questions were:

Q1a What is the relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination?

Q1b If a relationship exists, does it differ depending on ethnicity or gender?

Q1c Are there any group differences in the variables measured (core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination)?

For the qualitative Phase Two of this study, the overarching research questions were:

Q1d How have students' core self-evaluations and ethnicity expressed themselves in their lived experiences?

Q1e How has cultural capital aided in the internal processing of perceived discrimination?

Phase One: Quantitative Data Summary

The survey was completed by 585 undergraduate students. The response rate was satisfactory given the parameters and limitations of the study. Unfortunately, multiple locations were not surveyed as I was restricted to one institution. Similarly, given the timeframe and inability to send out a reminder email, I was able to obtain 585 complete responses for a response rate of 9.65%.

Demographic Data

In total, complete data were obtained from 410 (70%) females, 129 (22%) males, and 46 (8%) non-binary persons. Ages varied from 17 to 51 years old (M = 22, SD = 5.80). Many students (361, 61.71%) self-identified as White/Caucasian. The remaining demographic breakdown was as follows: 31 (5.30%) Asian/Pacific Islander, 40 (6.84%) Black/African American, 98 (16.75%) Hispanic/Latinx, 48 (8.21%) Multiracial/Biracial, and 7 (1.0%) Native American. University demographics for Spring 2023 were similar to the sample for this study. Census data (University of Northern Colorado, 2023) reported 67% female and 33% male. The ethnic summary included 61% White, 25% Latinx, 5% Multiracial, 4.1% African American, 2.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American. Demographic breakdowns for Phase One participants alongside the university population are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of Phase One Participants

Sample Characteristics	*n*	%	*N* %
Gender			
Men	129	22	33
Women	410	70	67
Non-Binary Persons	46	8	0
Ethnicity			
White/Caucasian	361	61.71	61
Hispanic/Latinx	98	16.75	25
Multiracial/biracial	48	8.21	5
Black/African American	40	6.84	4.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	31	5.30	2.1
Native American	7	1.20	0.3

Note. n=585 Participants were on average 22 years old (*SD* = 5.80).

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations and correlations among predictor and outcome variables appear in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations Between Variables Measured

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Core self-evaluations	36.86	7.61	1			
2. Community discrimination	13.65	6.80	-.371**	1		
3. Classroom discrimination	8.47	6.49	-.229**	.548**	1	
4. Age	22	5.80	.158**	-.062	-.077	1

*p<.05
**p<.01

Phase One Research Questions

Q1a What is the relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination?

Core self-evaluations were significantly correlated with community discrimination and classroom discrimination. Core self-evaluations were significantly correlated with perceived everyday community discrimination, $r = -.371$, $p < .01$. However, the effect was negatively impacted. Students with high core self-evaluations perceived significantly less discrimination in the everyday community interactions setting. Similarly, core self-evaluations were significantly correlated with perceived classroom discrimination, $r = -.229$, $p < .01$. Much like perception within the community, perceived classroom discrimination was also a negative relationship. As students' core self-evaluations increased, their perception of discrimination in the classroom setting decreased. Age was only significantly correlated with core self-evaluations, $r = .158$, $p < .01$. As age increased, so did students' core self-evaluations. This finding was supported by several of the focus group conversations, which I go into detail in the Phase Two analysis. Perceived everyday discrimination and perceived classroom discrimination correlated with each other $r = .548$, $p < .01$ so as students perceived everyday discrimination, they also were more likely to perceive more classroom discrimination. There was no significant correlation between age and discrimination.

Q1b If a relationship exists, does it differ depending on ethnicity or gender?

While there was a significant correlational relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination, this study did not find significant evidence of this relationship differing based on ethnicity or gender. The moderating effects of core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination was explored via hierarchical multiple regression analysis such that the control variables (gender, age) were entered in Step 1, the main effects (core self-evaluations and

ethnicity) were entered in Step 2, and the computed interaction term between core self-evaluations and ethnicity were entered in Step 3. The regression analysis was not statistically significant.

Q1c Are there any group differences in the variables measured (core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination)?

To examine group differences, mean comparisons were completed as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Gender Mean Comparisons

Gender		CSE		Everyday		Classroom	
	n	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Female	410	37.46	7.10	13.52	6.53	8.37	6.38
Male	129	37.68	8.15	12.47	7.34	7.61	6.51
Non-binary persons	46	29.22	6.35	18.11	5.90	11.83	6.57
Total	585	36.86	7.61	13.65	6.80	8.47	6.49

Note: Higher numbers represent higher levels of core self-evaluations or higher instances of discrimination.

Table 4

Ethnicity Mean Comparisons

Ethnicity		CSE		Everyday		Classroom	
	n	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Asian/Pacific Islander	31	37.19	7.38	13.84	7.09	9.36	5.76
Black/African American	40	37.98	7.78	7.10	8.05	11.18	7.45
Hispanic/Latinx	98	36.77	7.85	13.13	6.32	8.74	6.20
Multiracial/biracial	48	34.83	6.60	15.44	7.28	11.35	6.80
Native American	7	34.00	3.37	12.86	5.70	9.43	5.35
White	361	37.06	7.72	13.18	6.60	7.62	6.33
Total	585	36.86	7.61	13.65	6.80	8.47	6.49

Note: Higher numbers represent higher levels of core self-evaluations or higher instances of discrimination.

To explore additional group differences, a two-way ANOVA examining interaction effects between the categorical variables of gender and ethnicity was run.

Core Self-Evaluations

Gender had a significant effect on the measure of core self-evaluations ($F = 4.225$, $p = .015$.) However, ethnicity and the interaction between gender and ethnicity was not significant, $p = .949$ and $p = .120$, respectively. Pairwise comparison showed a significant difference in everyday discrimination between non-binary participants and females $p < .01$ and males $p < .01$. Participants who identified as non-binary had lower core self-evaluations than both male- and female-identifying participants. Male- and female-identifying participants did not differ from each other significantly in terms of perceptions of self-worth or core self-evaluations. A pairwise comparison based on ethnicity was also not statistically significant. A similar two-way ANOVA

was run but exchanged the outcome variable from core self-evaluations to perceived community discrimination and perceived classroom discrimination.

Perceived Community Discrimination. Everyday discrimination was significant for gender ($F = 5.760$, $p < .01$) and for ethnicity ($F = 2.428$, $p < .01$) but not for the interaction of gender and ethnicity. Pairwise comparison showed a significant difference in everyday discrimination between female participants and non-binary ($p < .01$) but not any other group comparisons. Participants who identified as non-binary perceived more community-based discrimination than participants who identified as female. Pairwise comparison for ethnicity only showed a significant difference between Black participants and White participants, $p < .01$. All other comparisons were not statistically significant at the $p = .05$ level.

Perceived Classroom Discrimination. Perceived classroom discrimination was not statistically significant for gender or ethnicity. Similarly, the pairwise comparison did not show any group differences in perception of classroom discrimination, $p > .05$ in all levels. The purpose of the perceived classroom discrimination survey was to measure if students perceived discrimination in the classroom or university. Not finding a significant finding of discrimination supported the theme of inclusivity in the classroom setting. The primary aim of inclusion is to leverage the cultural capital that all students bring into the classroom. Faculty who adopt and engage in inclusive efforts to ensure all students are recognized in the classroom and all sociocultural perspectives can be considered in the course activities (Fuentes et al., 2021).

Phase Two: Qualitative Results

For the qualitative Phase Two, the overarching research questions were:

Q1d How have students' core self-evaluations and ethnicity expressed themselves in their lived experiences?

Q1e How has cultural capital aided in the internal processing of perceived discrimination?

Qualitative Data Summary

Recruitment of the focus group participants occurred at the end of the quantitative phase. One of the survey questions asked participants if they would be interested in being a part of the qualitative phase, which aimed to dive deeper into their lived experiences. Of the 585 students who completed Phase One, 176 (30%) answered with interest in participating in the focus group phase. All students who indicated interest were emailed a consent form to return. Only students with a completed consent form were invited to schedule a focus group time.

A total of 27 students participated in Phase Two with the following demographic breakdown: 14 (51.85%) White, 7(25.93%) Hispanic, 3 (11.11%) Multiracial, 2 (7.41%) Asian, and 1 (3.7%) Black. Additionally, students were asked to provide their age (M = 21.96 SD = 5.94) and their gender: 20 female, 5 male, and 2 non-binary persons. A participant summary table is presented in Table 5

:

Table 5

Focus Group Participant Demographics

Focus Group	Alias	Gender	Ethnicity	Age
1	Carina	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	18
1	Abigail	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	19
1	Taylor	Male	White/Caucasian	34
1	Julia	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	22
1	Diana	Female	White/Caucasian	19
2	Jaime	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	23
2	Randyll	Female	White/Caucasian	20
2	Elliot	Female	White/Caucasian	21
2	Camila	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	21
2	Skylar	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	20
2	Casey	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	31
3	Jackson	Female	White/Caucasian	19
3	Holden	Male	White/Caucasian	18
3	Lisa	Female	Black/African American	21
3	Saige	Female	White/Caucasian	22
3	Jordan	Non-binary	White/Caucasian	17
3	Jessica	Female	Multiracial/biracial	22
4	Jane	Female	Multiracial/biracial	45
4	Alanis	Female	White/Caucasian	18
4	Jacob	Male	White/Caucasian	19
4	Robin	Non-binary	Multiracial/biracial	22
4	Charlie	Non-binary	White/Caucasian	18
5	Morgan	Female	White/Caucasian	22
5	Dakota	Male	White/Caucasian	19
5	Grace	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	19
5	Avery	Female	White/Caucasian	20
5	Jesse	Male	Asian/Pacific Islander	24

Note: Participants were put into focus groups solely based on availability.

Focus groups began with a script introduction to give an overview of the purpose of the study (see Appendix G). I introduced myself as the researcher, reiterated the notion that participation was entirely voluntary, and participants could leave at any point in time. All

participants were instructed to turn off their camera and change their name to the pseudonym provided to maintain anonymity prior to the start of the focus group. Four major themes emerged from the data.

1. Core self-evaluations evolve over time.
2. Core self-evaluations mitigate the damage of perceived discrimination.
3. Social capital and community influence your beliefs and perceptions in both positive and negative ways.
4. Students' community cultural capital serves as coping mechanisms for discrimination.

In the following sections, I provide support for each major theme with quotes and experiences from participants that tie it back to Yosso's (2005) CCW. The CCW is a framework that acknowledges and celebrates the various forms capital members of a marginalized community bring that could be drawn upon to foster success and resilience. While six forms of capital were outlined by Yosso (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistance), three stood out immediately within the focus group interviews. Those were aspirational capital, or the ability to maintain dreams for a better tomorrow, familial capital or the strong bonds and support systems that contribute to overall well-being, and social capital or the network and relationship that provide support and resources.

Theme 1: Core Self-Evaluations Evolve Over Time

Through the many conversations held within the focus group, this theme was a major component that drove the conversations. The experience was about learning to grow as you aged and matured. Phase One found a significant correlation between age and core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations refer to a broad personality trait that reflects an individual's overall

perception of their self-worth and competence. Individuals with higher core self-evaluations generally exhibit higher levels of motivation, resilience, and better ability to cope with challenges. As students grew older, they began to exhibit higher levels of core self-evaluations. When asked how their perception of self-worth changed as they gotten older, Julia (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 22) shared, "As I've gotten older, my definition of who I am has been based more on me. I've moved out and got into college and as I figure out what I want to do, I've gotten more confidence and moved away from my parents' viewpoints." Others shared similar experiences. Jesse (Male, Asian/Pacific Islander, 24) said, "I feel that it's kind of a matter of who I surround myself with because as I have gotten older, my views of my own self-worth have gotten better." Avery (Female, White, 20) mentioned, "I feel like as I've gotten older, I've just gained more confidence and think that confidence then leads me to having greater self-worth." Lastly, Taylor (Male, White, 34) said, "I just realized that as I got older, I became more comfortable with myself." During the focus group conversations, many of the participants shared their insight of growth and maturity as they aged. Participants showed an increase in self-awareness and their view of their self-esteem growing as they experienced and lived.

Several participants shared that time definitely impacted their perception of their own self-worth. "It took me 20 years to build up the confidence to be like, oh maybe I'm actually smart. Like, I wish I could go back and talk to my 18-year-old self and tell her, you are worth it, smart and capable of being successful" (Jane, Female, Multiracial, 45). These comments were similar across gender and ethnicity with Jessica (Female, Multiracial, 22) sharing, "I've pushed more towards my identity as I've aged, and it just further reaffirms who I am as I've gotten older." This theme aligned with the Phase One finding of core self-evaluations being correlated with age. As participants grew in age, their core self-evaluations also increased. Most recently,

research has examined core self-evaluations' variability over relatively long time periods. Tocci et al. (2020) investigated the extent to which levels of core self-evaluations varied over several years. Within their study, environmental factors could have a significant effect on personality development. Utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979), researchers obtained measures similar to those of core self-evaluation and found that core self-evaluations fluctuated within individuals overall long periods of time. In relation to fluctuation within core self-evaluations, Jackson (Female, White, 19) shared, "As I've moved out and got into college and figured what I wanna do, I've gotten more confidence and have moved away from other viewpoints to develop my own." This question of how your perception of yourself changed as you have gotten older prompted self-reflection among the participants. Jaime (Female, Hispanic, 23), shared, "If I could go back and tell that insecure little person, like, hey, this is who you're gonna turn out to be… it's ok to stumble along the way." In the same focus group, Randy (Female, White, 20) resonated with Jaime's response: "If I would have answered the self-worth questions years ago, I would be low but now I'm higher up and I'm pretty proud of myself and who I currently am." In another focus group, Saige (Female, White, 22) answered the question by sharing how failure had encouraged her to grow: "I have grown through failure. I used to be afraid to fail when I was younger and it would really get me down but like, now I've learned that even though I fail, I can overcome and I can be better." This comment tied directly to the self-efficacy component of core self-evaluations. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance. Saige shared how through failure, she learned to believe in herself and now looked at failure through a different lens. Saige also mentioned changing her expectations and showing personal growth as she

reevaluated her environment: “I’ve grown in my performance expectations because I’m like getting further along in my degree.”

Unfortunately, this was not the case with one particular participant who was struggling with their identity. Jordan (Non-binary, White, 17), one of the younger participants, shared a heartfelt message about enduring feeling like the ‘other’ in many situations. Powell and Menendian (2016) defined ‘other’ as difference or a “set of dynamics, processes and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities” (p. 17). Feeling like ‘the other’ could lead to a range of emotions including a sense of alienation, isolation, or even discrimination (Closson & Comeau, 2021). It could result in individuals experiencing a lack of belonging, struggling with their identity, facing challenges in interpersonal relationships that impact self-esteem, self-confidence, and overall well-being.

> When I was younger, um I definitely felt like there was something wrong with me, I guess because I didn’t really fit in with anything and like just for background, I am a transgender individual. As I’ve grown, I think of myself as more of a medical anomaly than someone who is transgender but I still feel weird and out of place. This really does impact my perception of myself. I’ve gotten older and going to therapy has improved but I still feel out of place. (Jordan, 17, nonbinary, White)

While the camera was off during the focus group, I could sense hesitation from Jordan. Jordan could be described as soft-spoken and timid. Other comments shared by Jordan included finding a safe space and community on campus being a big reason why they would continue at the university. “If it wasn’t for my friends, I would not be here today” (Jordan). This comment of community support being their saving grace is further explored in Theme 3.

Theme 2: Core Self-Evaluations Mitigate the Damage of Perceived Discrimination

Research has shown that individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to experience discrimination than those with low self-esteem (Major et al., 2003). One reason for this is people with high core self-evaluations are more likely to stand up for themselves and assert their rights in situations where discrimination occurs. A similar finding was supported through Phase One as participants with higher core self-evaluations perceived significantly less discrimination. Within the focus groups, we were able to dive further into this result. Lisa (Female, Black/African American, 21) shared, "I know what is right and what's moral. So, I don't perceive as much discrimination because I've worked past it where, as I've matured and seen more of the world, I move past it." Lisa did not think much of discrimination in the instances she experienced. Her high perception of self was able to mitigate the harm that discrimination could cause. Grace (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 19) wished she could "go back in time and boost my self-esteem because, um, I feel like that would make a difference on how I processed a lot of interactions." The CCW model (Yosso, 2005) asserted that various forms of capital fostered through cultural wealth such as aspirational, familial, social and navigational are used by communities to navigate and resist oppression and discrimination. Focus group participants frequently discussed the use of culturally based knowledge and abilities to survive forms of aggression and decided to move on or as Carina (Female, Asian/Pacific Islander, 18) said, "I would not say I ever internalize those interactions." Many of the participants found a way to cope with these interactions. Dakota (Male, White/Caucasian, 19) shared a story of an instance of discrimination:

> I had an instance where um, somebody came up to me and we had an incident because of the color of my skin. I had just moved to town. I'm from an area where the vast majority of the city is Latinx. Like all my friends are Latino and I was in this other town, probably

> seven and someone came up to me and was staring and called me racist. I was freaking out because I'm like six and I didn't understand what that was and she said, 'because you are white, you are racist'. And that hit me hard but if that were to happen today, I would definitely have reacted differently.

Dakota went on to explain how they know themselves: "I don't think I would ever want to understand the other person's side of it or want to keep entertaining their ideas. If I knew that's how their worldview was, I would distance myself from them."

Within another focus group, Jessica (Female, Multiracial/biracial, 22) shared a story of an instance of discrimination and how she processed that interaction:

> I am Hispanic and Native American, so I look physically very much like a person of color and I remember going around with my mom and two younger sisters and we were visiting some family from church who we'd never met like all of them before, but we knew the wife fairly well. So, we are going to this new house for the first time and my mom had all of us with her and we went up to the door and the woman's husband answered and was like, "oh the service entrance is in the back." And that was their immediate reaction, like here is the maid with her children.

She went on to elaborate on how she reacted and "never took it to heart. …Perceptions are just that. It doesn't define who I am or know myself to be, so when I experience these things [discrimination] I just shrug them off."

> It depends for me, if I experience something like that [discrimination] it kind of like, sets me back, you know, like to that small little 16-year-old that was just trying to make it. But it's nothing huge, it just like triggers that initial sense, you know what I mean, like it

> hurts the inner child and takes me back but as I've gotten older, it's gotten easier. (Jesse, Male, Asian/Pacific Islander)

Aligning with the findings of Theme One with regard to age and experience, processing discrimination comes with time. "It puts a damper on things for a minute but then I move on but I do think that has come with time." (Robin, Non-binary, Multiracial/Biracial, 22) Robin continued by expressing their confidence during those situations and not wavering from who they know themselves to be: "I know this happens but I'm more set in who I am."

At one point during the focus groups I asked, "What do you think the relationship is between discrimination and your perception of yourself?" and was able to get the following interactions:

> **Camila (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 21):** "I would say they definitely go hand in hand because if you've kind of been told something that was discriminatory for me personally, my brain just like repeats the thoughts over and over again."
>
> **Skylar (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 20):** "Yeah, it won't stop like an echo and maybe you want to believe it but I need to reel myself back and say ' no'."
>
> **Camila:** "Yes, exactly, I think if I repeat it, then it goes into existence. I feel pretty comfortable in my identity now and don't want to change who I am."
>
> **Skylar:** "Same here. Everyone is entitled to their opinion but it won't change how I see myself."

The focus group setting allowed participants to talk to each other as they explored their experiences and feelings. Students with high core self-evaluations were also more likely to have higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, which could help them better cope with the negative effects of discrimination.

In contrast, individuals with low core self-evaluations were more vulnerable to discrimination. They might be more likely to internalize negative stereotypes and beliefs about themselves, which could lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. This could then perpetuate a cycle of low self-esteem and missed opportunities.

Theme 3: Social Capital and Community Ties Influence Your Beliefs and Perceptions Both in a Positive and Negative Way

Participants credited networks of people, their contacts in the campus community, or social capital in helping them deal with discrimination. For example, Lisa (Female, Black/African American, 21) shared, "If I experience something hurtful, I'll reach out to someone or try to distract myself but usually my close friends will remind me that it's not true."

Social contacts with other students of similar identities were of particular importance to students in the study. Social capital ranged from friends to parents but their importance continued to be highlighted and students attributed their success directly to these networks. "I definitely see my family as part of my toolbox for success" (Avery, Female, White/Caucasian, 20). While Yosso's (2005) CCW model has been applied primarily to student populations of color, similar social capital was shared with the White-identifying students. "I also acknowledge my limitations. My friends help me not feel guilty when I need downtime to process or just be. I guess…what I mean is that they 'ok' the time I need for self-care and this is important to me because it also helps me value myself" (Alanis, Female, White/Caucasian, 18). Jordan (Non-binary, White/Caucasian, 17), who earlier shared about feeling left out and discriminated against because of their transgender identity, attributed their ability to navigate through a sometimes hostile environment to their "friends and the gender and sexuality resource center on campus," further highlighting the need for identity-based centers.

However, while networks of support could play a critical role in internalizing or navigating through discrimination, the same networks could also cause harm. Abigail (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 19) shared, “People around me judge me and you know, that’s what makes me afraid of what might happen. I dress differently and talk differently, and I can feel my community looking at me and…it makes me afraid.” Participants also shared the pressure they had endured due to parental expectations: “What my mom thinks of me because, I guess growing up, I always had kind of..um..I don’t know how to say, I..or phrase it…she held me to impossible standards. Like she is amazing and great but she held me to such high standards because she wanted more for me.” Jaime (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 23) felt conflicted because she appreciated the support her mother provided but also did not want to let her down. She continued, “I still ask for her support and always think, let me ask my mom or what would my mom say.” Similarly, Elliot (Female, White/Caucasian, 21) spoke out regarding her community influence: “My community influences how I view myself and that’s why I’m so harsh with myself. I feel like I need to be stronger because they see me in a certain light.”

When asked about feelings within the campus community, participants shared positive experiences. “I don’t usually feel safe when I go to the grocery store but within the school, I found my safe space where I don’t need to be guarded” (Jessica, Female, Multiracial/biracial, 22). This aligned with the finding of students not perceiving discrimination within the classroom. Robin (Non-binary, Multiracial/Biracial, 22) said, “For myself, I’m a bisexual female, um I go by ‘They’ pronouns and my papa is from Utah and is extremely homophobic and one Christmas we were having a conversation and that led him making a comment saying ‘all gay should die.’” They went on to share that “stuff really affects people and you say that you love me and you care but then you say that and take all that to heart, especially because he was my papa.” Another

participant echoed this feeling: “It definitely feels different when the hate is coming from somebody you know” (Female, Multiracial/Biracial, 45). Charlie (Non-binary, White/Caucasian, 18) agreed, “It’s more hurtful when its somebody you know instead of a stranger or even acquaintance.” Alanis (Female, White/Caucasian, 18) also chimed in: “If someone I know hurts me, does that impact how I’m viewing myself? Yes, I start to feel like I’m worth less because of that hurt coming from someone I know.”

Part of navigating through ‘hurt’ is learning what to do when you encounter those situations from your community. In another focus group when asked the same question regarding how to process the ‘hurt’ from within your support network, Jaime (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 22) said, “If I feel hurt for a second, I take a moment to reflect, I’m like, wait, I know who I am and I can stand up for myself and this makes me feel stronger and empowered.”

Theme 4: Students’ Community Cultural Capital Serves as Coping Mechanisms for Discrimination

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to hold on to hope and dreams despite inequalities faced (Yosso, 2005). Participants repeatedly discussed their high aspirations and how these goals motivated them to push through the discrimination. “I’d say a lot of the time when these experiences happen, they tend to push me harder and I hold on to my goals tighter” (Grace, Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 19). Charlie (Non-binary, White/Caucasian, 18) shared a story about being misgendered and feeling upset and Jane (Female, Multiracial/Biracial, 22) showed empathy and shared a common experience:

> So, I come from Texas, which we all know is very conservative area and I’m also a very spiteful person. Um, so always by my grandmother, I’m the only granddaughter and she never once commented on my intelligence or anything like that. So purposefully, I push myself really hard in school, and um, like, I’ll never experience something like being

misgendered, which I am grateful for, like I wish, I wish you didn't have to go through the struggle, but then there is a part of me being a woman where they just assumed I'm dumb and I've faced that a lot. So, out of spite, I try to make myself better, it motivates me to prove myself.

All the participants across the focus groups shared the importance of education and going to college. Additionally, when their abilities came into question, they fought harder to ensure they met their goals. "I believe in myself and I know I can do better, so when someone challenges me, I think my competitive side comes out and I'm like, no, I'm gonna prove you or honestly, myself, wrong" (Julia, Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 22). Many of the focus group participants shared instances of discrimination faced and how they coped with the experience, but they did not acknowledge it as a strength.

Jordan (Non-binary, White/Caucasian, 17): "I didn't realize my strengths until you talked about looking at where we are today."

Jessica (Female, Multiracial/Biracial, 22): "I agree with Jordan, I guess I think, everyone around me has gone through the same things, so me overcoming certain obstacles or facing discrimination is just a daily occurrence. I don't see it for the big deal it is? Does that make sense?"

Lisa (Female, Black/African American, 21): "It's easy to focus on the negative things in our lives and say, this is why I won't succeed but we are hardly told, 'look how far you've made it'"

Jessica (Female, Multiracial/Biracial, 22): "Yes, you see it as, oh, I'm lacking the money to pay for college or I'm lacking the support. It's so easy to compare yourself to

> your friends, but I guess I don't look at the positives, like you mentioned being bilingual in English and Spanish was a big deal."

Linguistic capital reflects the idea that students of color arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills and draws upon this capital as a strength to "draw and develop on various language registers, or styles, to communicate with different audiences" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Participants were quick to minimize their strengths. Jessica did not believe being fluent in two languages was a strength but I pointed out that according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022), only 20% of Americans could converse in two languages. She should be excited about that and could boast about it as a strength.

Taylor (Male, White/Caucasian, 34) described how he navigated certain instances of discrimination: "White guilt is real, um, now, sometimes I feel like I need to walk on eggshells or I need to be careful with what I say. I've learned to maneuver these situations." It was interesting to hear a participant use the word 'maneuver. Within navigation capital in Yosso's (2005) theory, the same word 'maneuver' is used. Yosso explained that students' navigational capital empowers them to maneuver within unsupportive or hostile environments. Even though Taylor identified as a White student, he felt this ability was a strength. While Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth is mainly applied to students of color, this showed it could transcend past identities and be applied to all students. Similarly, Abigail (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 19) talked about putting themselves "in the other person's shoes and be like, 'ok, yes' but I would view it like, maybe there is something going on in their life or maybe they were never taught this was wrong."

Learning to navigate instances of discrimination looked slightly different for each participant but all could see it as a successful coping mechanism. Some might decide to avoid

negativity. “I’ve learned to avoid that kind of people. I don’t give them the opportunity to hurt me (Camila, Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 21) or Skylar (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 20) with a similar approach: “I also distance myself from that. If they hurt me already, I don’t let them do it again.”

Abigail (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 19) tried to undermine the situation and not allow it to bother her: “I think that’s my coping mechanism, like, I’m trying to make light of the situation by making a joke. Maybe I do that because I don’t want to believe people could be that mean. Sometimes they are just ignorant and it’s nothing that would really impact me.” Within this focus group, Carina (Female, Asian/Pacific Islander, 18) shared some wisdom her father once told her: “‘Don’t confuse ignorance with maliciousness’ and I think of that a lot. Sometimes people do say things that bother me but then I remember my dad’s words and think ‘well, maybe they didn’t mean it like that’ so it does make it easier to move on.” Julia (Female, Hispanic/Latinx, 22) agreed with Carina’s comment and shared how she processed what she considered a microaggression: “I’ve gotten comments like, oh you don’t have an accent? And I’m like, um, why should I since I’ve lived here my whole life? I know they’re not saying it as a compliment, but did I take it as an insult? Like Carina said, I don’t give the person the power to hurt me. I just move on.” Taylor (Male, White/Caucasian, 34) self-disclosed he was autistic during the course of the focus group: “I’ve definitely had the experience of somebody just assuming that I would act a certain way because of my condition, as opposed to kind of like, actually getting to know me and how I am as a person. we can give power to words and choose how much harm they do to us,” further highlighting the anti-deficit mentality. They were focused on change and would not allow negative comments to overturn their own view of themselves.

Within the focus groups, students minimized their experience and were quick to justify some of their interactions. I was able to provide a reaffirming environment during the timeframe

I was with the students and wanted to share a personal experience with Focus Group 3. Once the focus group was over and I stopped the recording, Jordan, a nonbinary White 17-year-old, shared how grateful they were to have a space to talk about this topic. Jordan and I spoke for 20 minutes after the conclusion of the focus group about school, life, friends, and relationships. Jordan mentioned how they were unsure of their future with the current state of the nation and how they struggled every day to maintain a positive attitude. They questioned their very sense of being but were glad they were able to share their experience and the conversation helped them realize some of their strengths hiding on the surface. Even though this conversation was not recorded, it seemed evident that nonbinary students were currently struggling and we need to be able to properly provide them with the resources they need to be successful within higher education.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Within weeks of writing the conclusion of this dissertation, the participating university distributed a climate survey to assess perceptions of belonging among other issues such as feeling like we are appreciated, part of the team, racial climate, and themes of gender and sexuality. Campus climate assessment in higher education measures the extent to which all students, faculty, staff, and visitors—regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability—feel welcomed, valued, and supported in their work, studies, or research. Additionally, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have gained importance as critical components of higher education, aiming to create inclusive and equitable environments for all students. However, these principles have recently faced substantial resistance within the higher education landscape.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (2023) is currently tracking legislation that would prohibit colleges from having DEI offices along with a wide range of other initiatives such as banning mandatory diversity training. Last updated on July 14, 2023, there were 40 bills in 22 states with seven becoming law. For example, Texas, a state where 61% of students are non-White, signed into law House Bill 1:

> The bill includes a provision that would ban colleges from spending state-appropriated funds on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. The bill was passed by the House on April 6 and passed by the Senate on April 17 and was sent to a conference committee to resolve differences. The conference committee's compromise bill would ban diversity,

> equity, and inclusion practices or programs, including training, that do not comply with sections of the state constitution regarding equality under the law based on characteristics such as sex and race. The Senate approved the conference committee report on May 26, and the House approved it on May 27. The final version was sent to the desk of Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, on June 7 and signed on June 18. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2023, n.p.)

Across the country, lawmakers are proposing bills to limit DEI programs at state-funded institutions. Bills aimed at defunding DEI offices or removing diversity statements from hiring practices could have a detrimental impact on currently enrolled students. For example, Jordan mentioned that if it was not for the support they found within the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, they would not have been successful or continued to be enrolled. This is just one example of one student but one could argue the impact of diversity and inclusion on campus is essential for student success. Diversity, equity, and inclusion play a pivotal role in higher education, directly impacting student success on multiple levels. These principles are not just about fulfilling a moral obligation; they are essential for creating an enriched learning environment that fosters academic achievement and personal growth. The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods study was to evaluate students' core self-evaluations, ethnicity, and the relationship on perceived discrimination.

Four personality traits make up core self-evaluations: self-esteem is a term used to reflect an individual's evaluation of their own worth; self-efficacy is beliefs in one's own capability; emotional stability is the state in which one reacts to certain situations without becoming upset emotionally; and finally, locus of control is the extent to which individuals believe they are in control of events and outcomes in their lives. Together, these traits encompass the larger concept

of core self-evaluations or one's way of appraising oneself. The CSE trait was developed through the study of job satisfaction by Judge and Cable (1997); however, their study's aim was to apply its predictive ability from the business setting to the educational setting. By utilizing an explanatory, mixed-methods framework, I was able to find significant relationships between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination. As participants' core self-evaluations increased, their perceived discrimination decreased. I was then able to dive deeper and use Yosso's (2005) CCW model as guidance for explaining how students internalized perceived discrimination and how these experiences impacted their core self-evaluations and perceptions of self-worth. During the focus group conversations, four major themes emerged.

Core self-evaluations evolved over time with students sharing stories of how maturity had helped them increase their self-esteem and self-worth. Additionally, with an increase in core self-evaluations came a decrease in perceived discrimination. Students felt their higher view of themselves helped mitigate the damage caused by discrimination. Yes, students mentioned that discrimination had an impact on their own perceptions of their abilities but not to the extent it impacted who they believed they were. They could understand the situation and not question their abilities because they were confident in who they were as a person. Furthermore, student stories provided evidence that depending upon who the discriminatory behavior was coming from, students' social capital could have both positive and negative effects. Some words were held in stronger regard depending on who was voicing them. Lastly, students' community cultural capital served as coping mechanisms for discrimination.

Much of this quantitative phase was guided by the original pilot student done in Spring 2021. During this pilot study, I found that ethnicity moderated the effects of core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination. As students of color's core self-evaluations increased, their

perception of discrimination decreased, i.e., students of color perceived less discrimination as their self-worth, self-esteem, and such values increased. However, the opposite effect was found for White students. Students who identified as White perceived more discrimination as their core self-evaluations increased. One aims of this study was to see if these results could be replicated and possibly expand on the reasons why such results were found. Unfortunately, unlike the pilot study, which found ethnicity to be a moderating effect between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination, this study was not able to replicate the findings when it came to ethnicity's role in perceived discrimination. There might be several reasons for this but one that came to mind was the political landscape in which the original pilot study took place. The Spring 2021 pilot study took place immediately following the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Thousands of Trump supporters rushed to Washington, D.C. to support a claim that the 2020 presidential election had been 'stolen.' The attack was followed by political, legal, and social repercussions that might have impacted the results of the pilot study and perceived discrimination on campus.

Limitations

Limitations in this study should be noted and addressed. While the focus groups were able to provide themes and evidence to support the findings in Phase One, I found myself wishing I had included more variables or had a slightly lengthier survey. In this study, community and familial support was key in navigating through discrimination but a measure was not included in Phase One. This study would have benefited from additional questions regarding familial support, friends, and community connections. Perhaps students with more support would experience less discrimination or would find alternative ways to process those interactions. Roksa and Kinsley (2019) found familial emotional support played an important role in fostering

positive academic outcomes. Family emotional support was beneficial for academic outcomes as it promoted psychological well-being and facilitated greater student engagement. Participants in my focus groups continuously referred to the importance of family support as a positive influence as they navigated through discrimination.

Second, the two surveys intended to measure discrimination did not ask participants to identify a certain way. It was my intention to focus on ethnicity as an identity students would gravitate toward but that was my assumption. This was even brought up within my focus group with a participant sharing, "I am hard pressed to remember a time in recent memory where I was discriminated against because of my race or ethnicity because I'm not White, but times I've been discriminated against because of my gender, um are very like present in my mind." Within the context of this study and as shared through the interviews, the students with the lowest self-esteem and low view of themselves were those who identified as non-binary. In the most recent environment, the LGBTQ community has been under attack. Both Oklahoma and Florida have introduced bills making it a felony to provide gender-affirming healthcare or a transgender student being denied the ability to attend their graduation ceremony due to nonconforming to traditional gender clothing (Reuters, 2023). Perhaps that might be a reason for the increase in perceived discrimination.

The focus group setting allowed me to gather immediate feedback from participants during the discussions. I was able to ask follow-up questions and had real-time interactions with the same participants who answered the survey in Phase One. During the focus group conversations, I could sense the differences in maturity and confidence. Unfortunately, due to the structure, I was unable to link the focus group participants to their original survey responses. While participants shared feelings of inadequacy and how discrimination impacted their

perception of self-worth, it would have been interesting to be able to link the participants to their survey responses. I only asked basic demographic questions but felt I was lacking a richer story. While individual interviews would have been more time-consuming, this study might have benefited from learning where the participants grew up, their environmental structure, and other responsibilities they might hold. The focus group setting also influenced group dynamics. As the moderator, I tried to balance the conversation as much as possible; however, more dominant voices overpowered others. I acknowledge that some participants did not get to share. I was aware of their presence in the room but noticed they were quiet.

This study took place in a primarily White institution in the Midwest. While the demographic sample matched closely with the population, the experiences and thoughts shared might not be echoed on other campuses. As stated previously, I was planning on gathering data from a Hispanic-serving institution and a private religious institution but unfortunately was unable to obtain access to the student population. The students who attended these institutions might have had largely different experiences due to the campus environments. Hispanic-serving institutions contribute to the diversity, inclusivity, and educational landscape of the United States (Cortez, 2011). They provide opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities to access higher education, develop leadership skills, and make meaningful contributions to society. Diversity, education, and inclusivity initiatives contribute to building a sense of community among students, faculty, and staff by fostering an inclusive atmosphere where everyone's contributions are valued. Nivet (2010) demonstrated that diverse communities encourage collaboration, creativity, and the exchange of ideas, ultimately enhancing the overall learning environment.

Future Research

A future study could ask about the identities linked to responding to the survey instruments. For example, we would be able to see if there was a relationship between the more salient identities chosen and the perceived discrimination one experiences, and elaborate on whether certain identities perceived more discrimination than others. You could also change the structure of the research design. This study was a sequential explanatory design broken into a two-phase project. Phase One included quantitative data collection and analysis followed by qualitative data collection and analysis with a larger focus on quantitative data. As previously stated, I felt the quantitative data were lacking variables and this study could have benefited from a sequential exploratory design. In a sequential, exploratory, mixed-methods design, Phase One begins with qualitative data and analysis. Future studies could change the focus group setting to include individual interviews. Based on the interviews, this would inform the quantitative data collection and analysis with one final larger interpretation. While slightly more complex, a sequential transformative design could also provide valuable insights into students' core self-evaluations and their understanding of perceived discrimination.

In this study, students were limited to picking just one available time slot and once the focus group was full, they were unable to select the time. In additional studies, I could have allowed participants to select multiple times and then strategically assigned the focus groups. Researchers could take demographic data and predetermine focus group assignments to ensure a diverse focus group. Focus groups have a high chance to catch and consider peoples' feelings and beliefs (Hennink et al., 2019) and having a diverse pool would be valuable for gathering rich descriptions of their lived experiences. Determining the number of focus groups needed in a study is a key design of a research study and should have been given more consideration.

Contribution

The results of this study built upon the foundations laid in the literature review and utilized concepts discussed to frame the results of the study. Core self-evaluations played a significant role in how individuals experienced and responded to discrimination. Individuals with high core self-evaluations were more likely to assert their rights, while those with low core self-evaluations were more vulnerable to discriminatory behavior and its negative effects (Major et al., 2003). Jordan (Nonbinary, White, 17) shared their personal experiences of feeling like the 'other' in many situations. This feeling could lead to a range of emotions including alienation, isolation, and even discrimination, impacting self-esteem, self-confidence, and overall well-being (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Jordan described feeling out of place and undergoing a journey of self-reevaluation and growth, albeit with lingering feelings of being different. However, they attributed the equity centers as a pivotal organization that allowed them to connect with like-minded individuals. Existing research supported the notion that equity centers could be a haven for students facing discrimination or bias, offering mental health resources and support systems to help them navigate challenges (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Additionally, these centers promote diversity and inclusion by creating safe spaces where students from various backgrounds can come together to learn and grow (Museus et al., 2012).

Individuals with positive core self-evaluations might be more resilient and better equipped to cope with experiences of discrimination, potentially perceiving less discrimination as a result (Judge & Bono, 2001). The narrative shared by Jordan resonated with existing literature on the experiences of nonbinary and transgender individuals, highlighting the deep-seated feelings of alienation and the struggle with identity many face. However, positive core

self-evaluations could foster psychological well-being (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009) and helped Jordan maintain a positive view of themselves even when faced with discrimination.

This aligned with the growing body of literature advocating for more inclusive environments in educational institutions to foster a sense of belonging and well-being among all students including those with non-traditional gender identities. The specific findings from Chapter IV provided deep insight into the personal experiences of individuals navigating complex identity dynamics. Many of the narratives shared aligned with existing research by adding a personal story that echoed the broader experiences of students in higher education, emphasizing the psychological impacts of perceived discrimination and the journey toward self-acceptance and growth. Similar to Schmitt et al. (2014), this study found that individuals with negative core self-evaluations were more likely to perceive certain events as discriminatory, potentially because their view of the environment was negative. Understanding the nuanced relationship between core self-evaluations and perceived discrimination could offer insights into how students navigate discriminatory situations and the strategies they might employ to cope with their environment. This study added a rich, qualitative dimension to the existing body of literature, offering first-hand accounts that could potentially foster a deeper understanding of how students navigated perceive discrimination in a higher education setting.

Implications

When an individual experiences discrimination, it could reinforce negative beliefs about themselves and their abilities, leading to a decrease in their overall self-worth. While no differences between male and female participants were statistically significant, a small theme of feeling was mentioned by female participants: “It’s like this man will say something and cut me off, and um, I guess I’ve just learned to deal with that.”

As educators and student affairs practitioners, are we willing to acknowledge that our institutions, both their structures and cultures, might still in ways be unsupportive or hostile to our students and their communities? It is important to recognize the role core self-evaluations play in shaping our experiences and to take steps to build and maintain a positive self-image, which could help protect us from the harmful effects of discrimination. It is essentially crucial to address it within higher education in all its forms to create a more just and equitable society. Institutions could have a direct influence in reducing discrimination and building a sense of community.

Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on campus are essential in addressing discrimination that could hinder students' access to success. Harper and Hurtado (2007) highlighted the importance of fostering an inclusive environment to counteract microaggressions, stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination that students from underserved communities might face. Researchers found racial/ethnic minorities and their White counterparts who attend the same university often view the campus's racial climate in different ways. This was also evident during my focus group conversations of the wide array of voices all stemming from the same institution but all having slightly varying experiences. Students who engaged meaningfully with peers from different backgrounds and diverse perspectives both inside and outside college classrooms were unlikely to remain isolated within their own racial/ethnic communities. Administrators, faculty, and institutional researchers should proactively audit their campus climates and cultures and determine the need for change. Institutions need to be aware of the type of space and environment they are setting for students. There is a need to make systemic changes and not just for appearances but truly support the message. Jordan (Nonbinary, White/Caucasian, 17) shared, "The institution in a lot of ways is like on the surface it tries to

appear like its accepting but then their actions make me confused or doubt whether or not it actually does care." They went on to share a personal experience regarding bathrooms in a campus building: "There were a lot of gender-neutral bathrooms in Main Hall, which made me feel very comfortable but then the signage was reverted back to binary with very little communication and the whole ordeal has made me uncomfortable even to the point that I avoid that building." This type of change needs to be intentional and pervasive. The change could be felt across the institution and would impact the daily work of staff, faculty and students.

A critical aspect of student success is the development of a strong sense of belonging, which is directly linked to higher retention rates and academic achievement (Strayhorn, 2012). When students feel connected and valued, they are more likely to engage in campus activities, seek academic support, and persist in their studies. Identity-based centers play a fundamental role in higher education as they contribute to a more inclusive, diverse, and supportive learning environment. These centers provide spaces and resources that promote the well-being, personal development, and academic success of students from various identity groups (Renn, 2011). By providing physical spaces where students of similar background could connect, centers validate and celebrate student identities. Sadly, far too often they are overlooked as a valuable resource on campus. Several students shared during the focus groups that the identity-based centers provided much needed support when they experienced discrimination or were struggling on campus. As administrators, we need to encourage students to utilize the spaces on campus designed to help students navigate the challenges they might face both academically and personally. Faculty could encourage students to attend events, workshops, and cultural celebrations hosted by the various centers that educate the campus community. These activities foster cross-cultural appreciation and contribute to a much more enriched campus experience for

all. During a time of personal growth and exploration, identity-based centers offer opportunities for students to develop a strong sense of self and engage in self-discovery, which in turn could increase their core self-evaluations.

According to Yosso (2005), these forms of cultural wealth are not only valuable in and of themselves but also have the potential to enhance academic and personal success. Yosso's CCW theory has important implications for education and social justice. In education, this theory challenges the traditional deficit-based models that view students of color as lacking in skills or knowledge. Instead, it highlights the strengths and assets these students bring to the classroom and suggests these assets should be recognized and leveraged to enhance student success. Programs such as freshmen orientation could be restructured to incorporate strength-based training. During the focus groups, one student mentioned they were not aware of strength until it was identified and felt empowered. With institutions moving toward professional academic advising, staff could engage with students and incorporate social capital awareness into their meetings. We could train faculty and staff to guide conversations with students around a growth mindset and teach administrators about the principles surrounding Yosso's theory. First-year courses aimed at successful freshman transitions could cover cultural capital, strengths, and navigational skills. The syllabi could be reviewed to incorporate a common reader program that strays away from deficit thinking and redirects students to view themselves from a social capital point of view. Within first-year courses, instructors could require students to attend an identity-based center meeting or sponsored event. Additional assignments could include strength assessment and developing both short- and long-term goals. Successfully completing first-year courses boosts students' confidence and self-efficacy (Engberg & Mayhew, 2007). It demonstrates that students could handle the challenges of higher education and have a positive

impact on their overall academic performance. First-year courses provide a solid educational and personal foundation and set the stage for academic achievement and future success.

Lastly, as administrators, we could provide the opportunity and access to role models and mentors who share similar backgrounds and experiences. Hillier et al. (2019) highlighted how peer mentoring programs, particularly those that focus on underrepresented students, contributed to higher retention rates and improved academic performance. Peer mentor relationships provide students with opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals. These programs contribute to a more positive and enriching college experience. Having a peer mentor could boost a mentee's confidence by providing reassurance, encouragement, and a positive role model (Lopez et al., 2010). Mentors share their own experiences of overcoming challenges and showing their mentees that success is within reach. Hiring peer mentors from diverse backgrounds could help students navigate complex cultural differences and provide insights into the university experience from various perspectives, promoting cultural competence and understanding. Students could feel supported, valued, and connected to the college environment, which could lead to increased retention rates. Through peer mentorship, students could engage in meaningful interactions that facilitate personal growth and self-awareness.

Conclusion

By addressing discrimination, building community, and fostering a sense of belonging, DEI initiatives create an environment where all students can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. It is equally as important to continue the conversation within a classroom setting and continue to strive toward an equitable classroom setting. Jacob said, "As a White student, I didn't experience much growing up, you know, but now that I'm in college and it is part of the conversations and the discords that we are having in class, I am more aware of what's going on." He continued, "I feel like now that I am experiencing it more, I can acknowledge what it is." If

we did not continue these conversations, some students would not have the opportunity to learn and grow from their personal experiences.

Furthermore, Yosso's (2005) theory suggested that educators should work to create culturally responsive and sustaining classrooms that value and incorporate the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds. How do we help students stay connected to the communities and individuals who are instrumental to their educational success? By recognizing and valuing these resistance practices, Yosso's theory challenged dominant narratives that suggested people of color were passive victims of inequality. Instead, it suggested that communities of color were active agents in their own liberation and their resistance practices could serve as models for social change (Yosso, 2005). Inclusive campus climates have a meaningful, positive effect on student persistence and success, and play a key role in realizing higher education’s potential to address educational and societal equity gaps (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019; Swartz et al., 2019). Students excel in healthy environments, free of discrimination, where inclusion and respect for equity and diversity are valued. Undergraduate programs aimed at helping students with the transition process could incorporate trait development that nurtures core self-evaluations and yields successful students. These programs foster a supportive and inclusive campus culture, provide practical assistance, and contribute to the overall well-being of students as they navigate their academic journey and prepare for their future careers.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

Date:	11/03/2022
Principal Investigator:	Rosa Law
Committee Action:	**IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**
Action Date:	11/03/2022
Protocol Number:	2209043291
Protocol Title:	Investigating Core Self-Evaluations, Ethnicity and Perceived Discrimination among Undergraduate Students
Expiration Date:	

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).
- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. *You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu. Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - http://hhs.gov/ohrp/ and https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INVITATION

Investigating Core Self-Evaluations, Ethnicity and Perceived Discrimination among Undergraduate Students

Dear _____,

My name is Rosa Law, and I am a graduate student at The University of Northern Colorado. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree, and you have been randomly chosen to participate.

I am studying perceptions of self-worth, competence, self-esteem, and perceived discrimination. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey designed to measure the concepts in my study. Additionally, there will be an opportunity to further participate in focus groups aimed to dive into this topic in more detail.

Participation is voluntary and your responses will be anonymous and kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. I will not be collecting any student information that could possibly be linked to you specifically. Electronic data will be stored on password-protected computers and files will only be accessible by me. In addition, I will make every possible effort to maximize the confidentiality of your responses. I will remove any personal information that could identify you before data is shared. Additionally, all results will be reported in aggregate form so that individual responses cannot be identified. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee the anonymity of your personal data.

To thank you for your participation, students who complete the survey portion will be entered into a drawing for a $50 Amazon gift card. Students who choose to be a part of the focus groups will each receive $20 amazon gift card for their time.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. You may contact me at rosa.law@unco.edu.

If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please click on the link below to begin.
[insert Qualtrics link]

With kind regards,
Rosa Isela Law

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: **Investigating Core Self-Evaluations, Ethnicity and Perceived Discrimination among Undergraduate Students**

Researcher: Rosa Law, Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership
Email: rosa.law@unco.edu
Research advisor: Corey Pierce, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Corey.Pierce@unco.edu

The primary purpose of this study is to examine perceived discrimination experienced by undergraduate students, perceptions of self-worth, competence and self-esteem. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out several scales intended to measure your perception of self-worth, competence and self-esteem and perceived discrimination, and demographic information, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. There are no consequences if you do not participate in this study and you are free to stop at any time. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Electronic data will be stored on password-protected computers and files will only be accessible by me. I will not be collecting any identifying student information; therefore, your responses will be completely anonymous. In addition, I will make every possible effort to maximize the confidentiality of your responses. I will not be collecting student ID numbers or names. I will remove any personal information that could identify you before data is shared. Additionally, all results will be reported in aggregate form so that individual responses cannot be identified. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee the anonymity of your personal data.

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. No compensation for participation will be provided. However, participants will be entered into a drawing for a $50 Amazon Gift card. While there may be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study, your participation may add new knowledge to the social sciences.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in a loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please complete the questionnaire if you would like to participate in this research. **By completing the questionnaire, you give your permission to be included in this study as a participant**. You may keep this form for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

By clicking CONTINUE, you have read the above and are agreeing to participate in this study.

APPENDIX D

THE EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION SCALE

The Everyday Discrimination Scale

In your day-to-day life, how often do any of the following things happen to you?

Recommended response categories for all items:

Response scale for all items:
Once a week or more……4
A few times a month……3
A few times a year……2
Less than once a year……1
Never……0

1. You are treated with less courtesy than other people are.
2. You are treated with less respect than other people are.
3. You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.
4. People act as if they think you are not smart.
5. People act as if they are afraid of you.
6. People act as if they think you are dishonest.
7. People act as if they're better than you are.
8. You are called names or insulted.
9. You are threatened or harassed.

APPENDIX E

CLASSROOM DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Classroom Discrimination and Harassment

Here are some situations that can arise at school. Please tell me how often you have experienced them during the LAST 12 MONTHS.

Recommended response categories for all items:

The response scale for all items:

Almost every day (5)
At least once a week (4)
A few times a month (3)
A few times a year (2)
Less than once a year (1)
Never (0)

1. How often do you feel like your opinion is not valued in the classroom?
2. In a classroom, how often are you watched more closely than other students?
3. How often does a professor or classmate use racial or ethnic slurs or jokes?
4. How often does a professor or classmate direct racial or ethnic slurs or jokes at you?
5. How often do you feel that you have to work twice as hard as other work?
6. How often do you feel that you are ignored or not taken seriously by your professor?
7. How often do others assume that you would perform lower than you do and treat you as such?
8. How often have you been unfairly humiliated in front of others in a classroom?

Adapted from McNeilly, M. D., Anderson, N. B., Armstead, C. A., Clark, R., Corbett, M., Robinson, E. L., Pieper, C. F., & Lepisto, E. M. (1996). The perceived racism scale: A multidimensional assessment of the experience of white racism among African Americans. *Ethnicity and Disease, 6*(1,2), 154-166.

APPENDIX F

CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS SCALE

Core Self-Evaluations Scale

Instructions: Below are several statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each item.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.					
Sometimes I feel depressed.					
When I try, I generally succeed					
Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless.					
I complete tasks successfully.					
Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work.					
Overall, I am satisfied with myself.					
I am filled with doubts about my competence.					
I determine what will happen in my life.					
I do not feel in control of my success in my career.					
I am capable of coping with most of my problems.					
There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me.					

APPENDIX G

PHASE TWO SCRIPT AND QUESTIONS

Phase Two Script and Questions

A focus group questionnaire and protocol will be used to ensure consistency. The focus groups will involve open-ended questions designed to elicit the participants' perceptions about factors they feel contributed to the results of the survey data.

Introductory script: Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in phase two of this research project. My name is Rosa and today, we are going to be discussing how perceived discrimination interacts with your view of yourself and your self-worth. I want you all to feel comfortable sharing your experiences and the strategies you've developed to help you understand your lived experiences around this topic. I want you to know that this is completely voluntary and if at any point in time you wish to discontinue, you may do so without penalty.

Guiding Questions

How has your perception of yourself changed as you've gotten older?

Could you describe any instances of discrimination that you have witnessed or experienced?

How did you cope with these experiences? What strategies did you use to understand the situation?

How have these instances of discrimination affected your life and relationships with other people?

Have they impacted how you view yourself? How so?

Is there anything else you would like to share that you have not had the opportunity to share?