

RETRO-ACCULTURATION AND IDENTITY EXPRESSION: LATER
GENERATIONS OF MEXICAN AMERICANS AND THE INFLUENCE OF
CULTURAL DIMENSIONS ON APPEARANCE AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Yoo-Kyoung Seock)

ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study explores retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans and its influence on appearance management and cultural engagement via social media. This research investigates how cultural values shape identity expression, particularly collectivism and familism. A qualitative phase using focus groups revealed themes of resisting assimilation, erasing marginalization, and cultural reclamation through dress, language, and online engagement. Quantitative analysis with 149 survey respondents showed that collectivism significantly predicted appearance management and social media engagement, while retro-acculturation mediated the latter. Familism influenced cultural engagement via social media but not appearance management. Participants emphasize authenticity in digital portrayals and use social media to challenge stereotypes while maintaining familial and cultural ties. The study also reveals that family dynamics, institutional settings, and media representation influence retro-acculturation. This study contributes to the limited literature of retro-acculturation, offering insights into the evolving cultural identity of Mexican Americans

and emphasizing the importance of cultural pride in behavioral outcomes across generations.

INDEX WORDS: Retro-acculturation, Mexican American, Familism, Collectivism, Appearance Management, Cultural engagement via social media

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the people who have supported me throughout my education. Specifically, my family and my late grandmother who have inspired my research on immigrants' journey and how later generations continue to uphold their identity and heritage. This research is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

The United States immigration situation has been associated with terms such as melting pot, salad bowl, cultural mosaic, etc. These analogies reflect the country's increasing diversity and the influence of many ethnic cultures on U.S. society (Kim & Park, 2009). The U.S. Hispanic population is the largest ethnic subgroup, accounting for 19% of all Americans (Funk & Lopez, 2022). The National Population Projections by the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2060, the Hispanic population will rise to 26.9% with an optimal immigration scenario (Flores, 2023). The diverse backgrounds of Hispanic immigrants from Central and Latin America, including their varying lengths of residence in the U.S. and their home countries, create distinct cultural experiences. This complexity plays a key role in the process of acculturation, which refers to the adaptation to the customs of a new culture due to prolonged exposure (Alvarez et al., 2012; Berry, 2003; Chan, 2013).

Traditionally, researchers have examined acculturation through a bidirectional approach where the dominant and minority cultures influence one another (Castillo et al., 2010; Chan, 2013; Kim & Park, 2009; Lechuga, 2008; Perez & Rivera, 2014). As generations advance over time, values become more aligned with American values, and ethnic identification weakens (Duncan & Trejo, 2017; Morse, 2009). However, a contrasting phenomenon known as retro-acculturation emerged, where individuals seek to

re-embrace their heritage culture, in contrast to those who have fully adopted mainstream culture. Among Hispanics, retro-acculturation fosters cultural engagement, particularly to build bridges with generational gaps and reinforce their ethnic identity (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Chan, 2013; Garcia, 2017).

Most of the literature has generalized the Hispanic American population in discussions of acculturation and consumer behavior (Alvarez et al., 2014; Perez & Rivera, 2014; Rizkallah & Truong, 2010). However, country of origin plays an important role when marketing to Hispanics, as they cannot be treated as a monolithic group (Dudgeon et al., 2016; Duncan & Trejo, 2017; Liedtke & Bug, 2015; Strokes et al., 2016). Additionally, acculturation stages may differ between Hispanic subgroups due to their immigration patterns (Ogden et al., 2004; Vasquez-Parraga & Valencia, 2017). Despite this, there remains a lack of research focused on a specific Spanish-speaking country, such as Mexico.

Mexico has been a part of the larger discussion of acculturation and immigration, with its presence in the U.S. deeply rooted in colonization and successive waves of migration (Jimenez, 2009). Since 1965, Mexico has been the largest country of origin for Hispanic immigrants, accounting for 60% of the Hispanic population (Jimenez, 2009; Moslimani et al., 2023). These migration waves have created distinct generational experiences (Gutierrez, 1995; Vega & Ortiz, 2018). Over time, later generations have undergone shifts in language use, identity, and cultural values, often navigating biculturalism, a process in which individuals are socialized in two cultural groups, with

outcomes that can either be positive or negative (Chavez-Reyes, 2010; Jimenez, 2009; Padilla, 2006).

Several authors, including Korzenny and Korzenny (2012) and Morse (2009), explain the retro-acculturation phenomenon by claiming that it is a more positive experience, in general, to be Hispanic in the United States. Many second and later generations of Hispanic Americans grew up distancing themselves from their ethnic identity during adolescence to avoid discrimination, often encouraged by their immigrant parents or grandparents (Lynch, 2014). However, this approach did not always result in full inclusion. Some scholars argue that ongoing discrimination, despite efforts to assimilate, has historically prevented Mexican Americans from being fully accepted by mainstream society (Smith, 2003; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). As a result, many children of immigrants are assimilating and losing connection with their parents' country and cultural practices (Verdugo & Swanson, 2022). However, as multiculturalism gains cultural acceptance, individuals increasingly re-engage with their heritage, challenging traditional acculturation models (Chan, 2013).

Although scholars have recognized the phenomenon of retro-acculturation, it has yet to be studied using a retro-acculturation scale to evaluate second and later generations of Hispanic Americans. Furthering that idea, some researchers and writers have justified retro-acculturation due to changes in life stages, such as transitioning to college, entering parenthood, or experiencing the loss of a family member, among others (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Garcia, 2017; Schaffer, 2022). During early adulthood (ages 18-44), identity development is particularly significant, as individuals reassess cultural

values that are either reintroduced or passed down during major life stages (Eriksson et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2008).

Hispanic identity is learned through taught attitudes, values, and the Spanish language. It is shaped by cultural values tied to the Hispanic identity, including familism, collectivism, ethnic pride, experience with discrimination, political beliefs, and physical appearance (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Hispanics in the United States tend to be group-oriented and collectivistic (Hofstede, 2001), but acculturation often leads to adopting individualistic tendencies and behavior (Sawicki & Chapa, 2018). This negotiation between collectivism and individualism has yet to be researched with retro-accultured Hispanics. A subset of collectivism as a cultural dimension that is unique to the Hispanic population is the cultural value of familism (Knight et al., 2011; Sabogal et al., 1987). Familism is the stressed importance of referring to the family for support, comfort, and services, as well as the belief of family above individual interests (Montoro & Ceballo, 2011). Despite the enduring significance of familism, acculturation continues to shift cultural values and become more American (Morse, 2009). The role of familism in retro-acculturation and its influence on behavioral outcomes has not yet been explored.

Ethnic identity formation involves both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Attitudinal outcomes reflect the emotional component of social identity, often manifesting in pride and a sense of belonging (Cuellar et al., 1992; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). In contrast, behavioral outcomes are more externally visible and include actions such as participating in cultural events, wearing traditional clothing, or adhering to specific practices (Mejia, 2024; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). Therefore, it is

possible for an individual who may identify as and feel proud to be Hispanic American yet not engage in cultural expressions (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). For retro-acculturated Hispanics, the reintroduction of cultural values of collectivism and familism may influence attitudinal and behavioral outcomes differently.

Appearance plays a crucial role in self-expression and identity formation (Belk, 1988; Castro et al., 2022; Kaiser & Green, 2022). For Hispanic individuals, coming from a highly collectivist and familism-centered society, appearance is not only a personal matter but a reflection of family and group identity (De Mooij, 2004; Rama et al., 2020). For example, dressing well in public is often seen as a way to honor one's family and cultural values. Families also play a significant role in communicating beauty values and appearance, often applying image-related pressures using explicit comments about appearance (Mejia, 2024). These beauty values, passed intergenerationally, can become especially salient for later-generation Mexican Americans experiencing retro-acculturation. As individuals re-engage with their cultural heritage, appearance management, including fashion, grooming, and fitness practices, become a tangible way to reclaim and display ethnic identity (Kaiser, 1997; Kwon & Kwon, 2013). Everyday fashion forms as cultural bonding and a way to demonstrate participation in a shared Hispanic identity (Frick, 2024).

Another key behavioral output is cultural engagement, which refers to participation in practices and expressions closely tied to one's ethnicity and reflects the salience of ethnic identity among minorities. For Hispanics, cultural engagement includes participation in traditions, leisure activities, cultural foods, and Spanish language media

usage (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Media consumption, in particular, plays a vital role in the acculturation process by shaping language proficiency, communication behavior, and social interaction (Yang et al., 2004). Historically, exposure to mainstream media can facilitate acculturation, while engagement with ethnic media helps preserve cultural heritage (Cuellar et al., 1995; Kizgin et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2004). Recent studies have shifted the focus from traditional media (e.g., television, radio, magazines) to social media's role in acculturation (Correa & Jeong, 2021; Kim & Park, 2009; Lai et al., 2022; Li & Tsai, 2015). The role of social media, particularly relevant for individuals in early adulthood (ages 18-44) who are digital natives and more active on social platforms. Hispanics are heavier users of social media than their non-Hispanic counterparts, with especially high engagement on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Llaguno, 2023). Unlike traditional media, social media allows for culturally relevant content creation, providing a platform for Hispanics to express and celebrate their heritage (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Li & Tsai, 2015). In doing so, users can reclaim aspects of their Mexican heritage while navigating American and Hispanic cultural spheres. Thus, social media becomes a powerful tool for retro-acculturation, facilitating cultural engagement and identity formation.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore what triggers retro-acculturation amongst later generations of Mexican Americans. Also, to measure how cultural values are maintained and how ethnic identification influences on and offline behaviors such as appearance management and cultural engagement via social media. By understanding the

processes of retro-acculturation and behavioral expressions like appearance management and cultural social media engagement, we can gain deeper insights into this consumer segment. In addition to their experiences as ethnic minorities, they display ethnic pride and retention through their behavioral outputs. Therefore, in this regard, the overarching research questions guiding this research are:

RQ1 (QUAL): What life experiences, social influences, or personal motivations trigger retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans?

RQ2 (QUAL): How do later generations of Mexican Americans express retro-accultured cultural pride through their appearance and engagement on social media platforms?

RQ3 (QUANT): How do cultural dimensions such as familism and collectivism influence appearance management and cultural engagement via social media, and how does retro-acculturation mediate this relationship among later generations of Mexican Americans?

RQ4 (Mixed Methods Integration): How do qualitative insights into retro-acculturation experiences complement or diverge from the quantitative relationships between cultural values and behavioral expressions among later-generation Mexican Americans?

Research Objectives

The study aims to examine the phenomenon of retro-acculturation among later generations using a convergent mixed methods approach. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To explore the personal experiences, social influences, and motivations that trigger retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans

2. To investigate how these individuals express their cultural pride through appearance management and engagement with social media content
3. To examine how cultural values, particularly collectivism and familism, influence appearance management and cultural engagement via social media, with retro-acculturation as a mediating factor
4. To integrate qualitative and quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of how retro-acculturation shapes identity expression and behavior among later-generation Mexican Americans

Through these objectives, the study contributes to the literature on acculturation, cultural identity, and ethnic consumer behavior by offering nuanced insights into the evolving identity practices of this growing demographic group.

Significance of Study

This area is increasingly important for family and consumer sciences researchers and educators to understand these cultural dynamic changes occurring in the United States. The Hispanic population is growing larger and larger each year, with varying immigration and acculturation status that needs to be studied. The study is important to explore what triggers retro-acculturation amongst later-generation Mexican Americans. It also answers how cultural values are maintained and how ethnic identification influences behaviors online and offline.

Conceptual Definition of Key Variables of the Study

The following definitions are essential terms to conduct this study:

Mexican American: a person who is of Mexican descent but was born in the United States (Molinary, 2007)

Later Generation Mexican Americans (LGMAs): second generation and beyond population group of Mexican origin in the United States, who are uniquely characterized by their Mexican ethnic heritage, American birthright, and racialized position as a group of color (Chaves-Reyes, 2010).

Values: human conceptions of what is good, right, and worthwhile (Rama et al., 2020)

Enculturation: process of socialization to and maintenance of norms and cultural values (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Kim, 2007)

Acculturation: the bi-directional or multifaceted phenomenon of cultural and psychological changes in patterns of behavior, values, and beliefs derived from extensive cultural contact (Alvarez et al., 2012; Berry, 2003; Lechuga, 2008; Ogden et al., 2004; Perez & Rivera, 2014)

Assimilation: a process in which immigrants fully adapt to mainstream culture but lose their heritage culture (Kim & Park, 2009; Ogden et al., 2004)

Retro-acculturation: a process that happens when people who have assimilated into their new cultures begin to search for elements of their ethnic identities to incorporate into their new lives (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Inglessis, 2008; Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Liedtke & Bug, 2015; Lynch, 2014; Molinary, 2007; Perez & Rivera, 2014).

Collectivism: the individual sees the self as an aspect of the in-group, resulting in family integrity and interdependence with sociability (Burns et al., 2015; Sawicki & Chapa, 2018)

Individualism: favors independence, and people want to differentiate from others
(Hofstede, 2001)

Familism: importance of relatives as referents and as providers of emotional support
(Marin & Marin, 1991)

Appearance Management: all attention, decisions, and acts related to personal appearance
(e.g., clothing, grooming, and exercise-related services) (Kaiser, 1997; Kwon & Kwon, 2013)

Cultural Engagement: behaviors through which minorities actively communicate their ethnicity reflect the salience of the identity of their lives (Phinney, 1992; Verkuyten, 2010)

Social media: a group of online applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

These terms interact in meaningful ways to shape how later-generation Mexicans express identity and reclaim heritage. Understanding their connections provides critical context for analyzing cultural engagement both offline and in digital spaces.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Building on the study's conceptual framework, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature that informs this research. It explores key constructs such as retro-acculturation, cultural values, appearance management, and cultural representation in social media, all of which contextualize the behaviors and experiences of later-generation Mexican Americans.

Theoretical Framework

Inquiry Worldview

I follow a constructivist paradigm, which posits that multiple realities are shaped by an individual's knowledge, based on social interactions and their surroundings (Lincoln et al., 2023). Within my research, I seek to make meaning and understanding of a phenomenon such as retro acculturation based on later generations of Mexican Americans' experiences and perceptions. I plan to interpret their own experiences and perspectives to develop a deeper understanding of the motivations behind the reconnection with heritage culture. In line with academic research and industry norms, I hope to find a pattern and to put mixed-race consumers in a different market segment from their dominant race or ethnicity. Some biases I may hold are wanting the results to mirror my habits and experiences. Therefore, I will continue to reflect critically as a

researcher and inquirer known as reflexivity (Lincoln et al., 2023). A way to mitigate biases is by allowing the participants to inform me of their own experiences and allow the acceptance that they can be different and similar than my own. I will prioritize fairness to prevent marginalization and consider all perspectives, values, and voices.

Subjectivity Statement

My role as a researcher stems from that I am a female-identifying that comes from a mixed-race background of Black and Hispanic. I am a third-generation Mexican Guatemalan, and I struggle with navigating my ethnic identity and acceptance from others. I come from a mixed household, and I identify as third generation Hispanic, where I am very proud ethnically but feel lacking in some areas since I have limited interaction with my heritage culture, and I identify more Hispanic American. So, my reasons to retro-acculturate are to connect with my heritage, learn Spanish language and talk with family. Therefore, I have research interests related to ethnic consumer behavior, and how salient identities are shown through self-presentation in online and offline communities. This research will help me understand how my upbringing has affected my behavior and acts of ethnic pride. I want to explore what retro-acculturation looks like in modern day behavior and consumption for other Hispanic Americans of later and mixed generations. I think my experience and research can relate to other mixed consumers who negotiate their identities.

Theoretical Framework Overview

To understand how cultural values and identity influence the behavior of later-generation Mexican Americans, this study draws on four key theoretical frameworks.

Ethnic Identity Theory provides a foundation for understanding subjective and dynamic nature of cultural group affiliation. Acculturation Theory builds on this by describing the psychological and behavioral processes immigrants undergo as they adapt to a new culture, including the unique phenomenon of retro-acculturation. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, specifically individualism versus collectivism, help frame cultural value systems that may guide behavior and identity choices. Finally, Cultural Identity Theory highlights how individuals use communication to construct, express, and negotiate their cultural identities. Together, these theories offer a multidimensional lens to examine identity formation and cultural retention among later generations of Mexican Americans.

Ethnic Identity Theory

Ethnic segmentation has become an interesting marketing tactic to identify homogeneous groups of people. Ethnicity and ethnic identity are commonly mistaken to be interchangeable. Instead, ethnicity is used for minority groups that are culturally and physically different from the dominant culture (De Mooij, 2004). While ethnic identity is described as one's affiliation with individuals who share a common historical background, ancestry, nationality, religious affiliation, and language (Forney, 1980). Ethnic identification is more subjectively defined and focuses on the maintenance and retention of culture of origin (Ogden et al., 2004). Rather than being static, ethnic identification is fluid and can be shaped by acculturation and assimilation (Phinney, 1996). Ethnic identity is an important indicator of degree of acculturation because it refers to the strength of association to a particular group (Lechuga, 2008; Ogden et al., 2004).

Hispanic Americans are described as an ethnic group that originate from the Spanish-speaking territories of Mexico, Central and South America, or the Caribbean (Garcia, 2013). While other terms like Latino/a and Latinx are also used to describe this population, each carries unique cultural and political implications. The term Latinx, for example, emerged as a pan-ethnic label emphasizing the geographic origin, specifically Latin America, rather than language. While this term has gained popularity in academic and activist circles for its gender-neutral inclusivity, its usage remains debated within the broader community. For this study, the term Hispanic will be used more consistently, as language, particularly Spanish, serves as an indicator that can determine which subcategory one belongs to (Arjona et al, 1998). Spanish is the shared language among Hispanic communities, connecting people across diverse countries of origin. Efforts to preserve Spanish are commonly seen in bilingual households, where Spanish is spoken at home while English is learned and used in public institutions. As Rizkallah and Truong (2010) stated that “Spanish is more than just a language; it is a carrier of cultural identity” (p.120). Consequently, 95% of Hispanics including U.S.-born Hispanics, stated that it is important for future generations of Hispanics to speak Spanish (Taylor et al., 2012). However, language preference tends to shift across generations, with later-generation individuals between Spanish and English preference varies. Hence, marketing communications are advised to include multicultural marketing and to include both Spanish to English (Alvarez et al., 2012; Liedtke & Bug, 2015).

Consequently, there are varying levels of acculturation in each subculture (Ogden et al., 2004). There are four groups within the bidimensional model of the Hispanic segment: retainers, bicultural, assimilators, and non-identifiers (Alvarez et al., 2012;

Inglessis, 2008; Lechuga, 2008; Perez-Rivera, 2014; Toloza et al., 2021). These groups represent the different combinations of rejection and/or acceptance of host and heritage cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors (Lechuga, 2008). Immigrants must choose which cultural views, styles, traditions, language, and customs to retain that reflect their salient identity (Telzer et al., 2016).

Ethnic Identity and Acculturation

Every immigrant entering a new country or environment undergoes cultural change. According to Berry (1980), acculturation is defined as the changes in patterns of behavior that follow intercultural contact. When first introduced, acculturation was characterized as a linear process where immigrants experienced a change in patterns towards the dominant culture, otherwise known as assimilation (Berry, 1980). The unidimensional path is illustrated in Figure 1 where an individual starts out learning one's first and original culture through enculturation and eventually replaces it with a second

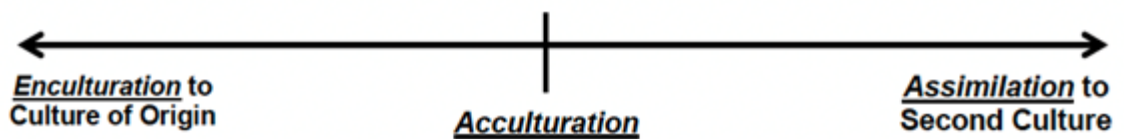


Figure 1: Dynamic Balance of Acculturation (Willis et al., 2004)

culture through assimilation (Willis et al., 2004).

However, other scholars have described acculturation as a malleable construct (Padilla, 1980; Padilla & Perez, 2003). It was later reconceptualized as a bidimensional model, where individuals can adopt elements of dominant culture without abandoning the

heritage culture (Berry, 1998; Korzeny & Korzeny, 2005; Lechuga, 2008; Ogden et al., 2004). Acculturation is more of a continuum where there are varying levels of acculturation patterns known as heritage dominant, bicultural, culturally unique, and assimilated (Berry, 2003; Korzeny & Korzeny, 2005; Ogden et al., 2004). Shown in Figure 2 is the bidimensional model of acculturation segmentation from Korzeny and Korzeny (2005) for Hispanics. The most direct indicators of an individual's level of acculturation are language usage and residency time in the culture (Alvarez et al., 2012; Willis et al, 2004). In this model, the y-axis represents language and behaviors that are associated with Hispanic culture. The x-axis represents English language dominance and behaviors associated with American orientation. Each quadrant allows for different degrees of cultural orientation and belongingness to each culture (Korzeny & Korzeny, 2005). The acculturation segmentation has been proven to present identity groups and used to explain differences in behavioral outcomes among immigrants (Alvarez et al., 2014, Lechuga, 2008; Li & Tsai, 2013; Perez-Rivera, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga & Valencia, 2017).

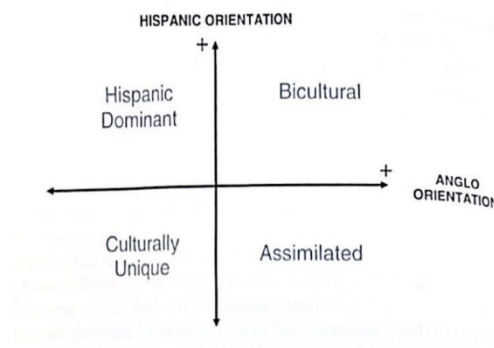


Figure 2: Bidimensional Approach to Hispanic Acculturation Segmentation

Different stages align with their identification with both countries. Going off the bidimensional model of the Hispanic segment divides the acculturation process into four groups: retainers, bicultural, assimilators, and non-identifiers (Alvarez et al., 2012; Inglessis, 2008; Toloza et al., 2021). Retainers are typically first-generation Hispanic Americans who show high identification with Hispanic identity. Members of the Bicultural segment have high identification with both American culture and Hispanic heritage. Assimilators are known for losing interest in maintaining Hispanic identity and instead have high identification with American culture, preferring to speak English. Lastly, non-identifiers do not identify with either of the two cultures. Second and third-generation Hispanic Americans may fall between assimilation and the bicultural segment, where they may choose to identify only as American or with their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin (Phinney, 2003). Importantly, acculturation is understood as a multidimensional process that is not stagnant and depends on the individual's ethnic identification.

Hispanics tend to have a higher level of ethnic identity than non-Hispanic whites, Blacks, Asians, etc. (Villarreal & Peterson, 2009). Even as Hispanics go through the acculturation process, they continue to show strong ethnic identification with a significant amount of cultural sustainability (Burns et al., 2014). The majority are segmented as bicultural, with a stronghold on cultural values, traditions, and identity is maintained through increased immigration, cultural retention, and retro-acculturation (Alvarez et al., 2014; Perez-Rivera, 2014). A major phenomenon explored in this study is retro-acculturation, which occurs later in life and is often self-initiated (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Among Hispanics who have been segmented as assimilated, some individuals

begin to reclaim their ethnic identity through retro-acculturation. These retro-acculturated individuals have yet to be formally classified within existing acculturation models, particularly in terms of ethnic identification. This study aims to investigate this emerging group and how retro-acculturation interacts with cultural values.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory

Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist, defined culture as a way for the mind to distinguish members of one group or category of people from another and how they orient their values into behavior. To help distinguish cultures based on value differences, Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001, 2011) developed a model of six dimensions. These dimensions include the Power Distance index, collectivism vs individualism, uncertainty avoidance index, femininity vs masculinity, short-term vs long-term orientation, and restraint vs indulgence (Wale, 2023). Initiated in 1980, Hofstede studied nine diverse cultures in 75 countries and regions, scoring based on a scale from 0 to 100 within each dimension (De Mooij, 2004; Sawicki & Chapa, 2018; Wale, 2023). Among these, collectivism and individualism are considered one of the most stable etic dimensions (Sawicki & Chapa, 2018) and are the primary focus of this study. Individualistic cultures favor autonomy and independence, while collectivist cultures favor duties and obligations and interactions with others (Burns et al., 2015). Most Western countries, like the United States, score high on individualism. As immigrants increase contact with American culture, there is a difference in collectivist and individualistic cultural values. Throughout the acculturation process, it is up to the immigrants to maintain cultural values and ethnic identity.

Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural Identity Theory (CIT), originally proposed by Collier (1988) and Collier and Thomas (1988), emphasizes the role of communication in the formation and negotiation of cultural identity. According to the theory, cultural identity is self-identified and rooted in a reaffirmed sense of belonging to a group, shaped by both conceptions of “being” and expectations for “acting” (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p.113). CIT suggests that intercultural competence, where cultural identities are validated, supports the ongoing development of identity, which occurs through communicative practices. For later-generation Mexican Americans, this includes how they negotiate, express, and reaffirm their cultural identity across individual, relational, and communal contexts (Collier, 1998). These processes are shaped by the salience of cultural identity in different situations and become most visible through social comparison, as individuals position themselves with dominant and heritage cultures.

Mexican Americans

Mexican Americans are a multi-cohort and multi-generational population that includes recent immigrants and U.S.-born individuals (Vega & Ortiz, 2018). First-generation immigrants are described as foreign-born individuals, while the second generation is born in America to foreign-born parents (Dennis et al., 2016). There has been a high population of Mexican Americans across major metropolitan areas in the Midwest, the West, and the South. Including the cities of Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston contain a population that rates higher than 70% of Hispanics who identify as Mexican (Moslimani et al., 2023a). More than half of Mexicans and U.S.-born Mexicans

show signs of homeownership with an average yearly income of \$40,000 (Moslimani et al., 2023b).

Following the history of Mexican migration, there are three main phases where the perpetual influx of Mexican migration peaked over the past hundred years, which represented broad ideological changes. The first occurred starting in the 1940s during World War II with the Braceros Program to address the labor shortage, many farmers recruited Mexican immigrants as a temporary wartime fix (Jimenez, 2009). This allowed Mexican Americans economic prosperity, giving rise to patriotic views and placement in a new middle-class demographic (Vega & Ortiz, 2018). Later in the 1960s, with the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, a new generation of Mexican Americans emerged, affirming their ties with the United States and Mexico, going by the name Chicanos (Jimenez, 2009). Chicano activists argued for their right to equality and advocated for policy changes, labor rights, and challenged race-based discrimination (Vega & Ortiz, 2018). Soon after, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) which abolished the national origins quotas, allowing permanent immigrant visas based on family relationships (Chishti et al., 2015). By the 1990s, two million Mexican immigrants had become legal residents (Caldera & Lindsey, 2015). Approaching the 21st century, the news and media began to realize the growth of the Latino population and its influence on popular culture.

The current immigration rate for Mexicans is 13%, which has slowed down compared to the past ten years (Funk & Lopez, 2023). By the same token that Hispanic Americans assimilate at a slower pace, Mexican Americans. A study by Duncan and

Trejo (2011) substantiates that Mexican Americans' process of assimilation and adaptation is at a slower pace compared to Europeans in the past. Several factors for this phenomenon include consideration of the proximity to Mexico, ethnic enclaves formed in American neighborhoods, and illegal immigration (Duncan & Trejo, 2011; Huntington, 2004). These factors provoke high ethnic identification amongst Mexican Americans by reinstating Mexican agents and other cultural attributes. There is a strong relationship between ethnic identity and the adoption of values associated with Mexican American culture (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Other ways that Mexican Americans maintain cultural values include internalized values from childhood. The purpose of the study conducted by Knight et al. (2010) was to measure culturally relevant values in Mexican adolescents and adults. One of the main cultural values recognized was familism, relating to family support and respect. Familism and other cultural values can become the guiding force for future behavior and decisions (Knight et al, 2010). As noted previously, Mexican immigration rates have decreased in the past several years, building upon increased contact with American culture. These statistics show that Mexican immigration has slowed down but is still present and acculturating to American culture. This also affirms that there is a larger percentage of a later generation of Mexican Americans.

Later Generation Mexican Americans

The Later Generation Mexican Americans (LGMAs) are defined as the third generation and subsequent generations are descendants of foreign-born grandparent(s) or ancestor(s) from Mexico. Some characteristics of this demographic are that they retain some degree of Mexican culture but may not necessarily understand the origin of some

values, beliefs, and practices (Chavez-Reyes, 2010). For example, the Spanish language proficiency in U.S.-born Hispanics has decreased since 1980 from 67% to 57% in 2019 (Funk & Lopez, 2022). Chavez-Reyes (2010) claims that LGMA's no longer speak Spanish but speak English exclusively. Many second or third-generation Hispanics growing up during the 1980-1990s were told not to speak Spanish by their parents, so they could grow up speaking without Spanish accents (Lutz & Aragon, 2024; Morse, 2009). Denying one's Mexican heritage was a common experience to avoid discrimination or prejudice until it was socially accepted. However, there is an effort to keep Mexican culture intact, and there is evidence of a stronger ethnic identification. "Today young Hispanics hear reggaeton music on mainstream radio stations...they are proud of their language and their culture" (Morse, 2009, pp. 6-7). In addition to the Spanish language has been agreed upon across 95% of U.S. Hispanics to retain and teach to the future generation of Hispanics (Taylor et al., 2012). In general, academics predict shift in US ethnic composition will enhance the need for cultural preservation within the Hispanic population (Liedtke & Bug, 2015).

Retro-acculturation

Retro-acculturation, a term coined by Carlos E. Garcia, is the conscious search for cultural identity or roots by later generations of immigrant families (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Valdés, 2008). This process only occurs with assimilated individuals who are yearning to learn about cultural roots and exhibit a rising pride in their ethnic culture and heritage (Li et al., 2013; Valdés, 2008). Other ethnic communities have experienced retro-acculturation as well. Some examples include Jewish Americans who

have partaken in learning Yiddish, which is spoken by their first-generation grandparents (Morse, 2009). Retro-acculturation is triggered by major life events, including marriage, family death, or attending college, that can inspire acculturation behaviors (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Kim and Park (2009) describe the phenomenon through Korean Americans in wedding ceremonies, integrating traditional Korean dress, ceremonial procedures, and food. Overall, the concept of retro-acculturation contradicts traditional acculturation by changing the direction of total assimilation (Chan, 2013). Instead, acculturation should not be viewed as the endpoint but the starting point for personal cultural development (Kim & Park, 2009). Now, what does retro-acculturation look like within the Hispanic population?

Most of the Hispanic population is U.S.-born; 81% of Hispanics living in this country were U.S. citizens reported in 2021 (Moslimani et al., 2023). A large majority of Hispanic Americans growing up in the 1990s and 2000s had parents who immigrated because they believed in the “American Dream” (Lynch, 2014). Resulting in external pressure to assimilate to American culture and only speak English in households (Garcia, 2017; Lynch, 2014). Now, as grown adults entering parenthood, they are motivated to reconnect with their heritage culture, search for lost heritage, and construct a different upbringing for their children that is different from their own (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Lennon, 2021). Therefore, retro-acculturation is likely to occur in the prevailing generations and generations to come. Many other market researchers like Garcia have also noticed the emerging trend amongst young millennials who identify as Hispanic American that want to learn Spanish, similar to Jewish Americans (Lennon, 2021;

Garcia, 2017; Valdés, 2008). Retro-acculturation takes place at an individual level and a societal level (Kim & Park, 2009). Then, on a societal level, in Hispanic media and marketing economy has caught onto retro-acculturation trends and continues to show more Hispanic representation, usage of Spanish language, cultural icons, and attributes in advertisements (Carrasco, 2022). With the help of globalization, multiculturalism, and communication technology allows the retention and preservation of immigrants' heritage culture is allowed (Kim & Park, 2009). Therefore, the presence of retro-acculturation may be a combination of a changing acculturation process and a changing global culture (Chan, 2013). Since there has been a great impact in the commercial and marketing industry, retro-acculturation has yet to reach academic studies for a developed model.

Cultural Values

Collectivism/Individualism

Collectivism is a part of a dichotomy with individualism where the difference between societies lies in how the self is oriented with the community, their perceived obligations, and dependence on each other (Wale, 2023). Hispanic Americans operate within a collectivist culture where they tend to prioritize maintaining harmony in their behavior, values, and obligations in groups (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). As cultural values are retained within the Hispanic community, there have been studies on collectivism and acculturation. Research has confirmed that as the level of acculturation increases, the level of collectivism decreases (Sawicki & Chapa, 2018). In the above study, a questionnaire was distributed through a private company that scores respondents' acculturation level and the correlation with collectivism level from a developed scale.

This paper addresses how acculturation impacts the dimensions of Hispanic culture, with collectivism included. Sawicki and Chapa (2018) conclude that different levels of acculturation generate different results of sustained values of collectivism. However, the scale did not account for an increase in individualism. This remains an open question as the level of acculturation increases, the level of individualism increases. Another question arises related to how retro-acculturation impacts on Hispanics' level of collectivism and individualism.

Media is one of the acculturation agents that help to learn or retain both cultures. Past acculturation studies have shown that social networks are an integral part of the consumer acculturation process (Kizgin et al., 2017). In addition to acculturation studies, there are several comparative studies investigating media usage across cultures. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been applied in several studies. Earlier research findings claim that culture-related motives for social media, such as self-enhancement, self-disclosure, and status, are stronger in collectivist cultures in South America compared to other collectivist countries (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Another study explored user motivations and behaviors in the United States, Spain, and Chile with differing collectivism scales. It is now established that individualistic cultures tend to use social media for information seeking and escapism, while collectivists prefer socializing with friends and family (Deng et al., 2023). For this study, we will examine the level of familism and determine what the motivations are behind interacting with ethnic social media content.

Familism

An orientation of collectivism that has been most often studied within Hispanics is familism (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008; Villarreal & Peterson, 2009). Familism, also known as *familismo* which is defined as the importance of their nuclear and extended family, and the strong feeling of loyalty (Marin & Marin, 1991). Familism plays a vital role plays on consumptive and purchasing decisions (Chattalas & Harper, 2007; Rizkallah & Truong, 2008). In a series of empirical studies, Villarreal and Peterson (2009) attempted to conceptualize 'Hispanicness' by measuring the cultural dimensions of ethnic identity and familism from a consumer behavior perspective. It was revealed that strong Hispanic identifiers who possess high degrees of ethnic identity and familism are influenced by spouse, significant other, and children in purchase decision making. The sample in this study consisted of individuals who identified as Hispanic or who had Hispanic descent. However, the level of acculturation was not considered. This has been explored in a prior study by Alvarez et al. (2012), who conducted a national sample of Hispanics to identify acculturation-based segmentation that emphasizes consumers' language choice in different contexts. It was reported that familism changes as individuals' contact with their host culture increases (Alvarez et al., 2012). To our knowledge, no prior studies have examined the degree of familism amongst retro acculturated individuals.

Familism is passed across generations through cultural socialization (Alvarez et al., 2012; Hernandez & Bàmaca-Colbert, 2016). A study by Knight et al. (2011) examined the transmission of cultural values from parents to their children. The results confirmed that the Mexican American mothers' values and ethnic socialization efforts were greater

than those of Mexican American fathers. Another form of cultural transmission and socialization, including attending family gatherings as well as keeping in contact with extended family members, is considered vitally important (Rama et al., 2020). Authors have noted that Hispanics value strong family relationships, their ethnic food, and various traditions, customs, and lifestyles from their own culture (Rama et al., 2020; Rizkallah & Truong, 2010). A recent study by Rama et al. (2020) identified how familism aligns with the eight categories of needs in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, emphasizing that Hispanic American participants are socialized by parents and siblings to value closeness, warmth, authenticity, and confidence in social situations. The family held more power than peers in influencing socialized thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and ultimately the development of self-concept among Hispanic Americans (Rama et al., 2020). This paper aims to explore how familism is transmitted and how it ultimately influences the thoughts, behaviors, and self-concept amongst retro-acculturated individuals.

Behavioral Outcomes

Appearance Management

As previously discussed, Mexican culture strongly emphasizes representing the in-group membership and maintaining a positive family image. These values often manifest through personality, behavior, and physical appearance. As Kaiser and Green (2022) noted, dress and appearance are linked to identity formation and expression. Emerging from a collectivist culture, Mexican individuals tend to take appearance and self-presentation seriously. Appearance management is a self-identification process that encompasses appearance enhancement, thought processes, perceptions, attitudes, and

emotions in various contexts (Kaiser & Green, 2022; Kwon & Kwon, 2013). Rinderle and Montoya (2008) found that Hispanic ethnic identity was significantly associated with physical resemblance. Therefore, appearance is an important marker and may play a prominent role in group membership (Backen & Umana-Taylor, 2011; Santos & Updegraff, 2014).

Many Hispanic Americans continue to use dress and appearance to express cultural pride while navigating mainstream society (Frick, 2024). Fashion is a powerful lens for understanding and displaying shifts in cultural values (Crane, 2002). Acculturation can influence these choices; some individuals adopt blended styles of mainstream and traditional aesthetics, while others maintain stronger ties towards their country of origin's aesthetics (Castro et al., 2022; Chattaraman et al., 2009). For Hispanic women, dress and appearance are deeply embedded in cultural norms and expectations (Inglessis, 2008). In public settings, appearance is often managed with care, not only to maintain personal dignity but also to reflect well on one's community and uphold shared cultural expectations (De Mooij, 2004). As Rama et al. (2020) highlight, efforts to create an aesthetically pleasing appearance are tied to the desire to project a positive self-image. These accomplishments not only enhance self-perception but also foster positive perceptions within the broader family group, reinforcing the collectivist orientation. The same goes for social occasions in collectivist cultures, where people tend to buy new clothes (De Mooij, 2004; Inglessis, 2008). In comparison from more individualist cultures often express fashion consciousness as a way to assert personal uniqueness (Chattalas & Harper, 2007; Chattaraman et al., 2009; De Mooij, 2004; Inglessis, 2008).

Appearance carries meaningful implications within the Hispanic community, where it has become a significant predictor of income, job prestige, educational attainment, and mental health (Backen & Umana-Taylor, 2011). Hispanic women face increased appearance-related concerns, including internalization of the Eurocentric beauty ideal, eating disorders, and body dissatisfaction (Lopez et al., 2013; Strokes et al., 2016). Conversely, Strokes, Clemens, and Rios (2016) reviewed fashion magazines that have a history of propagating Western lifestyles and promoting homogenization. However, they also found that social support and ethnic identity can buffer the negative effects of media exposure. Additionally, Hispanic women often report greater appearance-related pressures than other ethnicities (Liedtke & Bug, 2015). Still, questions remain about whether these pressures of appearance management stem from family expectations or societal norms. While much of the literature focuses on Hispanic women, there is a growing need to explore how Hispanic men experience and negotiate cultural appearance expectations. In addition to much of the existing literature focuses on portrayals in mainstream media, with limited exploration of how newer forms, such as social networking platforms, shape appearance concerns among Hispanic women.

In light of these considerations, this study will apply the concept of appearance management to explore how retro-acculturation influences how later-generation Mexican American men and women present themselves physically. Given the cultural importance of appearance within collectivist traditions and its role in signaling ethnic pride and association, appearance management will be used as a behavioral indicator, helping to

reveal how retro-acculturation influences the way participants express their cultural identity through physical appearance.

Cultural Engagement via social media

Social media serves as a dynamic space where users can share content, opinions, and suggestions and maintain social relationships (Kizgin et al., 2020). These platforms enable individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or body type, to express themselves and communicate their identity and culture. They can also choose to share personal styles, tastes, and opinions on social media (Belk, 2013; Kizgin et al., 2020). Social network sites also create spaces for people to connect with like-minded individuals with shared identities, both online and offline (Correa & Jeong, 2011). Crucially, social media usage is not culturally neutral; rather, it is influenced by socio-cultural factors including ethnic identity and community affiliation (Berthon et al., 2012). For Hispanic users, engagement with ethnic media, which refers to media that serve as an important avenue for cultural expression and connection (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017).

Minority users often benefit from media content that reflects their lived experiences. Prior research demonstrates that consumers produce more favorable thoughts and positive attitudes when it aligns with their cultural background or personal history (Lee et al., 2002). Social media platforms have served as identity-affirming and safe places for people of color (Lutz & Aragon, 2024). Compared to their White counterparts, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians users are more likely to actively participate in content creation content (Correa & Jeong, 2011), which in turn promotes visibility, solidarity, and cultural pride (Lutz & Aragon, 2024; Lee et al., 2002; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). Ethnic

media have been associated with positive outcomes such as increased ethnic identity salience and possibly retro-acculturation (Fujika, 2005).

In recent years, TikTok has emerged as a unique platform within this space. Unlike other social media applications, TikTok utilizes an algorithmically curated feed known as “For You Page” (FYP) to tailor content to user preferences, thus creating a highly personalized media environment (Newberry, 2022; Narayanan, 2023). Deng, Vargas-Bianchi, and Mensa (2023) found that cultural dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism significantly influence how users behave on TikTok. Specifically, users from collectivist cultures tend to use social media for information-seeking and socializing. These patterns suggest that cultural values continue to shape engagement behaviors even in algorithm-driven environments. Lutz and Aragon (2024) further examined how Latinx users experience cultural representation on TikTok. Their findings indicate that participants took pleasure in encountering Latinx cultural content, which often evoked feelings of pride and representation. However, they also noted that Latinx influencers often reinforce hegemonic narratives within their communities to attract larger audiences. Participants expressed a strong desire for more nuanced, high-quality, and diverse representations of Latinx identity.

Building on these findings, the current study will use TikTok as the primary platform to examine how later-generation Mexican Americans engage with ethnic representative media and how such engagement contributes to retro-acculturation. By focusing on this platform, the study aims to uncover how digital environments can facilitate cultural

retention and identity formation among younger, U.S.-born members of the Mexican American community.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This mixed-methods study explores how cultural values such as familism and collectivism influence retro-acculturation, and how it affects appearance management and cultural engagement through social media among later-generation Mexican Americans. The study is guided by the following qualitative and quantitative research questions and hypotheses.

Qualitative Research Questions

RQ1: What life experiences, social influences, or personal motivations trigger retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans?

RQ2: How do later generations express retro-accultured pride through their appearance and engagement on social media platforms?

Quantitative Research Questions

RQ3: How do cultural values such as collectivism and familism influence appearance management and cultural engagement via social media, and how does retro-acculturation mediate this relationship among later-generation Mexican Americans?

Mixed Methods Research Question

RQ4: How do qualitative insights into retro-acculturation experiences complement or diverge from the quantitative relationships between cultural values and behavioral expressions among later-generation Mexican Americans?

Hypotheses

Based on the literature and preliminary discussions, the following hypotheses are justified:

H1: (a) Collectivism will have a significant impact on appearance management, (b) Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between collectivism and appearance management

H2: (a) Familism will have a significant impact on appearance management, (b) Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and appearance management

H3: (a) Collectivism will have a significant impact on cultural engagement via social media, (b) Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between collectivism and cultural engagement via social media

H4: (a) Familism will have a significant impact on cultural engagement via social media, (b) Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media

Proposed Research Model

The following research model is proposed from the above discussion:

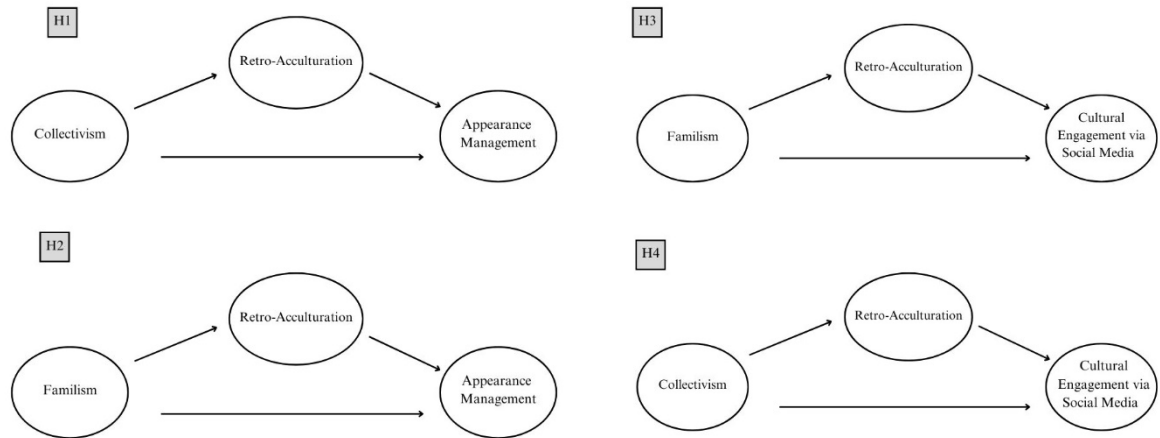


Figure 3: Proposed Research Model

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter describes the mixed methods approach used to accomplish the purpose of this study: understanding retro-acculturation among later generations of Mexican Americans and investigating how cultural values influence individual behaviors in appearance management. Additionally, it explores the societal impact of retro-acculturation and its contribution to cultural engagement, particularly in the content that later generations of Mexican Americans engage with on social media. This chapter outlines the methods employed in this study, providing the rationale behind the chosen methodology and detailing the procedures, sampling strategies, data collection, and analysis techniques.

Mixed Method Definition and Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach. The exploratory nature of this research identified the key factors influencing retro-acculturation among later generations of Mexican Americans. The study addressed a significant gap in the limited research on retro-acculturation, particularly among Hispanic Americans. Furthermore, research on Hispanic Americans is often encouraged to specify country of origin and nationality, due to the misconception that all Hispanic Americans form a homogeneous group. Mixed methods allow for the collection of different but complementary data on the same topic to develop nuanced and comprehensive understandings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018;

Morse, 2003). Qualitative data explored participants' subjective experiences, while quantitative data predicted patterns or trends in behavior. This study employed a convergent mixed methods design (QUAL + quant), in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected independently but concurrently from two distinct samples of later-generation Mexican Americans. The qualitative and quantitative components addressed shared constructs—retro-acculturation, cultural values (collectivism and familism), and behavioral outcomes (appearance management and cultural engagement via social media)—but used different participants from the same population group, aligning demographically and thematically. The qualitative strand explored personal, cultural, and social influences shaping retro-acculturation through focus group interviews. The quantitative strand examined predictive relationships between cultural values and behavioral expressions, using retro-acculturation as a mediating variable. Following a convergent design, both data sets were analyzed independently and integrated during interpretation to identify points of convergence and divergence. This approach enabled a deeper and more holistic understanding both personally and behaviorally. See Appendix A for a diagram of the research design for this study.

Sampling

Parallel sampling was used to ensure a diverse and comprehensive participant pool, with separate groups drawn from the same target population for qualitative and quantitative components. For the qualitative component, a total of 14 participants were recruited through the researcher's personal network and targeted outreach via social media platforms. Recruitment materials included digital flyers and direct messages,

designed to attract individuals who met the study's eligibility criteria (e.g., second generation or beyond, self-identifying as Mexican American, aged 18-44). For the quantitative component, participant recruitment was conducted through Prolific, a third-party market research platform. Prolific was selected for its ability to access a demographically diverse participant pool and ensure target sampling. Of the total responses collected, 149 eligible responses were retained for data analysis. The sample size was determined to ensure sufficient power for regression-based mediation analyses. While the two groups were independent, they shared key demographic characteristics, allowing for meaningful integration of findings during the interpretation phase.

Participants

Participants self-identifying as Mexican Americans, preferably later generation immigrants (2nd generation and beyond) were invited to participate in the focus group and survey. Those who did not self-identify as Mexican American were excluded from the analysis. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 44, as active retro-acculturation typically occurs during changing life stages, such as transitioning to college, marriage, entering parenthood, or experiencing the loss of a family member, among others (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Garcia, 2017). The age group also experiences heightened interest in social media engagement (Lin, 2023). Following Institutional Review Board approval, all participants read the consent form and agreed to participate.

Qualitative Strand

Research Design

Given that this study aims to examine Mexican Americans' retention, influence, and acknowledgment of culture and cultural values, a qualitative approach is appropriate to gain new and deeper insights into the experience of retro-acculturation. In-depth, semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted to gather rich insights into how individuals experience and articulate their cultural identity. Focus groups are preferred for this study as they enable the identification of shared experiences among Mexican Americans. This method is well-established and commonly used in media and communications research (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Additionally, focus groups provide a more natural atmosphere where participants can influence each other, mimicking everyday conversations (Krueger & Casey, 2000). This setting will also facilitate discussions on shared lived experiences of growing up as later-generation Mexican Americans, aligning with collectivist beliefs and values.

Procedures

The participants were recruited through personal network or social media outreach (See Appendix B for Digital Flyer for Recruitment). An anonymous link was distributed through personal networks, as well as a QR code that sent individuals to screening questions were administered to ensure eligibility (See Appendix C for Screening Questions). Selected participants received invitations via their preferred contact method. Based on their availability, participants were in groups of two or three participants at a time, and the interview was estimated to last 90 minutes. Before

participating, they completed a consent form (See Appendix D for Informed Consent Form), and participants were informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any point. All participants received an incentive of a \$10 gift card in person or sent digitally. Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted either in person or via Zoom. The questions asked related to participants' experiences growing up in a Hispanic household and cultural and family traditions that align with collectivist beliefs and values. Further into the interview, questions were more geared to the behavioral outputs of whether any cultural pride is displayed in the way they carry themselves, self-presentation, and in their social media content or following (See Appendix E for Focus Group Interview Questions). The audio was recorded and transcribed. After the completion of focus group interviews, any identifiers were removed. The recordings were destroyed after transcription was complete.

Data Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, interviews were transcribed verbatim using Otter.AI and then downloaded as Word documents. Then the transcribed interview data were stored and analyzed using ATLAS.TI software. ATLAS.TI allows centralization of all the necessary information to store and manage a research project (Frieze et al., 2018). In addition to the data organization, the software enables data analysis performed by the software itself and mediated by the researcher. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) describe six phases of thematic analysis: data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and

reporting results. In the initial coding phase, segments of the data were labeled to represent meaningful content shared by participants. These codes were then reviewed for conceptual similarities, sharing underlying ideas or meaning, and then organized into broader potential themes. The themes were refined and defined through an iterative process to ensure they accurately captured patterns relevant to the research questions. Coding focused on interview responses related to retro-acculturation experience and the participants' attitudinal and behavioral cultural expressions. Final themes were supported by key illustrative statements drawn directly from the data.

Quantitative Strand

Research Design

Quantitative methods were employed to gather measurable data that revealed patterns of behavior and statistically evaluate relationships between variables. Given the study's focus on how cultural dimensions influence appearance management and cultural engagement on social media, a survey was deemed the most appropriate tool for systematically capturing this information across a diverse sample. The survey included questions on demographic details, cultural orientation and dimensions, ethnic identity, language use, media use, and appearance management. The estimated completion time was 8-10 minutes to complete.

Measurement Items

Several instruments were used in this study. For the quantitative component, participants were asked to respond to five different instruments, including a demographic questionnaire, the Retro-acculturation scale (Cuellar et al., 1995), Collectivism vs.

Individualism Scale (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011), Familism Scale (Knight et al., 2010), Appearance Management Scale (Johnson, Francis, & Burns, 2007), Cultural Engagement (Yang et al., 2004). To best address our research questions, we selected the subscales mentioned above and used 56 items total.

1. Retro-acculturation Scale

Since there is no current retro-acculturation scale, an existing one has been revised to fit the needs of the study. The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II (ARSMA-II), developed by Cuellar et al. (1995), is a widely used tool in the literature. It categorizes individuals into four levels of acculturation based on their scores from specific items on the scale. The original scale consists of two subscales: assessing orientation toward Mexican culture and the other toward Anglo-American culture. Their scale used responses rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much/frequently*). Retro-acculturation in this study was measured using the reversed version of Kizgin et al.'s (2018) acculturation scale and the ARSMA-II scale (Cuellar et al., 1995), which measured language proficiency, media consumption, and cultural ties with family.

2. Collectivism Scale

To assess the level of collectivism, we adapted the Culture Value Scale (CVSCALE) construct from prior research (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011). Participants were asked to indicate their feelings on the involvement and contribution to group welfare. To measure collectivism, six items from the Collectivism-Individualism scale were selected.

3. *Familism Scale*

Familism was assessed using a 7-question subscale drawn from the 50-item Mexican American Cultural Value Scale (MACVS) (Knight et al., 2010). A 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Completely*), was used by participants to indicate their responses. It included items based on decisions made about family involvement and how time is spent with family.

4. *Appearance and Fashion, Style, Beauty*

Appearance, fashion, style, and beauty were measured using Johnson, Francis, and Burns' (2007) Appearance Management Scale, which was developed based on Kaiser's (1997) definition of appearance management. In the current study, participants responded to 9 statements relating to personal appearance and choices in fashion and beauty. Some items included "I worry about the judgments people make related to my appearance," and "I give my appearance a lot of attention every day." Participants answered the statements using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

5. *Cultural Engagement via social media*

To assess the affective component of ethnic media, a screening question asked participants whether they interacted with ethnic media on TikTok. If they responded "yes", they were then asked to indicate the frequency of their exposure using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Never*), 2 (*Rarely*), 3 (*Occasionally*), 4(*Frequently*), 5 (*Very Frequently*), 6 (*Almost Daily*), and 7 (*Daily*). Following this, participants responded to several items adapted from (Yang et al., 2004) regarding the importance of various

reasons for their engagement with ethnic media. These items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

Procedures

A proposal for this study was submitted to the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. Once approval from the IRB was obtained, the recruitment and data collection process started. Potential participants were recruited using Prolific using a screening process to ensure they met the criteria of being Mexican American and residing in the United States. Participants accessed an Internet-based survey via a Qualtrics hyperlink. After clicking the hyperlink, they were redirected to a consent form and explicitly asked if they were interested in the survey. If they chose to continue, they reviewed a consent form and explicitly confirmed their willingness to participate before proceeding to the survey questions (See Proposal Appendix F for the consent form). The survey included a demographics questionnaire and scales measuring retro-acculturation, collectivism vs. individualism, familism, appearance and dress, and cultural engagement via social media. Once the surveys were completed, their participation in the survey was completed and the survey ended. Data was collected anonymously using non-identifiable IDs.

Data Analysis

Data cleaning was conducted to remove inconsistent responses, including those who selected "Never" for cultural engagement with Mexican social media content. The dataset was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), where descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed. Outlier screening

was not conducted initially, but post-hoc checks were performed to identify potential outliers using standardized z-scores. While several extreme values were detected, analyses with and without these cases yielded consistent results. To test the study's hypotheses, mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 4). Hayes' model of conditional process analysis was selected because it provides a robust and efficient framework for simultaneously testing direct and indirect effects, allowing for a clear assessment of mediation. This approach was particularly suited to the study's goal of examining how cultural values influence behavioral outcomes through the mediating role of retro-acculturation. This approach was particularly suited to the study's goal to examine how cultural values influence behavioral outcomes through the mediating role of retro-acculturation. Separate mediation models were tested on each dependent variable, appearance management and cultural engagement via social media. Each model included one cultural value (either familism or collectivism) as the independent variable, retro-acculturation as the mediator, and one behavioral outcome as the dependent variable. For each model, three regressions were estimated: (a) the independent variable predicting the dependent variable, (b) the independent variable predicting the mediator, and (c) the mediator predicting the dependent variable. These paths were used to calculate the indirect effect (via retro-acculturation) and the total effect (sum of the direct and indirect effects) of the independent variable on the outcome.

Reliability and Credibility

To address reliability for the quantitative component, Cronbach's alpha was used on survey results to check whether the constructs result in reliable outcomes. Addressing

reliability for the qualitative component will involve reflexive journaling to aid in reducing bias and strengthening research findings. These approaches collectively strengthen the robustness and authenticity of the study.

Integration Plan

This study uses a convergent mixed methods design, in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed concurrently but independently, with integration occurring at the interpretation phase. Both data strands focus on shared constructs of familism, collectivism, retro-acculturation, appearance management, and cultural engagement. Integration will be achieved through triangulation, where quantitative findings and qualitative themes are examined for convergence and divergence. A joint display will be developed to visually align results from both strands, facilitating a holistic understanding of how cultural values influence retro-acculturation and related behaviors among later generations of Mexican Americans.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. First, the qualitative findings are introduced, highlighting key themes that emerged from participant narratives regarding cultural pride, identity expression, and retro-acculturation experiences. The following are the results from the quantitative analysis, including sample demographics, followed by the descriptive statistics for the key variables from the findings of online surveys. The study then presented inferential statistics, reporting the results of the hypothesis tests conducted. These tests included regression tests from the mediation analysis to investigate the relationship between cultural values and behavioral outputs, with retro-acculturation acting as the mediator. Each hypothesis was tested, and the statistical significance of the findings was discussed.

Qualitative Findings

In this section of the chapter, findings from the Qualitative phase will be discussed. The sample characteristics of the participants will be explained. In addition to a summary of the interview, it highlights three overarching themes from thematic analysis. Each overarching theme has two to four key themes, with several subthemes paired with a handful of quotations and excerpts to support claims. Overall, the themes found are

relevant to the research aims, intending to answer the research questions. The research questions are provided below for ease of reference:

- RQ1: What life experiences, social influences, or personal motivations trigger retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans?
- RQ2: How do later generations of Mexican Americans express retro-acculturated cultural pride through their appearance and engagement on social media platforms?

Sample Characteristics

The sample for the focus group interviews consisted of 13 later generations of Mexican Americans and one first-generation Mexican American who indicated protracted engagements with America. 12 of the participants were female and 2 were male. The participants were between the ages of 19-30 years old. All participants are current residents in the Southeastern region of the U.S. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (n=14)

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Generational Status
A1	21	Female	2
A2	19	Male	2
A3	30	Female	3
B1	19	Female	3
B2	22	Female	2
B3	20	Female	2
C1	29	Female	2
C2	24	Female	2
D1	29	Female	2
D2	28	Male	1

E1	19	Female	2
E2	22	Female	2
F1	25	Female	2
F2	22	Female	2

Summary of Interviews

Six focus group interviews were conducted with two to three individuals at a time to understand their experiences with cultural assimilation, cultural pride, values, and representation. Four of these interviews took place at a location at a university, and the other two took place via Zoom. A summary of the interviews conducted, and their duration is detailed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Table and Duration in Minutes

Description	Quantity
Number of interviews	6
Total duration of minutes	454 minutes
Average duration	75 minutes
Shortest interview	52 minutes
Longest interview	106 minutes

Interview Findings

There are three overarching themes related to cultural identity and retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans. These overarching themes are further divided into eight themes with corresponding sub-themes that highlight key experiences and perspectives alongside their connection to the research questions shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Themes and Sub-themes

Research Question	Overarching Themes	Sub-Themes	Connection to Theme & Research Question
RQ1. Influences on Retro-Acculturation	Adapting, Assimilating, and Resisting	Identity Negotiation	Participants often internalize dominant cultural norms that conflict with their ethnic identity. This tension influenced early assimilation and later led to retro-acculturation as individuals sought to reclaim their cultural roots.
		Parent Pressure to Assimilate	Parents encouraged assimilation to protect or advance their children in predominately white society, sometimes at the expense of cultural preservation. However, this pressure varied across generations and siblings, these differences influenced how participants later connected with their heritage through retro-acculturation.
		Proximity to Whiteness	Living in predominantly White environments influenced participants' early distancing from heritage. However, later participants began to challenge internalized standards and embrace their Mexican heritage.
		Lack of Hispanic Community	The absence of a strong Hispanic community led participants to seek out cultural spaces for association and authenticity later in life.
RQ2. Expressions of Cultural Pride	Societal Impact of Retro-Acculturation	Erasing Marginalization	Social media became a tool for cultural discovery and affirmation. Participants used online platforms to explore their heritage, resist stereotypes, and reconnect with Mexican identity.
		Appearance as a Form of Cultural Expression	Clothing and personal style were used as forms of ethnic pride. Participants used fashion and other appearance related behaviors to communicate their cultural identity visually, often inspired by peers online.
		Multiculturalism	Establishing peer groups with shared cultural backgrounds reinforced cultural pride and helped participants better understand and appreciate their own heritage.
RQ1 & RQ2	Cultural Reclamation in Practice	Rebuilding Cultural Connections	These actions reflect direct steps toward reconnecting with heritage-an embodiment of retro-acculturation. They are both personal and communal, helping participants feel a renewed sense of belonging
		Preserving Cultural Identity for Future Generations	Preserving and passing on cultural traditions to younger generations was seen as an act of pride, resistance, and continuity of identity.

Three major themes emerged from participants' narratives that illuminate the processes influencing retro-acculturation and expressions of ethnic pride. The first theme, *Adapting, Assimilating, and Resisting*, captures the early social pressures and internal conflicts participants faced as they navigated identity formation within predominantly white environments. The second theme, *Societal Impact of Retro-Acculturation*, highlights how participants leveraged social media, personal appearance, and peer relationships to reclaim and celebrate Mexican heritage. Finally, the third theme, *Cultural Reclamation in Practice*, illustrates how participants moved beyond personal identity work to rebuild cultural connections and preserve traditions for future generations actively. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive understanding of how external forces, internalized experiences, and deliberate acts of cultural engagement shape the process of retro-acculturation.

Theme 1: Adapting, Assimilating, and Resisting

The overarching theme of Adapting, Assimilating, and Resisting explains how participants navigated a complex process of identity formation shaped by pressure to assimilate into American culture, often at the cost of downplaying their Mexican heritage. During adolescence, many adapted by conforming to societal norms, minimizing their cultural expressions, and emphasizing proximity to whiteness to fit in. These actions were sometimes encouraged by parents who associated assimilation with opportunity and success. However, these assimilation experiences often varied by birth order, whereas older siblings tended to feel a stronger connection to their cultural roots, while younger siblings were perceived as more Americanized, speaking less Spanish and showing less

engagement in traditional customs. As participants matured, they began to resist these pressures, reclaiming cultural identity through appearance, clothing, and community engagement. This evolution reflects a conscious shift from cultural suppression to cultural pride, revealing how later-generation Mexican Americans actively negotiate and assert their cultural identity in a modern way.

Identity Negotiation

Participants navigated the complexities of balancing their Mexican heritage with American cultural norms. This negotiation of identity was marked by feelings of not fully belonging to either culture. While going through this battle, many identify as neither wholly Mexican nor entirely American but instead existing in a liminal space between the two. To summarize in a short Spanish expression, “Ni aquí, ni allá” translates to “Neither here, nor there.” One of the participants (A1, 21) resonated with the expression, reflecting their sense of cultural ambiguity: “*too American for, like, Mexico, too Mexican for America.*” This statement explains the in-betweenness of children or descendants of immigrants.

The inability to claim one cultural identity often led participants to modify aspects of their self-presentation in an attempt to fit into different cultural spaces. For some, this meant limiting their use of Spanish, downplaying their ethnic identity, or emphasizing American values in their upbringing. One participant reflected on how their family members in Mexico named her “too American,” criticizing her Spanish ability, certain behaviors, and overall orientation. “*It's not like I want to convert, I honestly wish I did speak more Spanish, yeah, closer to my culture. But my parents, once they came over*

here, they wanted to be more American too” (C2, 24). This statement illustrates that the pressure of assimilation was not just imposed on second-generation Mexican Americans by the mainstream United States but was also an intentional decision made by immigrant parents. In pursuit of economic stability and societal acceptance, many parents encourage their children to prioritize American customs over Mexican traditions. Ironically, their children faced criticism from extended family in Mexico for “not being Mexican enough.” This participant expresses regret in wanting to conform or having experienced pressure from her parents to act and identify as American dominant.

Participants’ early experiences navigating cultural identity were shaped by the tension between adapting to dominant societal norms and resisting the loss of their ethnic heritage. Identity negotiation emerged as a constant process, as participants internalized conflicting cultural expectations, often favoring assimilation during childhood and adolescence. After realizing such conflict, participants became reluctant to giving up Mexican culture and reanalyzed their positioning of identification and association with the dominant American culture.

Parent Pressure to Assimilate

For descendants of immigrants, parents are the primary source of their heritage culture. Many participants shared that either their parents or, by extension, their grandparents initially exposed them to cultural practices of Mexican culture, such as the Spanish language, celebrating traditional holidays, or even visiting Mexico. However, despite their cultural ties, their parents’ reason to immigrate was often driven by the pursuit of better opportunities, following attitudes towards assimilation.

Many participants described how their parents encouraged assimilation as a means of securing success in America. One participant emphasized that their parents' focus on success influenced their upbringing: *"My parents more so wanted me to be more American than Mexican, because of the fears that they felt that I wouldn't be successful"* (D2, 28). Success was often equated with assimilation, leading parents to encourage their children to embrace American culture over Mexican culture. However, this pressure was not intended to dismiss their cultural heritage instead, parents justified the pressure to assimilate to ensure a better future for their children. While many participants expressed gratitude and deep respect for their parents' sacrifices, they also felt conflicted, questioning the balance between achieving success and maintaining their cultural identity.

Parental pressure to assimilate was not always uniformly successful, and many participants noted how this played out differently across siblings. Participants reflected on how sibling dynamics and birth order influenced cultural identification within families. Several of the participants were the oldest sons or daughters of their siblings and described feeling more deeply connected to their Mexican heritage, having been more directly exposed to cultural practices such as speaking Spanish at home or participating in traditional customs. One participant shared, *"Maybe because I am the oldest. So, when I look at my younger siblings, if you were to ask them, they'd probably tell you more American and my Spanish is a little better than theirs"* (B2, 22). It is safe to assume that younger siblings were frequently perceived as more assimilated: preferring American food, identifying as American, and speaking little to no Spanish. Parental decisions

around assimilation not only impacted identity formation but also varied across siblings, reinforcing how cultural connections can be unevenly distributed within the same household.

This generational shift was particularly evident in the tradition of the Quinceañera, a significant cultural celebration for girls turning 15. One participant, the youngest of eight siblings, reflected on how her older sisters celebrated their Quinceañeras, while she did not. She explained, “*My older sisters got to celebrate, and the rest not so much. I think we got more Americanized, and so it wasn’t popular because, in my little hometown, it was all white people. So that way, there’s no point. Nobody knows what this is, who would I even invite?*” (A3, 30). Her decision not to celebrate stemmed not only from shifting cultural norms in a predominantly white community but also from a desire to avoid judgment or misunderstanding from peers. This reveals how assimilation is not always a direct parental imposition, but also a response to environmental pressures that influence how later-born siblings navigate their cultural identity within and outside of the family.

Overall, parent pressure to assimilate reinforced adaptation to American culture, with families encouraging cultural conformity to protect their children’s futures. Motivated by fear of discrimination, prejudice, and limited opportunities, many parents believed that promoting assimilation was an act of care and necessity. However, while well-intentioned, this emphasis on adaptation often led participants to feel disconnected from aspects of their Mexican heritage during formative years. Parents were often unaware of the cultural loss or identity conflict produced over time. As participants

matured, many began to retro-acculturate, seeking to reclaim the cultural traditions, language, and practices that had been minimized during childhood. Thus, parent-driven assimilation efforts unintentionally planted seeds for later retro-acculturation as participants sought to reestablish a fuller sense of cultural belonging. This theme highlights the intergenerational negotiations of identity that later influence participants' retro-acculturation journeys.

Proximity to Whiteness

An extension of identity negotiation and experiencing parental pressure to assimilate, most parents urged their children to act and behave in a certain manner to gain proximity to whiteness. "Proximity to Whiteness explains how those who are not white may still be perceived as higher in status than other people of color" (Garay et al., 2023, p.970). The concept expands to individuals aligning themselves in values, appearance, or social stance to gain access to the privilege associated with whiteness (Garay et al., 2022). Related to assimilation, white individuals assume that immigrants who have assimilated are more phenotypically White than immigrants who have not assimilated (Kunst et al., 2018). As a result, many Mexican Americans experience tension between embracing their ethnic identity and adapting to dominant societal norms, particularly concerning beauty standards.

When discussing appearance with the participants, many referenced that the beauty ideals for a Mexican American woman differ between both Mexican and American cultures. In Mexico, fair skin, light-colored eyes, and straight hair are favored, while in America, tanned skin, dark, silky hair, and an hourglass figure are the

benchmarks of beauty. During adolescence, many participants voiced a desire to embody Mexican beauty standards. However, this desire was often accompanied by conflicting feelings about their appearance, as they navigated different beauty expectations in different cultural contexts. A participant shared: *“I didn’t like my Mexican American features, I want to be blonde, and I want to have blue eyes, have that certain nose. But whenever I’d be in Mexico, I feel like I would dress too American. It just kind of depended on where I was, that I want to look more a certain way, a certain aesthetic”* (A1, 21). This statement illustrates an internalized preference for Eurocentric features, which are often reinforced by assimilation pressures and societal messages. Another participant reflected on how these pressures influenced her relationship with her natural hair. *“My hair is naturally, really curly. But I was assimilated out of that, and I was made fun of for having curly hair. So, now it’s ingrained with me that it’s straightened because usually you don’t find as many Hispanics with like, really curly hair”* (B1, 19). This quote highlights how Eurocentric beauty ideals not only impact how participants view their facial features but also shape grooming practices, such as hair straightening, in pursuit of acceptance. Interestingly, curly hair was described by some participants as both not aligning with Mexican beauty norms and as a feature that made them feel more visibly Mexican. One participant shared, *“I always wanted to have curly hair because I felt like that looked more Mexican”* (A2, 19). Another echoed this by emphasizing the value of embracing natural texture: *“Keeping your natural hair and not adopting the straight American hair. Most Hispanic women don’t have stick straight hair, they have curly hair”* (D1, 29). These contrasting experiences underscore the context-dependent nature of racialized and cultural appearance norms. At the same time, the first participant’s

discomfort with appearing “too American” while in Mexico demonstrates the situational nature of identity negotiation. Rather than fully assimilating into one cultural beauty ideal, they experience a push and pull between two sets of beauty expectations – one favoring Whiteness and another highlighting more traditional Mexican aesthetics shaped by their self-perception and external pressures.

Many of the parents of later generations of Mexican Americans also strive for proximity to Whiteness by enforcing traditional Mexican dress codes. Many participants shared their expectations of wearing feminine styles of dress and looking presentable. The male participants mentioned the expectation of well-fitted, tucked-in clothing that adheres to conservative and respectable forms of dress, which will lead to greater social acceptance. This manifested in parental discouragement of styles associated with Blackness, deviance, or “gang” affiliation out of fear that their children will be negatively stereotyped or face discrimination. One participant described how their parents policed their clothing choices, particularly concerning bagginess: *“Now my parents have more of a problem with the way I dress, mostly because of the bagginess. They hate that I wear baggy clothes, they kind of associate them with gang-related. Especially my jeans. She’s like, you look like you’re in a gang, you don’t look like a young woman”* (C2, 24). The participant’s mother explicitly links baggy clothing to gang affiliation, reinforcing the idea that certain styles are socially coded as dangerous or deviant. Additionally, the mother expresses a gendered concern, suggesting that femininity is associated with fitted, traditionally feminine attire. The parents’ clothing expectations can be seen to cultivate

proximity to Whiteness, not in the literal sense of appearing physically white, but aligning with behaviors and aesthetics perceived as “respectable” and modest.

However, this participant’s choice to wear baggy clothing, particularly baggy jeans, can also be read as an act of resistance. Another participant similarly expressed resistance to parental expectations regarding clothing. *“I love baggy clothes, and that is something that they will never take that from me”* (B3, 20). Together, these two perspectives illustrate how proximity to Whiteness is not always the driving force behind individual clothing choices and appearance management. Participants choose to embrace styles that make them feel comfortable and authentic, which is provided by baggy clothing, over social acceptance. Ultimately, these experiences reveal the complexities of appearance management as a site of both negotiation and resistance. While parental expectations often encourage conformity to White cultural norms, individuals may challenge these pressures by asserting control over their own fashion choices.

Proximity of Whiteness shaped participants’ early experiences of appearance management, reinforcing the pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards and traditional dress codes as strategies for social acceptance and respect towards parents. However, rather than fully assimilating, many participants described a process of resistance, particularly in their styling choices, grooming practices, and evolving sense perceptions of beauty. Acts of reclaiming natural features, embracing baggy clothes, or rejecting rigid gendered expectations signaled a move away from assimilation and a reassertion of cultural pride. These small but significant acts of resistance contributed to participants’ broader journeys of retro-acculturation, as they sought to reconnect with

authentic expressions of their Mexican American identity. Thus, the concept of Proximity to Whiteness prompted many participants to reexamine, resist, and reclaim their cultural heritage, directly influencing the retro-acculturation process.

Lack of Hispanic Community

A recurring experience from all participants at some point in their childhood was the feeling of cultural isolation due to the lack of a strong presence of the Hispanic community in their surroundings. Whether looking at school, social situations, or media representation, participants often found themselves one of the few, if not the only, Mexican Americans in their environment. This absence of cultural presence led to feelings of powerlessness and invisibility and resulted in the need to adapt to American culture.

Many participants described growing up in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) led to minimal cultural exposure, with sole reliance on family, and if fortunate enough, then with friends to share culture with. Within PWI, public cultural expression was either limited to designated cultural events, or it was discouraged to speak another language other than English was discouraged in a school setting. Participant D2 explained how speaking Spanish at school prompted teachers to say, *“You’re in America now, you need to speak English.”* This resulted in D2 experiencing the pressure to change behavior. She described *“I felt like you needed to be American. So, it felt like I was pushed to be American”* (D2, 29). The statement highlights how cultural expression was often restricted rather than being a natural and accepted part of her identity. Instead,

American identification was thrust upon ethnic minorities by institutional and external forces.

Another participant described how the demographic makeup shifted from her experience during primary education to now attending a PWI University shaped their cultural adaptation. *“It's very heavy, heavily, like PWI populated. So, I mean, I had to adapt more to American culture”* (F1, 25). This experience illustrates that environments where Mexican American identity was not represented foster a survival mechanism to adapt to American culture to fit in. As a result, participants felt compelled to suppress aspects of their heritage to avoid standing out.

Overall, the lack of a visible Hispanic community during participants' formative years contributed to pressures of assimilation and feelings of cultural disconnection. Growing up in environments where their ethnic identity was underrepresented or discouraged led many participants to prioritize American cultural norms over their Mexican heritage. The feeling of cultural isolation motivated participants to get involved with the community and find alike individuals. Thus, the absence of strong Hispanic community not only fueled early experiences of cultural erasure but also acted as a powerful catalyst for retro-acculturation. Inspiring participants to actively seek, preserve, and express their cultural identity.

Theme 2: Societal Impact of Retro-Acculturation

Retro-acculturation is the conscious effort to reconnect with one's cultural roots (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Valdés, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 2, retro-acculturation occurs at the societal level and the individual level (Kim & Park, 2009). At

the societal level, it allows individuals to fully embrace their heritage culture as well as other cultures. Through various channels such as media, community building, and challenging stereotypical narratives. Retro-acculturation fosters the reclamation of cultural narratives and facilitates identity affirmation through digital platforms. Social media allows users to see and hear representations that reflect their own linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural realities. Through influencers who highlight Mexican heritage and fashion content, participants found role models who demonstrated their success in creative and competitive industries without compromising cultural identity. At the same time, participants remained highly critical of inauthentic or harmful portrayals. Participants also expressed concern about the glorification of Eurocentric beauty standards, performative identity displays, and the commodification of Mexican culture in digital spaces.

Erasing Marginalization

The process of reclaiming representation is especially powerful in efforts to erase the marginalization of Mexican American voices through hyper-engagement in digital spaces. Participants described how social media play a key role in challenging exclusion and strengthening a sense of visibility, belonging, and pride. For many participants, media and social media platforms act as a bridge to their heritage, allowing them to engage with cultural content and see themselves reflected in public narratives. A participant described that social media allows a window into the life of citizens of Mexico by explaining that *“it’s nice that I can see like influencers and like people from Mexico that, like, I know, like, they look like me and they speak like me”* (A3, 30). The

sense of visibility fosters a stronger connection to identity. Another participant also mentioned that social media allowed exposure to Mexican heritage and fashion. Specifically, a fashion influencer who highlights sustainability and cultural representation and uses their platform to inspire others. She spoke highly of the Mexican fashion influencer who served as a role model and believes she is an example showing that Mexican Americans can thrive in competitive creative industries. *“She’s a sustainable fashion influencer, so everything she has is thrifted or second-hand vintage items. She has been going to the recent fashion weeks. ... I think she really inspired me then and is someone from my background that can make it in this field”* (C2, 24). This visibility helped participants feel seen and valued for their aspirations in competitive industries.

While some content affirms cultural pride, others reinforce damaging stereotypes. As one participant noted, *“Being able to watch videos, even just a cooking video, and hearing it in Spanish really helps me, but at the same time, I feel connected that way, but I can, I agree with you, like, there's a disconnect, especially when you're seeing so much negative”* (B2, 22). Participants acknowledge that representation is a double-edged sword, with good representation also bringing along bad representation of the Mexican American population or the Hispanic population. There can be positive portrayals to affirm identity, followed by negative stereotypes that create tension and detachment. B2 continued to express frustration with influencers who claimed cultural ties yet perpetual harmful narratives *“And then you have other influencers who say they're like, super Latino, but then they talk badly about the community, or they're not a good representation of us or they play on with stereotypes of what we're supposed to look like.*

So, I take media with a grain of salt” (B2, 22). The critical stance highlights how representation is not just about presence but also about authenticity. Participants are aware of the performative acts in media, specifically in this case, when one is displaying or representing cultural identity in media. It can result in both uplifting and misrepresenting participants’ lived experiences.

Participants were also critical of mentioning beauty standards and how the influencers with the most fame do not represent them physically. Many fashion influencers play into the Mexican American stereotype, and participants shared that the longing for influencers does not reflect their physical features or cultural realities. The longing for holistic representation, one’s beyond appearance and into shared values, language, and lived experience, was deeply felt. Another participant described *“I can see how social media can be good and unify us. But I can also see how it cannot unify us and play on those negative stereotypes. So, there’s no like middle ground”* (B2, 22). This quote exemplifies that there is still social progression to be made on how Mexican Americans are portrayed and what narratives gain popularity.

Retro-acculturation manifested not only as an internal process but also as a visible, external expression of cultural pride. This theme reflects a broader effort among later-generation Mexican Americans to erase marginalization by reclaiming digital spaces for authentic self-expression. Through critical media consumption and intentional engagement with culturally resonant content, participants are not only resisting erasure, but they are also reshaping how their communities are seen, valued, and understood, which in turn fuels pride and visibility.

Appearance as a Form of Cultural Expression

For many participants, fashion was a means of self-expression and cultural preservation. One of the participants is actively working to create a sustainable clothing brand that pays homage to heritage culture. *“I’m also looking to start my own brand called Verde, Verde, meaning green in Spanish, [and] to reduce, reuse, and recycle. I want to implement my heritage, my roots, hence the name being in Spanish more than anything”* (D1, 28). This participant strives to prolong the lifecycle of unwanted clothing from major brands in hopes of repurposing them with his fashion brand with a cultural identity. Clothing and fashion serve as a way to give back to the community and express his heritage. He hopes to cater to the street style aesthetic that is relevant and in style for Mexican Americans of today.

Beyond creating new fashion, participants also emphasized the importance of supporting traditional artisans and Mexican designers who use ancestral techniques. For one participant, the journey toward sustainability began with shopping second-hand, an entry point into a broader world of ethical consumption. As she became more aware of the impact of fashion, she was drawn to traditional Mexican textiles, recognizing their deep connection to sustainability and craftsmanship. Her growing appreciation for slow fashion also led her to explore her cultural roots, inspiring her to learn about traditional clothing-making techniques and the history behind them. Through social media, she found ways to support and buy directly from Mexican artisans, ensuring that these ancestral skills continue to thrive. She reflected on this rediscovery:

“I didn't know how people in my culture used to produce their items. And so now as an adult that I'm kind of like retrospectively, going back and seeing how items are being made, how we wore them, why we wore them, it's nice to see that they are keeping in tune with those roots and still naturally making your shirts with natural fibers. So, I think our Mexican culture has a good place in this slow fashion environment because we are slow fashion. They do hand embroider stuff, and that's why I want to continue supporting Mexican artisan items, is because it, it's what this slow fashion mantra, or whatever you want to call it, movement embodies.” (D2, 29)

Ultimately, these stories highlight how fashion allows freedom of expression, sustainability, and cultural appreciation. Appearance emerged as a powerful vehicle of cultural expression; clothing, styling, and personal aesthetics became tangible means to visually communicate ethnic pride. Whether through creating a brand, supporting artisans, or engaging with influencers who highlight these values, participants are finding meaningful ways to reconnect with heritage culture.

Multiculturalism

The societal impact of retro-acculturation also illustrates the increasing acceptance of cultural coexistence of both majority and minority group members, a dynamic aligned with the concept of multiculturalism (Kim & Park, 2009). Participants who were fortunate enough to grow up in diverse environments learn at a young age to appreciate multiple cultural perspectives, often forming friendships with other racial and ethnic individuals. A participant explains her upbringing and social circle, referring to it

as a “minority friend group, like it was black, Asian, like Hispanics, white people too in there. We were able to bring something to the table all the time, something to learn and something to appreciate about everybody's culture” (B3, 20). Similarly, another participant reflected on how her diverse group of friends fostered a sense of belonging. “I have a very pretty, diverse set of friends. I mean, you know, Middle Eastern, African American, Black. So, I just never felt like left out in any certain particular group, even though I was a biracial child. So, I just felt comfortable in the settings that I was always in.” (F1, 25).

Surrounding oneself with diverse individuals encouraged participants to embrace their cultural identity rather than suppress it. Many participants described the journey toward accepting their Mexican American identity, particularly as they transitioned from adolescence to adulthood. Specifically, the college served as a pivotal point for cultural self-discovery. One participant described her experience while attending a PWI college as the start of accepting her cultural identity. “When I got to college, I have learned to accept my culture, you know, not try to fit into society anymore. In high school, I always wanted to fit into society, but when I got here, I got a shock, because there was a lot of white people. No, it's fine, whatever. I'm Mexican. I'm just gonna embrace my culture, because this is who I am” (E2,22). Her experience exemplifies how being immersed in an environment where one's difference is more pronounced can push individuals towards cultural affirmation, rather than assimilation.

This transition represents a broader shift in self-perception for later-generation Mexican Americans from first viewing cultural differences as barriers to viewing them

more as strengths. Through exposure to multicultural environments, participants gained confidence in celebrating and appreciating cultural differences and valuing their own.

Theme 3: Cultural Reclamation in Practice

The last theme of retro-acculturation focuses on the individual level of how the participants partake in reclaiming cultural identity. Participants mapped out ways that show active efforts to get closer and gain more knowledge of Mexican culture through language, traditions, and the hope to travel and visit Mexico. Some of the subthemes include personal anecdotes in which they express their cultural pride and how they are drawn back into the culture. These responses show active efforts to reclaim heritage, ensuring traditions thrive for future generations.

Rebuilding Cultural Connections

A common theme among participants was the active search for Hispanic cultural spaces to reclaim lost aspects of their identity. Language plays a crucial role in the rediscovery process. Instead of feeling embarrassed about their proficiency, participants now see it as an opportunity for growth. Participants are eager to practice Spanish amongst family, peers, and the general public. Participant A3 is actively learning the Spanish language and, through that, has found a community “*As I'm learning the language and learning more about the culture, I think that's a special piece that makes me want to learn more of a language and get more involved*” (A3, 30). For many, the journey is as much about embracing the cultural knowledge they already possess as it is about rediscovering what was once lost or discouraged. Another form of cultural activism can be seen in finding cultural spaces, such as getting involved in extracurriculars in the

school community, building, or even in the setting of a PWI. Participant shares her reasoning by *“wanting to reach out to others, like to be a part of a Hispanic organization of some sort, so I can connect back with my ties to my roots”* (D2,29). Finding a community and associating with other Mexican Americans and Hispanics alike will reignite Mexican American identification and foster a stronger sense of belonging.

Many participants expressed a desire to visit Mexico to deepen their connection to their roots. The hometowns of their parents present a risk depending on the area and the criminal activity; however, this will not stop participants from traveling to more authentic locations in Mexico. A participant shared that she has never been to Mexico but prefers where to visit. *“I want to stay away from tourist areas. I've been hearing a lot how the food is being gentrified. Personally, I don't like that. If I were to really connect, bring me to the mountains, bro. Bring me to a ranch. Bring me to the farm. Don't bring me to a tourist area”* (B3, 20). This quote exemplifies avoiding visiting popular, gentrified locations for tourists and instead gaining insight on the everyday experiences of Mexicans living in rural and local cities. For some, this yearning was inspired by family members who had taken trips and returned with stories, souvenirs, and renewed cultural pride. A participant shared that they also have never visited Mexico, but her mom wants her to visit *“I had a couple of family members-, like cousins, who are also second gens, and they've gone back, and they've had amazing experiences, and they brought back a couple of things: shoes, clothing, or jewelry back. So that's a pretty cool experience for them. So, I really would like to go”* (F1, 25). Another participant shared the idea of a *“homing device”* known as an innate pull towards one's origins that is used to describe

the longing to reconnect and be back in one's homeland (A3, 30). Traveling back to Mexico was a reoccurring goal for many participants to be in touch with Mexican culture in real time to personally experience and treat it as a cultural exploration.

Ultimately, retro-acculturation extended beyond personal identity work into tangible actions of cultural reclamation and preservation. Participants describe deliberate efforts to rebuild cultural connections in community events, learning language traditions, and visiting the mainland of Mexico to gain a first-hand experience of the culture. In some cases, participants envisioned moving permanently to Mexico as a profound act of retro-acculturation, embracing the way life aligned more closely with their parents' and grandparents' experiences. In sum, participants work intentionally to reclaim and preserve their Mexican American identity on their own terms, showing how cultural pride can be rediscovered, redefined, and reinforced across generations.

Preserving Cultural Identity for Future Generations

Preserving cultural identity for future generations emerged as a deeply meaningful goal among participants. Many participants expressed a strong desire to maintain and pass down cultural traditions, particularly for future generations. Specifically, the cultural transmission of language to her future children was mentioned when a participant was discussing her own journey to relearn Spanish. *"I'm trying to find my way into making sure that I'm not losing it completely, because I think it's important for me if I have kids I would want them to be able to speak the language"* (F1,25). Language, for participants, was not just a means of communication but a vital link to cultural roots and identity.

Beyond language, maintaining family traditions, such as hosting gatherings and cooking traditional foods have become an integral part of identity. A participant reflected on a generational shift in responsibility, sharing “*My cousin and I have been joking, like, oh, it's going to be us now. Like, hosting, the carne asadas, weird to think about, but I think, I think something that we all, like, definitely want to contribute and continue doing, just because we've grown up with that*” (A2, 19). These shared experiences illustrate how ethnic pride is not just about heritage, more importantly, it’s about actively keeping cultural practices alive for the next generation. This involves actively living out traditions and embedding them into everyday life for future generations to inherit.

Participants viewed these efforts as more than personal goals but also as acts of resistance against cultural assimilation as a means of ensuring cultural continuity. Teaching themselves, peers, and eventually their children, younger family traditions, values, and history became an essential part of their narratives. By intentionally preserving and celebrating their cultural identity, participants positioned themselves as stewards of cultural memory, ensuring that future generations would inherit not just a name or ethnicity but a vibrant, living connection to their roots.

Summary of Findings and Main Themes

This study explored the nuanced experiences of later-generation Mexican Americans as they navigated retro-acculturation, cultural pride, and self-expression. Based on the series of interviews and insights that retro-acculturation is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including family dynamics, institutional environments, and media representation. During adolescence, many felt the need to

suppress aspects of their Mexican heritage, such as speaking Spanish, conforming to non-Eurocentric beauty features, or embracing traditional customs, to assimilate and avoid cultural stigmatization. However, for many, assimilation was not always a conscious choice; rather, it was enforced on them by social surroundings and family expectations. As participants entered early adulthood, they began actively resisting assimilation. They did so through appearance management, embracing natural features, making intentional clothing choices, engaging with culturally affirming digital communities, and reclaiming their Mexican American cultural identity with greater confidence and pride.

Participants demonstrated their cultural pride in highly visual and intentional ways. Appearance management emerged to express their ethnic identity, often through clothing, sustainable fashion, and fashion influencers. Clothing in resistant styles, such as baggy clothing, held particular significance as a symbol of autonomy and resistance. Despite parents' disapproval of clothing choices, participants reframed them as empowering, comfortable, and an authentic expression of self. Sustainable fashion rooted in cultural practices allowed participants to feel deeply connected to their heritage. This was even expressed in modern ways by wanting to pay homage to Hispanic culture through participation in the broader environmental movement. By aligning cultural pride with sustainable consumption, participants redefined heritage not only as something to preserve but as something to evolve with intention and responsibility. Influencers who exemplified this intersection, celebrating Mexican culture while practicing sustainable fashion, were cited as role models. They provided aspirational examples of how cultural identity could be both celebrated and modernized.

Retro-acculturation experiences varied among participants but often centered on seeking community and reclaiming lost cultural connections. Many sought out Hispanic student organizations, minority peer groups, and digital communities, which led to increased engagement of Mexican culture through digital spaces. Social media emerged as both a catalyst and a space for cultural exploration, enabling participants to reconnect with Mexican aesthetics, practices, Spanish language, and shared experiences that were otherwise distant or fragmented in their upbringing. While positive representation confirmed their cultural identity, participants criticized the lack of authentic portrayals in mainstream media. Through critical media consumption, participants constructed digital identities that honored their roots while challenging reductive stereotypes. These choices reflected both individual identity development and collective efforts to reshape societal narratives and created space for multidimensional representations of Mexican American life.

Ultimately, this study provides valuable insights into the evolving cultural identity of later-generation Mexican Americans and the role of retro-acculturation in shaping behavioral expressions. It answers key research questions by illustrating that retro-acculturation is driven by cultural longing, social influences, and the desire for representation. Findings suggest that cultural appreciation strengthens in early adulthood, influencing appearance management and social media engagement. Retro-acculturation is a distinct process that challenges traditional assimilation narratives and is not just a passive return to tradition, but an active, creative, and often critical process. It is shaped by visibility, representation, and the pursuit of belonging within Mexican American

culture and in a broader multicultural society. Their engagement with social media, fashion, and everyday acts of self-expression, later-generation Mexican Americans are not only reconnecting with their heritage, but they are also reshaping how it is seen, valued, and lived today.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative portion of this study was designed to test the relationships of cultural values and behavioral outputs, with retro-acculturation acting as the mediator. This portion addresses the following research question: (RQ3) How do cultural values such as collectivism and familism influence appearance management and cultural engagement via social media, and how is this relationship mediated by retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans? Specifically, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1a. Collectivism will have a significant impact on appearance management.

H1b. Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between collectivism and appearance management

H2a. Familism will have a significant impact on appearance management

H2b. Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between familism and appearance management.

H3a. Collectivism will have a significant impact on cultural engagement via social media.

H3b. Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between Collectivism and cultural engagement via social media.

H4a. Familism will have a significant impact on cultural engagement via social media.

H4b. Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media.

Table 4 shows the participant characteristics of the participants who were involved in the online survey for the quantitative study. Initially, there was a total of 157, but the final analysis included a sample size of 149 participants after data cleaning. 54 representing (36.2%) of the respondents were male and 88 were female (59.1%). The majority of participants (65.1%) were a part of Generation Z (age 19-30), while Millennials (age 31-43) represented the other (34.9%). 43 (28.9%) of the respondents had an annual household income of over \$100,000, 36 (24.2%) earned a range of \$50,000 to \$74,999 annually. 64 representing (43%) of the respondents work full time, while 33 representing (22.1%) of the respondents work part time. 29.5% of respondents have a Bachelor's degree, 28.9% have completed some college but no degree, and 18.8% have completed high school or earned a GED equivalent. Most participants (64.4%) are single, while 31.5% are married. 69.1% have no children, 10.1% have one child, and 14.1% have two children. Lastly, 58 representing (38.9%) of respondents were second generation Mexican American (the participants have one or more parent from Mexico while they were born in United States) and 37 representing (24.8%) of respondents were fourth

generation Mexican American (the participant has one or more great grandparent from Mexico).

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n=149)

Participant Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	54	36.2
Female	88	59.1
Non-binary	3	2.0
Transgender	4	2.7
Age		
19-20	13	8.70
21-25	45	30.20
26-30	39	26.20
31-35	24	16.10
36-40	16	10.70
41-44	12	8.10
Annual Household Income		
> \$35,000	23	15.4
\$35,000 - \$49,999	28	18.8
\$50,000 - \$74,999	36	24.2
\$75,000 - \$99,999	19	12.8
\$100,000+	43	28.9
Employment Status		
Full-time	64	43.0
Part time	33	22.1
Contract or temporary	4	2.7
Unemployed	29	19.5
Unable to work	4	2.7
Retired	1	0.7
Self-Employed	2	1.4
Student	8	5.4
Stay-at-home Mom	2	1.4
Rather not say	2	1.4
Education Level		
Less than High School	2	1.3
High School Graduate (or GED)	28	18.8
Some College	43	28.9
Associate's degree	18	12.1

Bachelor's Degree	44	29.5
Professional's Degree	2	1.3
Graduate Degree (Master's, Ph.D., M.D)	12	8.1
Marital Status		
Single	96	64.4
Married	47	31.5
Separated	2	1.3
Divorced	2	1.3
Prefer Not to Say	2	1.3
Number of Children		
None	103	69.1
1	15	10.1
2	21	14.1
3+	10	6.7
Generational Status		
1 st Generation		7 4.7
2 nd Generation	58	38.9
3 rd Generation	31	20.8
4 th Generation	37	24.8
5 th Generation	16	10.7

Table 5 shows the mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha for each construct and their scale items. The reliability analysis was performed on each construct. The first construct, retro-acculturation scale, included a 15-items that demonstrated strong consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). The collectivism scale consisted of 6 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$), the familism scale consisted of 7 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$), and the overall appearance management scale consisted of 9 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). Lastly, the cultural engagement scale consisted of 8 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$). The α values for each variable in this study were considered sufficiently reliable, as all values were above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Bonett & Wright, 2014).

Table 5: Item wordings of major constructs and descriptive statistics

Construct and Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
<i>Retro-acculturation</i> (Cuellar et al., 1995; Kizgin et al., 2018)			0.92
I speak Spanish	2.80	1.36	
I often speak in Spanish with my parents and family members.	2.54	1.57	
I associate with Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans	3.69	1.10	
I spend a significant amount of my social time with Mexican and/or Mexican American.	3.16	1.15	
I enjoy Spanish language TV or movies	2.67	1.22	
I enjoy reading books in Spanish	1.94	1.20	
I often listen to Mexican music.	3.19	1.28	
I often attend Mexican cultural performances (theatres and concerts)	2.44	1.20	
I often participate in Mexican public celebrations.	2.72	1.26	
I wish to travel to Mexico	3.81	1.22	
I have Mexican and/or Mexican American friends	4.04	1.07	
I frequently eat with Mexican and/or Mexican American friends/colleagues	3.58	1.19	
I like to identify myself as Mexican American	3.87	1.18	
My family likes to cook Mexican food	4.17*	1.03	
I often ask for help/advise from Mexican and/or Mexican American friends/colleagues.	3.17	1.15	
<i>Collectivism</i> (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011)			0.80
Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group	2.87	0.98	
Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties	3.52*	1.01	
Group welfare is more important than individual rewards	3.22	.985	
Group welfare is more important than individual success	3.01	1.01	
Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group	2.64	1.03	
Group loyalty should only be encouraged even if individual group suffers	2.54	1.09	
<i>Familism</i> (Knight et al., 2010)			0.88
When it comes to important decisions, the family should ask for advice from close relatives	3.26	0.91	
It is always important to be united as a family	3.81	1.02	
It is important to have a close relationship with aunts/uncles, grandparents, and cousins	3.62	1.06	
Holidays and celebrations are important because the whole family comes together	4.23*	0.86	
A person should always think about their family when making important decisions	3.49	1.04	
It is important for family members to show their love and affection for one another	4.09	0.85	
It is important to work hard and do one's best because this work reflects on the family	3.64	1.10	
<i>Appearance Management</i> (Johnson, Francis, & Burns, 2007; Kaiser, 1997)			0.87
I worry about judgements people make related to my appearance.	3.45	1.27	
I spend a considerable time thinking about my personal appearance	3.52	1.14	

Compared to other people I know; I pay more attention to my personal appearance	3.06	1.24
I give my personal appearance a lot of attention every day.	3.17	1.18
I will not add an item to my wardrobe unless it is fashionable	2.68	1.24
I am afraid of what others will think of me if I don't dress fashionably.	2.62	1.24
I feel more confident in myself when I give my personal appearance a lot of attention	3.91*	0.97
I add an item to my wardrobe if it is something I have seen my peers wearing	2.79	1.16
It is important that the items I add to my wardrobe to be attractive	3.42	1.09
<i>Cultural Engagement</i> (Yang et al., 2004)		0.76
How often do you interact with Mexican American social media content?	3.77	1.44
I want to learn more about Mexican culture	4.07	0.82
I want to improve my Spanish	4.17*	0.96
It entertains me	4.00	0.82
I want to belong to a group	3.42	1.07
I want to communicate with friends and family in Mexico	3.61	1.12
It helps me understand Mexican society	3.83	0.88
I want to find out what is going on in Mexico	3.76	1.10

*Indicates Majority of respondents

The mean was chosen for descriptive statistics to indicate the average response for each item on a scale (1-5). In addition to the standard deviation measures how much the responses vary from the mean. Based on the results from the retro-acculturation scale, participants frequently experience family likes to cook Mexican food ($M=4.17$, $SD=1.03$) and have Mexican American friends ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.07$). Participants showed the strongest agreement on sticking with a group through difficulties ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.01$). Based on the results from the familism scale, participants completely agree that holidays and celebrations are important because of the family unit ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.86$). Participants feel more confident when paying attention to appearance ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.97$). Lastly, the engagement with Mexican American culture on social media reflected that participant want to improve their Spanish ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.96$) and learn more about Mexican culture ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.82$).

The quantitative study involving an online survey was set to investigate how cultural values of later generations of Mexican Americans influence behaviors such as appearance management and cultural engagement via social media through retro-acculturation as a mediator. Mediation analysis was performed for each variable with retro-acculturation as the mediator for each model in SPSS. To assess the statistical significance of the indirect effects, the PROCESS macro was utilized along with its bootstrap technique, due to its effectiveness in evaluating mediation hypotheses. A 95% bootstrap confidence interval was applied to test the indirect effect using 5,000 bootstrap samples. This approach generated an empirically derived representation of the sampling distribution, which was then used to construct the confidence interval (Hayes, 2018). Also, the direct effect (c') and the estimated total effect (c) were calculated. If the values between BootLLCI and BootULCI do not contain zero, the mediation effect is statistically significant. Also, the bootstrap estimate of the standard error of the indirect effect, headed "BootSE", is the standard deviation of the 5,000 bootstrap estimates of the indirect effect. The direct effect (c') and the estimated total effect (c) were calculated.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis proposed that the cultural value, collectivism will have a significant impact on appearance management (H1a). Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between collectivism and appearance management (H1b). The direct effect of collectivism on appearance management (c') was statistically significant, as the bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero ($b = 0.262$, $SE = 0.096$, 95% CI [0.073, 0.452]). Collectivism alone accounted for approximately 8.15% of

the variance in appearance management ($R^2 = 0.0815$). The indirect effect of retro-acculturation was found to be insignificant, with a value of $a1b1 = 0.005$. The bootstrap confidence interval ranged from -0.057 to 0.054, which included zero. Therefore, retro-acculturation did not mediate the relationship between collectivism and appearance management. Based on this finding, Hypothesis 1b was rejected. Lastly, the total effect of collectivism on appearance management (c), calculated as the sum of the direct effect (c') and the indirect effects (a1b1), was found to be significant ($b = 0.092$, $t(146) = 2.917$, $p < .01$). This is supported by the 95% confidence interval [0.086, 0.448], which did not include zero. When both collectivism and retro-acculturation were included in the model, the model accounted for approximately 5.49% of the variance in appearance management ($R^2 = 0.0549$). This slight decrease in explained variance may reflect the non-significant contribution of retro-acculturation to the model, suggesting that retro-acculturation did not enhance the predictive power of collectivism in this context. Table 6 summarizes the results of the mediation analysis, while Figure 4 presents a path diagram illustrating both the direct effect (c') and the total effect (c) through the mediator.

Table 6: Total, Direct and Indirect Effect from Regression-based Mediation Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Total effect (c) of Collectivism on Appearance Management					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.267	.092	2.917	.004	.086	.448
Direct effect of (c') Collectivism on Appearance Management					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.262	.096	2.739	.007	.073	.452
Indirect effect (a*b) of Collectivism on Appearance Management					
	Effect (a*b)	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Retro-Acculturation	.005	.026	-.057	.054	

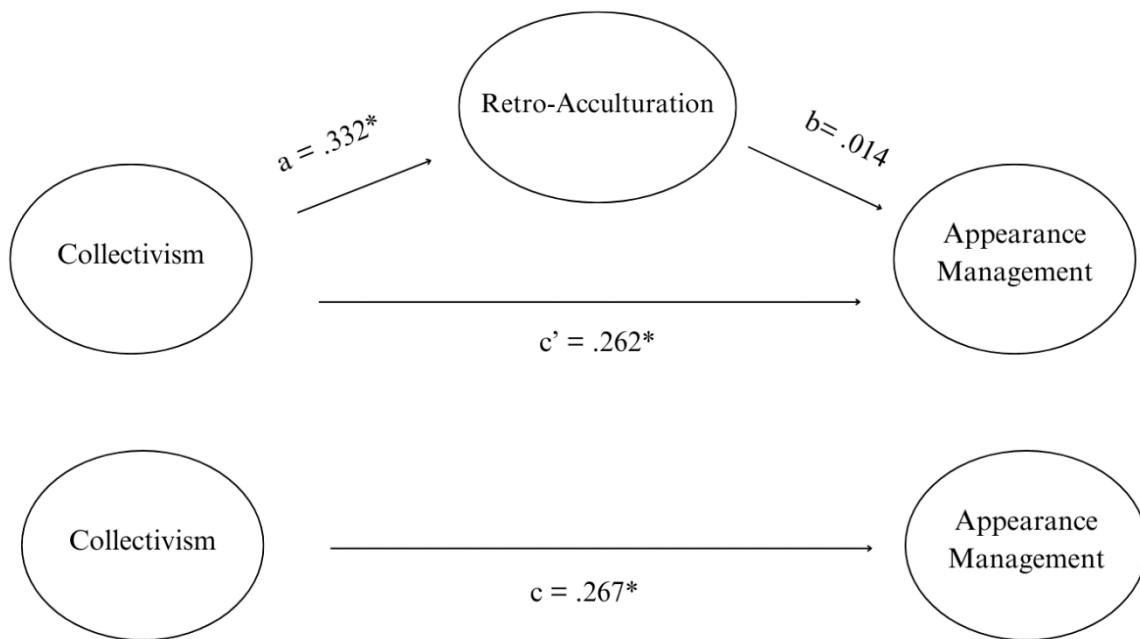


Figure 4: A path diagram illustrating the direct effect (c') of collectivism on appearance management and the total effect (c) through retro-acculturation

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis suggests that familism will have a significant impact on appearance management (H2a). Retro-acculturation will have a mediating effect on the relationship between familism and appearance management (H2b). The direct effect of familism and appearance management (c') was statistically non-significant, as the bootstrap confidence interval did straddle zero ($b = 0.097$, $SE = 0.098$, 95% CI $[-0.096, 0.290]$). Familism alone accounted for approximately 13.65% of the variance in appearance management ($R^2 = 0.1365$). The indirect effect was also found to be insignificant, with a value of $a2b2 = 0.019$. The bootstrap confidence interval ranged from -0.049 to 0.107 , which includes zero. Therefore, retro-acculturation did not mediate the

relationship between familism and appearance management and Hypothesis 2b was not supported. Lastly, the total effect (c) was found to be insignificant ($b=0.116$, $t(146)=1.280$, $p=0.203$). This is supported by the 95% confidence interval $[-0.063, .043]$, which does include zero. When both familism and retro-acculturation were included in the model simultaneously, the model accounted for approximately 1.29% of variance ($R^2=0.0129$). Table 7 summarizes the results of the mediation analysis, while Figure 5 presents the path diagram illustrating both the direct effect (c') and the total effect (c) through the mediator.

Table 7: Total, Direct and Indirect Effect from Regression-based Mediation Analysis for Hypothesis 2.

Total effect (c) of Familism on Appearance Management					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.116	.095	1.280	.203	-.063	.3430
Direct effect (c') of Familism on Appearance Management					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.097	.098	.989	.324	-.096	.290
Indirect effect (a*b) of Familism on Appearance Management					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Retro- Acculturation	.019	.0396	-.049	.107	

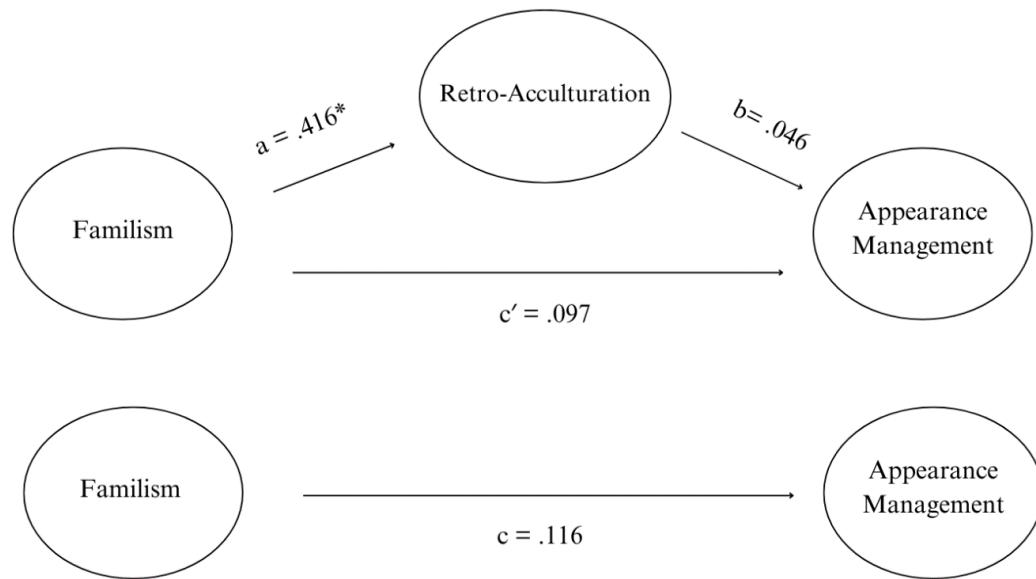


Figure 5: Coefficient Relationship between Familism and Appearance Management as mediated by Retro-Acculturation

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis proposed that collectivism would significantly influence cultural engagement via social media (H3a). Retro-acculturation would mediate the relationship between collectivism and cultural engagement via social media (H3b). The direct effect (c') of collectivism and cultural engagement via social media was borderline statistically significant, where the bootstrap confidence interval does include zero ($b = 0.123$, $SE = 0.62$, $p = .050$, 95% CI [0.000, 0.246]). Collectivism alone accounted for approximately 8.15% of the variance in cultural engagement via social media ($R^2 = 0.0815$). The indirect effect was found significant, with a value of $a \times b = 0.136$. The bootstrap confidence interval was between 0.055 to 0.2481, which does not include zero. Because the lower bound of the CI is exactly zero, this suggests the effect should be interpreted cautiously. Despite this, the significant indirect path indicates that retro-

acculturation does mediate the relationship between collectivism and cultural engagement via social media. Based on that finding, H3b was supported. Lastly, the total effect (c) was found to be significant ($b = 0.259$, $SE = .070$, $t(146) = 3.682$, $p < .05$). This is supported by the 95% confidence interval $[0.120, 0.398]$, which does not include zero. When both collectivism and retro-acculturation were included in the model simultaneously, the model accounted for approximately 34.71% of variance ($R^2 = 0.3471$). Table 8 displays the results of the mediation analysis, while Figure 6 presents the path diagram illustrating both the direct effect (c') and the total effect (c) through the mediator.

Table 5: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect from Regression-based Mediation Analysis for Hypothesis 3

Total effect (c) of Collectivism on Cultural Engagement via Social Media					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.259	.070	3.682	.000	.120	.398
Direct effect (c') of Collectivism on Cultural Engagement via Social Media					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.123	.062	1.976	.050	.000	.246
Indirect effect (a*b) of Collectivism on Cultural Engagement via Social Media					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Retro-Acculturation	.136	.047	.055	.2481	

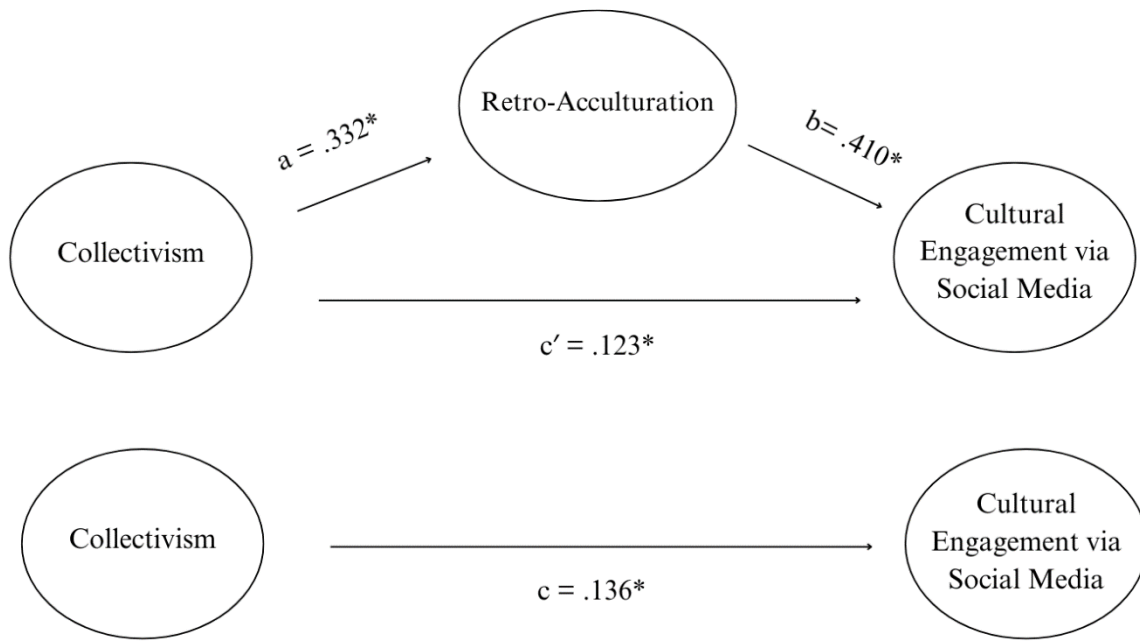


Figure 6: Coefficient Relationship between Collectivism and Cultural Engagement via social media as mediated by Retro-Acculturation

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis argued that familism will have a significant impact on the cultural engagement via social media (H4a). Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media (H4b). The direct effect (c') of familism and cultural engagement via social media was statistically significant, where the bootstrap interval does not include zero ($b = 0.151$, $SE = .062$, $95\% \text{ CI } [0.029, 0.272]$). Familism alone accounted for approximately 13.6% of the variance in cultural engagement via social media ($R^2 = 0.136$). The indirect effect with a value of $a \times b = 0.162$ was found significant. The bootstrap confidence interval ranged from 0.079 to 0.269, which did not include zero. Therefore, retro-acculturation

does mediate the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media. Based on that finding, H4b was supported. The total effect (c) was found to be significant ($b = 0.313$, $SE = .066$, $t(146) = 4.725$, $p < 0.05$). This is supported by the 95% confidence interval $[0.182, 0.444]$ which does not include zero. When both familism and retro-acculturation were included in the model simultaneously, the model accounted for approximately 35.6% of variance ($R^2 = 0.356$). Table 9 displays the results of the mediation analysis, while Figure 7 presents the path diagram illustrating both the direct effect (c') and the total effect (c) through the mediator.

Table 9: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect from Regression-based Mediation Analysis for Hypothesis 4

Total effect (c) of familism on cultural engagement via social media					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.313	.066	4.725	.000	.182	.444
Direct effect (c') of familism on cultural engagement via social media					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.151	.062	2.447	.016	.029	.272
Indirect effect (a*b) of familism on cultural engagement via social media					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Retro- Acculturation	.162	.049	.079	.269	

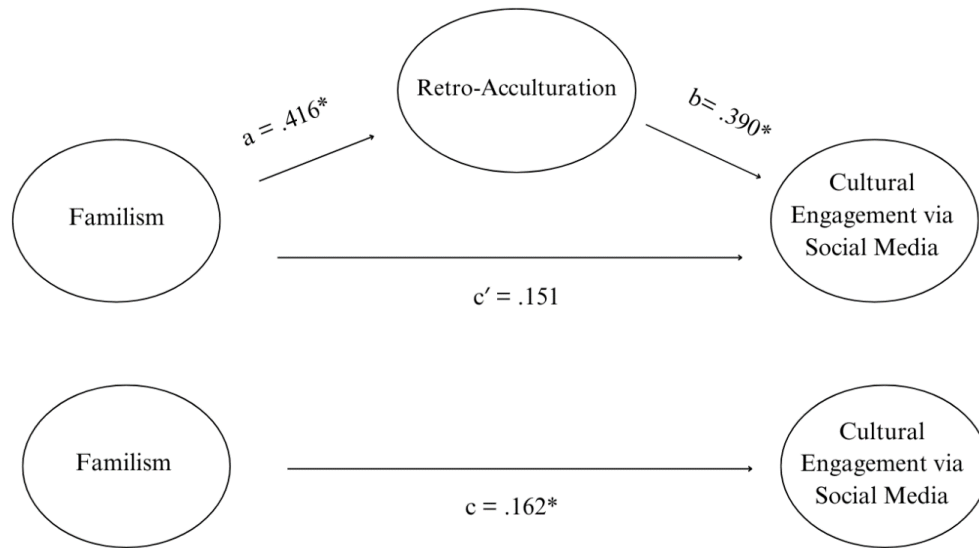


Figure 7: Relationship between Familism and Cultural Engagement via Social Media as mediated by Retro-Acculturation

Additional Analysis

In addition to the primary hypothesis testing using Model 4 of Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018), which examines simple mediation, further exploratory analyses were conducted to investigate potential moderation effects. Specifically, we tested whether the mediation pathways differed by gender, age group (Millennials vs. Generation Z), or generational status (i.e., second-generation vs. third-generation vs. fourth generation) by employing moderated mediation models (Model 7 in PROCESS). These models were each tested separately as potential moderators of the indirect and direct pathways for examination of conditional indirect effects to determine whether the strength or significance of the mediation varies across levels of a moderator.

However, the inclusion of these demographic variables did not yield significant interaction effects. That is, there was no substantial change in the indirect effects when

accounting for gender, age group, or generational status. Because of these demographic factors did not substantially influence the observed relationships, the final interpretation of results is based on the original mediation model.

Summary of Findings

After performing mediation analysis, the results are displayed in Table 10.

Hypothesis 1a was supported, while 1b was not supported. Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported. Both hypotheses 1 and 2 had the dependent variable of appearance management, that were proven not to be mediated by retro-acculturation but was affected by both cultural values of collectivism and familism. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported, given that the dependent variable was cultural engagement via social media. In summary, the results indicate that familism and collectivism affect retro-acculturation significantly, which in turn affects cultural engagement via social media.

Table 10: Findings from Mediation Analysis

Hypotheses	Findings
H1a. Collectivism will have a significant impact on appearance management.	Supported
H1b. Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between collectivism and appearance management	Not Supported
H2a. Familism will have a significant impact on appearance management.	Not Supported
H2b. Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and appearance management.	Not Supported
H3a: Familism will have a significant impact on appearance management.	Supported
H3b. Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and appearance management.	Supported
H4a: Familism will have a significant impact on cultural engagement via social media.	Supported
H4b. Retro-acculturation will have a direct mediating effect on the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media.	Supported

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter integrates findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components of the mixed-method study to provide a comprehensive understanding of retro-acculturation among later-generation Mexican Americans. The discussion centers on key factors influencing retro-acculturation, particularly the role of cultural values such as collectivism and familism. It examines how these values shape behavioral expressions of retro-acculturation through social media engagement and appearance management. The discussion contextualizes the study's mixed-method findings within the broader scholarly landscape on identity, cultural values, and ethnic expression among later-generation Mexican Americans. It interprets how collectivism and familism inform retro-acculturation and how these constructs manifest through appearance and digital engagement, expanding previous literature by highlighting generational nuance and resistance practices. Finally, the chapter outlines the study's limitations, proposes directions for future research, and considers implications for marketing strategies targeting culturally engaged Latinx consumers.

Joint Display Table

Key findings from both studies were integrated using a Joint Display Table (see Table 11). Joint display tables were used to ensure validity in the design process by aligning

findings from each study with the design of the next study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Quantitative results from mediational analysis were placed alongside qualitative findings, followed by a summary of how the qualitative and quantitative elements compared. Convergent findings suggested full agreement, while divergent findings addressed different aspects of a single phenomenon.

The integration revealed that while collectivist values consistently predicted appearance and social media behaviors across both methods, the qualitative narratives added depth by revealing the emotional and identity-based motivations behind those behaviors. For example, collectivism was not only a statistical predictor but also emerged as a lived ethic of community representation and cultural visibility. Familism, while predictive of retro-acculturation and cultural engagement via social media, did not significantly influence appearance management. Qualitative insights illuminated how participants leveraged dress and digital content to resist stereotypes and promote authenticity. Familial influence on style was seen as limited or even resisted in favor of individual aesthetic autonomy intersects with cultural representation. Appearance management emerged for individual aesthetic autonomy with cultural representation, shaped by broad collectivist ideals. Divergence emerged in cultural engagement as participants, while statistically predicted to engage based on collectivism and familism, selectively interacted with content that aligned with authentic cultural representation. Finally, retro-acculturation played a strong mediating role in digital engagement but not in appearance behaviors, suggesting that digital platforms may provide more cultural

reconnection. This synthesis highlights both the layered influence of cultural values and the domain-specific nature of ethnic identity expression.

Table 11: Joint Display Table of Findings

Concept	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Interview Findings	Mixed Methods Interpretation	Convergence/Divergence
Collectivism	• Significantly predicts retro-acculturation and appearance management. • Marginal direct effect on cultural engagement via social media, strengthened by retro-acculturation.	Collectivist values helped participants reclaim and express ethnic pride in desire to represent the community more positively and wish for authentic narratives in media.	Collectivist values helped motivate both offline (appearance) and online (social media) cultural expressions, showing that identity maintenance spans multiple domains.	Convergence: Both quant and qual show collectivism's role in maintaining and expressing cultural identity. Dress is a social signal tied to group belonging.
Familism	• Significantly predicts retro-acculturation. • No significant direct influence on appearance management. • Significant effect on cultural engagement via social media, mediated by retro-acculturation.	P1 participants valued the importance of family traditions. There were mixed feelings about the family influence on fashion style and appearance.	Familism strengthens cultural identity but does not strongly dictate personal style; it enhances relational engagement through digital platforms.	Convergence: Family values act as cultural anchors for retro-acculturation and extend into digital platforms, but did not heavily influence appearance management behaviors.
Appearance Management	• Directly influenced by collectivism. • Not significantly tied to familism or mediated through retro-acculturation.	Participants utilize clothing and personal style as a form of self and group representation. This includes resistant styles, often reframing disapproval from parents as empowerment.	Appearance practices are shaped by broad collectivist norms about representing one's community rather than direct family influence or explicit cultural re-engagement.	Convergence: Participants' balancing of cultural expectations and individuality mirrors the quant finding of collectivism influencing appearance directly.
Cultural Engagement via Social Media	• Collectivism and familism both predict engagement, especially through retro-acculturation. • Large increase in explained variance when	Social media allowed participants to celebrate their heritage and follow ethnic influencers. However, they were critical of the type of	Digital platforms serve as modern spaces for identity formation and cultural pride, with collectivist and familism values adapting to new technological forms.	Convergence/Divergence: Both findings reinforce that social media supports cultural engagement rooted in collectivist and familism values. However, participants strive for authenticity

Concept	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Interview Findings	Mixed Methods Interpretation	Convergence/Divergence
Retro-acculturation	retro-acculturation is included.	representation of Mexican Americans, resulting in resisting mainstream stereotypes.		in digital portrayals of Mexican Americans.
	• Key mediator for cultural engagement via social media. • Not a significant mediator for appearance management.	Participants re-engaged with Mexican culture after years of internalizing dominant American culture norms. A pivotal marker for this cultural rediscovery was the transition into adulthood.	Retro-acculturation facilitates deeper cultural engagement, especially online, but appearance behaviors may be independently negotiated beyond conscious cultural reclamation.	Convergence: Both methods highlight retro-acculturation as strengthening cultural connection without heavily guiding appearance.

Collectivism as an Independent Variable

The results of hypothesis 1 indicated that collectivism significantly influences retro-acculturation. This finding is consistent with the understanding that collectivism emphasizes identity within the broader social system. For later-generation Mexican Americans, reconnecting with their heritage culture is often accompanied by a re-adoption of collectivist values. Individuals who display high identification and ethnic pride are more likely to engage in retro-acculturation behaviors, such as learning the language or participating in cultural events, thereby reinforcing the link between collectivist orientations and heritage-seeking behavior.

These findings offer an important extension of Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, particularly his work on individualism versus collectivism. While Hofstede's work primarily addressed the national-level cultural differences, the current study illustrates how these dimensions can operate within national cultures and across generational lines. In doing so, it nuances Hofstede's original framework by demonstrating that collectivism is not geographically bound, but can persist or, in this case, re-emerge under certain sociocultural conditions, such as identity exploration or perceived cultural loss. This suggests that collectivist value orientations may serve as latent drivers of retro-acculturation, particularly in multicultural or assimilationist contexts where individuals feel the need to reclaim or reconstruct cultural identity.

Qualitative findings further contextualize this relationship. Many participants proactively sought out cultural experiences due to the lack of a strong Hispanic community or Mexican cultural influence during their adolescence. These efforts were

rooted in a sense of belonging and often sought connections that supported identity affirmation. One participant noted, *“As I am learning the language and learning more about the culture, it’s the community, I think that’s a special piece that makes me want to learn more of a language and get more involved”* (A3, 30). These experiences point to retro-acculturation for cultural rediscovery and identity affirmation shaped by collectivist values and social motivations. Ethnic identity theory further supports this interpretation. Ethnic identity refers to one’s sense of belonging to a cultural or ethnic group measured by cultural practices (e.g. food, music, media), social interactions, and self-identification (Epstein & Heizer, 2015). Retro-acculturation strengthens these sentiments and expressions by reinforcing cultural habits and community ties, thereby deepening affiliation with the Mexican identity.

Collectivism also appears to influence appearance management. This supports existing literature suggesting that Mexican Americans feel pressure to dress well in public to positively represent their family and community (De Mooij, 2004). This supports the idea that collectivist norms extend into practices like dress and grooming, which serve as visual affirmations of cultural pride and social representation. In addition, collectivism marginally influenced cultural engagement via social media. Many participants shared how social media provides visibility and exposure to Mexican culture. One participant shared, *“Being able to watch videos, even just a cooking video, and hearing it in Spanish really helps me, but at the same time, I feel connected that way”* (B2, 22). In line with previous findings, social media continues to serve as a powerful

force in shaping users' cultural orientation, including stronger Hispanic association and increased Spanish language use (Li & Tsai, 2015).

Familism and Family Dynamics

Familism significantly predicted retro-acculturation, showing that family-centered values continue to shape broader cultural identification among later-generation Mexican Americans. Interview data revealed that while parents often emphasized assimilation to ensure greater opportunities and success, they also encouraged preservation of cultural roots. Despite sometimes experiencing a complex or nuanced dynamic with their parents, participants consistently expressed respect and admiration for them.

This finding is consistent with Gonzales-Backen and Umaña-Taylor's (2011) study on how ethnic identity development occurs within multiple ecological contexts, particularly the family. While their study focused on adolescence, our findings indicate that familial influence remains significant into early adulthood, especially for U.S.-born individuals navigating cultural identity. Similarly, Marcia et al. (1993) emphasize the role of familial context in identity formation, suggesting that adolescents who receive psychological support and have strong role models are better positioned to explore and affirm their ethnic identities. Knight et al. (2009) further support this by noting that positive family role models are associated with greater family support and respect, which echoes key dimensions of familism.

Interestingly, qualitative insights revealed that birth order may play a role in shaping cultural orientation. A commonality between older siblings was described as

more culturally traditional, while younger siblings appeared to navigate identity with greater exposure to American cultural norms. This dynamic further illustrates the layered ways in which family structure influences cultural identity and the process of retro-acculturation.

We hypothesized that familism would influence appearance management based on the literature and the roles of family on shopping and consumptive behavior (De Mooij, 2004; Inglessis, 2008). However, our findings revealed a weaker, less direct relationship between familism and appearance management, diverging from expectations. Qualitative data provided additional nuance – participants acknowledged familial expectations but often described asserting independence through their dress. Some participants framed this as a form of gentle resistance or personal agency, aligning with Knight et al. (2009), who found that disagreement with parents can be positively related to the development of independence and self-reliance.

While collectivistic values may influence appearance to reflect family pride (Rama et al., 2020), individual appearance choices also reflect personal expression. Given that the participants in this study were U.S.-born and have experienced prolonged exposure to American individualistic culture, they may feel a greater sense of autonomy in their appearance-related choices, reducing the direct influence of family. These findings support the claims of Chattalas and Harper (2007), who found that highly acculturated Hispanic teens were less influenced by their families in fashion-related domains. Although Chattalas and Harper focused on adolescents, prior literature supports

that reference groups are subject to change with age and development (Moschis & Moore, 1979).

Social media, however, emerged as a more collectivist space shaped by familism. Participants reported using platforms like TikTok and an honorable mention of Instagram to stay connected with family traditions, share culturally relevant content, and express pride in their Mexican heritage. This is consistent with Millikin (2022), who found that digital environments often strengthen, rather than weaken, familial and cultural ties. In this study, social media was used for entertainment and a digital extension of familial and cultural life. Importantly, these findings may also reflect the influence of community ethnic concentration. As noted by Umaña-Taylor (2011), ethnic identity formation is often shaped by the density of co-ethnic community members. For participants growing up in areas with limited Mexican American representation, social media helped fill this gap. In this way, digital platforms mitigate geographic and generational barriers, reinforcing ethnic identity across contexts.

Appearance Management as a Dependent Variable

Collectivism had a direct influence on appearance management, suggesting that individuals had strong group-oriented values that considered how their appearance reflected on their community. Participants reported a desire to represent their heritage well in public, consistent with collectivist norms. For many, appearance served not only as a form of self-expression but also as a signal of cultural belonging. This aligns with the

findings of Frick (2024), who emphasizes that Latinos often use everyday fashion to form bond with their community and demonstrate active participation in their culture.

In contrast, familism did not significantly influence appearance management. Fashion and self-presentation are more individualistic expressions among later-generation Mexican Americans. Participants expressed a strong need for uniqueness, particularly through value-expressive products such as fashion and clothing. This desire often emerges as they navigate the tension between collectivistic, sometimes authoritarian expectations from parents and the individualistic norms of mainstream American culture (Chattalas & Harper, 2007). Several interviewees described how clothing became a form of self-definition, allowing them to assert autonomy while still acknowledging their Mexican heritage. For example, one participant noted that baggy clothing felt liberating, offering space for experimentation outside the gaze of family.

Beyond clothing, participants also discussed the growing embrace of natural features such as facial structure, skin tone, and hair texture as a part of their appearance management practices. Some describe a conscious rejection of Eurocentric beauty standards in favor of celebrating traits that reflect Mexican heritage. For instance, a few interviewees shared how they choose to wear their natural curls or avoid lightening their skin, viewing these choices as acts of cultural pride and self-acceptance. One participant noted, *“keeping your natural hair and not adopting the straight American hair. Most Hispanic women don’t have stick straight hair, they have curly hair”* (D1, 29). These acts of authentic self-presentation, like wearing natural curls or resisting skin lightening, are not merely aesthetic choices but embodied acts of cultural pride and resistance.

These dual expressions reflect a bicultural identity in which individuals navigate both Mexican heritage and American individualism. At times, participants embraced cultural features and references while personal style choices prioritized independence, experimentation, and deviation from family norms. These findings also speak to broader theoretical frameworks, particularly ethnic identity and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Participants' appearance management strategies reflect a dynamic interplay between group affiliation and individual categorization. Through dress and self-presentation, individuals positioned themselves within multiple identity categories: ethnic, generational, and personal. Social identity theory helps explain how participants make meaning of their appearance by aligning with or distancing from in-groups, depending on context and internal motivations.

Cultural Engagement via social media

Both collectivism and familism significantly contributed to cultural engagement via social media. For later-generation Mexican Americans, specifically the platforms TikTok and Instagram, offered tools for cultural rediscovery, identity expression, and forming meaningful community connections. This aligns with the Cultural Identity Theory (Collier, 1998), which posits that identity is enacted through communication and expression of a group's shared cultural values and beliefs. Social media offers a dynamic and accessible medium for this expression, making retro-acculturation more interactive and individualized. Through language use, visual storytelling, and curated content, participants actively reinforced their ethnic identities in ways that felt both authentic and empowering.

These findings are further supported by cross-cultural research demonstrating that the Hispanic population primarily uses social media as a tool for maintaining personal interaction with relatives and close friends (Correa & Jeong, 2011; Deng et al., 2023; Goodrich & de Mooij, 2013). Unlike individualistic motives like entertainment or self-promotion, it emphasizes relational bonds and social connectedness. Specifically, how participants describe how social media helps maintain ties with extended family, celebrate cultural holidays, and stay informed about issues relevant to the Mexican American community.

Insights from participant interviews highlighted how these collectivist digital behaviors coexist with a desire to portray their culture authentically. Many participants were aware of how Mexican Americans are represented online, expressing concerns over tokenism, stereotypes, and cultural commodification. For these users, using social media meant more than just maintaining ties, it involved a deliberate effort to control how their culture is portrayed and to push back inaccurate narratives. As Lutz and Aragon (2024) similarly found, participants felt that Mexican Americans are oversaturated online but still relatable. Mexican American participants acknowledged the privilege but expressed a common desire to dismantle the existing negative stereotypes in hopes of a diverse representation of Latinx people online. This reflects the role of ethnic identity affirmation as a psychological buffer, as described by Umaña-Taylor (2011). When faced with discrimination or misrepresentation, affirmation of one's ethnic identity can motivate individuals to resist negative portrayals and assert positive self-definitions. Rather than

internalize harmful depictions, participants in this study demonstrated agency by using social media as a platform to challenge dominant narratives and affirm cultural pride.

This tension between cultural preservation and narrative control reflects a nuanced convergence and divergence process. On one hand, social media allows for the continuation of collectivist and familism practices in a new format, signaling convergence between cultural values and digital platforms. On the other hand, divergence emerges in participants' active resistance to inauthentic portrayals and their desire to redefine how Mexican American identity is shared online. Digital spaces are not only tools for cultural maintenance but also areas for resistance and empowerment.

Role of Retro-Acculturation as a Mediator

Retro-acculturation was significantly influenced by both collectivism and familism, showing that these core cultural values encourage later-generation Mexican Americans to reconnect with their heritage culture.

However, retro-acculturation did not mediate the relationship between collectivism and appearance management. This lack of mediation suggests that appearance management may be influenced by collectivist values through direct pathways, independent of retro-acculturation. Appearance management is a deeply personal practice that involves how individuals choose to express and communicate their self-identity in various contexts (Kwon & Kwon, 2013). Someone with strong collectivist values can consider how their appearance reflects on their community, even if they are not actively

re-engaging with their heritage culture. Therefore, collectivism may shape appearance-related behaviors without the need for a mediating process like retro-acculturation.

Retro-acculturation also did not mediate the relationship between familism and appearance management. Hispanics have historically regarded the family as the most central and influential social group, with family members having a major impact on one another's purchasing and consumption decisions (Rizkallah & Truong, 2010). In collectivistic cultures, consumption patterns often reflect interdependence and shared values (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, the findings of this study reveal that, when it comes to fashion and appearance-related items, retro-acculturated individuals did not report direct influence from family members, an outcome that diverges from expectations based on familism.

While the findings of this study indicate that familism did not significantly influence appearance management, Castro et al. (2022) provide insight into how these dynamics may shift over time and across generational and immigrant experiences. Their study of Latina adolescent immigrants revealed that, during early and mid-adolescence, participants initially distanced themselves from their country of origin in their dress and appearance. However, as their identities developed and both cultures became more integrated with their truer sense of self, participants began blending cultural forms of dress as a way to express a multifaceted identity that brought a sense of pride in their family heritage and connection to their culture. Although this suggests that appearance can eventually reflect family and cultural values, the U.S.-born participants in the present study may be at a different developmental stage or cultural context, in which familism

strengthens identity formation, such as retro-acculturation, but not specific appearance-related behaviors. These findings suggest that appearance management may stem from direct value pathways rather than cultural rediscovery.

In contrast, retro-acculturation did mediate the relationship between collectivism and familism on cultural engagement via social media. Specifically, there was large increase in explained variance from 8.45% to 34.71%, highlighting a strong indirect pathway. These results affirm that cultural values fuel online cultural participation through the process of rediscovery. In other words, collectivist individuals may be more likely to engage with their culture more on social media through the process of reconnecting with and reclaiming cultural traditions. As prior research notes, collectivist individuals often use social media social integration, self-presentation, and self-expression (Belk, 2013; Chwialkowska & Kontkanen, 2017). While social media is typically viewed as a tool to help immigrant individuals acculturate to mainstream culture, it is not limited to this linear process of assimilation (Dalisay, 2012; Moon & Park, 2007). Instead, exposure to ethnic media can support the preservation of ethnic culture (Li & Tsai, 2015; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017).

Retro-acculturation also successfully mediated the relationship between familism and cultural engagement via social media. This suggests that for later-generation Mexican Americans, family-oriented values encourage cultural participation online and the process of cultural rediscovery that enhances such engagement. These findings align with cross-cultural research indicating that the Hispanic population primarily uses social media as a tool for maintaining personal interaction with relatives and close friends (Correa &

Jeong, 2011; Deng et al., 2023; Goodrich & de Mooij, 2013). Unlike individualistic motives such as differentiation and entertainment, social media engagement in this context appears to be more relational and collectivistic, grounded in the value of familism.

This behavior reflects a collectivist approach to social media use that stands in contrast to the more individualistic digital culture dominant in the U.S. Through the lens of retro-acculturation, it becomes clear that cultural values such as familism and collectivism can be maintained and even strengthened within digital environments. Ultimately, this supports the idea that retro-acculturation facilitates increased cultural engagement via social media, reinforcing ethnic identity and fostering meaningful cultural connections across generations.

Conclusion

This study examined how collectivism and familism, as core cultural values, influence retro-acculturation, appearance management, and cultural engagement via social media among later generations of Mexican Americans. Both collectivism and familism significantly predicted retro-acculturation, which in turn mediated their relationship with cultural engagement online. Participants emphasized authenticity in digital portrayals and used social media to challenge stereotypes while maintaining familial and cultural ties. These findings suggest that core cultural values encourage reconnection with heritage and expression of ethnic identity in digital spaces.

Qualitative insights further revealed that retro-acculturation is shaped by internal and external influences such as family dynamics, institutional settings, and media representation. Participants often suppressed their heritage during adolescence to avoid stigmatization, often under social and familial pressure to assimilate. However, cultural pride later resurfaced through retro-acculturation, particularly in the form of appearance management emerged as a visual and symbolic expression of pride, manifested through clothing choices, natural beauty, and the influence of culturally affirming role models online. While retro-acculturation did not mediate the relationship between both values and appearance management in the quantitative model, qualitative findings suggest that appearance is still a meaningful site of cultural expression, possibly influenced more directly by personal values or aesthetic autonomy than by mediated cultural reconnection alone.

Implications

This research provides a holistic perspective on later generations of Mexican Americans and how they exhibit cultural rediscovery as well as cultural retention. By focusing on a single country of origin, it reveals subcultural differences from the overall Hispanic population. These include value-based identity formation process, the role of language and upbringing shape cultural confidence, and a demand for authentic and nuanced representation.

A key contribution is the conceptual framing of retro-acculturation not just as an identity-seeking process but as a value-driven phenomenon deeply rooted in collectivism and familism. This supports emerging literature that conceptualizes the acculturation

process as cyclical rather than linear (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023; Chan, 2013).

Cultural return through retro-acculturation can be both a personal and social response to generational cultural gaps (Kim & Park, 2009). Focusing on later-generation Mexican Americans offers insights into how cultural identity evolves and persists beyond the initial immigrant experience. The study also links cultural constructs (familism and collectivism) to behavioral outcomes (like appearance management and cultural engagement via social media) through identity rediscovery and expression that manifests through everyday practices and media interaction.

This research expands the conceptualization of collectivism and familism through continued salience in identity-related behaviors across generations. It extends Hofstede's cultural dimensions and ethnic identity development by showing that values traditionally attributed to immigrant or first-generation populations can remain active in guiding behavior into later generations. Building upon Cultural Identity Theory by demonstrating how digital environments are central to the performance and negotiation of identity. These findings present a broader call to action for industries that shape cultural narratives including media, marketing, and education. As identity formation becomes increasingly mediated by digital environments, these sectors must evolve to reflect the complexities of identity development amongst later-generations Mexican Americans.

Aside from theoretical contributions, the study findings unveil important guidance for international or marketing firms targeting Mexican American consumers to understand that cultural pride and values still influence consumption and decision-

making. Marketing that taps into collectivist messaging, such as community, family celebration, traditions, may appeal more than overly individualistic appeals.

Given the strong presence of cultural engagement via social media, marketers can benefit from incorporating culturally rich content like storytelling, community-based campaigns, or influencer collaborations rooted in Mexican American identity to increase engagement and brand relevance. Similarly, to achieve an authentic representation of the Mexican American experience, brands should collaborate with culturally knowledgeable creators and use authentic narratives to build trust and loyalty.

For the fashion and beauty sector, there are promising opportunities to co-create collections or styles inspired by cultural heritage that reflect both tradition and modern expression. Brands that can highlight natural beauty, traditional motifs, and inclusive representations of Mexican American aesthetics that embrace both modern and ancestral influences. More broadly, industries across fashion, social media, and entertainment can benefit from engaging with the nuanced ways that later-generation individuals experience culture. Influencers and creators who speak to lived experiences offer powerful avenues for connection. By doing so, industries not only enhance cultural relevance but also contribute to the visibility, pride, and positive identity development of a growing segment of U.S. society.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While our research addresses several critical gaps in the literature and establishes the importance of the retro-acculturation process among later-generations of Mexican

Americans (LGMAs) we present several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, although the study focused on LGMAs, the majority of participants were second-generation rather than third-generation or beyond, as defined by Chaves-Reyes (2022) in the context of later-generational statuses. This may limit the applicability of findings to those further removed from immigrant experience. Additionally, the participant pool was predominantly female and second generation in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, which may have introduced gendered perspectives into the data and potentially limited the diversity of viewpoints related to cultural identity and appearance management.

Second, while the quantitative portion of the study used a third-party marketing company to distribute the survey nationally to reach the desired demographic. In contrast, the qualitative portion relied on personal networks and social media recruitment, resulting in a sample primarily concentrated in the Southeastern U.S., especially Georgia, with some participants having previously lived in Texas. These regional concentrations, along with potential influences of ethnic enclaves or lack thereof, likely shaped participants' cultural experiences and upbringing, which in turn may have impacted the themes revealed in interviews.

Additionally, the qualitative participants were self-selected, suggesting that many may already have had a heightened interest in cultural identity or retro-acculturation, potentially skewing results toward more culturally engaged individuals. To address these concerns in future studies, researchers could employ an explanatory sequential design. This would allow the quantitative findings to guide purposeful selection of qualitative

interviewees, enriching interpretation by allowing further exploration and explanation of trends observed in the data. Future research would benefit from more demographically and generationally diverse samples, particularly including more third-generation and beyond participants, as well as a balanced gender distribution. Future studies may be able to successfully detect subtle differences from key demographic factors such as gender, age group (Millennials vs. Generation Z), and generational status (second, third, and fourth generation Mexican American) that were not captured in the present research. These investigations could further clarify whether unique generational or gendered experiences shape the retro-acculturation process and its behavioral outcomes.

Finally, this study focuses on the cultural values of familism and collectivism as predictors of retro-acculturation. However, there are other relevant cultural constructs key to Mexican American identity such as machismo, *simpatía*, *respeto*, and fatalism (Cuellar et al., 1995; Knight et al., 2009; Villareal & Peterson, 2009). These cultural constructs may also play important roles in appearance management or cultural engagement but were omitted. Future research could benefit from incorporating these constructs to create a more holistic understanding of cultural expression. Moreover, exploring retro-acculturation among later-generation immigrants or those from other Latinx subgroups (e.g., Puerto Ricans, Salvadorans) could offer broader insights and highlight variations in cultural reclamation across diasporic communities.

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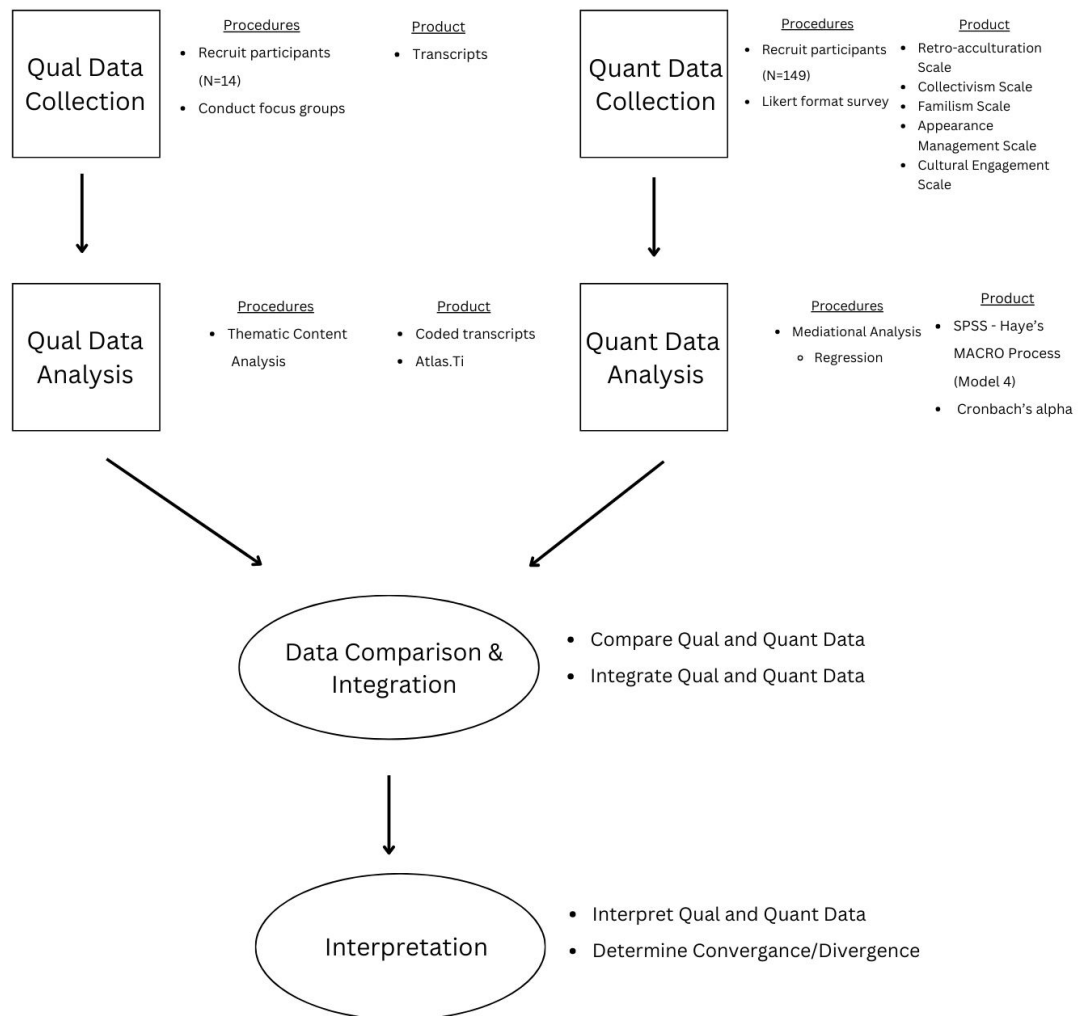
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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Convergent Visual Design

Convergent Visual Design



Appendix B: Digital Flyer

Focus Group Recruitment

The purpose of this study is to explore how Mexican Americans whose families have been in the U.S. for multiple generations reconnect with their cultural roots through values like family unity, community loyalty, and cultural expressions. It also examines how cultural pride is displayed through appearance and engagement with social media content.

All participants receive \$10 Gift Card

Scan QR Code

Any questions contact Co-principal investigator, Danielle Rodriguez
☎ 678-409-3422
✉ dar38638@uga.edu

Overview

- Participate in research study
- Engage in 90 minute focus group or in-depth interview at a convenient location
- Your responses are anonymous and will only be used for research

Eligibility

- Identify as **Mexican American** (US born with Mexican parents, grandparents, and/or ancestors)
- Between the ages of **18-43** years old

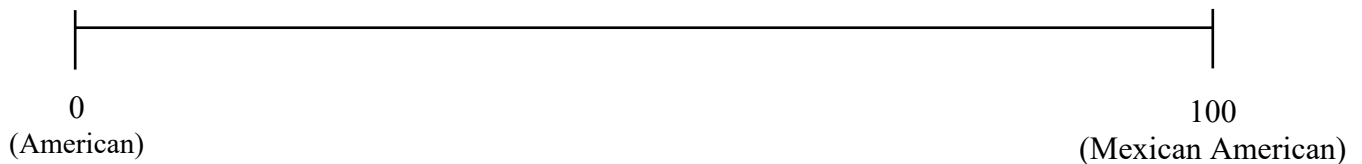
This study was approved by University of Georgia Institutional Review Board: #00011061

Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Appendix C: Screening Questions

Screening Questions

1. How do you identify yourself ethnically?
 - a. American
 - b. Mexican
 - c. Mexican American
 - d. Hispanic American
 - e. Other _____
2. Tell me about your Mexican heritage
 - a. Mom's heritage
 - b. Dad's heritage
 - c. Both Parents
 - d. Grandparents (1 or more)
 - e. None
3. Do you see yourself closer to mainstream American culture or closer to Mexican American culture?



4. How important is it for you to maintain Mexican heritage?
 - a. Not at all (1)
 - b. A little (2)
 - c. Neutral (3)
 - d. Somewhat important (4)
 - e. Very Important (5)
 5. Tell me about how you feel connected to your heritage culture (click all that apply)
 - a. Family influences
 - b. Peers
 - c. Learning Spanish language
 - d. Media (tv, social media, music, magazines)
 - e. Other: _____
 6. Do you follow any fashion/style content creators and/or social media influencers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 7. Are there any social media channels that you get Mexican and /or Mexican American content?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- If yes, please name them. _____
8. What language is typically used in the content? _____
 9. Do you feel a personal connection to the content shared by these channels?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
- 10. Are there specific types of content from these channels that particularly interest you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 11. Are there any social media channels that you get Mexican and /or Mexican American content related to fashion/style or beauty?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 12. If yes, please name them. _____

Demographic Questions

- 1. What gender do you identify as? (Select one)
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender
 - d. Nonbinary
 - e. Other (please specify)
 - f. Prefer not to say
- 2. What year were you born in? (Drop down)
 - a. 1981-2007
- 3. Choose the generation that best applies to you?
 - a. 1st generation = you were born in Mexico
 - b. 2nd generation = you were born in USA; either parent born in Mexico
 - c. 3rd generation = you were born in USA, both parents born in USA and all grandparents born in Mexico
 - d. 4th generation = you and your parents born in USA and at least one grandparent born in Mexico or other country with remainder born in USA
 - e. 5th generation = you and your grandparents born in USA and all grandparents born in USA
- 4. What is your annual income?
 - a. Less than \$35,000
 - b. \$35,000-\$49,999
 - c. \$50,000-\$74,999
 - d. \$80,000-\$99,999
 - e. \$100,000+
- 5. What is your household's annual income?
 - a. Less than \$35,000
 - b. \$35,000-\$49,999
 - c. \$50,000-\$74,999

- d. \$80,000-\$99,999
 - e. \$100,000+
6. What is your employment status?
- a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
 - c. Contract or temporary
 - d. Unemployed
 - e. Unable to work
 - f. Other (Please specify)
 - g. Prefer not to say
7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- a. Less than high school
 - b. High school (including GED)
 - c. Some college (no degree)
 - d. Associate degree
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D., M.D.)
8. What is your marital status?
- a. Married
 - b. Widowed
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Separated
 - e. Single
 - f. Prefer not to say
9. How many children do you have?
- a. None
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4
 - f. More than 4
10. What is your region of residence?
- a. West
 - b. Midwest
 - c. Southwest
 - d. Southeast
 - e. Northeast
 - f. Prefer not to say
11. Which languages are you capable of speaking fluently? (Check all that apply)

- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. Other (Please specify)

12. What language do you mainly speak at home?

- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. Other (Please specify)

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM RETRO-ACCULTURATION AND IDENTITY EXPRESSION AMONGST LATER GENERATIONS OF MEXICAN AMERICANS

Dr. Yoo-Kyoung Seock and Danielle Rodriguez invite you to participate in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Yoo-Kyoung Seock
Department of
Textiles,
Merchandising and
Interiors
yseock@uga.edu

Co-Investigator: Danielle Rodriguez
Department of
Textiles,
Merchandising and
Interiors
dar38638@uga.edu

We are interested in learning about the experiences of Mexican Americans, specifically those whose families have been in the United States for multiple generations, as they reconnect with their cultural roots. This study looks at how values like family unity and community loyalty, which are central to Mexican culture, play a role in this process. As the Hispanic population in the U.S. grows, many people are finding ways to stay connected to their Mexican heritage through traditions, language, and other forms of cultural expression. We are also interested in how people show their cultural pride through things like their appearance and content they engage with on social media.

If you agree to be in our study, we ask for your participation in small focus group discussions that will take two hours of your time. You do not have to be in the study if you don't want to: it is your choice. You can also agree to be interviewed but not be in a focus group. You do not have to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing. You can change your mind at any time and there will be no penalty.

We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the focus group members to keep the discussion confidential as well. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure and the protection of confidentiality is limited. The conversations and the focus groups will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept secure. The files will be encrypted, and password protected. You can decide whether you want your name used.

- I give my consent to have discussion recorded: _____ (initial)

After we complete the focus group interviews, we will remove anything that identifies you. The recordings will be destroyed after transcription is complete. We may continue to use de-identified transcripts and may share them with other researchers for future studies.

There are no direct benefits to this research participation. Participants will be compensated for participation in this study. At the conclusion of the interview participants of this study will receive a \$10 [Visa/Amazon/etc.] gift card.

Please feel free to ask questions about this research at any time. You can contact the Co-principal Investigator, Danielle Rodriguez at (678)-409-3422 or dar38638@uga.edu If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

_____	_____	
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.

Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your acculturation status? (assimilated, bicultural, segregated, marginalized)
2. In the past did you feel any pressure to acculturate at a specific pace? (from parents, school, society)?
 - How about now?
3. Tell me about your experiences growing up in a Hispanic household (parents, family, language)
4. Do you have any memories of family celebrations and parties?
 - Mexican oriented celebrations and parties
 - American oriented celebrations and parties
5. Do you celebrate any other culturally oriented customs and traditions?
6. Tell me when experiencing life changes (coming of age, moving, going to college, marriage, parenthood)
 - ... did that reincorporate Mexican customs and traditions?
7. Were there any expectations growing up on your appearance from...
 - Parents, family
 - Friends
 - Media (social media, magazines, TV)
8. Do you feel more pressure to look a certain way than, say some of your non-Hispanic friends?
9. Can you tell me what it means to be beautiful as a Mexican American woman?
10. How does social media content reflect or influence your sense of ethnic pride as a Mexican American?
11. Do you feel that social media helps you stay connected to Mexican American culture? If so, in what ways?

Appendix F: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM RETRO-ACCULTURATION AND IDENTITY EXPRESSION AMONGST LATER GENERATIONS OF MEXICAN AMERICANS

Dr. Yoo-Kyoung Seock and Danielle Rodriguez invite you to participate in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Investigator:	Dr. Yoo-Kyoung Seock Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors yseock@uga.edu	Co-Investigator:	Danielle Rodriguez Department of Textiles, and Interiors dar38638@uga.edu
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We are interested in learning about the experiences of Mexican Americans, specifically those whose families have been in the United States for multiple generations, as they reconnect with their cultural roots. This study looks at how values like family unity and community loyalty, which are central to Mexican culture, play a role in this process. As the Hispanic population in the U.S. grows, many people are finding ways to stay connected to their Mexican heritage through traditions, language, and other forms of cultural expression. We are also interested in how people show their cultural pride through things like their appearance and the content they engage with on social media.

Participation and Right to Refuse or Withdraw

If you agree to participate in the study, we ask for the completion of an online survey that will take 10-15 minutes of your time. Participation is voluntary. If there are questions that may make you uncomfortable, you can skip these questions if you do not wish to answer them or stop the survey. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality

You will not be asked for any identifying information in the survey. The confidentiality of any answers you provide to the survey, including general demographic such as age and gender, will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data and confidentially sent via the Internet by any third parties. Your responses will be analyzed by members of the study team who are located at the University of Georgia.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks to you. However, as this study involves data collection through online methods, which may present limitations regarding data security and confidentiality. In the survey, you will answer questions about demographic information, cultural orientation and dimensions, ethnic identity, language use, media use, and appearance management. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format. De-identified information obtained from this research may be used for future studies (or shared with other researchers) without obtaining your additional consent.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits or incentives to this research participation. There is no incentive or compensation for participation. However, your responses may help understand how later generations of Mexican Americans are reconnecting to heritage culture and help learn patterns of consumer behavior.

Contact Information

Please feel free to ask questions about this research at any time. You can contact the Co-principal Investigator, Danielle Rodriguez at (678)-409-3422 or dar38638@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Danielle Rodriguez