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A re-examination of universalistic views on acculturation through personal narratives

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ABSTRACT

Using an ecological and multicultural approach, this qualitative study explored twenty Latino (a) experiences with migration, and it has explored ways they have experienced living and starting a new life in mainland U.S. Participants were individually interviewed, and their voices, stories, personal experiences and perceptions are brought forth in this study. Several themes and subthemes emerged from the interviews that addressed issues of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and culture. The findings suggested that living and going through the process of acculturation is complex and related to a number of individual and contextual factors. It was also found that the ethnic/cultural/immigrant community has been a source of social and emotional support for them. A sense of belonging and group attachment has been especially important in helping migrants/immigrants unify and in providing a shared sense of community. The limitations and contributions of the study, and future recommendations for research are also discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter presents the background of the problem, a rational for why it is a problem, potential benefits of the study, and the definition of the variables to be investigated.

INTRODUCTION

History of Immigration

There has been a dramatic increase in the population of both legal and illegal immigrants/migrants in the United States. Between 1980 and 2000, 15.6 million legal immigrants came to the United States, and another 5.5 million entered the country illegally (Jacoby, 2004; King, 2000). According to the latest U.S. Census, Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (2008).

The nation's Latino population reached 46 million in 2008, and Latinos make up 15.1% of the estimated total U.S. population of 301.6 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008). Of course, these numbers do not count for the undocumented Latinos that have settled in mainland US. Mexicans, by far are the largest category at an estimated 30.2 million, with Puerto Ricans second at 4 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008).

The influx of immigrants from Latin American in the past three decades is transforming the demographics of the United States (Alegria et al., 2007); yet, a significant gap exists between our understanding of immigrants' and migrants' experiences in the host culture, as well as issues related to the acculturation process. The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the process of Latino/a acculturation by bringing forth the shared experiences and voices of men and women who have migrated to mainland US.

Impact of Immigration

The America that immigrants come to, although, more prosperous, is set within a context of economic inequalities that are more extreme than a century ago (Gans, 2004). The gap between rich and poor is wider than ever, creating what some social scientists have called the "hourglass economy" (Gans, 2004; Jacoby, 2004). In many cities, well-paid factory jobs have been replaced by service-sector work, and for some time now, real wages at the bottom of the pay scale have been declining rather than growing. On top of this, many newcomers settle in impoverished inner cities, where crime, drugs, gangs and broken families conspire to hinder their climb up the economic ladder (Massey, 2004).

Like the US economy itself, immigration has increasingly divided into a high end and a low end. No matter how immigrants enter the United States, legally, for purposes of family reunification or employment, or surreptitiously and without documents, immigrants generally come to work (Massey, 2004). In the upper end of the labor market, globalization has increased the demand for capital (Jacoby, 2004; Massey, 2004). As human capital has become crucial to sustaining the growth of knowledge-based economies, developed nations have found themselves competing for qualified workers (Massey, 2004). The current trend in immigration appears to be diverse, indicating an increase in the proportion of political refugees, highly skilled professionals, executives, and managers, as well as undocumented laborers (Roysircar, 2003). Therefore, the socioeconomic statuses of current immigrants run the gamut from the very poor to the upwardly mobile. At the bottom of the economic pyramid, are the unskilled immigrants

who are taking low paying jobs that provide poor working conditions and few opportunities for advancement (Massey, 2004).

Attitudes towards Immigration / Conditions of the Receiving Society

Americans' toleration of diversity has always been easier in principle than in practice (King, 2000). A multiracial and multicultural society built on immigration, both involuntary and voluntary, the United States has agonized at various stages about whom it will allow to enter, reside and naturalize. Immigration policy proved to be a forum in which eugenic arguments flourished (Jacoby, 2004). Sociopolitical concerns such as the recent outcries against illegal Latino immigrants and economic competition between the US and Asian countries are likely to increase the animosity toward these two fastest growing groups in the United States (Hwang & Goto, 2008).

The journalists, social workers, and amateur social scientists who first wrote about immigrants generally had a very low opinion of their manners, morals, intelligence and sanitary habits (Jacoby, 2004; Kraver, 1999). Some of them argued for an immediate end to all immigration; others joined with advocates of eugenics in proposing that the newcomers be sterilized or sent to communities that would today be described as concentration camps (Gans, 2004). Then, during the first decade of the twentieth century, a handful of American universities graduated the first professional sociologists trained to undertake empirical research. Some of the scholars headed for the immigrant slums to conduct their research (Gans, 2004). The problem was that most spoke only English, and as a result, they did much of their research among English speaking young adults of the second generation.

These researchers were often no less prejudiced against immigrants than earlier writers, but as a result of their generational "sampling bias" they spoke to far more Americanizing young people than first generation immigrants (Gans, 2004; Jacoby, 2004). Although these researchers were interested in describing the consequences of one culture group accommodating to a dominant one, later referred to as *acculturation*, this process became invested with ethnocentrism and came to be known as "Americanization" (Escobar & Vega, 2000). As a consequence, these scholars portrayed a second generation that was moving away from its parents' culture and escaping from immigrant poverty. The scholars were generally pleased by the Americanization they uncovered, and the term they used to describe it was *assimilation* (Gans, 2004). The term was later attached to the construct of social stratification by Gordon in his influential book, *Assimilation in American Life* (Gordon, 1964). Gordon's thesis was that social classes represented distinctive life styles, and assimilation represented acquisition of appropriate cultural knowledge and behavior to participate effectively in society (Escobar & Vega, 2000).

For decades the prevailing psychological model of successful immigration was one of "assimilation," of losing one's original cultural identity and taking on the identity of the dominant culture or of "fusion," the loss of all distinct cultures in a multicultural society and the creation of a new culture that maintained facets of each (Gardner et al., 2004). Both the assimilation and fusion models assume that a minority individual could no longer be distinguished from a majority individual once acculturation had taken place (Gardner et al., 2004) and immigrant's culture would eventually disappear, until finally the newcomers, at least the light-skinned ones, would be indistinguishable from other

Americans (Gans, 2004). In those early days, the three A's (acculturation, assimilation, and Americanization) were used almost interchangeably as elements of the cultural adaptation by groups of immigrants (Escobar & Vega, 2000). As a result, other thinkers/scholars believed that cultural, social, and other kinds of assimilations would continue uninterrupted, without slowing, over several generations (Gans, 2004). The assumption was that with assimilation would come speedier upward mobility, which in turn would generate still more assimilation.

In an effort to cleanse immigrants of their "foreign-ness," public school systems, educators, local and federal social service agencies, private industry and private charitable organizations offered instructions in English, and lessons on good citizenship and American customs (Kraver, 1999). From the immigrants' standpoint, the pressure to conform was immense; indeed, any outward expression of non-conformity was viewed as a failure to adhere to the American civic religion (Kraver, 1999). This process was thought to be roughly the same for all immigrants that could indeed be pictured on a graph as a straight line, beginning with the immigrants' arrival and ending when they had become fully American. Interestingly, this theory was formulated around the time Congress outlawed further immigration to America in 1924, and it was thought that the straight line would eventually end with the Americanization of all the immigrants (Jacoby, 2004). This straight line vision was more like the melting pot metaphor that envisioned a single kind of new American. Only after a significant amount of time did scholars realize that the straight line theory was too simple, and in fact, assimilation moved in many mysterious ways, and was influence by a number of factors (Gans, 2004; Jacoby, 2004). In fact, it turned out that there was no single pattern; different ethnic

groups demonstrated their own "lines." In most cases, these trajectories were not straight at all, but rather wavy and bumpy, and each different in some way (Gans, 2004).

If newcomers were not Americanizing, the obvious solution was to put an end to immigration (Thernstrom, 2004). Restrictive immigration and citizenship laws continued to exclude ethnic minorities from official American status (Weisskirch, 2005) and a series of laws enacted in the 1920s not only sharply reduced the total number of immigrants but also discriminated against Eastern and Southern Europeans because immigrants from those areas were perceived to be most resistant to assimilation (Thernstrom, 2004). It was not until 1965 that the doors were open once again to immigrants (Jacoby, 2004).

Cultural Context: Impact of Race, Gender, Economic status, Education and Spirituality

Becoming an American is a complex, personal process, the kind of transition that can take a lifetime, even two (Jacoby, 2004). A Mexican farmhand with a sixth grade education takes a different path into the mainstream than an Indian engineer working on an MBA. As Rouse (1992) suggests, it is important to identify immigrants class trajectories and in particular, to be attentive to the difficulties that arise when people not only move between countries that are markedly different but also experience a major change in the ways in which they make a living.

The diversity of today's immigrants can make it difficult to generalize as many differences exist among immigrants/migrants. The cultural context includes many factors among which there is the culture of gender. Roles and expectations for men and women tend to be different within and between cultures, and will have a significant impact on the

process of acculturation (Alegria et al. 2007; Falicov, 2003; Horton & Shweden, 2004).

The positions that men and women assume in the new culture seem to depend at least, in part, on the historical moment and the encounter of cultures that may create different ambiguities, gains, or losses, for the two genders in the country of adoption compared to the country of origin (Falicov, 2003).

Immigrant men from traditional patriarchal cultures and ecological niches often feel threatened and disempowered by the more Western, egalitarian values influencing their wives and children in American mainstream culture (Rouse, 1992). Recent studies indicate that women adapt to the cultural changes faster than men and may be more at peace with the decision to move to another country, citing gains of economic and personal freedoms (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). These changes are likely to be tied to the increased participation of women in the workforce; thus, many immigrant women feel torn by the dual vision and double shift of maintaining ethnic traditional lifestyles within the home while becoming modernized in their outside work settings (Falicov, 2003). Interestingly, gender differences in the process of acculturation have not been discussed in most research literature. The other important factor is skin color.

Throughout history, ethnic and racial minorities have been the victims of institutional and interpersonal discrimination (Hwang & Goto, 2008) and race has always been a key role in U.S. state sponsored immigration, naturalization, and citizenship laws (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Given the existence of racial prejudice in American society, non-European/non-White immigrants have been more likely to face exclusion and discrimination that their European counterparts (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Gee et al., 2006; Hwang & Goto, 2008; Shih et al., 2007), therefore we can not assume universality in the

acculturation process. Acculturation is more difficult for those persons who must cope with the stigma of being different because of skin color, language, ethnicity, and other visible variables. Minority status and perceived discrimination are found to be important social stressors for immigrants (Hwang & Goto, 2008; Verkuyten & Nekuee, 2001).

Of course, skin color does not affect an immigrant's ability to absorb American culture, but color can play a large part in hindering economic and social assimilation: today's black newcomers, from the Caribbean and elsewhere, are often treated as part of the African-American population, with all the associated disadvantages (Gans, 2004). While racial and ethnic discrimination have been outlawed and wage and employment discrimination has declined, significant discrimination still prevails in one key market, real estate (Gans, 2004; Massey, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). In general, darker-skinned people of all ethnic groups experience greater discrimination in the rental and sale of housing (Massey, 2004). As pointed out by Wadsworth and Kubrin (2007) immigrants typically inhabit the most socially disorganized communities characterized by poverty and limited economic opportunities.

Because where one lives is so important in determining life chances, residential segregation has profound implication for all aspects of acculturation. The concentration of poverty in certain areas creates a supremely disadvantaged social environment characterized by high levels of violence and social disorder (Massey, 2004). A second major factor undermining the prospects for assimilation is the quality of public schooling (Gans, 2004; Massey, 2004). Segregated inner city schools offer some of the poorest instruction to be found in the United States; even if they are not highly segregated, they are chronically under-funded and suffer from a lack of public support (Massey, 2004).

Matters are complicated by the fact that immigrants quickly pick up the discriminatory practices of their new country. Regardless of where they come from, immigrants learn that, in America, lighter is always better, darker is always worse and black is worst (Gans, 2004). Little time passes before immigrants become prejudiced against African-Americans (Gans, 2004). Striving for economic stability and psychological equilibrium in the new land is riddled with pressure to assimilate the dominant culture's negative judgment of dark-skinned, poor immigrants and deprives them of legal resources in the face of oppressive institutional treatment and derogatory stereotypes (Falicov, 2003).

"Asians" the term Americans use for immigrants from all the countries of the Far East – seem to be in a different situation (Nee & Alba, 2004). Because so many are middle class professionals, and because their children often excel in school, native born white Americans sometimes classify Asians as a "model minority" (Salant & Lauderdale, 2003). Still, being considered a model minority does not mean automatic acceptance in white America. Asians, like other immigrants, compete for jobs, housing and other resources in limited supply and discrimination can rear its head very quickly. In fact, Asian immigrants were ineligible for citizenship until 1952, and they faced many discriminatory local and regional laws that restricted their property rights and civil liberties (Nee & Alba, 2004).

"Latinos" used to describe many different ethnic groups in which the Spanish language is spoken (Portillo & Texidor, 1987). Lighter skinned Latinos are treated just about like Asians (Gans, 2004). Those with darker skin and other traces of their Indian ancestors have a harder time, and black Latinos, notably Dominicans and other West

Indians; suffer from the same discrimination and segregation as other black immigrants (Gans, 2004). Racial, ethnic, and economic discrimination shape the individual stories of most immigrants, particularly those from disadvantaged classes and poor countries, who are almost always perceived as the "other" (Falicov, 2003).

Another important factor relating to immigrants' experiences with acculturation is spirituality. Religion is cited as a key social and cultural institution among many immigrants (Gong et al., 2003). Unfortunately, few studies have examined how acculturation is linked to spirituality and psychological health. According to Gong (2003), emerging epidemiological findings from the past two decades suggest that religious involvement is associated with lower alcohol use, greater well being, lower rates of suicide and depression, and higher life satisfaction. Finch and Vega (2003), conducted a study with 3012 Latino immigrants looking at the effect of social support mechanisms as potential moderators and mediators of the relationship between stressful acculturation experiences and self ratings of health. The results indicated that religious support seeking and the number of family and peers one has in the United States have protective health effects. Furthermore, they found that even the deleterious effects of discrimination are attenuated (although not eliminated) with increasing levels of religious support seeking (Finch & Vega, 2003).

Conditions Prior to Immigration/ Reasons for Immigration

Another important component that has not received much attention in the literature is the situation of immigrants' homeland prior to emigration, including such factors as their social standing back home, their educational levels, occupational skills,

and even their previous exposure to urban and Western cultures, and the reasons that led

them to leave their homelands (Gibson, 2001; Rhee et al., 1995). Those who come

primarily for economic gain, for example, may be more willing than political refugees to

take up the ways of their American neighbors and to encourage their offspring to do so as

well. Rapid acculturation may even be a conscious strategy for achieving their economic

goals (Gibson, 2001; Jacoby, 2004). Refugees, on the other hand, especially if they

believe that their stay in the new country will be temporary, are generally less driven by

economics and job aspirations and frequently have less incentive to adopt the ways of the

new country (Gibson, 2001).

The social class background of the immigrant also influences the acculturation

process; middle class immigrants generally come into contact with a very different

America due to the neighborhoods where they settle than those who have few economic

resources (Gibson, 2001). We can not assume that those who arrive poor will enjoy

economic mobility and integration into the mainstream of American society.

Another important factor that needs careful examination is the status of the

immigrant. Berry (1998) stated that some individuals may come into the process either

on a voluntary basis (e.g., immigrants, sojourners) or are forced to acculturate (e.g.,

refugees). The entry into this process may be because of a physical move into a new

environment (e.g., immigrants) or through the colonization of territories (e.g.,

indigenous) (Berry, 1998). The experience may be altered significantly depending on

whether migration is voluntary or involuntary (Falicov, 2003). Those forced to leave

beloved homelands for religious, political, or war-related reasons may have experienced

trauma and feel intensely ambivalent about their longing to return and the necessity of

departure (Falicov, 2003). Such anguish may be ameliorated in those who left willingly

in search of a more prosperous life. In addition, some tend to settle permanently in the

new environment (e.g., ethnocultural) whereas others tend to move from one cultural

environment to another (e.g., sojourners) (Berry, 1998).

Proximity between homeland and new land also mediates the intensity of the loss.

The ability to make frequent visits, or even reside in both countries, may alleviate some

of the immigrants' pain by maintaining a sense of belonging and participation, a much

less feasible option for those whose homelands are far away and unreachable, or

politically or economically unfeasible (Falicov, 2003).   Despite the environmental,

cultural, and economic changes inherent in these modes of entry and settlement, the

process of adapting to the new society have been portrayed to be common for all people.

Prior immigrations context, proximity and accessibility to country of origin, gender, age

and generation, education, socioeconomic status, community social supports, and

experience of racial and/or economic discrimination must all be considered when

studying how individuals adapt to a new culture.

Acculturation Theories/ Universalistic Assumptions

Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, more than 20 million legal

immigrants have made their way to the United States, 80 percent or more of them from

countries outside Europe (King, 2000). The adaptations that emerge from the changes

imposed by migration on individual and family life deserve our careful study to better

inform delivery of social, psychological, medical, and educational services attuned to the

special needs of immigrants (Falicov, 2003).

It is clear that immigrants in the United States are confronted with many stressors and adaptation difficulties. Ethnic minorities have great social, economic, and political pressure to adjust to the traditions and lifestyle norms of White American culture (Zane & Mak, 2003).   Immigrants seem to exercise very little control over their lives, have minor influence in shaping the dominant cultural norms, and are powerless overall to affect the economic, political, and social structure of this society (Kuo & Tsai, 1986), in addition to the added difficulties of adjusting to a new dominant society. Therefore, the nature of the acculturation process will be shaped, at least in part, by where immigrants settle in the United States, the ethnic and social class composition of the communities in which they settle, and whether or not they are surrounded by co-ethnics or are more isolated from their ethnic culture.

Acculturation is a multifaceted process that refers to individual changes over time in identification, attitudes, values, and behavioral norms through contact with different cultures (Rhee et al., 1995); however, scholars working with this body of research have been primarily occupied with developing universal, linear models to understand the various stages of identity that an immigrant might experience (Berry, 1998; Burnam et al., 1987; Cuellar et al., 1995; Ghuman, 1991; Landrine & Klonoff, 1994; Nesdale et al., 1997). This linear model precludes the possibility that individuals may retain various elements of their culture of origin while simultaneously learning about another culture ((Zane & Mak, 2003). Even two-dimensional models such as bicultural identity, are limited in their ability to provide an understanding of identity in multiethnic individuals Phinney, 2003).   Rather than thinking of immigrants as moving from culture A to culture B in a linear fashion, we as professionals need to reconsider the process of acculturation

by emphasizing the process as continuous and ongoing, through which immigrants reconstitute and negotiate their identity. Changes occur during the lifetimes of immigrants and their descendants as they adapt to new situations and balance the demands and expectations of an old and new culture (Phinney, 2003).

By adhering to universal models of acculturation, we undervalue the asymmetrical relations of power and the inequities and injustices faced by certain immigrant groups as a result of their nationality, race or gender. According to Bhatia and Ram (2001) being "othered or racialized" is part of many non-European immigrants' acculturation experience, and these experiences are tightly knitted with their evolving conceptions of selfhood. It is important to emphasize that culture and self are deeply intertwined with each other; and, therefore, the meanings we create about ourselves are mediated through our participations in society and in our culture (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Therefore, self and culture are not independent or separate variables, but rather an individual's experiences in both cultures as well as other important factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, educational level are mixing and interchanging throughout the process, creating multiple identities.

When referring to an immigrants' acculturation process, we need to be attentive to issues of race, gender, and power status of the immigrant both before and after migration to the host country (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). In addition, the contextual factors that affect the acculturation process must be considered as well (Cabassa, 2003). The political, economical, and social context of the country from which individuals immigrated are important determinants that influence how individuals left and how they are going to adapt in a new society (Cabassa, 2003). Settlement factors at both the social and

individual level are also important issues that need to be considered when studying

acculturation experiences (Cabassa, 2003). Immigration policies as well as the host

country's attitudes toward immigration influence the reception of immigrants. Also,

immigrants' changes in demographic factors such as occupation, educational attainment,

and socioeconomic status, and other factors, can have profound effects on how the

individual adapts to the new culture (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cabassa, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

As the United States becomes a more diverse nation and as different cultures

come into continuous contact with each other, researchers and clinicians need to have a

better understanding of how individuals adapt to the cultural changes in order to provide

more adequate care and necessary services and resources. Migrant identity development

is central to multicultural psychology, acculturation, and mental health.

Non-European/non White diasporic communities bring into sharp focus a

requirement to constantly negotiate between the here and there, past and present,

homeland and hostland, and self and other. Such negotiations have not been adequately

recognized or understood in many of the existing acculturation models. By not

recognizing and increasing our understanding of these negotiations, we fail to provide

resources/supports that might be of great value to migrants/immigrants. By a lack of

awareness and understanding, we, as professionals and the general public, may begin

making assumptions that are based on discriminatory attitudes and beliefs of our past.

If we want to better understand how acculturation influences individuals we, as

researchers, counselors and helpers, need to allow the space necessary for the words of

these immigrant/migrant men and women to be heard. In order to learn from these

personal narratives and unique experiences, qualitative measures that mediate the

dynamic process of immigration and acculturation are warranted.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to expand on the existing literature on acculturation

of Latino migrants/immigrants. The goal of this study is to gain a more comprehensive

understanding of the process of acculturation encountered by Latinos, by examining the

complexities and intricacies of the acculturation process. As of yet, research has not

focused sufficiently on the numerous contextual factors that have been highlighted, that

may impact the process of acculturation. Thus, this paper aims to add to the literature by

examining the impact of various contextual factors during the acculturation process, and

most importantly creating some space for individual stories and voices to be heard.

Theoretical Framework of this study

One of the frameworks used in this study is the ecological model as initially

presented by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and more recently revised by the feminist ecological

theory (Ballou et al., 2002) addressing the dynamics between the individual and the

environment across various systems. The ecological model strives to understand the

individual across various systems and across time. There are several components, such

as the macrosystem (world views and ideology); the exosystem (social and government

institutions, culture and media); the mesosystem (the interaction between the

microsystem and the exosystem); and the microsystem, which incorporates family, peers,

and neighborhoods (Ballou et al., 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In using a feminist ecological model, we can identify that the acculturation process does not occur in a vacuum, but rather we can begin linking the process of acculturation to varied social, political, and cultural contexts.

In addition, this study also examines acculturation within the multicultural framework. The multicultural approach considers the cultural and sociopolitical context of migration and immigration, and it considers the history of oppression that specific ethnic and racial minority groups have experienced at the hands of mainstream society (Volpp, 2005). Also, it allows for a closer examination of factors that may aid or hinder one's experience in mainland US and understanding acculturation not just as a process, but rather how it is influenced by the intersection of race, ethnicity, class and gender.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity?
- Do all immigrants pass through the same "psychological acculturation" process?
- As components of identity are embedded in a network of multiple and often contested cultural practices, can gender, race, and class be relegated to the status of "variables?"
- What are the potential protective effects of spirituality, religiosity, and social supports?
- What has been helpful and what has been difficult in living in America?

Potential Benefits of the Research

The most important benefit of this study is expanding the existing literature on acculturation by adding personal narratives, voices, and perceived experiences of Latino migrants and immigrants. A potential benefit would be to increase the knowledge of those in a helping profession, by gaining more insight into what individuals encounter when migrating or immigrating to mainland US, and how their adjustment and acculturation process may be influenced by historical, political, and social forces.   Also, a better understanding of how race, class, and gender interact to influence immigrant identity development is helpful when working with ethnic and racial minority immigrants/migrants.

There are three potential benefits. First, it adds to the literature by addressing some of the limitations of the existing studies as well as critically analyzing the dominant views of acculturation within the field of psychology. Second, it seeks to increase cultural awareness among the counseling community. And lastly, but most importantly, it hopes to increase culturally sensitive services and practices for Latino(a) immigrants and their families.

Operational Definitions

Acculturation: the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact (Schwartz & Montgomery, 2002); a process of socialization into accepting and adapting to the cultural values of the larger society (Robinson, 2009). It involves changes in identity, values, behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes (Berry, 1990).

Culture: a set of people who have common and shared values; customs, habits, and rituals; systems of labeling, explanation, and evaluation; social rules of behavior; perceptions regarding human nature, natural phenomena, interpersonal relationships, time, and activity; symbols, art, and artifacts; and historical developments (Sodowsky et al., 1991). Belief systems, behaviors, and traditions make up the essence of culture (Robinson, 2009).

Ethnic Identity: a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group (Phinney, 2003). Ethnic identity is not a static category; rather, it is subject to change along various dimensions: over time or across generations in a new culture, in different contexts and with age or development (Phinney, 2003).

Ethnicity: referring to nationality and country of origin (Robinson, 2009).

Immigration: Immigration is defined as coming to a foreign country and taking up permanent residence.

Migration: This study has included some participants from Puerto Rico who are clearly not immigrants. Therefore, instead of using "immigration" in the results and discussion sections, this research will use the term "migration" in order to include all Latino participants, who moved from their home countries to mainland US.

Latino Immigrants: Latino is used to describe many different ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this ethnic label fails to describe the rich and diverse sociocultural and immigrant experiences of each group.   The term "Latino" or "Hispanic" does not define a race, ethnic group, or nationality. Rather, it is a used to describe immigrants to the

United States and their descendants from more than thirty countries in which the Spanish

language is spoken (Portillo & Texidor, 1987).

Psychological Acculturation: the internal processes of change that immigrants

experience when they come into direct contact with members of the host culture (Padilla

& Perez, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter begins with presenting a review of the literature addressing the

relationship between acculturation and mental health. This chapter will also identify the

theoretical frameworks and methodological foundations of acculturation and will

critically analyze dominant views of acculturation within the field of psychology. In this

chapter, there is an emphasis on the importance of obtaining a contextual framework

when studying patterns of acculturation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The immigrant influx of the last forty years is a demographic shift of historic

proportions. The number of newcomers living in the United States today is the highest it

has ever been (Jacoby, 2004). According to the latest U.S. Census, Latinos are the fastest

growing ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). As a result, there

has been an abundance of research studying the impact of acculturation.

Acculturation has been described as the psychosocial changes which occur when

individuals originating from one culture immigrate to a new host culture (Berry, 1997;

Burnam et al., 1987); the process whereby immigrants change their behavior and attitudes

toward those of the host society (Rogler et al., 1991). Psychologically, acculturation

reflects the extent to which individuals learn the values, behaviors, lifestyles, and

language of the host culture (Zane & Mak, 2003). It is safe to argue that in most cases

migration and immigration disrupt the supportive networks in the society of origin, which

is then accompanied by the difficult task of incorporating into a dominant group of the

host society. The immigrant may also be faced with many problems of economic

survival (Plan & Sachs-Eriksson, 2004), social mobility, as well as possible discrimination in the unfamiliar society (Gee et al., 2006; Hwang & Goto, 2008; Negy et al., 2009; Sue & Chu, 2003). Ethnic minorities have great social, economic, and political pressure to adjust to the traditions and lifestyle norms of White American culture (Zane & Mak, 2003). The nature of the acculturation process and the identification of factors predictive of successful cultural adaptation have been of considerable interest to researchers.

Latinos Cultural Patterns and Acculturation

　　　Latinos comprise a large and rapidly growing minority in the United States. The term Latino describes many different ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this ethnic label fails to describe the rich and diverse sociocultural and immigrant experiences of each group. The term "Latino" does not define a race, ethnic group, or nationality. Rather, it is used to describe immigrants to the United States and their descendants from more than thirty countries in which the Spanish language is spoken (Portillo & Texidor, 1987). According to most recent U.S. Census Bureau data, the proportion of Latino-origin people who are of Mexican background is 65%, approximately 9% are of Puerto Rican background, and about 3% each of Cuban, Salvadoran, and Dominican origins. The remainders are of some other Central American, South American or other Latino origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008) The Latino population tends to be younger than the population at large; the median age among Latinos is 26.7, while the median age for non-Latinos is 39.6 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Latino migrants have been a significant focus in acculturation research; however, the experiences of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans have received greater attention at the expense of other groups from Central and South America (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). As such, there continues to be much speculation about the influence of acculturation on family values and roles, socialization, child rearing, and parenting styles for Latino families (Chun & Akutsu, 2003).

Some researchers and professionals in the field (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Hobel et al., 2008; Marin & Marin, 1991; Taylor et al., 2006) have proposed that Latinos are characterized by high levels of interdependence, conformity, and readiness to sacrifice for the welfare of in-group members. Individual self assertion, competitiveness, and aggressiveness are discouraged (Marin & Marin, 1991). The concept of *familism* or *familialism* is one of the most distinct and important culture-specific values of Latinos as a whole (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Hobel et al., 2008; Marin, 1993; Vega, 1995). Specifically, familism is described as a cultural commitment to Latino family life and consists of strong identification with and attachment to members of the nuclear and extended family as well as strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity toward members of the family (Marin, 1993; Vega, 1995).

Several studies have attempted to determine whether familism is affected by acculturation. Some studies (Cortes, 1995; Vega, 1995) have suggested that it is likely that beliefs in certain aspects of familism become less salient as acculturation occurs in various Latino families. In contrast, other studies (Keefe et al., 1979; Luna et al, 1996) found that increased acculturation stimulated greater familism or family cohesion.   And other studies (Fuligni, 1998; Sabogal et al., 1987) have found that acculturation does not

have a detectable effect on familism. Cortes (1995) found that feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity toward members of the family as well as the notion of the family as an extension of the self protect Latino families from acculturative stress. More recent studies have reported higher levels of familialism among the less acculturated and that familism is positively associated with overall health (Campos et al., 2008; Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2007). Falicov (2003) proposed that many families are able to live in two worlds, alternating their everyday practices, rituals, and cultural codes depending on the context in which they find themselves. Acculturated adult Mexicans, and perhaps other Latinos, learn how to behave in a dominant culture that values assertiveness, independence, and achievement, but they do not tend to acquire mainstream internal patterns of family interactions, keeping instead the values and meanings of collectivistic families (Falicov, 2003). They live dual lives, functioning as mainstream Americans in the affairs of the community at large, but continuing their ethnically patterned lives within their own closed circle.

Marital relationships among Latinos are often characterized by adherence to strict gender role behaviors in which the dominant role is imparted to the husband and the wife assumes a secondary or more passive role (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). These roles are supported by the concept of machismo, which refers to the idea that Latino men often maintain dominance in the marriage by assuming the responsibilities of primary provider and protector of family (Montiel, 1973). However, it is important to consider that this view may no longer be representative of more contemporary marital relationships and therefore caution against stereotyping should be acknowledged.

Acculturation studies have highlighted how Latinas have moved beyond traditional gender roles and attained more egalitarian roles in their marital relationships (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). For example, acculturation is positively related to more liberal views about women and negatively related to more feminine role-type behavior for Mexican American women (Kranau et al., 1982). Similarly, it has been found that second generation Puerto Rican women are less likely to endorse stereotyped gender roles than are first generation Puerto Rican women (Soto, 1983).

A majority of Latinos are people of faith –they have a strong belief in the existence of a higher being and the need to follow prescribed formal practices to worship this being (Marquez, 2000). According to Marquez (2000) their religiosity is exhibited by marked features of cultural fatalism (form of existentialism expressed in a tendency to take life as it comes with a "resigned" mind set, as well as external locus of control (luck, supernatural powers, God). Religious leaders are viewed as substitute parents; therefore, they must be respected and obeyed.

For the past 30 years, the relationship between acculturation and mental health has been studied in Latinos more often than any other ethnic group. Interestingly, Rogler et al., (1991) published a review of the literature on Latino mental health, focusing on 30 empirical studies published between 1967-1989; however, they discovered that it was not possible to integrate the findings due to the lack of methodological uniformity.

A common theme in the acculturation research conducted with Latinos has been to point out differences in mental health between Latinos in dissimilar acculturation stages. For example, studies have suggested that biculturality is the stage of acculturation that is least detrimental to Latino's mental health and the ability to fit within the host

culture (Berry, 1997; Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008; Thoman & Suris, 2004). Torres and Rollock (2007) examined intercultural competence in predicting depression among 96 Hispanic adults. Their participants ranged in age from 18 to 62, and were comprised of Mexicans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Central and South Americans. Their results indicated that intercultural competence served to moderate the relationship between acculturation and depression and that those participants with high acculturation and high intercultural competence were associated with fewer symptoms of depression.   On the contrary, other studies suggest that there is a great amount of stress associated with the task of navigating and negotiating multiple identities (Alegria et al., 2007; Park-Taylor et al., 2008), and that health behaviors and risk factors become more unfavorable with greater acculturation (Abraido-Lanza et al., 2005). Some researchers have noted that alienation and isolation paired with discrimination may be the two intervening events producing the psychological distress (Kaplan & Marks, 1990; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2007) and that class and race are the most psychologically powerful determining cultural adaptations for this group (Hurtado et al., 1994). This is not surprising given that most Latino immigrants are economically disadvantaged (Portillo & Texidor, 1987). Employment attained immediately after migration often represents a step down from jobs left in the society of origin (Rogler, 1991). Poor education and employment discrimination combine to keep large numbers of Latinos from achieving economic security.   Discrimination has had serious consequences on the economic well-being of Latinos and has excluded many from the mainstream of U.S. society (Portillo & Texidor, 1987).   Today's immigrants, the majority of whom are cultural, linguistic, and racial minorities, may have a difficult time being included into the

superordinate American identity because of multiple visible differences, which can easily

identify them as outsiders (Park-Taylor et al., 2008).

Demographic data for the present study were taken from the 2008 U.S. Census

Bureau. The Census Office estimated 46 million Latinos living in the United States,

making people of Latino origin the nation's largest race or ethnic minority. Although the

socioeconomic status of Latinos varies considerably, it still continues to experience

substandard levels of educational attainment, employment, and family income. Among

Latinos, 22.9% of Mexicans, 24.8% of Puerto Ricans, 14.6% of Cubans, 17% of Latinos

from Central America, and 11.6% of Latinos from South America are below the poverty

level. Among Latinos 23.2% are below the poverty level compared to 8.6% of Non-

Hispanic Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). According to the U.S. Census Bureau

(2008), the poverty thresholds for a two person family is $14, 051.

Although Latinos are represented in a wide variety of occupations, occupations

such as farming, fishing and forestry have the highest percentage of Latinos than any

other ethnic group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). In contrast with Asians and non

Hispanic whites who are more often in management, professional and related

occupations. Many problems, such as air pollution, sexually transmitted disease, and

malnutrition affect the poor more than the affluent. Therefore, if Latinos are over

represented in the lower economic levels of the society, one can infer that these problems

will affect them in a disproportionate manner (Portillo & Texidor, 1987). Education

rates also significantly differ between Latino and non-Hispanic whites. Latinos with high

school diplomas rose from 53% in 1993 to 57% in 2004 and to 62% in 2008 but still low

when compared to 89% of non-Hispanic whites who had a high school diploma (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2008) If education is indeed a prerequisite for economic self-sufficiency, statistics on Hispanic educational attainment is a source of real concern.

A report by the Institute of Medicine in March 2002, addressed the health disparities for people of color. They reported a study conducted in an actual clinical setting by van Ryan and Burke in 2000, which found that doctors are more likely to ascribe negative racial stereotyping to their minority patients. These stereotypes were ascribed to patients even when differences in minority and non-minority patients' education, income, and personality characteristics were considered. According to this report by the Institute of Medicine, African Americans and Latinos tend to receive a lower quality of healthcare across a range of disease areas and clinical services.

A person's economic status, physical health, and unequal access to resources due to institutionalized racism are all important factors affecting mental health, however, these are factors rarely assessed in acculturation research. In research, there continues to be reluctance to acknowledging the detrimental effects of racial privilege. Instead, non-dominant group members find themselves blamed for their disadvantaged status and admonished for failing to work hard enough in a system which they are told rewards people for their hard work (Greene, 1995).

Acculturation and Mental Health

The importance of acculturation to mental health has been a major focus in the acculturation literature. However, researchers have come to very different conclusions about the correlation between these two variables. Berry (1997) has provided a conceptual framework from which to understand the psychological level of acculturation.

According to this framework, psychological acculturation begins with an ethnic individual's subjective experiences of the contact between two distinct cultures and the need to participate to varying degrees in each of the cultures. This process continues as the individual determines if this contact experience will present difficulties and the extent to which these difficulties will affect the adaptations process (Berry, 1997). Berry (1980), has postulated that it is common but not inevitable for immigrants to experience acculturative stress during the process of making "shifts" between the native culture to the dominant culture. Depending on the level of acculturative stress, an immigrant can exhibit pathological behaviors such as somatization and feelings of marginality (Berry, 1980).

It has been hypothesized that acculturation is related linearly both negatively and positively, and also to relate in curvilinear fashion to psychological distress (Burnam et al., 1987; Kaplan & Marks, 1990). The negative relationship has been described as immigrants low in acculturation have not had sufficient time to reconstruct social networks and therefore experience pervasive isolation from the cultural parameter of the host society. The absence of instrumental skills, such as knowledge of English, keeps the unfamiliar world from becoming familiar and controllable. This predicament lowers self-esteem and eventually gives rise to the symptomatic behavior (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). The positive relationship hypothesis states that increases in acculturation may alienate the person from traditional supportive primary groups. Lopez (2008) highlighted the importance of continued Spanish fluency among highly acculturated women, as well as continued visits to Puerto Rico are important experiences for self-esteem. A sense of belonging, or group attachment, may be especially important for traditionally

marginalized groups because it serves to unify and rally members in the face of various threats and provides a shared sense of community (Lopez, 2008). Increased acculturation also facilitates the internalization of host-society cultural norms, among which are damaging stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes toward certain cultural/racial groups. This may result in self deprecation and ethnic self-hatred (Burnam et al., 1987). Therefore, it has been hypothesized that good mental health stems from the optimal combination of retaining the supportive and ego-reinforcing traditional cultural elements and learning the host society's instrumental cultural elements (Burnam et al., 1987; Kaplan & Marks, 1990).

Others have argued that the strong family orientation and social ethics characteristic of many cultures result in less psychopathology among the un-acculturated (Kaplan & Marks, 1990; Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Sue & Chu, 2003). According to this view, increased acculturation may lead to higher expectations regarding the achievement of social and economic status in the dominant society which may be frustrated by discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion (Kaplan & Marks, 1990; Sue & Chu, 2003). In addition, the values of the dominant culture which emphasize occupational status and prestige, achievement, competition, and individualism may run counter to traditional non-American values which place greater emphasis on family and community integration (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). Thus, the process of acculturation may detach the individual from his/her family or group leading to interpersonal conflict and alienation from a valuable support system (Kaplan & Marks, 1990).

Kuo and Tsai (1986) found that among immigrants, those who moved to the United States at an earlier age exhibited fewer adjustment difficulties. They also found

that as long as the individuals had sufficient number of close ties, they enjoyed a better

mental health status, thus reinforcing the social support argument which holds strong

social supports to be imperative for good mental health. Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer

(2009) tested 112 Hispanic immigrants living in the US whether discrepancies between

their premigration expectations about life in the US and their postmigration (actual)

experience in the US would predict their levels of acculturative stress. Part of their

findings indicated that older immigrants and those with higher incomes experience

relatively less acculturative stress.

Burnam and colleagues (1987) examined the relationship between level of

acculturation and specific psychiatric disorders in a large and diversely acculturated

household sample of Mexican American adults residing in Los Angeles (n = 3132).

Acculturation was measured with a 26 items scale measuring language familiarity and

usage, ethnic interaction, activities reflecting cultural traditions and lifestyle, ethnic

identification, and ethnic background. The scale was based upon the Acculturation

Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980) and the Behavioral

Acculturation Scale (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Aranalde, and Kurtines, 1978). Psychiatric

disorders were assessed using the NIMH Diagnostic Interview Schedule (DIS).   Their

results indicated that native-born Mexican Americans, who tended to have higher levels

of acculturation, had higher lifetime prevalence of disorders than immigrant Mexican

Americans, including phobia, alcohol and drug abuse or dependence, as well as major

depression and dysthymia (Burnam et al., 1987). One possible explanation provided by

the researchers to explain this difference was that immigrants may be at lower risk for

disorders than native born Mexican Americans because of a lower sense of deprivation.

Although immigrants are likely to have lower social status they may be less distressed by their current status because it surpasses their standard of living in Mexico (Burnam, et al., 1987). Native Mexican Americans, with higher expectations for status attainment fostered by the dominant culture, may be more distressed with their current circumstances and experience a greater sense of deprivation (Burnam, et al., 1987).

Kaplan and Marks (1990) examined the relationship between acculturation and psychological distress in young (20-30), middle aged (31-50), and older adults (51-74) Mexican Americans (n = 3084). Psychological distress was measured with the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), and acculturation was measured with items on spoken and written language and ethnic identification. They found that as acculturation increased, psychological distress significantly increased in young adults but tended to decrease in older adults. Age may moderate the acculturation-distress relationship because different age groups typically find themselves in different social and economic circumstances (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). These research findings support the assumption that Mexican American young adults (moderately or highly acculturated) attempting to achieve social and economic status in the U.S. may find that their outcomes fall short of their expectations and aspirations because of discriminatory barriers and practices related to employment and advancement, which is likely to produce frustration and anger which may lead to psychological distress (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). On the other hand, through the years, these individuals may develop a more bicultural orientation on dimensions such as affiliations, social supports, and cultural beliefs, which may contribute to positive mental health (Kaplan & Marks, 1990).

Thoman and Surís (2004) examined acculturation level and type, acculturation stress, and several demographic variables as predictors of psychological distress and health related quality of life in a sample of 101 Latino patients. The researchers used the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II (Scale I); the Hispanic Stress Inventory, which is a self report inventory developed to assess a broad range of culturally relevant psychosocial stressors experienced by US born and immigrant Hispanics; the Medical 36 item Short Form Health Survey, to assess physical, mental, and social functioning and well-being across eight domains; and the Brief Symptom Inventory, which is a 53 item self report inventory designed to assess overall psychological distress level and specific psychological symptoms (Thoman & Suris, 2004).

The results indicated that acculturative stress was predictive of psychological distress beyond the effects of demographic variables. They also found that low-bicultural acculturation type was associated with greater psychological distress. Assimilated acculturation type was predictive of good quality of life and mental health (Thoman & Surís, 2004). One of the major limitations of this study as reported by the researchers was the limited capacity of their assessment measures. They were not able to assess participants who may have been categorized as marginalized acculturation type and there was high probability that many of the study participants fell within the marginalized acculturation type, which is characterized by a low of a sense of belonging or identification with either cultural group (Thoman & Surís, 2004).

Methodological Issues

Given the importance of acculturation to the psychological study of ethnic minority issues, extensive efforts have been made to operationalize and assess the acculturation level among ethnic minority individuals (Zane & Mak, 2003). The most frequent domain seems to be the use of language. However, as Zane and Make (2003) have pointed out, there are great differences in how language use is assessed. Some measures primarily assess language use, others primarily assess language preference, and other measures primarily assess language proficiency. As Le Sage (2004) points out, there are problems associated with relying on language use to assess acculturation. First, language use in the interview does not truly reflect language preference or proficiency, as persons can be proficient in several languages and use them selectively. In addition, learning a second language does not indicate the extent to which values associated with that linguistic tradition are adopted (Le Sage, 2004). Ethnic language is often lost in one generation but affective aspects such as kinship bonds are more enduring and less likely to be extinguished by exposure to American society (Sue & Chu, 2003). Also, Harwood (1994) argues that compared to earlier periods, proportionately fewer immigrants arrive today without prior exposure to English. In addition, many contemporary immigrants have already acquired cosmopolitan cultural orientations in their countries of origin and have internalized them, not as alien accretions or "American" ways, but as part of their own culture (Harwood, 1994).

Another frequently sampled domain involves the people with whom an individual chooses to socialize and affiliate with and daily living habits such as the types of foods eaten or the type of music to which one listens to. According to Falicov (2003), many immigrant families are able to restore a sense of coherence to their lives by developing

dual visions and lifestyles that preserve central themes of a cultural family life. An immigrant's daily family rituals, such as meal preparation, home decoration, forms of daily greeting, and dress may mimic the local customs of the original culture, but they may also mix the new elements of language and customs of the adoptive culture (Falicov, 2003). The opportunity to engage in ethnic festivals, enjoy ethnic dance groups, obtain ethnic foods in markets and restaurants, and meet and marry coethnic individuals can be factors that enhance feelings of ethnic belonging and positive ethnic attitudes; however, these are not necessarily linked to acculturation (Phinney, 2003).

Clearly, it is difficult to determine the level of acculturation by proxy variables alone. A qualitative measure is necessary in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this complex and multidimensional process. Unfortunately, researchers tend to measure what is easy (e.g., generation, language, food preference) rather than tackle the important but difficult to measure phenomena such as affective and intimate relationships and values (Sue & Chu, 2003).

In most of the studies reviewed, there was an ambitious pursuit to compare the psychological health of individuals to levels of acculturation. This analysis carried the assumption that individuals at different levels of acculturation will have differences in their psychological presentation, perhaps independent of many other variables, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, perceived discrimination and prejudice, occupations, conditions and reasons for immigrating, and the conditions of the receiving society. This assumption is clearly problematic and not consistent with a multicultural framework. This major limitation has been discussed minimally by some researchers but not nearly to the extent that it deserves acknowledgment.

Kaplan and Marks (1990) identified significant limitations of some of the measurement scales. For example, the widely used CES-D scale (Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression) has a strong bias toward affective components of mental illness. This assumption may not be adequate for mental health research across cultural lines because in some non-Anglo cultures, for example, somatic symptoms such as appetite loss and sleeping disorder are more frequent expressions of depressive illness, than are affective symptoms, such as depressed mood, feeling of guilt, and suicidal ideas that are more common in Anglo cultures (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). Most of the scales used in research contain insufficient measures of somatic manifestations which may be the primary expression of depression among the less-acculturated, non-Anglo groups.

Salant and Lauderdale (2003) compared various approaches to acculturation within the health literature of Asian immigrants. They emphasize the importance of considering the socioeconomic context as well as migration histories within acculturation studies. They also pointed out that some of the measures typically used to assess acculturation are not equally appropriate for each Asian group (2003). They stressed the importance of recognizing cultural, group and individual differences. Salant and Lauderdale recommend that researchers proposing to study acculturation and health need to articulate a conceptual model of acculturation, explicitly stating how they understand acculturation and health to interrelate while paying attention to the historical experiences of different ethnic groups. They also recommend that researchers become aware that the expression of illness as well as objective health may change with acculturation and that gender and socioeconomic status may modify acculturation's effect on health (2003).

Rogler and colleagues (1991) examined 30 publications on the acculturation and mental health status among Latinos in the United States. One of the major criticisms was based on the style of assessing acculturation. Mostly, an assortment of interview items has been developed to tap into the respondent's immediate cultural life. Most commonly, items assessing acculturation examine whether English is used in a variety of situations and social relations, the language of the media the respondents read or watch, the consumption of foods, cultural preferences in style of clothing, and self-assessments of ethnic identity. To regard this type of assessment as one that can satisfy appropriately the diversity among cultural groups is a troublesome assumption. For example, Rogler and colleagues (1991) emphasize that Latinos display considerable diversity, not only with respect to socioeconomic status and other demographic characteristic but also with respect to specific cultural elements historically rooted in their respective nationalities. Recognition must be given to the fact that cultural elements specific to Latino nations, or configurations of such elements composing a nation's cultural heritage, are being left by the wayside as a result of this assumption, and as a result their relevance remains unexamined, unknowingly blocked from the researcher's view (Rogler et al., 1991). Rogler and colleagues (1991) also challenged the use of standardized mental health assessment tools and the use of diagnostic criteria stating that such procedures run the risk of imposing clinical categories of mental illness without considering whether they are applicable.

The other significant limitation worth mentioning has to do with the limited capacity of a quantitative research design. When using these common quantitatively based scales, many factors remain unexamined that may in fact be significantly impacting

the acculturation process, and the psychological well being of immigrants.   It is also

important to acknowledge that most quantitative measurement tools have been designed

using White, middle-class, masculine norms as standard for healthy development; thus

creating bias toward understanding "normal, healthy development and behavior" from a

dominant white cultural perspective. When an established set of criteria for evaluating

people's worth exists, economic exploitation, religious bias, homophobia, able-body-ism,

and other sources of discrimination ensue (Robinson, 2009). Because of the limited

nature of these measurement scales, many variables and factors are not accounted for

when examining the relationship between acculturation and mental health status. For

example, unequal access to resources, prejudice and discrimination, difficulty meeting

basic needs for survival may be significant components, but are often overlooked.

Although differences in language and customs diminish over generations, phenotypical

differences do not. Visibility, or identifiability, is clearly a factor in discrimination, as

well as maintenance of ethnic identity (Phinney, 2003). Members of ethnic groups that

are racially identifiable have experienced continuing discrimination for many

generations, therefore, for them a strong ethnic identity may be thought of as a reaction to

negative interactions with the larger society (Phinney, 2003).   Race is associated with

significant economic, political, social, and psychological consequences. In our social

world, race is used to divide people into groups, and these groups are associated with

different levels of status, disparities in access to resources, and discrepancies in

achievement, health, and well-being outcomes (Shih et al., 2007).

Plant and Sachs-Ericsson (2004) examined the depressive symptoms and

prevalence of major depression among members of ethnic and racial minorities, and

White people from a large random sample. Their research findings indicated that minority group members experienced more depressive symptoms and a marginally higher prevalence of major depression than did White participants. These effects were mediated by participants' problems meeting their basic needs (Plant & Sachs-Ericsson, 2004).

It is not surprising that negative experiences such as decreased opportunities for employment and education, higher rates of poverty, higher rates of prejudice and discrimination are associated with psychological distress. If minority group members face more hardship than do White people, then they may be more likely to draw on others for strength and support. In fact research in social psychology indicates that when people are distressed they are more likely to affiliate with others, particularly those who share a similar fate (Plant & Sachs-Ericsoon, 2004).

In a more recent study, Lopez (2008) also points out that a sense of belonging, or group attachment, may be especially important for traditionally marginalized groups because it serves to unify and rally members in the face of various threats and provides a shared sense of community. Therefore, while considering these factors, if one was to quantitatively study the level of acculturation with minority immigrants it is a high possibility that these individuals would be considered low on the acculturation scale (due to their tendency to affiliate with similar folks) and because their reported distress, we could conclude that those low in acculturation therefore have increased psychological distress; clearly a biased and misrepresented outcome. However, when taking other factors into consideration and allowing these folks to speak about their experiences of acculturating to the dominant society we could conclude that with increasing

acculturation, proactive factors such as strong social networks, family cohesiveness may erode and put minority group members at higher risk for psychological problems.

Given the historical as well as contemporary existence of racism and discrimination in United States, one may assume that there would be more literature on the effects of racism on minority individuals. Yet, research exploring the biological, psychological, and social effects of racism is virtually nonexistent (Clark et al., 1999). Nesdale and Mak (2003) focused on the psychological consequences of immigration. They found that as cultural distance increases, it is plausible that immigrants would find it easier, less stressful to stay with their traditional attitudes and ways of doing things, rather than confronting and adapting to an alien environment (2003). What they also found was that cultural distance is related to the level of acceptance or prejudice experience by immigrants from members of the cultural majority – the greater the distance, the less the acceptance (Nesdale & Mak, 2003). Not surprisingly, they also found that physical dissimilarities militate against acceptance. For example, they reported that more stigmatized groups such as Caribbean blacks and Chinese versus less stigmatized groups such as Greeks and Italians perceived themselves to be at a social disadvantage in the dominant culture (2003). The implications of these findings are that, as cultural rejection by the dominant cultural group increases, immigrants might turn increasingly toward their ethnic group for support and identification (Nesdale and Mak, 2003).

A more recent study conducted by Park-Taylor and colleagues (2008) investigated the attitudes of ten participants, from diverse racial backgrounds, in regards to "what it means to be a true American." The researchers concluded from the personal interviews

that "to be American is to be White." They also reported that due to the impact of 9/11

and the War in Iraq, participants reported heightened levels of racial profiling,

discrimination, and an "us-versus-them" mentality (Park-Taylor et al., 2008). Other

researchers have argued that since racism is an incorrigible feature of American society,

new immigrants and their children are at risk if they sacrifice their cultural identity in an

ill-fated attempt to assimilate (Nee & Alba, 2004) and are better off remaining in their

own protective ethnic communities.

Theoretical Frameworks on Acculturation

Clearly, there have been two distinct theoretical frameworks that have dominated

the study of acculturation. One camp of researchers have assumed that acculturation is a

unidimensional construct that can be conceptualized along a single continuum, ranging

from the immersion in the person's culture of origin to the immersion in the dominant or

host culture (Burnam et al., 1987; Kaplan & Marks, 1990). Usually the process is viewed

as a one-way process. In this view, the minority must make itself more like the majority,

whose role is limited to accepting or rejecting the minority "petition" to be allowed into

the mainstream. But the reality is that the majority changes too, and the American

mainstream has been continually reshaped by the incorporation of new groups (Nee &

Alba, 2004). Measures using the unidimensional model have tended to rely on several

behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal domains related to acculturation to determine where

individuals fall along this theoretical continuum (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cabassa, 2003;

Gibson, 2001).

Instruments based on these models fail to capture how individuals balance both their cultural domains, and therefore forcing individuals to make a choice between the two cultures. There is a false assumption that in order for individuals to acculturate there needs to be a reduction in their adherence to their own cultural practices. Therefore, with such assumptions, individuals who are moving toward the dominant culture are forced to throw away aspects of their culture of origin to make room for the acquisition of new cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cabassa, 2003).

The second theoretical perspective that has dominated the research field on acculturation (Berry, 1998; Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Nesdale et al., 1997; Plant & Sachs-Ericsoon, 2004; Rogler et al., 1991) is the multidimensional model. The framework for this multidimensional model is often expressed in four distinct acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These four underlying strategies are based on the assumption that individuals are free to choose their own acculturation style. However, history provides us with numerous examples of how some groups have been forced or discouraged from interacting with the dominant society.

The major limitation of both models, the unidimensional and multidimensional, is that it does not capture the dynamic nature of the acculturation process, and the complexity and uniqueness involved gets lost when the theory is translated into measurement instrument (Cabassa, 2003). As an example, Cabassa provided a scenario that challenges these universalistic approaches to understanding one's process of acculturating. "An individual entering the acculturation process early in life (childhood or adolescence) may embrace the dominant cultural values and behaviors as a way of fitting in and reject some aspects of their culture of origin. This same individual may,

later in life, embrace his/her own culture of origin and integrate these two cultural

orientations" (Cabassa, 2003, pg. 138). Measurement and research design that fails to

include this developmental possibility may miss an important component of the

acculturation experience. Additionally, acculturation may look very differently in private

and public contexts. Publicly, an individual may express a certain acculturation level

such as integration or assimilation, but the same individual in his/her own private space

may act or behave very differently.

Overview of Limitations of the Existing Studies

This review of the literature is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather the goal is to

point out current deficiencies in the acculturation research which will guide the purpose

of the current study. Current research reflects an oversimplification of the relationship

between acculturation and mental health. For example, issues such as the nature of the

immigration, time of immigration, socioeconomic status, racial differences, length of

residence in the United States, differences between the two cultures in contact, and social

support networks, among many others, may moderate the way acculturation takes place

(Cortes, 1994). So the relationship between acculturation and mental health is influenced

by many variables but unfortunately, a great majority of studies disregard these

interrelationships. Too often, the examination of the relationship between acculturation

and mental health is reduced to the use of one acculturation scale, generally heavily

loaded on language items, and a scale assessing psychological symptomatology (Cortes,

1994).

The majority of the current acculturation scales suffer from another limitation. They tend to force respondents to make a choice between the levels of involvement in culture to the exclusion of another. This is a common trend with most quantitative studies where individuals are asked to self report on several items. Padilla (1980) argued that the current quantitative measures of acculturation do not provide information about how the individual adapts and/or copes with the pressures to acculturate, nor have they helped to understand why some immigrants acculturate at a faster rate than others, and what factors determine the difference.   In addition, simple questionnaires that force an individual to select White, Asian, African American, Latino, and American Indian are too simplistic and inadequate in assessing the multiplicity of ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds that constitute an individual's core identity and that determine how a person responds to different social contexts (Padilla, 1994). Proxy measures inform us about a possible relationship between acculturation and some other outcome, such as health outcomes, but provide us with little information about how and why these relationships are formed (Cabassa, 2003).   Rather than simply relying on the use of proxy measures, a phenomenological approach would document ongoing emotional issues in acculturation as well assessing the manner in which each individual cognizes and evaluates the interethnic environment. By incorporating personal narratives we may gain a more comprehensive understanding of people's cognitions and evaluations of their multiethnic world and of their ongoing affective reactions to interethnic situations (Harwood, 1994), clearly a move away from the universalistic assumptions that have permeated the research field.

Universalistic Views of Acculturation

Much of the literature on the acculturation process has assumed universality, which rests on the assumption that all immigrating individuals undergo the same kind of psychological operations during the acculturation process. As stated by Bhatia and Ram (2001), to suggest that the acculturation process merely involves 'culture shedding' or 'some behavioral shift' or the 'unlearning of one's previous repertoire' implies that one can float in and out of cultures, shedding one's history and replacing it with a new set of cultural, and political behaviors whenever needed. Some scholars (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Padilla & Perez, 2003) have criticized anyone advocating for "integration" as the endpoint. This goal is problematic in two ways; one is that integration/biculturalism is expected without the explanation of how such a goal is achieved and secondly, who decides when one is "appropriately integrated?" Advocating the strategy of "integration" as the endpoint of the acculturation process overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful rupturing experiences associated with 'living in between' cultures (Bhatia & Ram, 2001).

For most people, their negotiation with multiple cultural sites is fluid, dynamic and interminable and often unstable and is not adequately capture by a linear, universal classification of acculturation. The development of hyphenated identities (e.g., Asian-American, Mexican-American) involves a constant process of negotiation, intervention, and mediation that are connected to a larger set of political and historical practices that are in turn lined to and shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality and power (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Cabassa, 2003). Having to choose a fixed identity, as the universalistic view on the process of acculturation dictates, negates an individual's other identity which even

if invisible, may be a substantial a part of their multiple identity development and self-definition.

We need to move beyond the use of proxy measures. Relying on a person's age at immigration, time spent in the US, and language spoken at home, are not providing us with a complete picture of this complex cultural phenomenon; rather, they provide a fragmented and often confusing picture of how acculturation affects individuals trying to adapt to a new environment (Cabassa, 2003). Proxy measures inform us about a possible relationship between acculturation and some other outcome, such as prevalence of mental illnesses, health outcomes, coping strategies, but provide us with little information about how and why these relationships are formed (Cabassa, 2003; Trickett, 1996). Proxy measures alone do not capture the intricacies of the acculturation experience and therefore need to be used in conjunction with other measures and contextual factors, such as qualitative accounts, of how a person adapts to a new culture and how a person makes meaning of his/her experiences. The inclusion of contextual factors helps us identify possible mediator and moderator factors that may hinder or aid the acculturation experience (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cabassa, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Sue & Chu, 2003).

In the field of Psychology there has been a strong emphasis on empirically validated therapeutic approaches that emphasize individual responsibility on one's ability to adapt and function "appropriately" in the dominant White middle class society. There are a variety of assumptions and beliefs embedded in our understanding of human nature and health and one must be aware of these assumptions as well as one's own bias and influences. We need to look beyond the constrictive measures and our biased

assumptions but rather strive to design measurement scales and clinical practices that respond to the complexity of human beings. Rather than placing total responsibility and obligation on the individual for growth and development and "healthy" acculturation, one needs to consider societal, political, and environmental factors that may impede one's ability to acculturate to the dominant society.

We can not discuss culture without acknowledging race, gender, class, as well as well as other socioeconomic and political factors. Characteristics of the migrant groups, differential conditions and reasons for migration, conditions of the receiving society, family values, and expectations, experiences with prejudice and discrimination, education level, occupation, location, language may have differing salience for different groups. Clearly, the research needs new direction, proceeding from, but not constricted by, the existing findings and assumptions.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter presents a description of the research design, individual interview recruitment and selection criteria, information about participants, format and content. A restatement of the research questions is provided along with questions aimed at gathering the data during the interviews. Ethical considerations will also appear in this chapter.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method is identified as the most relevant method to build upon a body of knowledge, by uncovering the unexpected, and by exploring new avenues within a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). They have also stressed that specific cultural lifestyle patterns are very difficult to plumb in surveys unless there has been primary exploration through a qualitative research design.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of acculturation encountered by Latinos. As discussed in chapter two, a majority of studies have examined the relationship between acculturation and mental health in isolation from relevant sociocultural and contextual variables The main emphasis of the current study is to investigate how the contextual factors shape the process of acculturation. Therefore, this research will take the form of a narrative study by using a thematic analysis approach. This approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an event and aims to explore in detail the participant's view of the topic under investigation (Smith et al., 1999).

Participants were interviewed individually and given an opportunity to tell their unique stories of immigration or migration and their experiences with the process of acculturation.

Recruitment and Selection Criteria

An initial attempt was made to recruit participants from community based organizations such as "Latino Health Institute" and "Centro Latino de Chelsea," from local schools with high diversity rates such as Columbus Elementary School in Medford and Chelsea Public High School. This attempt was made through an initial email contact, followed up by a phone conversation and then at the request of respective directors and/or representatives, the IRB approved flyers stating the research topic, and population of interest as well as the contact name and business phone number of the researcher was sent. These recruitment efforts did not generate any participants and therefore, recruitment relied on a network approach, which entailed approaching a group of people including professionals, associates, and friends to describe the study and to elicit their cooperation in generating a list of prospective participants. An IRB approved flyer was also distributed either in person or via email. Once potential participants were identified, with their consent, their names and phone numbers were released to the researcher and were promptly contacted by the researcher. During the initial phone conversation, the goals and purpose of the study were described, participation, confidentiality were also discussed, and potential participants had an opportunity to ask questions.   If the potential participant met the inclusion criteria (see Appendix A), and expressed an interest in participating, the interview time and day was scheduled. Each participant was given the

option of meeting where they felt most comfortable. A majority of participants expressed

a strong interest in meeting in their homes, one participant was interviewed in a public

place (i.e., Starbucks) and a number of participants were met at their work place, either

before or after work, or during a lunch break, which they deemed as comfortable and

convenient.

At the start of each interview, each participant was explained: the general purpose

of the study; what their voluntary participation involves, sharing with the researchers

their immigration/migration and acculturation experiences during a 1 hour interview; and

the issues of confidentiality, including their approval for audio-taping the interview. A

detailed description of the informed consent was provided. As outlined in the informed

consent, participants were reassured that they will not be asked any questions regarding

their legal status. The informed consent was read out loud by the researcher, frequently

stopping and assessing the participants understanding. On two occasions, the participant

did not fully understand the contents and a third person, who was able to translate, was

brought in by the participant. Each participant was asked to sign and date the informed

consent and was given a copy of the signed form.

Participants

There were 20 participants. Participants were not asked to state their exact age,

but were asked to confirm that they were 25 years or older. At the time of the interview,

participants have been living in mainland US 10 years or less. The relationship status of

participants were mixed with some married, some married but separated, single, and

engaged. However, some participants reported being legally married but not living with

their partners. More than half of the participants had a child or children. The following

countries were represented: El Salvador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Columbia, Dominican

Republic, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, and Mexico.   Information including their

pseudonyms, country of origin, ethnic self-identification, gender, reasons for

migration/immigration, location of the interview, marital status, and years living in

mainland US is outlined in Appendix E.

Interviews

Interviews were one hour in length. Before the interview, each participant was

asked whether they wanted/needed a translator. Only two participants expressed concern

with their English and said that they preferred to invite a friend who could help them.

Each interview was audio-taped and later transcribed by the researcher.

Interview Content: Addressing the Research Questions

As previously mentioned, narrative research involves getting a story from an

individual who is identified as having some knowledge or experience with the topic of

the study. Therefore, in the beginning of each interview, I, the researcher let participants

know that their experience is interesting, important, and relevant, and therefore their

experiences and stories being investigated have worth and merit. Most interviews took

place at participants' homes, providing the researcher with invaluable information about

the context of their lives and therefore the researcher's role was an integral part of the

qualitative study. Interviews were less formal, less structured, asking participants to

share parts of their experience that they would like others to know about.

There were some semi-structured questions identified only to develop some consistency across interviews and to ensure that the research questions would be addressed; however, in most cases, stories, experiences, and topics naturally emerged during the course of the interview. The research questions that have been identified for this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity?

2. Do all immigrants pass through the same "psychological acculturation" process?

3. As components of identity embedded in a network of multiple and often contested cultural practices, can gender, race, and class be relegated to the status of "variables?"

4. What are the potential protective effects of spirituality, religiosity and social supports?

5. What has been helpful and what has been difficult in living in America?

Each interview started off with the last research question, "What has been helpful and what has been difficult while living in America" and interestingly, in many cases, it was the only question asked directly, as participants naturally addressed the other areas of interest. If certain areas or topics were not addressed, I, the researcher asked additional questions in an effort to address the research questions.

To address the first question, Phinney's (2003) components of Ethnic Identity was used. According to Phinney, the aspects include (a) the ethnic self identification, or self-label, that people use to identify themselves ethnically; (b) the subjective sense that

people have of belonging to an ethnic group and their feelings about their group membership (i.e., the strength and valence of their ethnic identity); and (c) their level of ethnic identity development (i.e., the extent to which their feelings and understandings about their group have been consciously examined and issues surrounding ethnicity have been resolved, leading to an achieved ethnic identity). Some questions that were of interest and may have been asked to elicit some discussion regarding ethnic identity were:

> ➢ How do you identify yourself?
>
> ➢ What are you feeling about being a part of your ethnic group?
>
> ➢ Who do you associate with the most?
>
> ➢ How do you define your relationship with your own ethnic, racial, and/or cultural community?
>
> ➢ Where do you interact with members of your own ethnic, racial and/or cultural community?
>
> ➢ What feelings do you have regarding your own ethnic community?

The second research question is one that is frequently studied in quantitatively driven research studies to determine the level of acculturation. In many cases, there is an assumption that all immigrants undergo the same kind of psychological operations during the acculturation process. Therefore, simple open ended questions were asked in an effort to elicit a discussion around this complex issue. Questions such as:

> ➢ What language are you most comfortable speaking?
>
> ➢ How do you define your relationship with the host society (with "Americans)?

➢ Where do you most often interact with the host society?

➢ How do you feel about the host community (America)?

➢ Do you have any plans to return to the homeland?

➢ How frequently are you able to visit your homeland?

➢ How have you coped/dealt with the differences between the customs of the host community and your own habits, practices, beliefs?

➢ What is the quality of the relationship with your family, immediate and extended?

➢ Do you have plans on becoming an American Citizen, if so, what are your feelings or reasons for wanting to become a citizen?

The third research question addresses the importance of race, gender and class in the process of acculturation. In most of the acculturation research, gender, race and class have been relegated to variables; however, it is strongly believed by this researcher and other critics noted in the literature review that the acculturation process is impacted by ones gender, class and racial identity. Therefore, open ended questions were asked to address these important areas. Some of the questions are as follows:

➢ What has been the most difficult issue about being a female/male migrant in the US?

➢ Has your gender role changed since you migrated to the US?

➢ Has there been any change of power distribution in your family?

➢ What role has your race played in your experience with the host culture?

➢ Have you experienced any type of discrimination?

➢ What was your occupation in the homeland?

> ➢ What has your occupation been in America?

> ➢ Discuss/describe the major challenges you face as a Latino migrant?

In order to address the fourth question regarding the potential protective effects of spirituality, religiosity and social supports, the following were inquired about, although again, most were answered naturally during our discussion:

> ➢ What is your religious and/or spiritual affiliation?

> ➢ How frequently do you participate in religious, spiritual practices?

> ➢ Has your affiliation with religiosity or spirituality helped you to accommodate to the host culture?

> ➢ What are your social supports?

> ➢ Are there supports and/or resources available in your ethnic/cultural community?

> ➢ Are there supports and/or resources available in your host community?

In addition, because the researcher is interested in contextual factors that impact the process of acculturation, other questions regarding the reasons for migrating, conditions prior to migration and expectations of America were also discussed. Please refer to Appendix B for a list of Semi-structured interview questions.

Data Analysis Strategy

The thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the data. As defined by them, thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. According to the authors, there are six phases of thematic analysis. Phase 1 is *familiarizing yourself with your data*, which

involved transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial

ideas. For this study, all audio recordings were listened to and transcribed by the

researcher. Then each transcript was read several times in an effort to get to know that

data. Initial impressions were written down as part of this phase. Notes taken during the

interview were also reviewed to become further familiar with the data.

Phase 2 is *generating initial codes*, which involves coding interesting features of

the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and collating data relevant to

each code. This part of the analysis included reading each transcript while organizing the

data into more meaningful groups based on the research questions. During this phase, the

researcher worked systematically through the entire data set, giving full attention to each

data item, and an effort was made to identify interesting aspects in the data items that

may form repeated patterns/themes across the data set. This coding was done by writing

notes on the margins of the text, and by highlighting text that indicated a potential

pattern. During this phase, the researcher coded for as many potential themes/patterns as

possible. Data that seemed to depart from the dominant story was also identified and

coded.

Phase 3 is *searching for themes*, which includes collating codes into potential

themes, and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. During this phase of data

analysis, the researcher began by looking over the data that was now coded and collated.

The researcher now had a long list of different codes that have been identified across the

data set and as part of the next step, began analyzing how the different codes may

combine to form a theme. A visual map was used that identified the five research

questions and an effort was made to sort the different codes into themes. Again, any

piece of the data that seemed to depart from these themes was also identified as an important piece of the data. At this stage, there were some codes that did not belong anywhere, and the researcher created a "miscellaneous theme" to house these codes at least temporarily. During this phase, the overarching goal was to start thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes and between any data that departed from the dominant story.

Phase 4 is *reviewing themes*, which entails checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts, and the entire data set.   During this phase, themes that were identified were reviewed and compared to the narratives for consistency. At this point, themes were further refined and some were merged together. At the end of this phase, it was important for the researcher to have a good idea of the different themes and how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.

Phase 5 is *defining and naming themes*, which is ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, and generating clear definitions and names for each theme. In this phase, the researcher focused on identifying the story that each theme told, and also considered how it fit into the broader "story" that would be told about the data, in relation to the research questions.   A final set of themes were created from this phase.   And finally, Phase 6 is *producing the report*, which is the final opportunity for analysis, involving the selection of vivid, compelling examples, final analysis of selected extracts, and relating back to the analysis to the research question and literature. This last phase involved the creation of the report with supporting narratives.

Faithfulness to Data, Consistency, Credibility/Authenticity

This study is interested in bringing participants' voices forward, retelling their

stories, experiences and constructed meaning. This study is not interested in making any

truth claims, but rather interested in the perceptions of people interviewed. It is not

intended to present the information in this study as the "ultimate truth" but rather it holds

up the perceptions of the people who have had these experiences. Therefore, faithfulness

to data was assessed by taking the findings back to a handful of participants, asking them

to react to what has been said. Results are then refined to incorporate subjects' reactions.

This method has been documented by researchers (Janesick, 2000; Silverman, 2006) as a

valid way to check for faithfulness of the data or as more commonly known as validity.

As Silverman stated (2006), "taking one's findings back to the subjects being studied

where these people verify one's findings, it is agreed, one can be more confident of their

validity. This method known as respondent validation."

As for consistency, a peer reviewer, with research and counseling experience, was

asked to look over the material, and react and respond to the themes that were selected.

She was asked to check the final results, selection of themes as a way to check for inter-

rater reliability. There was strong concordance between the researcher and the peer

reviewer. As Janesick (2000) pointed out, "a high level of inter-rater agreement is

evidence that a theme has some external validity and is not just a figment of the

investigator's imagination."

Researchers, such as Silverman (2006), believe that "authenticity" rather than

sample size is often the issue in qualitative research. The aim is usually to gather an

authentic understanding of people's experiences and it is believed that open-ended

questions are the most effective route towards this end.

Ethical Considerations

There was no harm to participants during this study. This study did not involve

deception. As it was indicated in the informed consent, if participants experienced any

discomfort related to the content or to the format of the study, they could have withdrawn

from the study at any point, or refuse to answer any questions that they deemed as

inappropriate. In addition, I informed all participants that my findings will be available

to interested participants.

With regard to confidentiality, all notes and tapes have been stored in a locked file

cabinet, and only the researcher and committee members of this research will have access

to them. Once the research has been completed all tapes will be destroyed. To further

maintain confidentiality, participants will not be identified by their last name anywhere

on the tapes or notes, and no identifying information will be used at any point during this

study. Informed consent forms will be the only forms that will contain participants' full

name therefore, all consent forms have been stored separately from the tapes and

interview notes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the individual interviews will be presented. The interview questions and discussions were guided by the ecological and multicultural perspective discussed in chapter two as well as the literature review. The goal in this chapter is to bring forth people's voices and their constructed meaning by identifying common themes as well as the nuances of their experiences.

Participants, Setting, Format

This study included 20 participants, 7 males and 13 females, all at least 25 years old or older. Although they do vary in the amount of time spent in the US, they all have been in the US for 10 years or less. The countries represented include: El Salvador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, and Mexico. Information including their pseudonyms, gender, place of interview, country of origin, ethnic self-identification, reason for migration, years living in the US, and marital status is contained in Appendix E.

Because this study includes participants from Puerto Rico, the term "migration" will be used to describe all participants leaving their host culture and settling in mainland US. All twenty interviews were conducted in English; however, in two of the interviews, a friend of the participant accompanied us for translation purposes. Most of the interviews were conducted in participants' homes, one in a public café, and the rest at participant's work place, either before, after or during work (their lunch break). The interviews were one hour long, and were causal, informal, and there was a real attempt to

get to know each participant, explain why I chose this particular area of interest, and to

let them know how much I appreciated and valued what they have agreed to share with

me. In an attempt to get to know the participants and to build some rapport, I briefly

shared with participants some of my own experiences with immigrating and living in the

US. These initial conversations were very important, as I do believe that they opened the

door for a mutually engaging conversation, allowing more of their lives to be apparent.

In many cases, I had the privilege of meeting other family members and being part of

their private homes, which provided me with invaluable context of their lives. At the

beginning of most of the interviews, I was offered food, snacks and/or a beverage, again,

making me feel at home and welcomed. At the end of the interviews, most participants

thanked me for providing them with a space to talk about their experiences, and in most

cases, hugs were exchanged. This journey has not only provided me with their voices

and stories, but it also shed some light on what it meant to be a "guest" in some of their

homes.

This study is not interested in searching for any "truths" or any kind of ideas or

theories that can be generalized to the rest of the population, but rather it is interested in

presenting, describing stories and experiences that these participants have shared with

me. It is their reality, their constructed meaning that I am so eager to present.

Qualitative Findings

Each interview began with two simple questions, "tell me what has been helpful

and what has been most difficult in living in mainland US?" In most of the interviews

these two questions were sufficient as it lent itself to talking about all the other areas of

interest. By asking these two questions, most participants addressed factors such as race,

gender, class, socioeconomic factors, the meaning of their migration, their plans of

whether to stay or go back, citizenship interest, and information about ethnic identity.

They responded by talking about existing social supports, the meaning of those supports

and the role of spirituality and/or religious beliefs in their lives.

I speak to this in an effort to highlight the value of qualitative research as I have

seen it and experienced it by virtue of conducting this study. I have learned that if you

allow some space and time and you ask people in a genuine, welcoming way to "tell

you," they are happy to do just that. I said very little in most of these interviews, but

instead I listened and it provided volumes about their experiences and constructed

meanings.

The individual narratives generated twelve major themes and five corresponding

subthemes. The major themes, are the following: Geo-socio-political factors have a

significant influence in the process of acculturation; Proficiency in English is an

important factor that influences acculturation and a major component of discrimination;

Citizenship without an emotional attachment; Aiming toward feeling a sense of

biculturalism; Feeling displaced; Negative view of Americans and of Americanized

Latinos; Race is a socially constructed phenomenon; New role for women: personal

freedom; The Latino stereotype; Spirituality as protection; God plays an important role in

our lives; and Lack of social supports in the host community. The subthemes generated

enhance some of the components of the theme by emphasizing certain aspects shared by

most of the participants. To support themes and subthemes, direct quotes from

participants are included within the text. Participants' voices and stories are identified by

quotation marks and are italicized. These twelve themes and subthemes are outlined in
Appendix D.

Geo-socio-political factors have a significant influence in the process of

acculturation

According to participants interviewed in this study, the factors that underlie this
theme include, proximity of the homeland, the conditions in which migrants are coming
to mainland US, the conditions prior to migration (in homeland)- socioeconomic class,
and the age of the person migrating to mainland US. Participants identified these
variables as significant influences in the process of acculturation.

Proximity of the homeland seems to be important for a few reasons. The more
obvious is the ability to visit more frequently as a way of maintaining connections to
friends and relatives in the homeland. As Adriana from Mexico explained this to me,

"It is very important to stay connected to people from back home, family and

people who I grew up with from kindergarten to high school, so when we decided

to stay in Boston, I told my husband that I need a few spaces a year that are

completely Mexican, so we have been traveling there and visiting for a month, not

just a quick visit but rather being together with cousins, family and friends; it

worked and it really balanced my year out."

Another reported benefit of having your homeland close is finding more
resources, more people and more of your own culture in the place of settlement. The
issue of not being a minority came up, like in certain parts of Miami,

"Immigrating from a country that is very far away versus one that is a

neighboring country is a different experience, like in San Diego for example,

there is a mini Mexico country, if you are very close and well off financially, it is

very easy to pretend that you are still in Mexico."

Another benefit of having your homeland closer had to do with the process of

coming to mainland US. Although I let my participants know that we would not discuss

legal status, about a handful shared with me some information about their journey to

mainland US. What they had endured was heartbreaking, and they spoke of traveling for

many days and weeks in awful conditions, which necessitated having to leave their

children behind. If conditions were any different, or they homelands were any closer,

they reported that they most likely would have brought their children. Many stated, *"it*

was just too dangerous, and the trip too long to put the children through that." These

participants spoke of leaving their families and/or children behind in a very emotional

way, especially since they have not been able to be reunited with them, in some cases for

7-8 years. These are the folks who expressed a strong desire to return to their homeland

in order to be reunited with their children and therefore their main goal was to work and

gain some financially stability and less so on acculturating to the host community.

Socioeconomic status is also an important factor that influences the acculturation

process. It even impacts the reasons of coming to mainland US as well as influencing the

kind of opportunities, resources, and benefits that one has as a result of his/her

socioeconomic status. As Claudia described, her experience with settling in mainland US

was different due to her good economic situation, stating:

> *"I immigrated in a good situation, we got the apartment we wanted, we got the*
>
> *car we wanted, prepared ourselves for the winter, you know it wasn't survival*
>
> *mode, like a lot of immigrants."*

Victor from Puerto Rico who came to the US to attend school, talked about how different his experience had been, addressing two influences, economic but also the importance of the reason for migration. He too spoke of not having to *"figure out how to survive"* and also having built in supports at school helped him tremendously. A number of participants who came to mainland US to work and gain some financial stability, spoke about their experiences and how different it was due to their economic standing. Having to find a job, an apartment, and figuring out how to live on only a few dollars a week, while at the same time not speaking English and struggling with a variety of barriers were all part of their reality. As Henry from El Salvador, who reports having grown up in poverty stated:

> *"When we first came we didn't have nothing here, no apartment, no job, no*
>
> *money. My brother gave me $10 and with that, me and my wife ate for two weeks,*
>
> *and the worst was I wanted to work but I didn't speak English so no one would*
>
> *talk to me and give me a job."*

Within this theme, there were two areas that were emphasized by most participants and therefore, have been added as subthemes, as a way to further emphasize the importance of Geo-Socio-political factors when talking about acculturation.   The two subthemes are: Legal status and Prior exposure to American culture.

Legal status has a significant impact

Participants were not asked to disclose their legal status and were not asked any

questions regarding their status; however, some participants volunteered to speak about

the impact of it stating that "*being illegal was the scariest and most difficult.*" Also,

because one's legal status determines the access to jobs many individuals could not find

work for the first few months after they arrived. This proved very stressful especially for

those who came with little or no money and migrated in hopes of making money. Many

participants expressed feeling very surprised at the impact that legal status has on finding

a job and expressed gratitude at having found "any job" where they are able to make

money. I did not ask any further questions about legal status as a way of protecting the

participants; however, it is clear that it has a major impact on not only the process of

acculturation, but on meeting basic needs for survival.

Prior exposure to American culture has its benefits

Based on participants' responses, it appears that migrants who were introduced to

the American culture either directly by prior visits, or more indirectly by learning about

the culture or prior familiarity with linguistics seemed to have an easier transition than

those migrants who had no prior exposure to the culture. Adriana from Mexico spoke of

her experience as a "dual existence;" being introduced to the American culture since she

was very young, having visited prior to her migration, and having a very strong linguistic

foundation of the English language. She said "*to me the US culture was always very

familiar and it wasn't strange at all so I felt comfortable and there wasn't a big shock

like other immigrants.*"   Those individuals who did not have prior exposure to the

culture spoke of the cultural shock they experienced. Some commonly reported experiences had to do with the social aspects of the host culture, access to jobs, and most commonly reported was the change in weather. Many participants expressed being ill prepared for the winter months and the difficulty with not knowing what to expect. For many it was the first time they experienced the harsh winter weather and snow, like Sofia from Nicaragua who stated *"I suffer a lot during the winter because I don't know how to dress appropriately."*

Another way cultural shock was expressed had to do with the prior expectations of America but without prior exposure. Some participants expressed having a preconceived notion of what "America would be and look like." These participants said that once they arrived and saw the environment around them, the very poor neighborhoods, they were shocked stating *"it did not match the image of America as perfect."* Some participants were shocked by the existing laws, like Numar who migrated from Columbia. He stated:

> *"People here talk a lot about freedom but when you come from where I come*
>
> *from you feel like there is no freedom here, it's restricted, rude, and there are a*
>
> *lot of stupid things that don't make sense."*

Interestingly, many participants spoke of being surprised by all the rules, laws and norms that exist in America, describing natives as "*very attached to the norm.*"

Proficiency in English is an important factor that influences acculturation and a major component of discrimination

Undoubtedly, the most common theme that emerged across all interviews had to do with the difficulty of not speaking English. Every participant who migrated to mainland US and did not speak English prior to their migration identified the language barrier as the most difficult challenge and the biggest barrier to their success.

Participants unanimously agreed that *"your proficiency in English determines the kind of experience you will have in America."* The utility and value of the English language was the most common theme discussed. Participants expressed a strong link between poor English skills and being treated badly. Some of the experiences of participants included: *"being treated like an illiterate;" "people make me feel so stupid;" "people had no respect for me;" "I was taken advantage of;" "people get mad at you and don't want to help'"* and *"you are low on the hierarchy if you don't speak English."* When participants shared their journey with not speaking English or not speaking well, the issue of discrimination was always present in their stories. Participants expressed a lot of frustration with not being able to speak and the lack of opportunities they had as a result. Henry from El Salvador, who migrated to the US to work and make some money in hopes of being able to help his family back in his home country, spoke about his struggle with not speaking English. He told the following story:

> *"The first time I walked into a coffee shop and I didn't know how to ask in English for a coffee, so I asked how we ask in my country, and everyone just laughed and left the counter. They didn't want to serve me. And then you hear people tell you to speak in English and others who say 'I don't want you guys to*

speak Spanish here,' so how do you think I feel when I hear that…my personal

language. I feel very sad, and now I understand that in this country you don't get

respect until you can speak English."

Those who grew up bilingual, or learned English prior to migrating to mainland US reported experiencing less discrimination, stating, *"I was treated okay, it helps if you can speak English;"* and *"with language, becoming proficient in English, you move up the hierarchy ladder; you are valued more."* Most participants also expressed the importance of communicating in Spanish in their homes; especially in teaching their children Spanish. The level of engagement with the English language and the desire to learn it really seemed to relate to participant's reasons for migrating as well as on their plans for the future. Those individuals who migrated to mainland US for economic reasons, and hoped to make some money and return "home," seemed to be less interested in learning or perfecting their English language skills. They were able to find jobs where English was minimally required, their social network was comprised of only Spanish speaking individuals, and they were not looking to "acculturate," but rather they were looking to make some money and be able to return to their homeland and be reunited with their families. Although they too, spoke of the hardship they faced as a result of poor English, and facing discrimination, but in response, they let me know that "*it was okay, I want to go back" "America great, you make money and help your family I am very happy*." They seemed to not be as invested in acculturating, connecting socially with folks of the host community, as were the participants who planned on staying here, or at least hoped to stay

Another area where some participants expressed the strong influences of language is in the workforce. Several participants expressed not being able to continue in their field due to their lack of proficiency of English. Several participants let me know that they had degrees in accounting, business, economics, teaching, and here the jobs that were available to them were babysitting or cleaning. Erica from Guatemala who has a degree in engineering and now works part time cleaning houses and as an interpreter, explained to me: *"No matter how educated you are, how many titles you have in your country, you are nothing here."* Although this experience was shared by both men and women in this study, only the women talked about feeling *"ashamed"* for having to settle for whatever job was available. Undoubtedly, the men had to make this shift in their vocational identities as well, but they did not talk about what it has been like, aside from being thankful for finding a job and being able to make money.

Citizenship without an emotional attachment

There is an overarching belief in the more traditional acculturation research that immigrants/migrants progress in an almost linear fashion and eventually with the end result of being "acculturated." Being "fully acculturated" in the literature has been associated with a preference to speak English, or at least proficiency in English, and a shift in preferring some of the host communities offerings such as, food, music, traditions. Wanting to obtain citizenship in the new culture has been also linked to someone who is more "acculturated" and has made some of these shifts. In talking with participants in this study, it became apparent that participants want to obtain citizenship but in most cases, without an emotional attachment. Most of the participants, expressed

wanting, hoping to someday become a citizen of the United States. When I asked their

reasons and what citizenship had meant to them, the common answer was that it provides

"flexibility, more benefits, and certain privileges, such as being able to travel more

freely, and being able to bring loved ones to visit." However, all participants emphasized

their preference to their own cultural background and almost everyone stated that they

sometimes "daydream" about going back "home" someday, when they have reached

financial security. Some added that the strong urge to go back was due to feeling like

"*that is where I belong where I feel most comfortable*." Among participants there was a

handful who had already obtained citizenship, or had been born in the US, like those

migrants from Puerto Rico. Even they spoke of someday possibly going back or at least

retiring in their homelands.

In addressing the emotional attachment to a culture, participants naturally spoke

of ethnic identity and how that relates or does not relate to acculturation. Some

participants spoke of "identities" and feeling different, and an example of this comes

from Victor who migrated from Puerto Rico:

> *"Although Puerto Ricans are not immigrants we are cultural and linguistic*
>
> *immigrants, by the virtue of our language and culture we are Latin Americans, by*
>
> *the virtue of our economic system and political affiliations we belong to the US so*
>
> *it is kind of a dichotomous type of an identity so it becomes difficult to pinpoint*
>
> *where does the Puerto Rican identity fall; however, you feel that you are*
>
> *different."*

Asking participants directly of how they identify, produced a very similar answer.

All participants except Lili, identified as Latina/Latino, regardless of citizenship status,

the number of years spent in mainland US, or level of acculturation. Some examples

include Numar, a young man who came from Columbia to attend college and has decided

to stay. He speaks English very well and has surrounded himself with mostly English

speaking friends. He stated:

> *"I don't feel American at all and even though I plan on becoming a citizen, I think*
>
> *culturally I will never identify as American."*

Another example comes from Enrique, who has migrated from Puerto Rico. He is

married to an Italian woman and has had two children who were born on mainland US.

He stated:

> *"I feel like I have very acculturated but I will always identify as a Puerto Rican*
>
> *and so do my kids, who were born here."*

Aiming toward feeling a sense of "biculturalism"

Some participants talked about a more complex view of ethnic identity. For

some, it wasn't necessarily choosing one culture over another but rather working toward

feeling a sense of belonging in both cultures. There seem to be a deliberate attempt made

by some participants to incorporate both cultures. A few of the participants spoke of

having a *"dichotomous identity"* or in some cases, *"multiple identities"* as they navigate

through this culture while maintaining some of their own values, traditions, emotional

attachments. Like Eva who immigrated from Mexico with the initial plan to stay for 6

months but has now been living in the US for 4 years. She explained to me that you need

to be bicultural in order to feel a sense of belonging.

"The culture here and my culture is very different, and we are still in the process, we are open to have another too because it's hard to belong here and to belong you have to be bicultural."

Participants' stories included making a conscious effort to integrate within the host culture, an aggressive attempt to learn the English language, and to socialize with natives. Learning English language was either done by "*only speaking and socializing with English speaking folks in order to learn it,*" or as Eva from Mexico explained, *"I stayed in the library all day to study English."*

A lot of participants; however, expressed a dual existence described as behaving and acting differently in their private selves from their public selves. There wasn't necessarily a greater investment in either culture, but rather it was the going back and forth in between and within cultures. As examples, some participants like Eva and Adriana from Mexico, expressed only speaking Spanish in their homes, with a strong effort to educate children about the language and culture, and engaging in more traditional cooking and celebrations as well as values. However, when shifting into their public selves, these individuals spoke English well and have adopted some of the US cultural traditions, and had a mix of friends, English and Spanish speaking. It was more about having different selves, having multiple identities in an effort to preserve their own cultural traditions, morals and values, but being able to succeed in their new culture as well.

Another theme that emerged from the individual interviews was shared by many participants. It was not a feeling of biculturalism, but rather, as the result of migration, feeling displaced.

Feeling displaced

Many participants shared stories about their continued search for a sense of belonging. Since their migration to mainland US, they have been feeling displaced, not fully comfortable in either their homelands or in the host culture. Victor explained feeling displaced in the following way:

> *"Feeling displaced, because I don't consider that my home nor do I consider this to be my home, sort of in between realities, you are constructing your own reality. I think the trick is to find how to have two selves engage in a meaningful exchange so that you have cohesion, so you have some glue that bring that together, and then you go through life by more than just compartmentalizing both of those things and switching them on and off with people, not one or the other."*

This "displacement" was addressed in many different ways; in some cases, individuals told stories about living in mainland US and feeling different and feeling they did not belong and then traveling back to their homeland and feeling a bit separate from their friends and loved ones. This was expressed by Teresa from Venezuela in the following way:

> *"When I visited home I felt displaced, I asked myself "where is my home" as doesn't feel "at home" in either place."*

Anita from Peru explained her experience with visiting her homeland and feeling increasingly more displaced with each visit:

> *"When I went back for the first time everyone was like so happy, everyone was missing me, the second time it was calmed down, the third time, no more. It's like*

you are no more over there and you lose your space, that makes you

think...'where is my home now?' and that is a sad thing."

Many of the participants talked about feeling alienated from friends in their home

countries. A few participants who expressed a desire to someday return back to their

home countries expressed their fear that they will feel out of place once they return. As I

spoke with Erica from Guatemala, who has been in the US for 7 years, she let me know

that going "back" is something she thinks about often:

"Of course I want to go back, that is always on my mind, I don't know when I do

go back, if I'll be thinking what am I doing here, that I'm displaced, but for now, I

always think about going back..."

Others talked about feeling a sense of "loss" since living in mainland US. During my

interview with Victor, from Puerto Rico, he spoke about his loss in this way:

"Rarely do we come out unscarred, and it's important to be able to look back and

to acknowledge the unacknowledged that very often come in a form of a loss, loss

of friends, loss of connections with family members."

This sense of loss was emphasized by many individuals as they talked about missing their

friends and family, and their difficulty with making friends here. They talked about

feeling isolated, lonely and frustrated. They described themselves as people who were

once well connected socially and now feel socially isolated.   A couple of male

participants talked about the impact of learning English, and becoming fluent, and how

that has isolated them from Latin peers; as Numar from Columbia explained:

"Being able to speak English has allowed me to enter the Anglo world, but it

separated me from other Latinos."

Numar also spoke about the importance of speaking English as a requirement for making friends in the US. Adriana, from Mexico, also addressed the separation she felt from other Latinos once her English was perfected, stating:

> *"I don't look Latina but as soon as I speak Spanish they know that it's my main language, so I get sort of accepted but there is always this, you know, aren't you really American?"*

A common theme among all participants seemed to be around the difficulty of making friends in mainland US. Most participants expressed their disappointment with how difficult it is to make friends, English speaking friends, and the lack of personal and social connections they felt. Some described their biggest challenge as "breaking into a social circle."   As a result, the issue of not belonging and feeling displaced was once again addressed. Most of the participants expressed a real negative view of "Americans" addressed in the next theme. They described "Americans" as those who were born and/or have been living for an extended period of time in mainland US.

Negative view of Americans and of "Americanized" Latinos

Participants almost unanimously agreed that it is difficult to make friends; while describing most natives as: *"cold, not warm people at all;" "socially distant;" "only care about themselves;" "work too much and only care about money and material things."* Many talked about *"needing to work your way into a social circle"* and needing to *"climb up the hierarchy"* in order to make friends. Here is one example from Teresa, from Venezuela, who has been in the US for 7 years.

"It is very hard to make American friends here, they don't want some immigrant who doesn't speak English and is only a babysitter, you know, I am low on the hierarchy."

Interestingly, a number of participants let me know that they preferred to socialize with Spanish speaking individuals. The most common reason given was that there was an "increased comfort when with a Spanish speaking person" and feeling more "connected" to a Latino(a) individual. One example that illustrated this preference comes from my interview with Sofia, who stated:

"I can really connect with someone from Latin America so easily"

On the contrary, many individuals expressed their disappointment with other Latinos they met here in mainland US. This was shared by even those who expressed a preference to socialize with Latinos, but also acknowledging their disappointment with "*how much people change in America*." Interestingly, they described their disappointment in the same way they described their negative views of Americans, using terms such as, "*cold, withdrawn, not helpful, only interested in themselves and material things, not friendly, too competitive*."

There was a perception among the participants that living in mainland US has "changed" Latinos and were now more similar to Americans, which was expressed with disappointment by many participants. One example comes from Claudia, from Dominican Republic, who has been living in the US for the last 2 years, stating:

"Friendships are different here, Latinos have changed so much here, they are not like they were back home."

Although this perception was shared by many participants, there seemed to be two predominant characteristics of how "Americans" and "Americanized Latinos" were described by most participants. These two characteristics were described as Americans placing a stronger emphasis and more value on work rather than spending time with family and friends, and describing Americans as individualistic. These two characteristics are described as subthemes to further emphasize its predominance across participants' experiences. These subthemes are identified in italics.

Work emphasis over family and personal time

   This subtheme is something that emerged as we talked about participants' views of "Americans" as well as Latinos who have been living in the US for a number of years and according to most participants, are "Americanized." Most of the observations and comments had to do with the lifestyle in mainland America. Participants unanimously agreed that *"there is little time to relax and there is too much emphasis on work."* Participants explained that their social life, their family time, their spiritual and religious lives have all been somewhat compromised because of the strong emphasis on work. An example comes from Anita, who described really "loving" all that America offered; both materially and personally, however, stating that one of the downfalls is that she works too much. She stated:

> *"No friends, no family, no holidays, no happy birthday to me, it's work, work, work but is like you ride a horse, you on the horse it causes you a lot of sacrifice but you can't get off."*

America has also been described by some participants as "the culture of spending" stating that the drive to work and sacrifice other aspects of your life has to do with materialism. Sofia describes her experience as:

> *"You are almost convinced that you need to buy something, you are not sure what but there is a need and a push."*

Many participants spoke about the value of "materialistic things" here in America, and the desire to own the best of everything and how that is perceived as success. It however, comes at the cost of less time with family, friends, and loved ones, and more time working in order to earn the money necessary to progress "materialistically."

Individualism

A common experience shared by all participants had to do with "individualism" being valued in mainland US. Most participants reported this to be a challenge especially as they first arrived and tried to navigate through different aspects of the culture. One way it was emphasized was through interactions with people, stating: *"everyone is just either by themselves or with their family, doing their own thing and there is no love, you know, sometimes you don't talk with anybody and you don't even know who lives next door to you."* Numar, a male participant, spoke about his experience of coming to the US from Columbia to go to school. He was quickly surrounded by other college students and had 5 other roommates. He explained that in his country it would have been the norm to "*put money together and buy things*" as well as to cook and eat together; however, when he suggested this to his roommates they told him that it was impossible and it would be better if they all bought for themselves and cooked for themselves. He reports feeling

"shocked" stating *"you know where I come from is more family oriented, more group oriented, so that was an interesting learning experience."* A few participants spoke about the individualistic nature of the country. An example comes from Enrique, stating:

> *"Everything is about money and money, you know in my country is about money but people help you. Here no one wants to help you and you can't trust nobody. This is a problem we have in America, everything is money and greed."*

Many participants expressed this same sentiment about the "Americanized" Latinos, stating that they have changed and "*only care about themselves.*" There was a lot of sadness expressed from both males and females who spoke about "*their own people changing.*"

The next set of themes respond to the impact that race, gender, and class have on ones experiences in mainland US and on the process of acculturation. As previously stated in chapters one and two, most quantitative studies simply have asked participants to identify their gender, race and class among other variables, minimizing the role and impact that these "variables" have on ones experiences. Within these next few themes, we begin to hear and understand how acculturation is much more difficult for those participants who must cope with the stigma of being different, based on visible characteristics. Participants candidly speak about the impact that their skin color, language, ethnicity, gender, and class have had on their experience in living and acculturating to mainland US.

Race is a Socially Constructed Phenomenon

Every participant brought up the importance of race in their lives. Many spoke to how "difficult" it has been having to identify their race. They let me know that prior to living in mainland US, race was not something they ever had to think about, let alone identify. They expressed feeling confused, and even shocked at having to identify themselves as "not White" stating *"I have always thought of myself as white."* Most expressed how "*terrible*" they felt to be treated "*differently as a result of not being seen as White*." An example comes from Enrique, who migrated from Puerto Rico and has thought of himself as "White" prior to living in mainland US. He stated:

> *"I am not seen as White here, and because of it I am treated differently; race*
>
> *plays a large part in the way people look at you and treat you."*

Teresa from Venezuela spoke about her difficulty with having to identify her race, since her whole life she has always thought of herself as White. She states: *"I was not the White that they expected."* She even spoke about getting questioned regarding her name which is a typical American name stating:

> *"My name passes as a White name, my daddy gave me that name but when I came*
>
> *here people think I changed my name because I wanted to be White or*
>
> *American."*

Those participants with lighter skin spoke of their white skin color privilege, which they never realized before. Stating the advantages of *"being able to pass as White"* and *"I blend in so it helps*." Adriana from Mexico talked about her advantage of being able to "pass" and how that has helped her integrate into society:

"I don't look Latina at all, as you can see. I can pass, and I can even sort of hide

my accent if I wished to, and I'm Jewish so I can hide in the Jewish identity, and

sort of trash the Mexican identity if I need to be integrated into society,

unfortunately, you know in social situations."

A couple of participants attributed their "social and economic success" on race,

describing the advantages of being able to pass as White and therefore being treated with

more respect. A couple of participants explained "race" in terms of where one falls on

the hierarchy. Victor, a male participant from Puerto Rico, reported that he has always

been considered White, at least prior to his migration to mainland US. He initially

argued with people who dismissed his "Whiteness", even proving that he can "tan" in the

sun, and that his skin is "more White" than most people considered "White;" however, he

concluded with:

"Race is a cultural phenomenon, I'm White but here I am not, and it's really a

hierarchical thing, so the implication is that you are not high enough in the

hierarchy in order for you to consider yourself to be White, because you are not,

and it's a sociological truth here in America."

Some participants reported that one's socioeconomic class helps with not experiencing

discrimination as much. Some benefits reported, were the ability to be move into a more

desirable neighborhood, get access to resources, and overall, "being treated more fairly."

Claudia from the Dominican Republic, who has been in the US for two years, and

although she spoke English well, she spoke with a heavy accent, shared an example of

how she experienced discrimination as opposed to her brother, who is higher on the

socioeconomic status.   As an example to the differential treatment, she gave me the

example of when she tried to get an ID. She was told to complete a form and then had to return 4-5 times because she was told that the form was completed incorrectly. She states her difficulty as such:

> *"They sent me back several times and they never explained what was wrong. After my 3rd time I went back with the form they gave me and they said it was wrong I began to cry because I believe they did that to me because I was an immigrant and my English was not good, I really believe that they were discriminating me because I was not from here and I think they don't like Hispanic people here."*

She then proceeded to let me know that after going back a few more times and being rejected for either not printing the application in color or for not folding it correctly (in three), she asked her brother to go with her. Her brother had been in the US for 15 years and was a successful business man. She reports the following:

> *"I went back with my brother, he looked good, wearing a suit and all he said was hi and that was enough. Everything was okay, they didn't comment on anything. They thought he was American."*

These examples nicely illustrate how the multiple aspects of identity affect ones experiences with living and adjusting to their new culture. Through these participants' stories it is apparent that America looks and feels different for those Latinos who are from a low socioeconomic class and are racially defined as "not White" than for the Latinos who are higher on the socioeconomic class and can "pass as White." The encounters are different because of multiple visible differences, which identifies them as outsiders, increasing their risk of facing discrimination.

As part of this research there was an effort to assess gender roles and how people may function in their gender roles as a result of having migrated to mainland US. The women talked about their role being more equal here, *"women have more freedom to speak their minds and to do many different things;"* being treated more equally in the workplace, having more independence, having less responsibility in the household such as this example provided by Maria from El Salvador: *"it's easier for a woman, you don't have to cook and clean all day and you work a little and do house stuff and you can eat at a restaurant and its okay."* Some expressed that it is much harder for them because they are still mainly responsible for all things related to the home, such as kids, cleaning, cooking, and are now expected to have a job outside the home with no family help. And some of the female participants spoke about personal freedom, which became a theme in many women's experiences.

New role for women: Personal Freedom

Female participants spoke about their personal freedom as the ability and opportunity to discover *"me."* They expressed increased freedom in discovering the range of who they could become, something that would not have been possible in their homelands. Anita, a female participant who immigrated from Peru talked about her initial goal of wanting to come to the US for two years to make some money for her family owned business that she helped run in her home country. Her husband had passed away and she has a grown daughter, but her whole life has revolved around providing for her daughter and continuing with the family business. When she came to the US, her main focus was to learn English and make some money; however, different opportunities

popped up for her. She now works as a Certified Nursing Assistant and is eager to continue by going to nursing school. She is 57 years old, and states:

> *"This country gives us opportunities when you want to do something. I am so satisfied with myself because I did it good for myself, it is a good thing I came because now I have this career."*

This sense of satisfaction as she described it to me comes from within, being able to do something that she is passionate about, and for the first time in her life, making herself and her needs a priority. She spoke of this newfound freedom with a lot of passion and excitement.

Another female participant, Adriana, who immigrated from Mexico in favorable conditions and is financially secure came to the US to finish her college degree. She married before coming to the US and her and her husband were both able to come. She began by letting me know how much she missed her family but also recognizing what the separation had meant for her:

> *"I miss my family but I have also been able to construct my family with my husband and that in Mexico would have been a different scenario."*

She went on to let me know that in Mexico she had little independence, less space for her and her husband to do things on their own, and more pressure to follow traditional roles both personally and in her marriage. She stated:

> *"The biggest positive for me was having a good connection with my husband and you know I waited a lot to have kids, like 7 years, so I could really explore things that I could never explore in Mexico about myself and about my partnership with my husband."*

Another female participant, Eva, also from Mexico, has been in the US for four years with her husband and two children. Their goal was to come for six months to a year to work and had planned on going back to Mexico. In the first several months in America, she and her family experienced significant hardship as a result of not being able to work legally, not speaking English, and feeling completely isolated and alone. She described having to "fight" every step of the way from having access to a library, to being able to take classes to learn English, to finding jobs that paid very little but was necessary for their survival. During the process of these struggles and different hurdles, she began to appreciate her passion and strength, something she had not been aware of before. She explained it this way:

> *"Over in my country I never do anything because I went to school, and had someone pay my bills and I had a scholarship to go to college and I didn't have any problems, I got married and found a job, and I all the times had a car and didn't have any problem, it was very easy and here I was having a lot of problems and it was very difficulty but also I didn't have somebody to stop me. One thing that I had here is to be me, to be free."*

She described the closeness of her and her family in Mexico, something she still misses but in many ways, as something that has always held her back. She talked about the differences in this way:

> *"In my culture before you act you have to think about what is happening with your mother, with your uncle and father and what they are thinking but here, you don't have that, so now I see that the reason I love it here is because I can be me. I don't have to do what I am told because I am a woman, but I can do what I*

want, and that is the best part of my life. In 4 years I am here, I do more than in

my whole life in Mexico."

To sum it up Anita explained to me the reasons she has stayed in mainland US:

"I am here to do something about me, to discover me, to not only think about

money or career or to be a mother or to be a wife but to be you. And I never

thought that until I came here and so America gave me that freedom and I am so

happy."

Interestingly, the men that were interviewed reported no changes in their role within their

families, stating that their primary role was still to provide financially. Most men that

were interviewed were doing something significantly different vocationally than they

were back in their home countries; however, they did not comment on these different

roles or the impact it may have had, but only stated that they were "*lucky and happy*" to

have a job and to make money.

The Latino Stereotype

When participants were asked about what has been most difficult in living in

mainland US, many expressed their struggles with overcoming the "Latino stereotype."

Many participants had a similar experience of being compared to other Latinos and

usually to the Latinos who were viewed negatively either in their communities or in the

media. Many participants stated: *"There is a clear prejudice against Latino people here.*

People think that Latino people are not educated and we don't speak English and then we

are treated bad." Numar spoke of his experience of being Latino from Columbia, stating:

"You know in Columbia there are a lot of drugs, so I have met people and they

assume that I'm part of some sort of drug trafficking or something like that."

There was also the experience of "being compared" that seemed to pervade most

experiences. Participants felt like a lot of "Americans" assumed that Latino was "kind of

the same thing" and would compare Latino individuals from many different countries and

regions.

The other striking similarity between participants' stories had to do with feeling

that "*Americans view all Latinos as bad people.*" Many participants wished to express

that "*not all people come here to do bad things*" and the main reasons for many is to

work hard to have more opportunities and resources.

Sadly, a couple of participants who have been living in mainland US for close to

10 years spoke either directly or indirectly of internalized racism and oppression, as a

result of living and participating in society. For example, Adriana spoke of "*hiding*"

behind her Jewish identity and her "Whiteness" when needed and even "trashing the

Mexican identity" in order to integrate into society. Numar spoke of "*absorbing,*

sometimes unconsciously, part of this culture" and his experience of separating and then

become estranged from the Latino culture as the result of the stereotypes and the

perceived need to integrate and acculturate. Victor spoke more directly to internalized

oppression as he saw it from a language standpoint, stating:

"There is this internalized oppression, where parents being oppressed by the

system and being embarrassed by the system tell their kids, 'I don't want you to

suffer the way I did so I want you to speak English and get a good job' so the

message is that you need to be ashamed of your culture in order to make it here.

The message is not that it's okay to be Latino and speak Spanish."

The next couple of themes address the protective effects of spirituality, religion, and social supports as experienced by the participants interviewed.

Spirituality as protection

The spiritual nature of participants' lives was felt on many different levels. Participants either spoke directly to it or I, the researcher, could feel it as I was sitting with each participant and listened to their story, their experience. All participants let me know that they were very spiritual. However, it was not spirituality as we know it in a traditional sense, where we are talking about higher power, spirits or ancestors. It was spirituality as it has been described and understood by many feminist theorists, such as Ochs (1983), Plaskow and Christ (1989). It was being able to reflect on their experiences and having a relationship to their experiences and reflections (Ochs, 1983), while feeling connected to their communities and loved ones.

Participants spoke about believing in themselves even when things were very difficult, feeling connected to their loved ones and family members and believing that things would work out, sticking together-being together-supporting each other-especially through difficult times. It was described as *"finding even one person who you can trust and have a connection to and start building a relationship and have a sense of belonging,"* Participants' spirituality was felt when they spoke of their families they left behind, and they let me know that they wanted to create better lives for them. It was felt when they spoke about their families they were able to have here, in mainland US,

connecting with family members in the deepest ways and knowing that "they would be okay." Or as Eva from Mexico explained, seeing her children coming home everyday from school smiling and looking happy, and knowing that "*coming here was the right choice even if it was the most difficult time in my life" and* then stating *"I know I had to keep going, for them and for me."*

Spirituality was felt during the interview process, in fact, my interactions with participants and the interview itself in many cases was spiritual. This too has been described by feminist theorists as spiritual. Ochs has described it as "our relationship to other people is perhaps the most complex, and through our relationship to people we can find the more ready access to a spiritual life" (1983). In many instances, I felt as if I had known the participant for many years. There was a sense of closeness as the result of my interest in their lives, my own past experiences, and the opportunity given to participants to share their stories with me. Because of my own experiences with immigrating to the US, there was a level of "knowing" that perhaps was different from a researcher with no such experience. Sometimes, when words failed to express a situation, an emotion, I still understood, deep down I understood and the participant knew that I understood. I felt this, but also it was expressed to me either by a hug, smile, tearful eye, or just a long pause.

Others spoke of their resilience, but did not exactly label it as such. A handful of participants came to mainland US in horrific conditions, barely surviving weeks and sometimes months of traveling. Many others around them did not make it, and this was part of their shared stories. When I asked what it was that helped them make it, they spoke of their connections to families and children, and believing in themselves and

knowing and feeling supported and loved by many people in their lives. Again, spirituality playing a significant role in the ways that people have coped and persevered.

God plays an important role

Another common theme among all participants was in response to God and religion. Although every participant spoke about the importance of God in their lives and in believing in God, a number of participants expressed to me that since moving to mainland US, going to church has significantly decreased. For many, going to church was a significant part of their lives back in their home countries, however since coming to mainland US, many participants expressed that they no longer have time to go to church and/or are too tired because of their long and hard workweek. However, their strong faith, believing in God has continued in a more personal way.   As Oscar, from El Salvador, explained; although he no longer attends church, everyday he finds a moment to say *"Jesus Christ, thank you for everything."* Teresa, from Venezuela explained that as a result of migrating to the US, she encountered many hardships and as a result has become *"very close to God."* She credits her accomplishments to herself and God stating:

> *"When you look for him (God), he shows up and he keeps you going and opens*
>
> *doors for you where you never expected. Only he can do that and I am better*
>
> *everyday in all areas because of him."*

Those that reported going to church on Sundays report that the biggest benefit is meeting other people, and feeling a sense of belonging. Many agreed that *"it's very difficult to build a social network here but religion opens doors."* The most common ways participants described the role that religion plays in their lives were the following:

"feeling a sense of belonging;" "provides opportunities and a community;" "great for developing a social network;" "great place of support;" and "great place to meet other Spanish speaking people."

Having access to church seemed to have played an important role for many participants when they first arrived to mainland US. An example is from Anita who described her relationship with the church in the following way:

> *"The first thing immigrants do here is go to church and meet people there, I met a nice group and they gave us a welcome….I think the church was like coming home….(long pause)…Thank God for the church!"*

Some participants spoke about the decline in their spiritual and religious practices since coming to the US. Again, a main reason listed was a lack of time; however a few spoke about the US not being a place where religion and spirituality is valued. Instead, America was described as a place where work, professional gain, and material things have replaced religion and spirituality. Sofia from Nicaragua, who has only been in the US for three years stated:

> *"At home I went to church all the time and I would talk about God a lot with friends and family but here, in America, talking about God is politically incorrect."*

 As a result, a number of participants expressed that they have resorted to a more personal kind of a spiritual and religious life.

Lack of social supports in the host community

I was saddened to hear the stories of most participants in regards to the lack of social supports and resources available to them. Participants' explained to me that they have experienced "America as unfriendly, unsupportive, and overall, not welcoming of immigrants." Resources are few, and even the existing resources are carved out to certain people. For example, learning the English language is something that most participants were very interested in and have actively wanted to pursue. However, access to resources to learn the English language has presented a challenge for most participants. Programs that are free are few and rare. The ones that do exist have long wait lists, anywhere from 1-2 years. There are some free programs that are funded by libraries; however, they are town specific and if you don't live in the town where it's offered, you cannot participate. For example, Eva, from Mexico, spoke about her horrid experience of seeking out a free program to learn English. They did not have any free programs in the town where she lived; however, she found something in the town next over. She became a wonderful advocate for herself, stating:

> *"I was told that I couldn't come to the program because I don't live in that town.*
> *So I called the director every day and I asked her to please give me the*
> *opportunity to learn. She said she couldn't, but I called for 3 months, I called*
> *every morning, afternoon and night and she wasn't always answering her phone*
> *so I was leaving messages a little in English and in Spanish but then finally she*
> *said okay."*

She now works as an advocate for other immigrants/migrants who are in similar situations.   Other participants shared similar experiences, of wanting to learn English but

not having the resources. There are existing resources for those who can afford it; however, most participants I spoke with said that when they first came, that was financially out of reach for them. As for other resources, according to participants there is not much available in the host community, but there are some Latino groups and organizations that have been a tremendous help. Organizations such as "Latino Health Institute" or ""Centro Presente" have been utilized by many of the participants. Participants reported that they have received the most support from these organizations.

From the 20 participants, the few that expressed a more favorable experience of the host community said that what made a difference was to have an already established social network, like for those who attended college, or having resources that were available to them due to their good socioeconomic standing. Some participants said that having a family member in the place of settlement was tremendously helpful, or having met even one person who welcomed them. Eva who emigrated from Mexico with her husband and her two children spoke of her initial interaction with a native in a favorable way. She initially felt alone and isolated; however, due to the efforts of her "American" neighbor, she was able to feel more comfortable and welcomed. She described their relationship in the following way:

> *"My neighbor came with cake and two baskets with food to say welcome. I was trying to ask about the school but she couldn't answer any questions, we couldn't communicate. But she came back with backpacks full of school supplies. We tried to have a friendship every single morning she came to my house and we were walking and trying to talk and she helped me get a car, and enroll my children in school and even brought me and my children to the church."*

Eva's view of "America" is very different as a result of this neighbor. She has described Americans as helpful and caring. Although she acknowledged that in the beginning it was very hard for her and her family, she reports the one thing that made a difference is feeling like she belonged.

Most participants agreed that there is a lack of social supports in mainland US; however, a number of participants spoke about the lack of interpersonal closeness as one area that was especially difficult. In order to speak to this more in depth, the following subtheme was created.

Feeling alone, isolated and lacking close connections

When talking about the lack of social supports and resources, many participants expressed "*feeling alone, and missing friends and family*" in addition to "*missing close connections.*" Even when participants established new friendships and social supports, the "closeness" they had experienced in their home countries was missing. They spoke of relationships and friendships being different in America and described relationships as much more distant and much less affectionate. George, a male participant from Guatemala, spoke of his shock when he came to the US and realized that "*neighbors don't say hello and you don't even know your neighbors.*" Since he has been here, he was able to build himself a community exclusively composed of people from Latin American countries. He stated: "*we are hanging out and spending a lot of time together, we come from different countries but its same harmony.*" Overall, close connections, family, and friends are the most frequently reported things that participants missed about

being away from their homelands. It was the most commonly reported difficulty in living in mainland America.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these stories and experiences were shared as mostly a response to my first two questions to all participants: What has been helpful and what has been most difficult in living in mainland US? The narrative data naturally emerged from these two questions, in some cases with very little guidance and probing. In many cases, these two questions were all that was necessary to address the other research questions. In addition to what has already been reported, when participants were asked about what has been the most helpful in living in mainland America, these were the most commonly reported. However, they were mostly emphasized by participants who have been in the US longer.

1. *It's easier to make money in America and being able to help my family financially*
2. *You work hard here but you see results*
3. *Feeling secure and protected as there is less violence here.*
4. *Better laws and everything is more organized.*
5. *Much better school system and medicine here.*

It seems that these benefits are not immediately experienced by migrants, but rather with time, some of these benefits are more apparent.   Also, many participants expressed that when they initially migrated to mainland US, they did so with the intention of returning back to their homelands; however, after a few years, decided to try and stay. When I asked what had changed for them and the reasons for wanting to stay, the above benefits were the most common reasons listed.

CHAPTER FIVE

In this chapter, there will be a summary of major findings that will link the results of this study with the literature review and theoretical framework of this study. I will also address the limitations of this study and future recommendations.

DISCUSSION

Summary of major findings

This study gathered individual stories and experiences in an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of acculturation encountered by the Latino migrants as well as a better understanding of the contextual factors that shape the process of acculturation. A thematic analysis was used which is an analysis of the phenomenological content, concerned with individual's personal experiences, voices, and constructed meaning. This study was guided by the literature review as well as my own personal experiences. The conceptual vehicle for this incorporation is an ecological perspective, linking the process of acculturation to varied social, political and cultural contexts, as well as examining acculturation with a multicultural lens.

There were 20 participants, all individually interviewed. There were 7 males and 13 females, heterogeneous in regards to age, marital status, socioeconomic class, country of origin, and the number of years living in the US. The structure of the interviews was informal and although the questions were semi-structured, there was much openness and encouragement to "tell a story" that spoke to individuals' experiences of living in mainland US. Each participant was asked the following two open ended questions; "what has been helpful and what has been more difficult in living in mainland US?" In most

interviews, these two questions were all that was necessary, as the conversation seems to naturally flow and the other research questions were naturally attended to during the course of the interview.

Several themes and subthemes emerged from the individual interviews (see Appendix D). As previously outlined, acculturation has been widely studied; however, for the most part, it has been researched using quantitative measures which have assumed that all immigrants undergo a similar kind of psychological operation during the acculturation process (Berry, 1997; Burnam et al., 1987; Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Rogler et al., 1991). This author along with other researcher (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Sue & Chu, 2003), believed that acculturation is a complex process, often involving the negotiation with multiple cultural sites and that it cannot be adequately captured by a linear, universal classification of acculturation. This belief was strongly supported in this study, as participants shared their unique and complex stories regarding migration and acculturation. Participants spoke of the numerous factors that influenced them, with many similarities and some differences among them, suggesting that not all immigrants pass through the same "psychological acculturation" process as proposed by the second research question. Across participant stories, a dominating theme emerged that spoke to the numerous factors that have influenced their process. In order to capture the numerous factors discussed by participants, *"geo-socio-political factors"* was used to describe the complexity of this process. This included factors such as proximity of the homeland, the conditions in which migrants are coming to mainland US, the conditions prior to migration, socioeconomic class, age, legal status, prior exposure to

American culture, proficiency in English, and racial and ethnic identity, all of which have

been listed as important factors that either aid or hinder the process of acculturation.

As a number of researchers suspected (Cabassa, 2003; Bhatia & Ram, 2001;

Gibson, 2001; Jacoby, 2004; Rhee et al., 1995) the situation of migrants' homeland prior

to emigration and socioeconomic factors have not received much attention in the

acculturation research, but are important components. This study supported that ones

social standing back home, previous exposure to urban and Western culture and reasons

for migrating all have significant bearing on how the individual experiences their contact

with mainland US. Also, this study supported a more recent study conducted by Negy et

al., (2009) on the contributing variable of prior expectations. Those individuals with

prior exposure to the American culture expressed "knowing" what to expect and therefore

not experiencing the degree of acculturative stress that those migrants who expressed a

significant discrepancy between their premigration experience and their postmigration

(actual) experience in mainland US. Participants who knew what to expect described

their experience as less stressful, stating that knowing what to expect, and knowing that it

would be difficult to find a job and to learn English helped them with the adjustment,

versus those participants who had the illusion that they would find a job right away and

make a lot of money. They were surprised to find themselves "struggling" and were

especially surprised to find many others struggling and living in poverty.

Another finding of this study is that socioeconomic class has a significant impact

on the experience the person has and on the process of acculturation, although not well

documented in the existing literature. As stated by Roysircar (2003) and found in this

study, the current trend in immigration and migration appears to be diverse, indicating an

increase in the proportion of political refuges, highly skilled professionals, as well as undocumented laborers, therefore, the socioeconomic statuses of current migrants/immigrants run the gamut from the very poor to the upwardly mobile. A person from middle class or higher incomes come into contact with a different America due to where they can settle, than those who have few economic resources. As a number of participants from a high socioeconomic class explained that it was an "easier transition" without the "struggle for survival as many other migrants are facing."

Reason for migrating also impacts the process of acculturation. This study also found that those individuals who primarily come for economic gain and believe that their stay in this country will not be temporary, are more willing to take up the ways of their host culture and to encourage their children to do so as well and may even make the conscious effort to acculturate. However, those individuals who believe that their stay in the new country will be temporary are generally less interested in learning the language, connecting with individuals from the host culture or adopting new ways.

Proximity between homeland and new land is also an important factor. As hypothesized by Falicov (2003), participants in this study expressed that their ability to make frequent visits can and have alleviated some of the pain by maintaining a sense of belonging and participation, a much less feasible option for those whose homelands are far away and unreachable, or politically or economically unfeasible. All of these factors have been emphasized by the participants in this study as important and as factors that impact the process of acculturation. Another area of interest of this study had to do with race and gender. In many quantitative studies mentioned earlier, gender and race have been relegated to the status of "variables;" however, this study found that one's racial and

gender identity has a significant impact on the process of acculturation, and especially on the kinds of resources and supports that are available.

Acculturation is more difficult for those persons who must cope with the stigma of being different because of skin color, language, ethnicity, and other visible variables. Bhatia & Ram (2001) emphasized not assuming universality in the acculturation process because non-European/non-White immigrants have been more likely to face exclusion and discrimination than their European, "White" counterparts. This is consistent with this study's findings. Most participants reported differential treatment as a result of their skin color, ability to speak English or other visible attributes. For many, identifying race was difficult and "insulting" as they have always thought of themselves as "White." Race is not just a phenotype, but it defined participants' social standing. Participants who could "pass as White" spoke of their privilege of being able to integrate more easily and being able to "hide" when necessary for social mobility. Race has been described by a couple of participants as a "cultural phenomenon" and an issue of perception and hierarchy. Participants who have always thought of themselves as "white" have been forced to question their racial identity. Participants spoke about the intersection of race and language adding that "having an accent" somehow resulted in not being seen as "White" and therefore being treated differently. The impact of race is not addressed in most acculturation research. Race has only been defined as a "variable" in most studies, where participants were asked to identify themselves racially and ethnically, without any significance given to the impact that this "self description and perception" may have on the process of acculturation.

Another interesting finding of this study was the those individuals who did not speak English well, and as a result associated mostly with other Latinos, reported less discrimination than those participants who spoke more fluently, and had a mixed group of friends. Some studies such as Gee and colleagues (2006) found that immigrants and migrants report more discrimination with increasing time in the United States. They hypothesized that increased length of residency may lead to more experiences with and recognition of discrimination. Although this was not the finding of this study, there might be a similar explanation. Those individuals who have improved their language skills and can and have associated with natives are able to recognize discrimination more so than those individuals who rarely interact with individuals outside of their support system, which consists of other Latinos. Improved English language skills also afford one with being able to understand and recognize discriminatory practices more so than those who have limited English ability.

The language spoken by immigrants/migrants has received a lot of attention in the acculturation research, as it has been used as a measure of one's level of acculturation. However, the role and impact of language has not been studied and yet, as seen in this study, it has a major bearing on how the migrant/immigrant is treated in mainland US and the kinds of opportunities and resources that are available. Most participants told stories of discrimination, prejudice, and feeling alienated as a result of not being able to speak English "well." Many participants expressed feeling "stupid," and felt that Americans had no respect and have taken advantage of them when they could not speak well. Many participants agreed that your proficiency in English determines the kind of experience you will have in mainland US.

Ones ethnicity and visible variables seemed to also have an impact, according to participants in this study. There seemed to be a consensus that mainland US is not that welcoming towards Latinos in general and that it has deemed "all Latinos" as uneducated, poor, and lacking the ability and motivation to learn English. This finding is supported by a recent study conducted by Hwang & Goto (2008) who studied the impact of perceived racial discrimination of Asian American and Latino College Students. Their findings indicated that Latinos did report feeling like they have been accused of doing something wrong (e.g., stealing, cheating, not doing their share of work, or breaking the law) more than Asian Americans. However, this study found that those Latinos who had "lighter skin" seemed to have a different experience, a more positive experience due to their reported ability to hide behind their "whiteness" and ability to pass as American, especially when they spoke English well.

Another important finding of this study has to do with participants unanimously reporting that one of the most difficult aspects of living in mainland US was making friends and "breaking into social circles." In many of the experiences, individuals reported not feeling welcomed, alienated, and that it was very difficult if not impossible to make friends with Americans. Even when these migrants want to integrate and socialize they seemed to be rejected, as a result of their racial, ethnic, cultural, economic and/or social standing. Clearly, these multiple aspects of identity affect the acculturation process and work as an expression of hierarchy. This finding is concordant with some researchers (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Falicov, 2003; Verkuyten & Nekuee, 2001) who speculated that acculturation is more difficult for those persons who must cope with the stigma of being different because of their skin color, language and ethnicity. Racial,

ethnic, and economic discrimination shape the individual stories of most migrants,

particularly from disadvantaged classes and poor countries, who are almost always

perceived as the "other."

The cultural context includes many factors among which there is the culture of

gender. Researchers have speculated that roles and expectations for genders tend to be

different within and between cultures, and will have a significant impact on the process

of acculturation (Falicov, 2003; Horton & Shweden, 2004). In this study, a number of

women participants spoke of the personal freedom they have for the first time as a result

of living in mainland US. It was the freedom to discover the range of who they could

become. Some women, as stated by Falicov (2003), expressed the difficulty of

maintaining their ethnic traditional lifestyles within the home while also managing their

outside work settings, especially with no added family support as they would have in

their home countries. The men participants of this study mostly spoke of their economic

gains and benefit of working hard but also seeing results. They valued being able to

provide financially for their families living here, and in many cases, helping their families

living in their home countries.

As clearly seen from these participants' stories and experiences, gender, race,

class, and ethnicity are much more complex than it has been noted in quantitative studies

where they have been relegated to variables only (Aroian, 1990; Berry, 1990 & 1997;

Burnam et al., 1987; Cortes, 1994; Cuellar et al., 1995; Gibson, 2001; Kaplan & Marks,

1990; Le Sage, 2004; Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Rogler et al., 1991). Acculturation is

more difficult for those persons who must cope with the stigma of being perceived as

different because of their skin color, language, ethnicity, gender, class and therefore

cannot be relegated to descriptive variables. Much of the research has been limited to quantitative paradigms that do restrict the depth and richness of investigation of the topic of acculturation. This study focused on individual voices, experiences and perceptions as a way to present a better understanding of the important contextual factors when considering the process of acculturation.

In meeting with participants, listening to their stories, their voices, their constructed meaning, it became apparent that acculturation is very difficult to assess. No wonder there is not one clear, agreed upon model to assess ones level of acculturation. As Phinney (2003) has suggested, rather than thinking of migrants/immigrants as moving from one culture to another, we need to reconsider the process of acculturation by emphasizing the process as continuous and ongoing, through which migrants/immigrants reconstitute and negotiate their identity. In this study, a few participants expressed the importance of being bicultural as a way of feeling a sense of belonging. Contrary to acculturation research that suggests "biculturalism" as the ideal endpoint for psychological health (Berry, 1997; Burnam et al., 1987; Kaplan & Marks, 1990; Thoman & Suris, 2004) participants in this study who expressed a desire to feel a sense of belonging in both cultures and working towards a sense of biculturalism also discussed the immense pressure that comes from it. They spoke of the pressure that is created by wanting to meet the expectations of the receiving cultural context and that of the heritage cultural community.

A majority of participants in this study expressed feeling displaced, sort of in between realities and trying to construct new meaning and a new reality. Many participants felt alienated from friends in their home countries and did not have a sense of

belonging in mainland US. They often asked the question of "where is my home" stating that neither place felt quite like home. Many described it as a loss; a loss of friends and a loss of connections with family members. These stories are congruent with Bhatia and Ram (2001) criticism of "integration or biculturalism" being the endpoint in the acculturation process. They stated, "advocating the strategy of integration as the endpoint of the acculturation process overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful rupturing experiences associated with living in between cultures."

Participants, regardless of their legal status, preference of language, social supports, or other variables typically used to assess acculturation, identified as a Latina or Latino. With an exception of one participant, all individuals in this study expressed that culturally they would never identify as "American." Interestingly, only one of the participants, Lili, identified as American; however, she would fall low on the acculturation scale if we were using the well known acculturation scale described by Berry (1998). Most commonly items assessing acculturation examine whether English is used in a variety of situations and social relations, the language of the media the respondents read or watch, the consumption of foods, and cultural preferences. Lili reported that she socializes with only Spanish speaking friends, has a limited English vocabulary; in fact, she is one of two participants who needed a translator during the interview, and expressed preferring many of her own foods, values and cultural traditions. She however, expressed feeling comfortable, mostly economically, in mainland U.S. and therefore feeling more like an American.

Two of the participants, who migrated to mainland U.S. to pursue a college education found themselves initially embracing the dominant cultural values and

behaviors and rejecting some aspects of their culture of origin as a way of fitting in; however these same individuals, once graduated from college, began once again embracing his/her own culture of origin and integrating the two cultural orientations. This finding is something that Cabassa (2003) addressed when outlining the major limitations of both unidimensional and multidimensional acculturation models, arguing that neither captures the dynamic nature of the acculturation process, and the complexity and uniqueness involved gets lost with measurement instruments.

Every participant in this study spoke to the importance of maintaining a connection to their ethnic and cultural roots. For some it meant maintaining ongoing connections with friends and family from their country of origin, for others it meant speaking only in Spanish when at home, and mandating their children to learn and speak Spanish in the homes, and for others it meant the opportunity to engage in ethnic festivals, enjoy ethnic dance groups, obtain ethnic foods in markets, and meet with other co-ethnic individuals. These social connections served to enhance feelings of ethnic belonging and therefore served as a protective factor for many individuals. This has been supported by more recent studies that have addressed the importance of social support (Taylor, et al., 2006) and have highlighted the importance of identifying protective factors that reduce the negative effects of risk factors and results in positive outcomes (Crockett et al., 2007). Many participants expressed needing just one person to connect to in order to feel some sort of belonging and without that connection, feeling lonely and isolated.

Most of the social supports came from relatives already living in mainland U.S., from other Latino individuals and largely from spiritual and religious organizations.

Most participants in this study heavily relied on these sources of support stating that in large part, the dominant culture and most Americans are not friendly nor are they welcoming of immigrants/migrants. They reported a lack of services and resources available to them in the host culture.

Most participants described America as well as "Americans" as cold, not friendly, workaholics, materialistic, individualistic, greedy, and socially distant. Although many participants expressed a desire to break into a social circle and make some "American friends" many on the other hand expressed their increased comfort in socializing with other Latinos; and therefore choosing to build a social network comprised of other Latin American folks. Even though there was a clear preference to socialize with other Latinos/Latinas, many participants expressed their disappointment with "how much people have changed" as a result of living in mainland U.S. They reported that those Latino/Latinas who have been living here for some time are less helpful, more socially distant and much more individualistic. One can gather from these reports that acculturation is an ongoing process and internal values/norms continue to change and shape as one becomes more and more "Americanized." Most participants in this study expressed a negative view of these "Americanized Latinos" similar to their view of most native born "Americans."

Religion and Spirituality have been reported as most important in feeling a sense of belonging, and a connection to something or someone. It was apparent as participants shared their experiences and stories that spirituality and religion are the major protective factors as individuals are navigating the different aspects of their lives. It has not only

opened doors and provided social networks for individuals, but it is the force that helps many cope and continue to strive even under the most difficult circumstances.

Many of the participants in this study migrated to mainland U.S. for economic reasons. Their initial plan was to come for a few years, work and then move back to their home countries. Some of the participants, of course, had other reasons, such as attending college, or an interest in learning English. However, most of the participants stated that after living in the country for a few years, they decided to stay. When asked about the reasons for wanting to stay, they reported benefits such as, increased opportunities, easier ways of making money, feeling more secure and protected as there is less violence, and appreciating the good school systems, medicine and laws that are available. Interestingly, these benefits were mostly reported by individuals who have been here for a longer period of time and were able to experience and appreciate these benefits. Interestingly, when asked about what's been most difficult, the list was long and naturally covered many of the research questions addressing barriers due to race, gender, class, and language; losses, missing family and friends, and overall feeling isolated, lonely and displaced; however, the benefits for many seemed to still outweigh these difficulties and struggles.

Although the United States has been characterized as a nation of immigrants, newcomers to this country have not always been warmly welcomed by American born individuals. Each wave of new immigrants have had to face unique challenges and barriers with regard to their inclusion into the American culture and identity. As a result of the large immigrant population, there has been an abundance of acculturation research. Researchers and professionals have been interested in defining healthy ways of

acculturating and ways to reduce acculturative stress; however, studies have failed to address this complex process using phenomenological approaches. This study provides just that. It has used a phenomenological approach to document the ongoing emotional issues in acculturation, as well as assessing the manner in which each participant evaluates and makes sense of their interethnic environment. Instead of proxy measures that are typically used in research, this researcher used personal narratives which have allowed individuals with an opportunity to share their unique and personal experiences, as they talked about their journey of settling in mainland U.S. and the impact that gender, race, ethnicity, class, social standing, and language have on this process.

This study was interested in addressing the major gap that exists in the acculturation research, as outlined by some researchers (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Cabassa, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Sue & Chu, 2003). It is difficult to find research on acculturation that addresses these multiple and converging issues. Some sociologists and feminists have given voice to acculturation with respect to oppression and related socio-political issues and have written theoretically, not empirically, about the sociopolitical, psychological, and historical complexity of acculturation among Latinos; however, research addressing these important areas is virtually non existent in mainstream Counseling and Psychology literature.

The goal was to move away from strictly relying on quantitative measures and the use of proxy variables, but rather to include contextual factors using a phenomenological approach. As a result, this study was able to identify factors that do hinder or aid the acculturation experience as well as documenting the unique, complex and personal

process that individuals go through as a result of their settlement in mainland U.S.   In response to the research questions, this study's major findings are the following.

Collectively, the results of this study indicate that living and going through the process of acculturation is complex and related to a number of individual and contextual factors. This finding dismisses the assumption proposed by Berry (1990, 1997, 1980, 1998, 1986) and supported by others that individuals are free to choose their own acculturation style and may fit into one of the four categories (assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization). To the contrary, this study found that individuals are constantly negotiating and meditating the many aspects of their lives. Although biculturalism has been considered as a healthy acculturation strategy (Berry, 1997), there is stress associated with the task of navigating and negotiating multiple identities, as expressed by the participants in this study. Participants expressed the role that race, ethnicity, culture, and proficiency in English have on whether they will be accepted by natives, as well as the kind of services, resources, and supports that are available to them. Race was something that all participants spoke about and were affected by in some way. As we know, race is associated with significant economic, political, and social consequences and it has been used to divide people into groups. These groups are associated with different levels of status, and disparities in access to resources and supports.

Another finding of this study had to do with the protective effects of spirituality, religiosity, and social supports. According to the majority of participants in this study, the ethnic/cultural/immigrant community has been a source of social and emotional support for them. Religiosity and spirituality also takes on a personal level and it has served as a

protective factor when facing difficulties. Participants expressed that a sense of belonging and group attachment has been especially important in helping them unify and in providing a shared sense of community.

Clearly as seen in this study, the information gathered would not have been possible with a quantitative method. It would not have been possible to gather the richness of individual stories, experiences and constructed meanings. We would be missing the cultural context which clearly has such a significant impact on the process of acculturation. From these individual perspectives, we see how in their experience, the acculturation process was complex, involving a constant process of negotiating and mediating many aspects of their lives that are connected to a set of political and historical practices that are, in turn, shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality, culture, and power.

Limitations of the study

A limitation of this study is the heterogeneity of the group which includes a wide range in age. Although as part of the inclusion criteria, participants had to be at least 25 years old, the range seemed to be wide. A study sample that focused more on a specific age group may have provided different themes more applicable for that group. Kaplan and Marks (1990) reported that age may moderate the acculturation-distress relationship because different age groups typically find themselves in different social and economic circumstances.

Another limitation had to do with language. Although most participants spoke English fluently, there were a handful of participants who had a limited vocabulary and therefore may have had a difficult time expressing themselves. I let each participant

know that I did not speak Spanish but that if needed, a Spanish translator could be available. Although no one utilized this option, there were some interviews that were difficult to conduct and a translator would have been helpful. Some of the stories may have been lost in translation due to difficulty with the English language as well as some of the limitations of English in regards to emotional expression.

Another limitation has to do with where participants were interviewed.   A majority of the participants were interviewed in their homes; however, one participant was interviewed in a public café, and eight participants were interviewed at their workplace, during their lunch hour. By interviewing participants in their home, I was able to enter their phenomenological world, which enhanced the interview experience and provided me with a closer, more in depth look at their lives. This was not possible with participants who were interviewed in a public place.

And lastly, it is important to speak to the regional limitations of this study. Study participants lived in Massachusetts, and therefore, it is important to note that individual stories and experiences may have been different in other parts of mainland US., such as the south.

Contribution of this study

Thus far, much of the research on acculturation has been limited to quantitative paradigms that have restricted the depth, richness and complexity of this process. The approach of this study expands knowledge beyond simplistic proxy variables (e.g., language spoken at home, preference in food, music) to gaining a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perceptions in regards to acculturation. The major

contribution of this study is bringing forth people's voices, experiences, stories and their

constructed meaning and realities. These narratives are invaluable in further

understanding the complexities and intricacies of these participants' lives, and in hearing

it from them, as they have experienced it, felt it, and have created meaning from it. In

practice, professionals may be alerted to the ways that the sociopolitical climate can

affect the individuals' identity, behaviors, and feelings. Being aware of how the

sociopolitical environment affects individuals, it would be important for counselors,

educators and other professionals to recognize the need for advocacy and social justice.

Instead of expecting migrants/immigrants to adjust and integrate into the dominant

culture, there needs to be a bidirectional approach to this process. The dominant culture

needs to adjust and integrate itself as well, striving to be more flexible, welcoming, and

sensitive to the varying needs and experiences of migrants and immigrants.

This study is based on an ecological model that takes into account social,

political, economical, structural forces that operate on an individual in addition to other

contextual factors. It is multiculturally sensitive as it does not assume, but it tells the

stories as they have been shared with this researcher. A more general contribution of a

qualitative study was described by Denzin & Lincoln (2008), who stated that telling the

stories of marginalized people can help to create a public space requiring others to hear

what they do not want to hear.

Future Recommendations

In using a qualitative approach, this study aimed at gaining a more comprehensive

understanding of the process of acculturation encountered by Latinos. This approach

afforded the opportunity to study a phenomenon that is embedded within a social-political-economic-cultural context. More research is needed in this area that allows personal voices and stories to be told especially as there are continued changes in the ethnic composition in the US.

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Appendix A

Are you from Puerto Rico, Central or South America or the Caribbean? Have you been in the United States for less than 10 years?

If you answered yes, and you are at least 25 years old you may be eligible to participate in a study interested in better understanding the experiences of Latinos in the United States.

Please call if you are interested in receiving more information about the opportunity to share your experiences. Study participation is voluntary and strictly confidential.

If interested please contact:

Tünde Turi-Marković, M.A.
Project Coordinator
781-581-2615

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview questions
Areas that may be emphasized

There will be an effort made to address the research questions. Below are some interview questions that will be asked if the participant does not naturally bring up these areas or topics. It is important to note that the interviews are semi-structured meaning that other areas, questions and/or topics may naturally emerge during the course of the interviews and therefore, it may not be necessary to ask all of the questions listed below.

1. What has been helpful in living in America? What has been difficult in living in America?
2. How do you identify yourself?
3. What is the ethnicity and/or cultural background of your close friends?
4. Who do you associate with the most?
5. Where do you interact with members of your own ethnic, racial, and/or cultural community?
6. What feelings do you have regarding your ethnicity, cultural background?
7. What language are you most comfortable speaking?
8. When did you learn to speak English?
9. What were some of the reasons you decided to move to America?
10. Do you have any plans to return to your homeland?
11. How frequently are you able to visit your homeland?
12. Are there any differences between your own society and the host society (America)? Is so, what are some of the differences and how have you adapted to these differences?
13. What is your relationship like with your family, immediate and extended?
14. (Question for individuals not from Puerto Rico) Do you have any plans of becoming an American Citizen, if so, what are your feelings or reasons for wanting to become a citizen?
15. How has it been for you as a Latino female (or male) living in the US? Has your role changed in any way?
16. Has there been any change of power distribution in your family?
17. Have you experienced any type of discrimination?
18. What was your occupation in the homeland?
19. What has your occupation been in America?
20. Are there any major challenges you face as a Latino person living in America?
21. Do you have a religious or spiritual affiliation?
22. How frequently do you participate in religious or spiritual practices?
23. Has your affiliation with religiosity or spirituality helped you accommodate easier to the US?
24. Do you have any social supports? If so, what are they?
25. Are there any sources of support in your ethnic community? Are there any sources of support in your host community?
26. Is there anything else that you would like to share with m

Appendix C
Informed Consent

Northeastern University, Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology

Investigators' Names: Tünde Turi-Marković
                          Dr. Tracy Robinson-Wood

Title of Project: A Re-Examination of Universalistic Views on Acculturation through Personal Narratives.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be in this study because you are a Latino male or female who has recently (less than 10 years ago) immigrated or migrated to this country

Why are you doing this research study?
The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of Latino individuals who have either immigrated or migrated to the United States. We are interested in your story of what has been helpful and what has been difficult in living in America. We are also interested in whatever else you want to share with us about coming to America.

What will I be asked to do?
You will be asked to meet with the researcher, Tunde Turi-Markovic for a one hour interview during which you will be asked about your experiences with either immigration or migration as well as your experiences in living in America. With your permission, this one hour interview will be audiotaped.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
You will be interviewed in your own home or any place and at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will take about one hour.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
You may feel uncomfortable about being audiotaped. The purpose of the audiotaping is to be able to fully listen to the participant without having to take a lot of notes and also being able to listen to the interview again, if necessary or if something was missed. The tapes will only be listened to by the researcher and/or research assistant; and tapes will

be destroyed at the completion of the study. If you are uncomfortable by being audiotaped the researcher will not use it.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help others (counselors, researcher, and other health care providers) better understand issues that individuals have to face when they immigrate or migrate to a new country as well as better understanding Latino individuals' experiences in America. One of the goals of this study is to bring more cultural awareness among the counseling community.

Who will see the information about me?
Only the researcher of this study will see the information about you. Your name and the information that you would share with the researcher will remain confidential. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way. We will keep the information we obtain during the interview as well as the tape in a locked filing cabinet in Tunde Turi-Markovic's home office. The tapes will be destroyed after the completion of this study. The informed consent with your signature will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years but will be destroyed thereafter.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University to see this information.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
It is not expected that you will be harmed in any way in this study. No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Yes, your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may stop at any time.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study you can contact Tunde Turi-Markovic, a doctoral student at Northeastern University at 781-581-2615.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Vivienne Conner, Coordinator for Human Subject Research Protection, Division of Research Integrity, 413 Lake Hall, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Telephone: 617-373-7570. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
No, there will be no money offered for your participation.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
No, your participation involves no cost to you.

Is there anything else I need to know?
You must be at least 25 years old and must be a Latino from Puerto Rico, Central or South America, or the Caribbean in order to participate in this study.

You will not be asked any questions regarding your legal status not do we want you to disclose any of this information.

I agree to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person above

_____   _____
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant   Date
above and obtained consent

_____
Printed name of person above

Appendix D

Central Themes and Associated Subthemes

Central Themes	Subthemes
Geo-socio-political factors have a significant Influence in the process of acculturation	Legal status has a significant impact Prior exposure to American culture has its benefits
Proficiency in English is an important factor that influences acculturation and a major component of discrimination	
Citizenship without an emotional attachment	
Bicultural identity	
Feeling displaced	
Negative view of Americans and of "Americanized" Latinos	Work emphasis over family and personal time Individualism
Race is a socially constructed phenomenon	
New role for women: personal freedom	
The Latino stereotype	
Spirituality as protection	
God plays an important role in our lives	
Lack of social supports in the host community	Feeling alone, isolated, and lacking Close connections