The Dissertation Committee for Crystal Myrna Guevara Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Dissertation:

Living with Uncertainty: Identity Transformation in Central American and Mexican Immigrant Women in the United States

Committee:

Ricardo Ainslie, Supervisor

Delida Sanchez

Nestor Rodriguez

Diane Schallert

Living with Uncertainty: Identity Transformation in Central American and Mexican Immigrant Women in the United States

by

Crystal Myrna Guevara

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2019

Dedication

To the immigrant women whose lives have been shaped by the journey of migration and the often-untold stories of their sacrifice, dedication, and courage.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Living with Uncertainty: Identity Transformation in Central American and Mexican Immigrant Women in the United States

Crystal Myrna Guevara, Ph,D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisor: Ricardo Ainslie

This study utilized a qualitative approach to conceptualize identity transformation in the immigration experience of Central American and Mexican undocumented women. Currently, limited research exists on identity formation for this first-generation immigrant sub-population. Individual interviews informed by a psychoanalytic lens were conducted with Spanish-speaking women and analyzed through an Interpretive Phenomenological Approach. Literature on identity, gender, and immigration served as a basis for understanding socioecological factors that impact the experience of transitioning from one country to another. Acculturation, social identity models, and intersectionality served as frameworks to understand the evolving and subjective social realities of undocumented immigrants, which are pivotal when working in Latino mental health psychology. Several themes emerged from the analysis of participant's interviews describing key socio-ecological factors that shaped women's identity formation pre-migration as well as political, economic, and social factors that influenced women's decisions to migrate. Additionally, this study also describes the common challenges involved in the

acculturation process and the strategies that women used to navigate the such challenges in order to reconstruct new lives in the United States.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

"Those who live with globalization's consequences are not at the table,

and their voices are generally excluded."

– David Bacon, *Illegal People*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The process of migration involves important psychological changes for migrants that take place prior to, and after reaching, their new country. The migratory process has a critical impact on the ongoing development of identity, which likely influences acculturative outcomes (Espin, 1987; Garza-Guerrero, 1973). Due to the most recent influx of female migrants to the United States, it has become increasingly important to capture their adaptation experiences as they reconstruct their lives in this country. During the 1990s, the United States underwent an increase in unauthorized migration that nearly doubled within the decade (Fix & Passel, 2003). From 2008 to 2012, women made up 46% of the 11.4 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Sixty percent of these women have lived in this country for at least ten years (Zong & Batalova, 2015; Fuentes, Duffer, & Vasquez, 2013). The increase of female migration to the United States over the past four decades furthers the need to understand the dynamics behind gendered migration (Nawyn, 2010, Pessar et al., 2003). The findings gathered from this study can provide a strengths-based lens to work with undocumented immigrant women when conceptualizing mental health conditions and to help address migratory struggles.

Migration Patterns in Texas

Texas is known to be a destination state for many immigrant individuals attempting to work and establish a new life. This is also the state from which I gathered my data for this research. The Migration Policy Institute reports an estimated 1,464,000 undocumented

individuals live within Texas borders, primarily composed of Mexican nationals who make up 78% of the unauthorized population, followed by El Salvador at 4% (60,000), Honduras at 4% (56,000), Guatemala at 3% (49,000), and India at 1% (19,000) in 2008-2009 (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Additionally, the population of unauthorized women in Texas reflects the nation's average of 47% (746,000) while women in California, Arizona, and New Mexico make up 48% of the unauthorized population. Nearly half of the 1.5 million undocumented immigrants in Texas are women, accounting for approximately 2.5% of the Texas population (Zong & Batalova, 2015). This portion of the Texas population is embedded in the local economy, political agenda, and social community. As much as immigrant women contribute to the functions of the communities in which they live and work, their self-concept in turn, are profoundly affected by the social and political attitudes of their environment.

The self-concept of these immigrant women, that is, the way they see their position within their environment and the individuals' beliefs of themselves, has been shaped by the experiences that led them to leave their home countries, by what happened along the way before entering the United States, and by the experiences they have in the United States as undocumented immigrant women (Jensen,2007; Higgins, Klein & Strauman; 1985). This involves a process of "transformation and reinvention" as women begin to negotiate new identities through encounters with the 'discursive structures' of the host environment (Giroir, 2015). For instance, becoming "undocumented" introduces a new aspect of identity that is often labeled negatively in the United States and sets the stage for experiences of discrimination and rejection. While each immigration journey is unique, the immigrant experience overall will affect every aspect of life for these individuals (Meyers, 2016). For instance, roles they practiced within their community, professions they practiced, even rights they exercised as citizens in their

2

native country will all change.

The unique experience of migration has an impact on the identity of an individual. Yet, the transformation of identity for undocumented immigrant women remains largely under-studied (APA, 2011). An ecological approach, using the lens of intersectionality, can help increase our understanding of the subjective character of the acculturation experience for immigrants. More specifically, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model and intersectionality complement each other in the exploration of how ecological factors and social institutions transform an individual's self-concept.

In many cases, pre-migration experiences are carried over in the ways in which women interact with their new host environment and how they view their position within a new ecological system. Before introducing literature on migration and identity, a brief section on women's experiences in their country of origin and in the United States is reviewed.

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN. Today, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are known as the Northern Triangle, one of the most violent regions of the world. With a reported 48,947 homicides between 2011-2014, reaching a rate of 50 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, the rise of Central American migration to the United States repeats its history of the civil war diaspora of the 1970s (Chavez, 2014; Radan, 2007). Relative to gender, both Mexican and Central American women report threats to their safety by local gangs, rape, extortion, and even abuses from their domestic partners in their country of origin. Often, these reported cases result in impunity for their perpetrators. In summary, Mexican and Central American women experience extreme danger driven by an imbalance of gender marginalization in these regions (Guzman, 2012; Ainslie, McDermott & Guevara, 2018).

These structural forces greatly shape their identity as women, while also limiting their sense of agency (Pessar et al., 2003). Mexico and the Northern Triangle are the home countries of many of the undocumented women who reside in the United States, and while these statistics inform us of the suffering of numerous women in these countries, they also tell the story of their childhood and life before their migration journey.

EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES.

The statistics on migrant deaths along the United States-Mexico border vary among humanitarian groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and United States agencies formally known as the Department of Homeland Security. It is difficult to determine exactly how many migrants die each day crossing the United States-Mexico border seeking new opportunity (Gonzalez, 2000; Isacson, Meyer, 2013). In 2012 alone, the second highest number of migrant deaths, totaling 463, was reported specifically due to drowning or dehydration while crossing the border. It is important to note that these numbers do not account for violent deaths associated with human smuggling. Due to the increase of border patrol surveillance, migrants are forced to travel through more treacherous border zones. Consequently, United States initiatives in the past two decades have made migrants more vulnerable to human smugglers (coyotes), cartel extortion, and violence (García, 2006; Hollander, 2006). For women in particular, making this journey can pose other vulnerabilities due to their gender. Women fear and frequently confront a number of threats, including rape, extortion, and human trafficking (APA, 2011). Central American migrants, in particular, must cross through Mexico and run the risk of further dangers due to their undocumented status in the Mexican territory (García, 2006).   Before 1848, the geographical and physical border between the United States and Mexico did not exist. Today, this border is symbolic of a dark past, current social tensions, and opportunity.

Soon after arriving, Mexican and Central American workers begin to play a critical role in keeping the United States economy afloat (American Immigration Council, 2017). High demand for migrant workers has become a primary reason to migrate thousands of miles away from families and communities. Economic pressures due to poverty necessitate the migration of women who are most "prone to economic crises" (Guzman, 2012, p.63). Today, 60% of undocumented immigrant women are employed in the labor market, while 30% provide childcare for others or remain at home (Cervantes, Hafiz, Kline, Kuhner, & Morrow, 2015). Before the rise of female migration, immigrant men dominated the international labor market, while immigrant women and children were perceived as burdens in the host country (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Today, however, immigrant women outnumber their male counterparts in the employment sector although socially still perceived as burdens by the host country.

Although Mexican and Central American immigrant women are employed as house cleaners and nannies, they remain in the shadows of an informal or "under the table" economy. More recent arrivals tend to be employed as live-in nannies and housekeepers. Recent arrivals are subject to the greatest forms of financial and labor exploitation, as well as social isolation (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; 1994). For example, a survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center (2010) found that 61% of Latino[1] participants experienced workplace discrimination, primarily linked to their immigration status. Latinas in particular, are vulnerable to gender-specific issues

---

[1] Furthermore, pan-ethnic terms generated within the United States, such as *Hispanic* or *Latino/a,* which have historically been used interchangeably, do not fully describe the ethnic and racial heterogeneity of individuals whose ancestry originates from Latin America (Perez & Cruess, 2014). The term "Hispanic" was created by the United States Government in the 1970s to describe Spanish-speaking groups residing in the United States (Passel & Taylor, 2009). The term "Latino/a" describes groups of people who originated from Latin American countries and comprised of European, Indigenous, Asian, African, and other ancestry. It should be noted that Latino groups in the United States are extremely diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic background, generational status, legal status, religion, spirituality, level of acculturation, skin color, and nationality. I want to acknowledge that the use of the term *Latino* in the proposal is used carefully when describing the diversity that exists across these groups.

that create added stress in their daily lives (Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015). For instance, once in the United States, many immigrant women may have difficulty knowing how to access resources, such as healthcare and psychotherapy (Espin, 1987; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

While this may change over time, language barriers and unfamiliarity with the system can further isolate women from interacting with the host environment. This social and systemic isolation may prevent many women from asking questions and seeking help (Meyers, 2016; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Some resources, such as shelters, are a foreign concept for women who immigrate to the United States. Even some gendered socialization from their country of origin, such as tolerating domestic violence, or the interplay of machismo and marianismo, can discourage women from seeking help (Meyers, 2016; Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015).

Although women demonstrate some degree of agency by deciding to migrate, the environment in which they find themselves often overpowers their agency. Traumatic experiences resulting from circumstances in their environment, for instance, weigh negatively on the migration and acculturation process for Latina immigrant women and can lead to depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Maddern, 2004; Radan, 2007). It is important to note that women interviewed for this study may or may not have varied experiences of structural, community, or domestic trauma that impacted their mental health prior to migrating (Doctors Without Borders, 2017). Additionally, current research fails to capture the trauma individuals experienced in their country of origin that may lead to PTSD, depression, anxiety related symptoms, loneliness, or loss of sense of self, which inform their interaction with the host environment (Chu et al., 2013; Maddern, 2004; Radan, 2007). Thus, women often carry

traumatic experiences related to gender marginalization, violence and abuse, and political violence, with them to the United States (Ainslie, McDermott & Guevara, 2018).

In summary, women's immigration to the United States introduces new forms of gender-based oppression, as different dimensions of identity (i.e., immigrations status, racial, and ethnic) become salient depending on attitudes, values, and beliefs of the new cultural environment. Additionally, pre-migratory experiences inform the constructive (i.e., the formation of ethnic and gender identity in the country of origin), deconstructive (i.e., the characteristics that are challenged or lost in the migratory process), and reconstructive (i.e., new dimensions of identity emerge such as immigrant identity or navigating a new position in the social and racial hierarchy of the host environment) process of identity transformation during the migration journey. While research on migration has primarily focused on acculturation models and post-migratory experiences, a closer look at pre-migratory experiences that are carried over during the migration process can help inform how immigrant women interact with their new host environment. Pre-migratory experiences can provide important clinical information to conceptualize the presenting concerns for immigrant women who engage in therapy by understanding the unique pre-migratory challenges presented for this sub-population. Additionally, focusing on pre-migratory experiences and how they transform identity, through an ecological lens can provide further insight into the varied acculturative outcomes for this population.

The Present Study

This study aimed to understand the constructive, deconstructive, and re-constructive process of identity transformation through the lens of migration. Specifically, a primary focus of this study was to examine *how* identity is transformed in immigrant women who travel from their country of origin to reconstruct a new life in the United States. I focused on the experiences of

Central American and Mexican women who have immigrated to the United States. In particular,

I was interested in how social, cultural, and political factors in the United States and the country

of origin influence the acculturation process through the intersection of different identity

dimensions. Furthermore, this study sought to contribute to the literature on Latin American

women and explore identity transformation, while also examining the role of intersectionality in

the immigration experience for this population.

To conduct this study, I utilized acculturation theory, social identity models, and the

concept of intersectionality as frameworks to understand how identity is transformed during the

migration experience. Because immigrant women from Central America and Mexico embody an

intersectional identity as women and "outsiders" as immigrants with an undocumented status,

their exposure to multiple cultural contexts likely results in a unique identity transformation

experience. This subpopulation has different and layered marginalized identities within two

separate cultural environments making their identity transformation unique to other intersectional

identities. While culture helps to shape the acculturative outcomes of immigrants, studying the

way immigration intersects with other dimensions of identity such as gender, race, and social

class can be critical to researchers' understanding of how these changes come about.

Currently, several acculturation theories in the literature attempt to describe the

experience of immigrant women from Central America and Mexico in the United States,

however, these theories fall short in fully conceptualizing the weight of migration on identity.

Berry (2005) indicates that further research on the historical, political, and social context of one's

country of origin must be pursued. Thus, my study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how

pre-migratory experiences impact how immigrant women interact with their new environment.

By including a pre-migratory perspective on the process, I attempted to address current

limitations in the acculturation literature. For instance, by understanding the socialization, hardship, and culturally informed ways women coped in their country or origin, we can better understand how they may interact with their new context of reception, also gaining insight into varied acculturative outcomes for this sub-population. Finally, I also considered ecological factors (e.g., political, social, and cultural factors) that impact identity in the country of origin and in the United States.

The study involved conducting 14 in-depth interviews with immigrant women from Mexico and Central America. Interviews were structured and analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Since nativity and age are considered to be significant factors that impact acculturation and identity formation, I only interviewed first generation immigrant women (Rumbaut, 2002). During interviews, I explored the following questions: 1) how living in different cultural contexts may render certain aspects of identity more salient than others, 2) how one's identity is transformed through migration, and 3) implications to acculturation not considered in current models. These questions are presented in the interview guide included in Appendix A. Interview data were analyzed using acculturation and ecological models as macro-level tools to facilitate an understanding of the transformative identity process of migration. Furthermore, intersectionality was utilized as a micro-level framework to help explain different outcomes of acculturation for individuals within the same group.

The issues experienced by women who migrate from Mexico and Central America described above, were the central focus of my study. Accordingly, my research questions were guided by a motivation to understand how identity is impacted by the unique dynamics immigrant women experience through their interaction with social structures and institutions within their country of origin. These questions also prompted for responses in how women

interact with their host country furthering our understanding of the deconstructive and

reconstructive phases of identity transformation reflected in acculturation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The fluidity of identity through gender, immigration, and lifespan has been noted in several studies across various social science disciplines (Nawyn, 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). Research on identity, however, has not adequately addressed the impact of immigration on different aspects of identity (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006), nor has immigration been directly linked to dimensions other than cultural identity (Schwartz et al., 2006). Yet, factors such as immigration status and gender identity influence the acculturation outcomes of immigrant women. Recently, there has been a push to include migration in feminist theory precisely because gender permeates the different experiences involved in the immigration process (Nawyn, S. J., 2010, Espin; 1987; Pessar, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000; Giroir, 2015). For instance, feminist theory studies the context of socio-cultural systems that reinforce experiences of gender inequality (Thing, 2006; Espin, 1987; Ademas & Duenas, 2017).

Current Latino identity models primarily focus on identity formation in the context of the United States rather than in the country of origin. The concept of intersectionality can help inform gaps in current acculturation literature by centering on the socio-historic narratives of immigrant women of color, who they were in their country of origin, and how their identity shifts during the process of acculturation. As Giroir (2015) suggests, "narratives can be understood as a socially and culturally bound process that is both iterative and explorative of our multiple identities" (p. 305). In this study, I applied intersectional theory to understand how identity is transformed by focusing on gender identity and the process of becoming an undocumented immigrant. In the next section, I review immigrant mental health and summarize key migration concepts such as ecological models, acculturation models, and identity dimensions (i.e., gender, racial/ethnic, and immigration status) through the lens of intersectionality.

Mental Health and Migration

Undocumented or non-citizen Latinos have higher rates of untreated mental health disorders due to low access to health services in the United States (Rios-Ellis, B., 2005). Trauma may be experienced at different stages of the migration process, either in the country of origin, during the migration journey, or while resettling in the United States. Consequently, immigrant women can experience mental health difficulties related to immigration. Examples of pre-migration trauma include: interpersonal, racial, and political trauma (Suárez-Orozco, Birman, Casas, Nakamura, Tummala-Narra, & Zarate, 2011). While ecological factors can impact different forms of mental health disorders, links between traumatic exposure (e.g., interpersonal, political, and racial) mental health, and identity for immigrant populations, remains understudied (APA, 2011).

Kaplan et al. (2011) researched the different forms of trauma exposure experienced by Latina immigrants both in their country of origin and in the United States. This research emphasizes the importance of studying trauma experienced by this subpopulation, while also considering the context of those experiences. For instance, a traumatic experience can be culturally interpreted as a *susto* or a fright sickness that leads to soul loss and includes symptoms such as depression, insomnia, introversion, irritability, lethargy, and anorexia (Kemp & Rasbridge, 2004; Spector, 1996). Often, presenting concerns related to mental health problems can be expressed through somatic expression for Latino patients (APA, 2011). These symptoms can include an inability to breathe, tightness in the chest or neck, headaches, and stomachaches (Canino, 2004). Conceptualizing concerns related to the immigration stressors in this way may help to improve treatment for Latino immigrants by providing a more accurate evaluation of how ecological stressors impact mental health for this subpopulation.

Kaltman et al.'s collection of life histories reports experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional violence experienced in their country of origin, during their migration experience, and in the United States (Kaltman, Mendoza, Gonzales, Serrano, & Guarnaccia, 2011). While much of the trauma experienced by women in their country of origin is gender-based, immigrant women also experience trauma related to their immigration status in the United States. These forms of trauma include: isolation, hiding in the shadows, living in fear, and relationship violence. Women tend to experience physical and emotional violence in interpersonal relationships, though experiences of emotional violence are most prevalent.

Immigrant women can experience multiple forms of discrimination and structural inequalities over time, which shape the meaning of their identity in their country of origin and later in the United States (Bauer et al., 2000). Additionally, when identity dimensions overlap multiple minority strati (as captured by the concept of intersectionality), immigrant women report higher levels of depression, abuse, and discrimination than their male counter-parts. Even after adjusting for immigration status and age, Latinas had 73% higher odds of experiencing a psychiatric disorder related to depression than their male counter parts. Discriminatory experiences in the host environment may be based on the misconception that Latino groups refuse to assimilate to United States culture -- a historical expectation of all incoming immigrant groups. Consequently, several studies found that discrimination toward Latina women, who hold more traditional heritage beliefs, is associated with higher levels of depression and decreased likelihood of seeking treatment (Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015; Cordero, Kurz, 2006). In addition, recent research has examined the intersection between discrimination, immigration, and health outcomes. The findings in these studies reflect the broader literature, which shows that perceived discrimination is linked to poorer physical and

mental health outcomes, as well as decreased access to quality healthcare. Research has demonstrated that health outcomes and access to healthcare may vary by length of time in the United States and age at migration (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Radan, 2007; Meyers, 2016; Organista, 2007).

Despite the fact that Latino immigrants experience high rates of trauma, these experiences are understudied in academic research. The few existing studies have focused on trauma exposure in Latina American women in primary care or social service settings. While high-income and developed countries continue to advance research on mental health, much study is still needed to understand differences in mental health disorders across cultures and subpopulations.

Even after arriving in the United States, new/other forms of mental health disorders may develop due to interactions/experiences within the new environment. For instance, undocumented immigrants are at particular risk of developing mental health disorders due to the stress and instability associated to their legal status (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These findings appear to be in tension with other research findings such as the "Immigrant Paradox" (finding that Latino immigrants have better health, including mental health, than second and third generation Latinos). However, with the rise of chronic socio-ecological stressors against undocumented immigrants, this population may be more vulnerable to risk factors (i.e., perceived discrimination, increased isolation) that impact mental health over a period of time. Undocumented women experience additional stressors due to the threat of deportation. Often the primary caretakers of their children, being deported produces a traumatic separation, which has been associated with clinical depression (Miranda et al., 2005). Thus, for

14

these women, it is clear that multiple ecological forces play a powerful role in shaping their identity. I expand on this topic later in the dissertation.

Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Model

Literature on migration has begun to recognize the benefits of using an ecological approach to understand the impact of migration on an individual's sense of self. Most notably, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model has been used to describe the processes that mediate or hinder the psychological effects of migration.

In an effort to understand how multiple environmental systems impact acculturation, including risk and protective factors for Latina immigrant women, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system's theory is introduced as a framework. This model proposes that individuals are impacted by the quality and continuity of proximal (i.e., relationships, family, community) and distal (i.e., laws, policies, and culture) ecological factors. These factors can impact the individual's functioning, development, self-concept, or perceived relationship with their environment (Jensen, 2007). This model also describes a "multilevel environment" composed of five spheres that can trigger "dysfunction" (i.e., acculturative stress), or can mediate the impact of migration on psychological well-being (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner (1988) theorized these five levels to be the individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Four of these ecological levels ultimately interact in complex ways to construct an environment that molds an individual's subjective experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duenas, 2015). These systems are summarized in Table 1, below:

Table 1: Summary of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Model

Level 1	**Individual:** unique characteristics of the individual known as bio-psychological factors such as gender, physiognomy (i.e., skin color, phenotype), nationality, immigration status, age upon arrival to United States that may facilitate or hinder acculturation over time.
Level 2	**Microsystem:** daily and immediate surroundings and face-to-face interactions with the individual such as family, diversity of local community, availability of ethnic enclave, community violence, local sentiment about immigrants, social supports such as religious organizations, workplaces and directly shape the individual.
Level 3	**Mesosystem:** shows the relationship between the variables in the microsystem or intermingling microsystems and includes the individual. Value systems between work and home (two separate microsystems) interact to influence the individuals …
Level 4	**Exosystem:** variables directly outside the microsystem. Includes linkages occurring between two or more settings such as the economic system, transportation system, local government, mass media, and other societal institutions (Miller, 2002, p.438). This system influences processes within the individual's immediate setting but does not include the individual.
Level 5	**Macrosystem:** referred to as the general cultural blueprint that influence an individual's goals, risks, values, and ways of raising the next generation (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Miller, 2002, pp.438-439). Also considered to be the cultural context impacting acculturation such as social expectations, beliefs, values, laws, and policies.

THE CONTEXT OF RECEPTION

Poststructuralist identity theorists argue that individuals are in a constant 'dialogic relationship' with their environment and must constantly negotiate their identities (Giroir, 2015). The *context of reception* or environment is defined as the way in which immigrant groups are

accepted or rejected by their host culture. Schwartz et al. defined the *context of reception* as "the ways in which the receiving society constrains and directs the acculturation options available to migrants" (2010, p. 3). There are many ecological factors captured by the *context of reception* that contribute to the migration experience of immigrant women in the United States (Padilla, 2003). For instance, within a *context of reception* less favorable to migration, migrants may experience higher levels of acculturative stress[2] and discrimination. One consequence of this is that, if immigrants experience discrimination they may be less motivated to attempt to acculturate (Padilla, 2003).

Gender identity is influenced by conditions that prompt immigrant women to migrate (i.e., antecedents), as well as ecological factors they interact with in the host country. According to Jensen (2007) antecedents can be stressors that exist regardless of the *context of reception* and include: 1) reasons the individual decides to immigrate, 2) experiences of trauma before and during migration, and 3) pre-departure experiences in their community (Jensen, 2007; Rambaut, 1991). Thus, identity is transformed by the pre-migratory experiences in the host country and renegotiated by post-migratory experiences in the host culture.

In order to understand how identity transforms it is critical to explore the social, cultural, and historical specificity of a particular group (Rouse, 1995). Specifically, it is important to understand how pre-migratory experiences and ecological factors construct gender identity and group identity, recognizing the heterogeneity that can exist in one country. While in the United States, for instance, identity is organized through parameters of nationality, sexuality, race,

---

[2] Acculturative stress contributes to the emotional distress of immigrant women in the work place and personal life as adjusting to new behaviors and values of the new environment can often conflict with their traditional behaviors and values (LaFramboise, et a.l, 1993). Some of the contributors of acculturative stress are separation from family and social supports, socio-political vulnerability, learning a new language, unauthorized immigrant status, and fear of deportation (Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015; Cordero, Kurz, 2006). The host cultural environment is likely to impact the level of acculturative stress depending on the differences in values between the heritage culture and the United States culture.

religion, gender, and most recently, through immigration status due to the greater presence of diverse groups (Rouse, 1995). We must explore pre-migratory identity dynamics and bridge this knowledge to post-migratory understanding of identity.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained how the microsystem and an individual's characteristics (i.e., skin color, language, education attainment, gender, and mental health) have a proximal (direct) impact on how the individual experiences their environment, whereas the other ecological subsystems (i.e., mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem), are thought to indirectly impact the individual. The macrosystemic approach dominates most of the literature on immigrant women populations and uses statistics to frame the immigration experience. Immigration status, for instance, is a macro-level construct that impacts the daily lives of individuals as the laws and policies regarding immigration are shaped by cultural values of the United States. Jensen (2007) argued that 'within the context of acculturation and immigration, stress is theoretically aroused at the macrosystem level when discontinuities exist' between the heritage and host culture. For instance, while Latinos are socialized to value collectivism, interdependence, and collaborative relationships, the United States culture values individualism and competitiveness (Ademas &Duenas, 2017). Thus, the *context of reception* is likely to impact the level of acculturative stress and create "cultural mistrust," such as the mistrust in Western institutional practices (Garcia-call and Magnuson, 1997).

While macro-level data describes one way of conceptualizing an experience, it is also important to analyze the conditions of immigration at the microsystemic level. This approach includes more didactic and real-life experiences to understand the immigration experience. For instance, the microsystem emphasizes the role of communities during the post-migration process. While some micro-level factors in these areas can act as protective factors (i.e., social networks,

services, and familiarity, protection from external stressors), acculturative stress can increase due to high levels of poverty, limited exposure to the English language and the mainstream culture, as well as perceived discrimination (Duenas, 2017).

In addition, "othering" by the *context of reception* threatens healthy identity transformation processes for immigrant women. The following subsections provide a brief overview of ecological factors impact on undocumented immigrant women's identity transformation.

IDENTITY POLITICS: THE Impact of Labeling on Identity. In the United States, becoming "undocumented" introduces a new aspect of identity that is often negatively labeled, setting the stage for experiences of discrimination and rejection. Since the 1990s, lawmakers claiming anti-immigration actions for causes of national security have lobbied for exclusionary laws targeting entire groups of people who are undocumented. (Abrego, 2011; Doering, Horner, Martinez, Lopez, & Delva, 2016). These laws not only have legal but also social effects -- they contribute to the social rejection and isolation of undocumented immigrants. For instance, Proposition 187[3], Secure Communities Program[4], SB 1070[5], and most recently SB4 in Texas[6] have created a hostile environment for Latino immigrants. These laws, among many other anti-

---

[3] Policy introduced in the state of California in 1994 that made undocumented immigrants ineligible for social services and mandated educators and human service providers to verify citizenship of their clients. It attempted to bar undocumented immigrants from using any form of social service, non-emergency healthcare, and public school access. The policy did not go into effect but did create fear and anguish among the immigrant community.

[4] A federal program designed to identify undocumented immigrants in United States jails and prisons through fingerprints submitted by participating facilities.

[5] Arizona law passed in 2010 and upheld by the Supreme court in 2012, allowing polices officers to inquire about an individual's immigration status during routine traffic stops under the authority of state law, leaving many vulnerable to discriminatory profiling.

[6] A statewide policy initiative by the Texas Legislature that provides local law enforcement the authority to ask for a person's immigration status during "routine interactions." Failing to comply with federal immigration law by the officer may lead to fines or removal. This law has sparked controversy across the nation doubting its constitutional grounds, condoning racial profiling, and decrease public trust, and targets sanctuary cities. In September 2017 a federal judge temporarily blocked SB4, but governor Greg Abbott is currently seeking to appeal this ruling.

immigrant laws, ordinances, programs, and tactics have further contributed to acculturation stress for this population (Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Conerlius, 2009; Organista, 2007). This rejection of people based on their immigration status within the *context of reception* of the United States can cause individuals to internalize these labels and possibly accept forms of mistreatment (Abrego, 2011; Massey, 2007). This interaction between the legal system and individual is an example of a dynamic interplay between the macrosystem and the individual.

When the host environment perceives the presence of immigrants as threatening to the status quo, regarding them with fear and anxiety, a context is created in which immigrants are negatively portrayed. This extreme, and unfortunately common "othering" of immigrant groups, is often produced through stereotyping immigrants who are depicted as "criminal" or "illegal" (Woodward, 2004). This social construction of illegality contributes to social discrimination, including this imposition of negative labels and can have detrimental effects on an individual's identity[7].

As a consequence of this *context of reception*, discrimination against Latinos has increased. Between 2004 and 2006, hate crimes against Latinos increased by 25% (Shattell, Villalba, & Stokes, 2009). Living in an environment that imposes negative labels, such as 'criminal', 'illegal', and 'thief', may contradicts the individual's value system and can produce an identity crisis (Woodward, 2004; Ward, 2008). The Latino Immigrant Paradox, which describes "the phenomenon that first-generation Latino immigrants are far less likely to engage in criminal activity" (Wright & Benson, 2010), challenges this criminalization imposed by overarching social structures. The cumulative "othering" and discrimination of first-generation immigrants

---

[7] Howard Becker's labeling explains how human behavior engages in the label imposed such as a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, if you label a person as a criminal, there is a high probability the person will internalize this "deviant" behavior as a characteristic of personal identity. Labeling theory does not claim that immigrants turn deviant, but rather demonstrates a process by which environment has the power to influence the internal processes of any individual.

are symptoms of contextual and systemic factors, which can affect the acculturation process and one's sense of self.

POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN THE MEDIA. Media is often used to reinforce the *context of reception's* attitudes and beliefs about immigrant groups. The United States has a social history of perceiving Latino immigrants south of the border to be inferior to White Americans (Molina, 2006; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017).

This perception has continued to the present day, in which stereotyping Latina immigrants as 'pregnant pilgrims' is common (Gutierrez, 2003). These perceptions produce overt forms of discrimination, such as California's Proposition 187 (Hayes-Bautista, 2004; Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). This racialized and sexualized immigration rhetoric depicts Latina immigrants as hyper-fertile agents seeking to take advantage of the American welfare system by birthing "anchor" babies (Caminero-Santangelo, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Although the proposition was overturned, laws such as this, along with Arizona's HB1070 and the SB4 initiative in Texas, reinforce stereotypes about Mexican and Central American immigrants as "lazy and un-abiding to the law" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2012; Bacon, 2008, pg. 94). These attempts to shine a negative spotlight on immigrant groups cause psychosocial damage to both dominant and marginalized immigrant groups, further dividing them (Guzman, 2012).

INVISIBILITY: THE GENERALIZATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) argue that previous studies have failed to consider the unique positions of immigrant women and their salience in traditional family roles and as cultural representatives. Dominant cultures cluster and stereotype immigrant women as a homogeneous working class without

considering within-group variability. Past literature has failed to identify agency and has not considered the 'transformative process of migration' on women's identity (Moreno, 2002).

Being undocumented adds additional layers of complexity, and in the *context of reception,* this status can produce unique challenges. Thus, my objective in this study was to further our understanding of undocumented immigrant women's process of adaptation by exploring the gender and immigration status dimensions of their identity. The sexism and xenophobia that female immigrants experience in the *context of reception* influences acculturation in ways that looking separately at gender identity or immigration status cannot fully capture. Although there are other identity dimensions such as class, race, and ethnicity that are critical to shaping the experiences of this sub-population, my focus on the intersection of gender and immigration status, as well as ecological factors, calls attention to the importance of considering multiple dimensions of identity when studying the acculturation process.

As previously mentioned, current acculturation models do not capture the *context of reception's* impact on the identity process. In the next section, I will introduce literature on acculturation and how acculturation outcomes are impacted by the pre-immigration experience.

Acculturation

Acculturation involves various systems that can impact the adaptation of Latino/a immigrants in the United States. It is a process in which an individual simultaneously negotiates maintaining characteristics of the "heritage culture," while also adapting to the "host culture" (Berry, 1997; Gonzales, Fabrett, & Knight, 2009; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1981). This process can also be influenced by socio-cultural-political factors, and can be further understood by incorporating Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems theory*. Berry (2005) argued that the combination of political,

economic, and demographic conditions of an individual's country of origin must be studied in

order to understand an individual's motivations for migrating and their acculturation trajectory.

Specifically, the country of origin's ecological context can help determine if migration was

voluntary or forced, which impacts how adaptation occurs in the new country (Berry, 2005).

Similarly, the *context of reception* greatly influences an individual's path of acculturation.

Consequently, immigrants may be less motivated to attempt to acculturate if they are confronted

by discrimination against their group by the dominant group.

There is a need to understand further the two-way nature of the acculturation process, in

which heritage/minority cultures simultaneously transform the host/dominant culture, as, for

instance, the recreation of cultural traditions that are adopted by the host culture, ethnic

identification by future Latino generations, as well as an increasing demand for bilingual

professionals (Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). This means that we need to look at how the host

environment is acculturating to the changes that come from contact with immigrant cultures

(Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Psychological acculturation, an aspect of acculturation, is defined as the internal process

of change in an immigrant's experience when interacting with the host culture (Teske & Nelson,

1974; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Berry, 2005). These psychological changes include the behavior

patterns, norms, institutional changes, and values of a cultural group or individual (Teske &

Nelson, 1974). Berry also argued that "there are vast individual differences in psychological

acculturation," even within the same group (Berry, 2005, pg. 702). At the group level, general

acculturation occurs; while at the individual level, psychological acculturation takes place.

Psychological acculturation can result in behavioral shifts (e.g., ways of speaking, dressing,

eating, and in cultural identity) or more problematic outcomes, such as acculturative stress (e.g., uncertainty, anxiety, and depression), or negative impact on self-esteem (Berry, 1976).

Acculturation does not apply in the same way for all groups of immigrants (Berry, 2005). Scholars have hypothesized that acculturation may be more difficult for individuals who are coping with the stigma attached to their skin color, language, and/or ethnicity (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Some intra-psychic factors such as ego strength, decision-making skills, resolution of feelings of loss, and the ability to tolerate ambiguity (in particular, gender-role ambiguity), impact a migrant's adaptation process (Espin, 1987). Conversely, social constructs such as race, class, education level, and immigration status also determine the experience and outcome of the acculturation process (Espin, 1987; Doran, & Satterfield, 1988). Thus, it is clear that acculturation is influenced by a vast set of complex factors.

In order to examine the identity process in the experience of immigration, I review existing theories of acculturation in the following subsections. These theories represent primary theoretical frameworks that have dominated the literature on immigrant experiences and adaptation outcomes.

UNIDIRECTIONAL MODELS

The first models of acculturation described the process as a unidirectional paradigm, ultimately ending with assimilation: the individual conforms to the dominant culture while relinquishing her heritage culture. For instance, the model developed by Park and Miller in 1921 describes acculturation as a "blending process" that is gradual and irreversible for immigrant individuals and occurs in three stages: contact, accommodation, and assimilation. In acculturation, to avoid conflict and "othering," new immigrants behave in ways consistent with the host culture (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Unidirectional

models assume that higher degrees of assimilation lend themselves to more positive outcomes. However, this argument is disputed by empirical data on the "Healthy Immigrant Paradox," which shows higher levels of acculturation are actually associated with higher levels of depression, substance use, decreased lifespan, and adolescent pregnancy (Clark & Hofsess, 1998, pg.115). Additionally, recent studies on Mexican immigrants and their descendants found certain mental health disorders to increase over an individual's lifetime and across generations (Alderete, Vega, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2000; Alegria et al., 2007).

BIDIMENSIONAL MODELS

Historically, Unidirectional Models have been critiqued for promoting the notion that immigrant cultures are inferior and that immigrant individuals are incapable of integrating two distinct cultures (i.e., biculturalism or the active engagement with at least two cultures) (Ramirez, 1984, Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p.115). On the other hand, Bidimensional Models aim to address the limitations of Unidirectional Models. John Berry's widely cited theory (1997, 2003) on the historical experiences of ethnic minorities in the United States, for example, was pivotal to understanding the acculturation experience. His model highlighted the power differentials between dominant and non-dominant groups and was composed of three phases: contact, conflict, and adaptation[8] (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; p. 117, Berry, 2005). This Bidimensional Model encompasses two independent dimensions that underlie the process of acculturation: 1) maintenance of heritage culture and pre-migratory identity, and 2) involvement or identification with aspects of the host society (Berry, 1980). Evaluating the level

---

[8] Contact refers to the historical conditions to which these two groups met (i.e., immigration, military encounter, or political intervention/ invasion). Conflict results from the dominant groups attempt oppress the less powerful group and accounts for the expected tension and hostility. The last phases, adaptation, is intended to reduce the conflict between the two groups by working on two major issues 1) cultural maintenance (whether or not individuals wish to maintain their cultural identity), and 2) contact and participation (whether individuals seek daily contact with the dominant group).

of these dimensions results in four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization[9]. These acculturation strategies (or outcomes) are influenced by the socio-cultural context and parameters set by the dominant group (i.e., *context of reception*). For instance, if an individual is high in both dimensions they would be categorized within the integration acculturative strategy as illustrated in the diagram below.

Identification with Minority Group
Identification with Minority Group

		Strong	Weak
Identification with Majority Group	Strong	Integrated	Assimilated
	Weak	Separated	Marginal

Figure 1: Bidimensional Model of Acculturation, Berry (1980)

Even so, Bidimensional Models are limited because they do not account for the complexities of the experience of acculturation (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p.115; Ngo, 2008). Specifically, the two foundational dimensions of Bidimensional Models (i.e., preservation of heritage identity and extent of connection to the host culture) are limited, as they fail to adequately capture the diverse experiences of varied populations. For example, Bidimensional Models conceptualize acculturation as a linear progress that leads to a "fixed-state." These models do not consider "variations in strategies across multiple domains of social functioning,"

---

[9] Assimilation is an acculturative position where the individual will fully immerse into the host society. Separation occurs as full immersion into the heritage society is maintained and retraction from the host society. Integration is a position where both the host and heritage culture and balanced and maintained. Marginalization is a result of no contact with the heritage society and host society.

nor do they incorporate contextual information related to "historical time periods" (Kim & Abreu, 2001; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, pg. 119).

Furthermore, the *context of reception* can limit agency in the acculturation process for immigrants. For instance, immigrants may feel pressured to undergo cultural changes due to political, social, and/or economic circumstances in order to survive (Marin, 1993; Padilla & Perez, 2003). The Bidimensional Models do not consider how the parameters of the *context of reception* actually limit the agency of the individual to choose acculturative strategies. Consequently, the dominant group perceives immigrants as resistant to the expectations of *context of reception.* In turn*,* this resistance contributes to their status as "other."

Similar to acculturation, identity is an ongoing process of struggle, negotiation, creation, deconstruction, and re-creation (Ngo, 2008; Dominelli, 2002). Immigrants may view their cultural identities in different ways throughout their lives and even experience a false identity due to internalized oppression (Ngo, 2008). Current Bidimensional Models do not account for within-group differences such as skin color, physiognomy, level of education, or socioeconomic status (SES), which impact the process of adaptation (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2010). Thus, these models may benefit from including factors involved in the formation and reformation of multiple identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and others).

MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODELS

Most recently, multidimensional models have been created to conceptualize acculturation more accurately. Multidimensional models describe acculturation as an ongoing process that can vary across time different and contexts (Felix-Ortiz, Newcomb, & Myers, 1994).

The Multidimensional Measure of Cultural Identity (MMCI) was developed to assess bicultural and mono-cultural orientations across several domains of acculturation (Felix-Ortiz et al., 1994). This model suggests the use of "cultural identity" as the primary descriptor to capture the complexity and multi-dimensionality of acculturation. It also offers a complex way of understanding the acculturation process because it places individual's experience in the context of the environment, social functioning, and time. While this conceptualization can provide critical insight, it can be problematic as it places blame on the individual for struggling to acculturate (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Specifically, it does not consider that power dynamics and systemic oppression may complicate the acculturation process for the individual. Other social psychological (Bourhis et al., 1997) and Bidimensional Models also fail to critically examine "oppressive societal structures, dominant-subordinate power differentials, and the formation and reformation of multiple identities" (Ngo, 2008, p.59). Therefore, a primary aim of this study is to focus on the role that personal history, societal oppression, cultural context, and identity formation have on the acculturative process for ethnic minority immigrant groups in the United States (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Ngo, 2008).

Multidimensional models offer the most contemporary and complex understanding of acculturation when compared to previous models. Even so, changes within a group's behavioral, psychological, and attitudinal levels are yet to be fully understood by current acculturation models (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Kohatsu, Concepcion, & Perez, 2010). Some critiques of these theoretical frameworks are that they have traditionally been analyzed through an ahistorical, gender-neutral, and apolitical lens. This is not appropriate when working with marginalized groups who are impacted by all three factors. Additionally, they have not considered within-group diversity. Bhatia and Ram (2001) extended this argument by

highlighting that these models place privileged and non-privileged immigrants in the same category and minimize or disregard the impact of inequities and injustices faced by marginalized groups. This critique has greatly informed my research questions, which explore intersectional identity. Women are marginalized through their gender, immigration status, SES, and ethnicity/race – identities that cannot be universally categorized by an acculturative framework. As explained above, these intersectionalities have been omitted from previous literature on the migration experience.

Cross-cultural psychology research studies often identify between-group but not within-group comparisons (Mendoza, 1984; Martinez & Mendoza, 2013). Although immigrant groups are commonly compared to native groups of the host country, neglecting to identify within-group differences can have serious implications on standardized testing, mental health diagnoses, and clinical work with Latino patients. Chicano psychology highlights the impact of mono-categorizing ethnic groups, while "systemically ignoring the cultural backgrounds of Mexican Americans" (Martinez & Mendoza, 2013, p. 62). In my research, I attempt to address this critique by recognizing the heterogeneity that exists even within my subpopulation composed of multiple and overlapping identities. Diverse pre-migratory socio-cultural experiences have a meaningful impact on the acculturation process of individuals and the transformation of their psychological character during post-migration. Padilla and Perez (2003) stated that major theories of acculturation fail to consider how individual differences and personality characteristics facilitate or hinder acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 40; Birman, 1994). These differences are comprised of "personal attitudes, traits, and socio-political-historical experiences" (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 41). Understanding individual and group processes is

complex but can be achieved by utilizing more current social psychological research that takes intersectionality into account.

Acculturation is a multi-layered and complex process; often the immigration journey intertwines with post-migration life (Meyers, 2016; Berry, 2005). Becoming "undocumented" adds an extra layer of complexity to the identity transformation process. Overall, two arguments can be made for further research into the subjectivity of acculturation: 1) current acculturative models use categories and measurements that are too broad and ignore the socio-historical-political experience of an individual and, 2) they do not adequately capture the importance of *contexts of reception* (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Ngo, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010).

Past literature has explored the relationship between acculturation and cultural identity. Yet, the experience of acculturation is deeper than cultural variables such as language, behavior, and practice. For example, research on immigrant health cannot be fully explained by the culturally based changes that are a focus of current acculturation models. Even expanded acculturation models do not fully capture the extent to which institutional factors reproduce patterns of immigrant health. Additionally, current acculturation models tend to ignore the socio-historical contexts of migration. The historical racialization of newly arrived immigrants plays an important role in how different groups integrate into the host culture (Viruell-Fuente et al., 2012). These unique experiences are not fully captured by the "one size fits all" assumption of acculturation models that portrays a universal experience of migration (Schwartz et al., 2010; Ngo, 2008).

Finally, this broad conceptualization of adaptation experiences places privileged and unprivileged immigrants together, despite the fact that they experience different acculturative trajectories within the *context of reception*. This is to say, current acculturation models do not

fully explain *why* members from similar ethnic groups experience different acculturative outcomes. By incorporating this lens, it is possible to examine the way in which systemic factors influence how immigrants are received based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and access to obtaining legal immigration status. For instance, white European immigrants receive a number of social privileges over ethnic minority immigrants from underprivileged countries. This differential treatment of immigrants often results in different acculturative outcomes for different groups. Specifically, more privileged groups are integrated or assimilated into the host culture, while underprivileged groups tend to be marginalized or separated (according to Berry's Bidimensional Acculturation model). These different forms of reception for privileged and underprivileged immigrant groups may impact acculturative stress experienced throughout their time in the host country.

ACCULTURATIVE STRESS

Once in the United States, heightened exposure to ecological stressors and adversity can further impact mental health for immigrant women (Hovey & King, 1996; Hovey, 2000; Canino & Roberts, 2001; Roberts, Roberts, & Chen, 1997). Past literature has described how the migratory experience can cause acculturative stress (i.e., stress resulting from acculturation), which may lead to anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and mood disorders (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Jensen, 2007). Furthermore, *being undocumented can intensify acculturative stress in the new environment.*

Difference in values between the heritage culture and the United States culture likely impacts the level of acculturative stress that is experienced. Factors such as immigration status, gender, low-socioeconomic background, and lack of social support can lead to further

discrimination, which in turn, increase feelings of hopelessness[10]. For instance, Marsiglia et al.

(2011) found an association between high levels of stress and high levels of hopelessness among

this sub-population, which for some Latina immigrants can be severe enough to cause clinical

depression (CDC, 2014).

Acculturative stress may also contribute to emotional distress in the professional and

personal lives of immigrant women. Adjusting to new values and expectations can be

challenging, particularly when they conflict with heritage behaviors and values (LaFramboise, et

a.l, 1993). Some factors that contribute to acculturative stress are separation from family and

social supports, socio-political vulnerability, challenges in learning a new language,

unauthorized immigrant status, fear of deportation, and perceiving the host country as an

unwelcoming environment (Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015; Cordero,

Kurz, 2006) Latina immigrant mothers face further stressors when attempting to raise their

children in a challenging and unfamiliar environment with limited access services, resources, and

social support (Arcury & Quandt, 2007).

Acculturative stress can impact generations of immigrant families. For instance, second-

generation immigrants receive greater exposure to United States culture and can feel torn

between two cultures. Latino youth are observed to acculturate faster than their immigrant

parents, but also perceive greater levels of discrimination, feeling torn between two cultures, and

feeling disconnected from their *heritage culture* (Polo & Lopez, 2009). These factors put

children of immigrant parents at greater risk of psychological distress, who are three times more

likely to attempt suicide than their first-generation counterparts (Peña, Zayas, Cabrera-Nguyen,

& Vega, 2008). Furthermore, acculturative stress has been associated with an increase in

---

[10] Hopelessness was assessed as a culturally specific response to the sociopolitical context where acculturative stress
may arise. It can be in relation to or independent of traditional psychiatric diagnoses such as depression.

externalizing behaviors, such as aggression and substance abuse, as well as internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007; Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009). First generation immigrants coping with loss, life disruption due to migration, and learning to navigate a new culture and language tend to experience higher levels of internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety and depression).

Because multiple generations of immigrant families acculturate at different paces, many families may experience *intergenerational conflict* leading to increased family conflict, fragmentation, greater perceived family dysfunction, and hopelessness about the future (Portes & Rambout, 2001; Hovey, 2000; Hovey & King, 1996). Therefore, exploring how immigrant women, the cultural carriers and central pillars of immigrant families, experience ecological risk factors associated with acculturation, may help inform interventions that better serve multiple members of immigrant generations.

Latino immigrants and families run a higher risk of healthcare inaccessibility than non-immigrant Latinos. Latina immigrant women have a higher prevalence of psychiatric disorders than their male counterparts and are reported to value health care services more (Fortuna, Perez, Canino, Sribney, Alegría 2007; Mulvaney-Day, et al., 2007). Even so, Horwitz et al. (2008) report Latina immigrant women hesitate to seek treatment for culturally stigmatizing illnesses such as AIDS, STIs, TB, and mental illness. Cultural stigma surrounding mental health disorders may cause immigrant women to express psychological stress through somatization or the "manifestation of emotional problems and psychological distress" (Çinarbaş, 2007, pg.17).

In summary, critics of current acculturation models, such as Ngo (2008) and Schwartz et al. (2010), stated that the acculturation literature also needs to be viewed from the perspective of those who experience the phenomenon—the immigrants. Current literature is limited in this area

and does not adequately reflect the perspective of immigrants, that is, the way *they* subjectively perceive the new culture and experience the ongoing process of acculturation. Using the IPA methodology, my study took a 'bottom-up' approach and capture the perspectives of immigrant women --- how they view and define their new environment and adaptation experience. This approach can also contribute to the two-way conceptualization of acculturation and how the minority/ heritage culture is influencing the host culture.

Acculturation models such as Berry's (2005) bidimensional model and Felix-Ortiz or Bouhris' multidimensional models attempt to capture the process of an immigrant individual's shift in cultural identity (i.e., behaviors, attitudes, food choice, music preference). While cultural identity helps define roles for gender and ethnicity, most of the literature often studies identity dimensions exclusively without considering the overlap of dimensions that capture a more accurate experience for individuals and how they see themselves through different intersections of their identity.

Holistic theories strive to account for the complexity of identity and the inequities faced by immigrants who possess multiple marginal identities. Two such models are Crenshaw's *Intersectionality Model* and Taijfel's *Social Identity Theory*. These models can be helpful to understanding how identity is affected by pre- and post-immigration environments. Intersectionality, rooted in critical and feminist theory, presents a lens by which researchers and therapists can gain a deeper understanding of the changes an individual undergoes throughout the migration experience. Additionally, this concept is useful in conceptualizing differences in acculturation outcomes within immigrant groups. Finally, it provides deeper insight into how acculturation relates to the transformation identity. Before exploring the potential connections between acculturation, intersectionality, and the ecological framework, it is important to review

the literature on identity models, as they provide the foundation upon which the concept of intersectionality is founded.

Identity Models

Previous research has described migration as disruptive to one's sense of self, but also as a space for transformation and reinvention where migrants can negotiate new identities in their interaction with a new *context of reception* that is different from their heritage environment (Espin, 1987; Giroir, 2015). Migration contributes to the complexity of identity transformation and self-concept. Thus, it challenges current identity models to capture multiple dimensions of identity fully. In the following section, I discuss social, gender, ethnic/racial, and immigrant identities in more detail.

SOCIAL IDENTITY

Social identity contributes to the ways individuals add meaning to their collective identity at the group level and personal identity at the individual level. When an individual migrates, they experience changes in social hierarchies constructed by their environment and, through *discourse,* they discover and re-construct a post-migratory identity that produces either upward or downward mobility depending on the dimensions (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status) of their identity that the *context of reception* and new social hierarchy either values or rejects.

Padilla and Perez (2003) proposed using a social cognitive lens to better understand the social identity transformation of immigrants. They utilized Social Identity Theory to explain how group membership is an important aspect of how people identify. This theory describes identity formation within the *context of reception,* in which a division between the "in" groups and "out"

groups exists and serves to separate the "us" from the "them" (Tajfel, & Turner, 1986). These

divisions are created through the way people think, feel, and act as members of a collective

group, institution, or culture. Also, these contextual factors also guide cognitive processes and

understanding of one's status, role, and value in society (Zimbardo, 1996). The *meaning* of social

identities (i.e., gender, race, among others) has the ability to shift through an individual's group

affiliations (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Yet, the trajectory of immigrant social identities is dictated

by the host group; newcomers have less political power and are often stigmatized due to their

outsider status. Similarly, John Berry (2005) described the psychological dynamics of group

relations, which he theorized takes place at the group and individual levels. This dynamic mirrors

acculturation, when group members of different cultural backgrounds come into contact, they

must negotiate their identity in order to avoid conflict at the individual and group levels[11].

In areas where immigration transforms the social fabric of the dominant community,

immigrants are psychologically "processed" as outsiders. If their immediate presence can be

physically, mentally, and socially contained, the environment continues to function normally.

This out of sight out of mind mentality socially isolates immigrants in their places of

employment such as in kitchens, on overnight cleaning crews, construction sites, and as child

caretakers (Ainslie, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). In essence, the host environment works to

"other" immigrants in many ways, while using them to maintain its daily functions.

According to self-categorization theory, social identities are constructed through a

cognitive "sense-making process" (Padilla, 2003, p. 49). Negative stereotypes can be detrimental

to the overall collective function and safety of the immigrant community. The majority of

undocumented immigrants remain hidden in the shadows for fear of being stigmatized or

---

[11] At the group level, the process of acculturation can shift the collective identity through changes in social
structures and institutions as well as cultural practices. At the individual level, acculturation involves changes in
cultural and psychological processes through a long-term process that often takes generations.

incriminated because their status is not socially accepted (Penrod et al. 2003; Anderson, 2008; Gasana, 2012). Such stigma represents a threat to an individual's sense of safety. Consequently, institutional barriers, specifically barriers to social services, are created in reaction to stigma attached to certain groups due to bias.

Additional research is needed to understand how stigma and out-group status affect acculturation outcomes for members of immigrant communities, as well as, how immigrants cope with stigma (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Although social identity theory can help explain the role of group membership in the transformative identity processes of immigrant groups, the narrative of the individual (i.e., their distinctiveness), remains untold. Immigrant women are doubly marginalized due to their immigration status and gender. They are excluded and deemed the "out" group and scapegoats by the dominant culture (Abrego, 2011). This distinctiveness influences the within-group variance in acculturation outcomes (Berry, 2005; Kuo, 2014; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Taking a deeper look at women in their pre-migratory lives can help us understand how identity is transformed when different ecological factors and new social hierarchies, such as immigration, gender, racial, and ethnic statuses are present.

Research shows that although trends in acculturation tend to be slower for women than for men, women outpace men when acculturating to shifting egalitarian gender roles (Espin, 1987; Giroir, 1979). Woodward (2004) stated that identity formation is impacted by: 1) childhood experiences - one's sense of self is constructed by the past as well as the present and, 2) gender and sexuality - our sense of who we are is most significantly linked to our awareness of our identities as women or men (p. 17). Additionally, gender roles and values are heavily shaped by cultural norms and are further discussed in next section. In the following section, I discuss cultural gender, ethnic/racial, and immigrant identities in more detail.

Immigrant families are influenced by the values, ideas, and practices of the multiple environments they inhabit (Levitt, 2009). The narrative of migration for immigrant women is unique in this respect. They are often responsible for recreating their heritage values within the host culture. Specifically, women have traditionally been regarded as central pillars of the family or cultural 'guardians.' However, they also have limited access to host cultural resources compared to men, and consequently are expected to maintain the cultural characteristics of their country of origin, such as keeping their families intact and preserving community networks (Goldstein, 1995; Holmes, 1993). Furthermore, ideas that women endorse influence the upbringing of their children in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, women are considered to not only be "cultural carriers" but also model how cultural and gender identity is recreated "for future generations" (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989, p.9).

Thus, immigrant women play a critical role in stabilizing their communities within the host culture. For instance, previous research has found that Latino cultural values (i.e., intact families, strong work ethic and aspirations, and ethnic enclaves/community networks) may be protective factors for Latino mental health (Shields & Behrman, 2004; Jenson, 2007).

These gender role expectations related to maintaining the family and community networks are guided by cultural values, such as *marianismo*. Thus, in order to understand gender identity within the context of Central American and Mexican immigrant women, the concept of *marianismo* is important to consider.

Marianismo. In Mexico and Central American countries, cultural factors such machismo[12] and marianismo play a central role in gender dynamics, which drive the cultural,

---

[12] Machismo exists within the socio-political-historical functions of Latin American regions at the macro-level and within family functions at the micro-level. Gonzalez-Gonzalez and Zarco, (2008) account for a number of social and

social, and political sectors (Anzaldua, 1987). The traditional and religious values of Latina

womanhood are represented through marianismo, a cultural construct that defines the ideal

woman to be selfless, pure, chaste, and passive (Anzaldua, 1987). In contrast, a feminist

perspective in the United States defines the ideal woman as independent, vocal, and career

driven, which may differ from values endorsed by an immigrant woman's country of origin

(Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Brooks & Bolzenddahl, 2004; Domino & Acosta, 1897).

Although machismo reflects many of the values of masculinity in the United States, marianismo

does not directly translate to an American understanding of femininity. As women immigrate to

the United States, the definition of womanhood can be challenged or evolve due to exposure to

this novel cultural environment (Arrendondo, 2002; Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Thus,

gender identity must be viewed through an historical, political, and cultural context.

GENDER IDENTITY

Moreno defined gender identity by including "ancestry, sexual coupling, procreation, and

care of offspring" and is embedded in cultural identity. In other words, gender identity is

"fundamental to and intertwined with cultural identity" (Moreno, 2002, p.80).

Childhood experiences of women who immigrate during adulthood strongly shape the

cultural expectations of gender roles. The cultural environment reinforces views and 'socially

constructed shared discourses' resulting in gendered identities that inform an individual's sense

---

cultural factors that openly endorse beliefs that male attributes are valued more highly than female attributes in numerous societies. When individuals immigrate to the United States, machismo produces both adaptive and maladaptive processes within a new environmental context (Chin, 1994). Machismo represents a set of traditional masculine qualities and reflects values of the Latino culture. Similar to the complexity of masculinity here in the United States, machismo is double-sided in idealized and maladaptive ways. The idealization of machismo carries qualities typified by pride, valor, protectiveness, being a family provider, and a caring lover (Vasquez, 1998). However, machismo can produce maladaptive conditions in the country of origin and after immigrating to the United States. As culturally depicted in Mariachi songs, telenovelas (Spanish soap operas), and more importantly, in the reflection of our reality – machismo can over-power men and oppress women. As machismo is idealized, it leaves opportunity for acceptance of violence, sexual promiscuity, and male dominance over women. An example of how these two contrasting sets of values can coexist would be a man who financially provides for his family but performs violent acts of domestic abuse toward his wife.

of self and position within the environment (Giroir, 2015). For instance, due to the sexist, patriarchal, racist, and nativist characteristics of United States society, Latina women who migrate to the United States continue to experience forms of sexism coupled with new discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and immigration status (Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p. 98). Gender is not separate from other dimensions of identity, but rather helps to reproduce the sexism experienced in both countries. Thus, their identity as women evolves as they are continuously exposed to new notions of gender role expectations.

Studies looking at the effects of immigration on Latina's gender identity and gender roles are continuing to emerge (Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Parado & Flippen, 2005; Espin, 1987). Adames and Chavez-Dueñas (2017) and Gil and Vasquez (1996) argued that immigration impacts gender-role ideologies and how Latina women adapt to United States culture. Additionally, the endorsement of more traditional gender expectations may isolate women from mainstream United States. culture (Espin, 1987). Even so, the manner in which individuals acculturate to the dominant culture can vary.

Moreno (2002) further explained that gaps in research exist concerning the conceptualization of culture as seen through the eyes of immigrants, that is, how culture is constructed and how the host culture is perceived. How immigrants define these experiences influences the way in which they reconstruct their cultural and gender identity in the new country (Moreno, 2002). Immigrant Latina women must navigate through the complexities of two different cultures and conflicting gender expectations (Pessar et al., 2003). Over time, this can lead to feeling that they do not belong to either culture; a notion consistent with the "ni de aqui ni de aya" mentality (Anzaldua, 1987; Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; LaFramboise, et al., 1993). The need to grieve the loss of one's home country as well as the physical proximity of

loved ones left behind, creates a unique stress that is only familiar to those who have migrated. This experience is commonly termed "culture shock" (Espin, 1987). The experiences of culture shock can vary depending on the circumstances in which one left their home country. Specifically, whether one migrated through either forced or voluntary migration, or through legal or illegal means (Ainslie et. al., 2013; Espin, Dottolo, & Palgrave, 2015).

The feminization of migration. The pattern of migration is evolving as more women are coming to the United States, a phenomenon referred to as the *feminization of migration* (Nawyn, 2010). As previously described, most of the literature on migration covers the male migratory experience and is viewed as a 'macro-social' occurrence. Researchers have identified two primary reasons for female migration, which are: 1) evolving traditional gender roles in a woman's country of origin, and 2) women obtaining increased agency and mobility (Gonzalez-Gonzalez, Zarco, 2008). However, shifts in gender roles can still perpetuate forms of trauma and tension among immigrant women in the United States. For instance, women report emotional abuse from partners who often limit their financial resources as a form of maintaining control and limiting their agency (Reina, Lohman, Maldonado, 2013; 2014, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). In some cases, women are forced to work while their partners are not. This post-migration shift in employment status contributes to changing gender roles but can also maintain a pattern of domestic violence experienced in the country of origin (Kaltman, Mendoza, Gonzales, Serrano, & Guarnaccia, 2011). Husbands tend to resent their wives for their newfound independence, which can appear to challenge traditional patriarchal authority (Espin, 1987, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). As the structure of gender employment shifts, however, the opportunity for different identities to form and older identities to disappear can occur (Woodward, 2004). These

difficulties can impact acculturative and mental health outcomes for women (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013; Phinney, 1992; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993)

Unfortunately, much like intimate partners, employers in the United States also abuse the rights of Latina immigrants (Kaltman et al., 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). Current labor laws and regulations do not protect undocumented domestic workers, allowing for the exploitation of immigrant women (Cervantes, Hafiz, Kline, Kuhner, & Morrow, 2015). Exploitation can take the form of unpaid work hours, discrimination, threats of deportation, and withholding papers (Meyers, 2016; Cordero & Kurz, 2006; Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015). Access to resources and buffers such as financial support, legal status, local labor markets, and social networks influence whether or not immigrant women remain in abusive work environments, which similarly can impact their mental health (Ramirez, 2010; Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015).

In addition to stressors related to changing gender roles and unethical employer practices, women also experience acculturative stress. Taken together, these factors contribute to the overall emotional distress of immigrant women (LaFramboise, et al., 1993). Furthermore, research demonstrates that undocumented or non-citizen Latinos have higher rates of untreated mental health disorders due to low access to health services in the United States and are less likely to receive the appropriate mental health treatment than non-Latino White counter parts (Rios-Ellis, B. 2005; Larkey, Hecht, Miller, & Alatorre, 2001). Several studies have also found Latina women are less likely to seek treatment if they experience discrimination in any context (Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016; 2015; Cordero, & Kurz, 2006).

ETHNIC AND RACIAL IDENTITY

Ethnic and racial identities are specific types of social group identities. In the field of psychology, race has been defined by shared physical characteristics, including skin color, physiognomy, and other hereditary traits (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Orgnanista, 2014; Cokley, 2007; Helm & Cook, 1999). Conversely, ethnicity is defined as an individual's lineage (e.g., national, regional, or tribal origins; Helm & Cook, 1999). Finally, culture refers to the "complex constellations of morals, values, customs, traditions, and practices that guide and influence people's cognitive, affective, and behavioral response to life circumstances" (Parham et al., 1999). Despite these distinctions, ethnicity, culture, and race are often used interchangeably. However, ethnicity and culture can vary within members of the same racial group and vice versa. This non-specific use of terms within research on Latino populations has led to research studying Latino identity through a lens of ethnicity, while ignoring racial considerations; rendering an incomplete picture of Latino identity development.

Latino racial heritage is variously composed of three groups: Indigenous, Black, White, and *mestizaje* (or multi-racial). *Mestizaje Racial Ideologies* promote the belief that all Latino descent is racially mixed. However, Chavez-Dueñas and Adames (2017) highlighted how these ideologies fail to consider hierarchies among various racial groups, denying the colorism that permeates Latin American countries and Latino communities in the United States. Furthermore, Latino immigrant groups are categorized by race in the host society even if their ethnicity differs. For instance, Chavez-Dueñas and Adames explained how a "dark-skinned Colombian male may identify as *mestizo* even though he is likely to be categorized and treated as a Black man in the United States" (2017, p.154). In actuality, when Latino immigrants move from one racial hierarchy in their country of origin to another racialized society, the meaning of their racial

identity is transformed. Thus, the experience of 'turning into a minority' in the United States and experiencing overt racism can be an entirely new experience for some Latino immigrants.

Latino identity models are still teasing out how to accurately capture identity development for such a heterogeneous group. Latino immigrants are also clustered by acculturation models and demographic surveys, which categorize individuals as 'Latino' without differentiating within-group differences based on race and ethnicity (Lopez, Morin, & Taylor, 2013). Models of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1992; Umana-Taylor et al., 2004) are predominantly applied to Latino/as; however, these models lack consideration of the within-group variance and impact racial identity. Models such as Phinney's Multiple Ethnic Identity Model (MEIM) do not fully capture ethnic identity for Latinos in particular, as the model considered race as part of ethnicity. This is a current issue in research when studying Latino populations – as a very heterogeneous group ethnicity and race are not synonymous and cannot be universally applied. There are many races within ethnic groups and vice-versa. Other models designed to exclusively study Latino/as identity process, for instance the Mexican American Ethnic Identity Model (Bernal, Knight, Garza, & Ocampo, 1990) and the Ethnoracial Model of Latino/a Identity Orientations (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001) demonstrate an unclear understanding of racial identity within Latino groups while minimizing the skin color hierarchy that exists within the Latino community (Adame, Chavez-Dueñas & Organista, 2016).

Other theories primarily focus on Latino college students and adolescents to understand generational acculturation and biculturalism for Latino ethnic identity development (Torres, 2003; Ruiz, 1990; Padilla, 1994; 2012; Felix-Ortiz, 1994). A more holistic framework proposed by Adames & Chavez-Dueñas (2017), Centering Racial and Ethnic Identity for Latino/a Populations (C-REIL), accounts for the complexity of race and ethnicity in Latino identity. This

framework places race and ethnicity at the center of an individual's intersecting identities and seeks to bridge this gap in research.

Social structures can have a significant influence on identity (Woodward, 2004). In the United States, for instance, identification is organized through parameters of nationality, sexuality, race, religion, gender, and immigration status (Rouse, 1995). Even an immigrant's legal status only becomes relevant to their identity post-migration. Due to the vast diversity of this group and multiple racial and ethnic identifications, discussion of racial and ethnic statistics in the United States is further complicated. Therefore, gaining a more accurate understanding of the specificity of an individual's social reality/ (i.e., gender, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and legal status) can help capture shared experiences among this sub-groups processes of pre-migratory experiences, re-constructing a post-migratory identity, how they relate to their new environment that impacts acculturative outcomes.

Research also highlights the need to tease out the intersection between Latino ethnic identity (i.e., continued sense of belonging with one's heritage culture and maintenance of its values and practices) and national identity (i.e., the development and adoption of host cultural values) and their impact on immigrant ethnic identity development and mental health outcomes (Phinney et al., 2001). Ethnic identity is formed in the pre-migration stage for immigrant mothers, whereas ethnic identity for their children is formed in the United States (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). National identity, which can be a component of ethnic identity, varies within immigrant families and across generations (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Ek, 2009).

For undocumented immigrants, identity shifts due to interactions with a new environment that impact their mental health remain largely understudied. Ecological factors compound marginalized identities (i.e., immigrant, legal status, gender, level of education, SES) that

intersect and influence the social identity the individual embodies. For instance, the extreme "othering" of immigrants through the *discourse* of race, racism, nationalism, and gender politics among others deconstructs an individual's existing identity and reconstructs a new identity as an "outsider."

The overgeneralization of the experiences of immigrant women in the current literature is important to recognize. As a researcher, I must keep this overgeneralization in mind. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of migration must include the overlap of social identities and related systems of discrimination and oppression, and not exclusively view migration through the lens of race or the lens of nationality. These gaps in the literature support the use of qualitative studies to gain a more accurate conceptualization of immigrant women from specific regions, cultures, and vocations and how these details mesh with the larger concepts of international migration and the fluidity of identity in different cultural environments. Thus, beginning at the micro-level and working toward informing the macro-level.

IMMIGRANT IDENTITY

The experience of immigration plays a role in identity transformation; as women leave their country for a new country and they assume an additional layer of identity, immigrant identity. As women move to new countries, the immigrant experience itself adds a new dimension to their identity -- that of being an undocumented immigrant.

The transformation of identity begins with the socio-cultural-political factors that helped define who these women were while in their country of origin prior to immigrating. Once arriving in the United States, the identity of immigrants begins to react to socio-cultural-political factors in the new environment. Thus, transformation begins upon the first moment of arrival and continues throughout the migration process. I hypothesize that the shift in socio-cultural-political

factors that occurs when migrating from one country to another impacts how immigrant individuals identify within each system. There are potential parallels and contrasts to draw from both environments, which influence the meaning individuals attach to their racial, ethnic, and gender identity. Given that we know relatively little about identity prior and subsequent to migration, this kind of research is sorely needed for this overlooked population. An ecological systems perspective on acculturation coupled with intersectionality can help identify how these factors impact health and how adapting to a new environment is achieved.

     Detention centers and deportation. Whether captured at the border after recently arriving or detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials during an immigration raid at their private home or place of employment, undocumented immigrants are processed and transferred to detention centers within a matter of hours. Often family members cannot communicate with those detained because ICE officials have transferred their detained relative to a facility states away (Suárez-Orozco, Birman, Casas, Nakamura, Tummala-Narra, & Zarate, 2011).

     During detainment proceedings, immigration officials come to question all aspects of who these women are and their reasons for immigrating. They question immigrant women on their traumatic experiences, intentions for residing in the United States, and essentially their existence. This systemic immigration enforcement questions the life women have reconstructed in the United States and impacts the root of these women's identity. They now live in a constant state of uncertainty. Yet, the power to validate their experiences-- their identity—is not in their hands but rather the power lies with the immigration official who determines—essentially—their destiny. For instance, while in detention centers, women's fingerprints are processed, personal clothing stripped, their dignity taken, and human significance robbed (Suárez-Orozco, Birman,

Casas, Nakamura, Tummala-Narra, & Zarate, 2011). This structural process re-writes the social roles of immigrant women from "free" and functioning members of their families and communities to detainee number X. Society re-writes their social role; they are suddenly perceived as criminals awaiting a verdict.

This system of immigration enforcement threatens the life women have reconstructed in the United States and impacts the root of their identity -- they now live in a constant state of uncertainty. Since 2005, over 3 million immigrant detainee cases have been processed and the numbers continue to grow exponentially. In addition, the time undocumented immigrants being detained has extended so private corrections corporations can continue to profit from housing detainees (Hinojosa, 2011; Whitney 2015; Dreby, 2012). This is a case in which social structures overpower the agency of an individual and defines their social role.

Mexican and Central American women represent a significant portion of immigrant women in the United States (Cervantes, Hafiz, Kline, Kuhner, & Morrow, 2015). The immigration process can leave individuals in a state of limbo for an undetermined period of time. The experience of living in detention centers, negotiating the legal system, or being undocumented can be disorienting and terrifying. Deportation, even the fear of it, can lead people to question their identity while tolerating periods of uncertainty, often exacerbating depression (Hacker et al., 2011). This experience of uncertainty regarding safety, status, and identity is an often unrecognized side effect of our current immigration system. The following section includes current literature that discusses intersectionality as it relates to ecological influences that shape the gendered and migrant experience of immigrant women from Central America and Mexico.

Intersectionality

The conversation about identity is not new to the field of psychology. Yet, dimensions of identity such as gender, race, and immigration status have been politicized and studied as exclusive terrains. The concept of intersectionality can help us to fully conceptualize the influence of immigration on identity for Central American and Mexican women residing in the United States.

This concept describes the hierarchical nature of power and systems of oppression (i.e., gender, race, class) that work together to produce inequality, and how these social positions are experienced simultaneously (Viruell-Fuentes, 2012). The intersections of identity often shape the experiences of marginalized populations and highlight within-group differences, which can decrease tension between groups fighting for various social justice causes (Crenshaw, 1993). Generally, as a theoretical framework, it aims to highlight the within-group differences to minimize the constant between-group comparison to show how oppressive structures target marginalized populations.
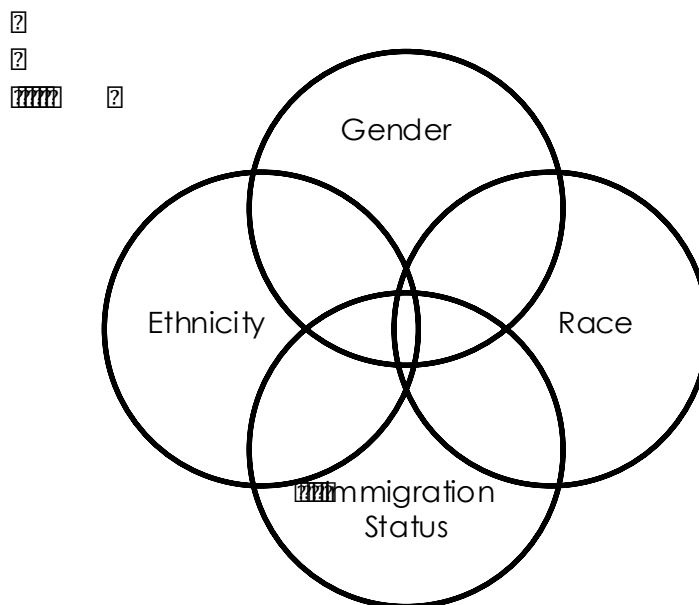
Figure 2: Intersectionality Model

INTERSECTIONALITY: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Intersectionality theory was first introduced during the second wave of feminism in the 1970s by American Black feminists who challenged the perception of a universal gendered experience posing the argument that individual experiences were shaped by multiple dimensions of identity. Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality theory (1980) explored the -isms of society (racism, sexism, etc.) and how they intersect at different points in time within different ecological frameworks.

Crenshaw argued that dimensions of identity cannot be examined in isolation rather their social realities are experienced simultaneously (1991). Although the intersectional trilogy has traditionally been based on race, gender, and social class, research since the 1980s has expanded to study the intersection of other social realities such as immigration and sexuality. Even so, intersectional studies on migration remain scarce.

When considering undocumented immigrant Latina women, it is important to consider how context and history impact the multiple identities of an individual. Acculturation frameworks that categorize the experiences of migrant groups through a culture-based lens dominate the current migration literature. Recent research, however, has called for a shift from culture-based frameworks to theories that address "how multiple dimensions of inequality intersect" (Viruell-Fuentes, 2012, p.2099; Anzaldua, 1987). For instance, intersectionality highlights the inequalities reproduced by societal institutions and may help to explain different acculturative outcomes for members within the same group (Geronimus & Thompson, 2004; Viruell- Fuentes, 2012).

INTERSECTIONALITY AND HEALTHCARE

Viruell- Fuentes, Geronimus, and Thompson discussed the use of intersectionality, focusing on the intersection of race and immigration within immigrant health research. They proposed a shift from a cultural-based framework (i.e., acculturation) that ignores the socio-historical context in understanding health disparities toward an approach that studies how multiple dimensions of identity impact health. They argued this concept provides a richer understanding of how the social determinants (e.g., class, race, gender) impact immigrant health. For instance, experiences of discrimination, racism, and sexism have been shown to produce poorer health outcomes for marginalized immigrant groups. They further explained how ecological factors, such as healthcare policy, reproduce systemic inequalities in healthcare by "othering" marginalized groups.

THE TRANSNATIONAL INTERSECTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Utilizing a *transnational intersectional framework*, "which conceptualizes sexual, ethnic, and immigrant identities as multi-layered, interwoven, mutually constitutive identities whose construction transcends national borders" (Thing, 2006, p. 827), he conducted a multisite ethnographic study of sexual identity formation for Mexican immigrant gay men in the United States. In his research, Thing explored the hybrid constructions of identities based on the migratory and settlement patterns of his participants and proposed, "identities are best understood as mutually constitutive intersecting social identities" (Thing, 2006, p. 811). His research highlights how different intersections of identity shape individual experiences within a particular cultural context, and which can be shifted or reproduced within a new *context of reception*.

INTERSECTIONALITY: CENTERING RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY FOR LATINOS

Adames and Chavez-Dueñas (2017) argued against the 'clusterization' of heterogeneous immigrant groups. For instance, categorizing all members of Latin American descent as "Latinos" blurs racial and ethnic identities together. This notion is also true of current Latino identity models, which fail to distinguish between racial and ethnic identities. They also argued that while many dimensions of identity (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, immigration) contribute to the construction of social realities for Latinos, race and ethnicity remain the most salient in terms of reproducing social inequality.

Adames and Chavez-Dueñas (2017) recognized that context greatly influences the saliency of identity dimensions for Latinos. For example, when living in one's country of origin, a salient aspect of identity may be nationality. However, when an individual migrates to a new cultural context, different aspects of identity may become more salient, as they are added or imposed on the individual. In other words, being in a new culture produces new identities that are absent in one's culture of origin. Being identified as an immigrant, undocumented, and generalized as "Latina" rather than, for instance, "Mexican" or "Guatemalan," may become more salient identities within the United States.

Adames and Chavez-Dueñas (2017) introduced the Centering Racial and Ethnic Identity for Latinos (C-REIL) framework, which seeks to study the intersection of racial and ethnic identity among Latino/as. The C-REIL framework is composed of three parts (see Figure 3). Part I centers racial and ethnic identities within their socio-historical and political contexts. It examines how race and ethnicity intersect with other social identities to produce unique racialized and ethnicized experiences. Part II highlights factors that contribute to ethnic identity development, such as 1) ethnic socialization (e.g., parental ethnic socialization), 2) social mirroring (e.g., the media or other societal outlets that help convey negative messages

surrounding ethnicity), and 3) social contexts that heighten awareness of ethnic identity. Part III

focuses on factors that inform the development of racial identity among Latino/as regardless of

context, for instance, the history of colonization, colorism, and Mestizaje Racial Ideologies.

What this model captures is the notion that cultural contexts set up parameters by which

individuals create meaning about their place in society.
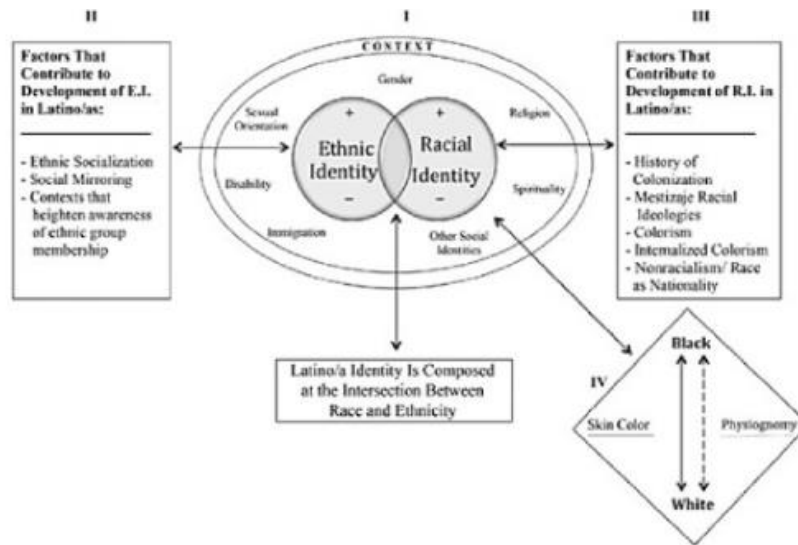
Figure 3: Centering Racial & Ethnic Identity for Latinos (C-REIL) Model

In summary, intersectionality can serve as a guiding framework for how social structures

impact an individual's immigration experience (Viruell-Fuentes, 2012, pg. 2100). Studying

immigrants' experiences can help us to understand why members of similar immigrant groups

obtain different acculturative outcomes. Thus, I used this concept as a theoretical construct to

comprehend the perspectives of immigrant women. This concept also can help researchers

understand how the *context of reception* limits a person's agency during the acculturative

process.

As mentioned earlier, Crenshaw (1993) explored the dimensions of race, class, and

gender when violence against women of color is discussed. At the intersection of gender and

immigration status, in particular, circumstances occur in which immigrant women are reluctant

to leave abusive relationships for fear of deportation despite the Immigration Act of 1990[13] (Crenshaw, 1993). Furthermore, the Houston Police Department released a report in September 2017 showing a 43% drop in the reporting of sexual assault within Latino neighborhoods shortly after SB4 was supposed to go into effect. This is a result of oppressive structures continuing to limit the agency of marginalized groups.

Parallel to intersectionality, Suyemoto and Donovan and Espin (2015) explored the psychological impact of migration on women including memory, grief, and the construction of the "other." Memory, in particular, informs the reconstruction of new identities in the host country and speaks to the importance of considering how pre-migration experiences impact adaptation to the host culture. Women are considered to be a pillar in Latino immigrant families as caretakers while also negotiating within the public sphere in matters of employment, seeking legal status, or even accomplishing the migration journey itself (Schirmer, 1993; Abrego, 2009). We must take a closer look at how their self-concept evolves throughout their immigration experience (in their country of origin and during the process of resettlement in the Unites States).

Immigration and feminism are rarely coupled in academic research (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). My research goes beyond acculturation by conceptualizing experiences in the country of origin as an integral part of immigrant women's identity. I explored the connection between acculturation and intersectionality as tools to understand the transformation of identity. Thus, this research examined how identity is shaped by living in two different environments (i.e., country of origin v. host country). Specifically, I explored how migrating from an individual's country of origin to a new country affects identity beyond simply looking at cultural factors. For instance,

---

[13] Immigration Act of 1990 "provides that a battered spouse who has conditional permanent resident status can be granted a waiver for failure to meet the requirements if she can show that "the marriage was entered into in good faith and that after the marriage the alien spouse battered by or was subjected to extreme mental cruelty by the United States citizen or permanent resident spouse." H.R. REP. No. 723(I), 101st Cong., 2d Sess. 78 (1990).

how the country of origin and *context of reception* can target certain dimensions of an

individual's identity and accept or "other" them. Figure 4 illustrates my research attempts to

bridge the gap between pre-migratory life and post-migratory life from an ecological perspective

to study the intersection of gender and migration status, topics which require further

investigation.
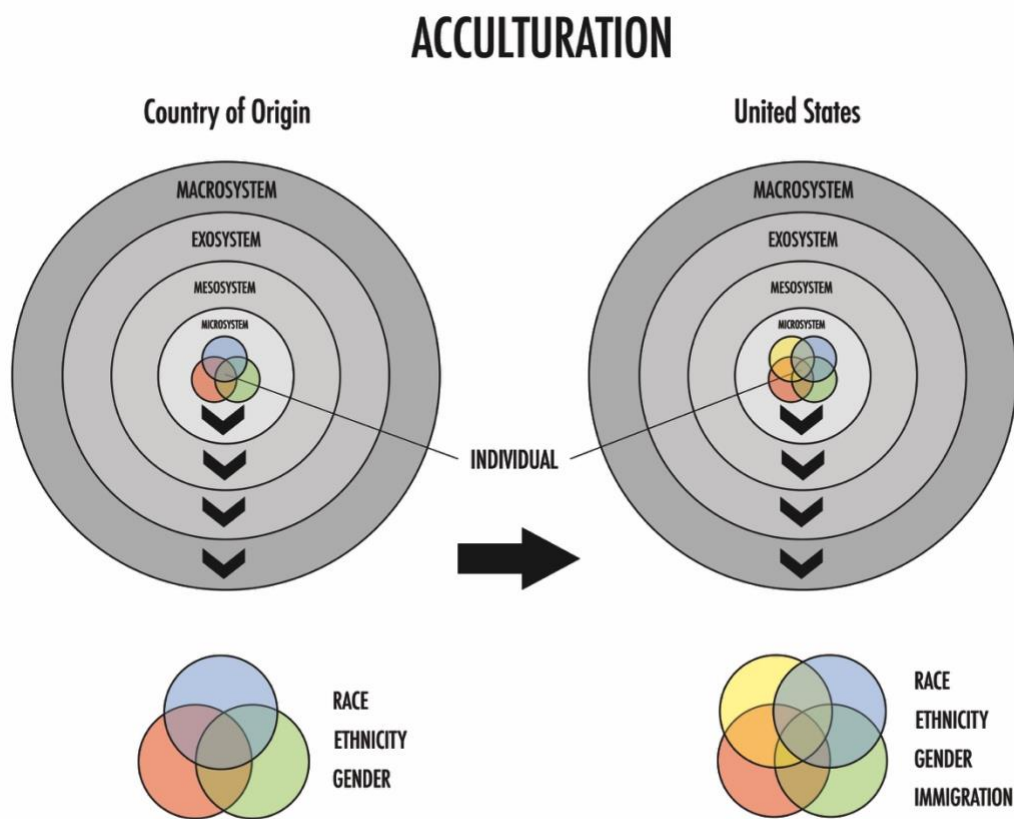
Figure 4: Theoretical Integration of Acculturation, Intersectionality, and Bronfenbrenner's

Ecological Systems Model (Guevara, 2017)

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"Place is not founded *on* subjectivity but that *on which* the notion of subjectivity is founded. Thus one does not first have a subject who apprehends certain features of the world in terms of the idea of place; instead the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place." (Malpas, 1998, p. 35)

Statement of Purpose

This study explored the identity transformation of undocumented immigrant women residing in the United States. My research questions explored the identity transformation process in Central American and Mexican women. Questions investigated how participants viewed themselves in their country of origin, how the immigration experience has impacted them, and how their identity has changed in the process of reconstructing their lives in the United States. Specifically, how their racial, ethnic, and cultural meanings, especially the implications of gender, begin to shift as they are exposed to new cultural systems.

The intersectional identities these women hold interact with the environment in unique ways, and can help us understand why members of similar immigrant groups obtain different outcomes of acculturation. Through in-depth interviews, I gathered information on how participants reconstruct their identity as they learn to adapt to a new environment. Given that relatively little is known about the transformative processes of identity due to migration, this research may help to shed light on the experiences of a population that is hidden in shadows of the United States. Furthermore, as cultural carriers, Latina women ultimately influence the way in which gender, ethnicity, and culture will be understood by future generations of Latinos in the United States. Exploring pre-migratory identities is crucial to fully conceptualize experiences of gendered migration, as well as the rejection or acceptance of stereotypes, and how identity is transformed.

One way of learning how to better serve the needs of Central American and Mexican women who have migrated to the United States is to understand that they continue to carry pre-migration trauma and ethnic forms of connection. These pre-migratory experiences ultimately shape new identities in the United States, while new experiences within the host country add layers to existing identities. In other words, the process of migration adds an additional layer of complexity to identity formation (Parham, Ajamu, & White, 2010). Thus, I argue that the dynamic relationship between the individual and her environment (i.e., socio-cultural-political factors) plays a critical role in identity transformation.

As mentioned above, this study investigated the identity transformation process by exploring systemic factors that defined who these women were in their country, how their identity shifts at the first moment of arrival in the United States, and how it continues to change throughout the process of acculturation. The final section of this chapter introduces the methodological approach to the study, as well as the research questions that guided the interview process.

Methodological Choices

Qualitative research is an exploratory approach appropriate to working with concepts (i.e., transformative nature of identity) that are themselves fluid, continuously evolving, and dynamic in nature. It is an *idiographic* and *emic* process, in the sense that it focuses on a small number of participants that can provide meaning to the topic of interest. Qualitative research offers a flexibility that allows researchers to capture chaotic and disordered life experiences, make order of the data/information collected, and explore the meaning individuals attach to these experiences (Corbin & Straus, 2008). Essentially, qualitative research looks at "how people make sense of what happens…[and] what the meaning of that happening is" (Smith et al, 2009,

p.45). In addition, qualitative research seeks to formulate hypotheses grounded in the data, while helping to construct a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by multiple individuals. While there are several qualitative methodologies that can be applied to this study, the following section describes phenomenology and its application to the analysis.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and method of research. It is the "study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Smith et al., 2009). In other words, phenomenology is the study of how we experience phenomena as conscious beings. It does not, however, explore *what* we experience but rather *consciousness* itself and factors that shape lived-experience (e.g., societal structures). Additionally, this approach focuses on an individual's "relatedness to a particular experience" and her understanding of that experience (Smith, 2009, p. 195). At its core, phenomenology aims to investigate the *meaning* attached to lived-experience, while also revealing the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2003).

Through *naturalistic inquiry*, phenomenology attempts to "inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings" (Patton, 1992, p.37). As a form of qualitative research, phenomenology offers the flexibility to explore a series of perspectives and meaning-making processes that evolve into a phenomenon of shared realities. Thus, it is the most appropriate method to study the experiences of individuals who have lived in multiple cultural contexts, such as undocumented immigrant women.

Many forms of phenomenology are used in the social sciences. The philosophical underpinnings of Transcendental Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology, two of the most prominent approaches, are discussed in the next subsection. Briefly, Transcendental

Phenomenology focuses on how individuals make meaning of their lived-experience in order to gain the essence of a particular phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology goes one step beyond, adding a layer of interpretation to capture the essence of the phenomenon.

PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology was first introduced by a German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) during World War I, and has since occupied a strong position in contemporary philosophy (Dowling, 2007). Husserl regarded "experience as the fundamental source of knowledge" (Racher & Robinson, 2003) and envisioned phenomenology to be "a rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear in order to arrive at an *essential* understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Dowling, 2007, p. 132; Valle et al., 1989). In particular, Husserl was interested in how individuals articulate their own experience of a given phenomenon and, through "depth and rigour…may be able to identify the essential qualities of that experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). The 'essential' characteristics of phenomenon, Husserl believed, transcend individual experience, as essences are universally experienced.

To accomplish these goals, Husserl developed a phenomenological method, known as Transcendental Phenomenology, intended to identify the core structures of the human experience in three steps. The first step in this method is *phenomenological reduction,* defined as the attempt to "understand the essential features of a phenomenon as free as possible from cultural context" (Dowling, 2007, p. 132). This involves recognizing "what is immediate to our consciousness" or refraining from interpretation based on prior knowledge (Dowling, 2007, p.132; Smith, 2009, p. 12). In other words, Husserl proposed approaching the phenomenon in its rawest form. The researcher can attempt to achieve this by *bracketing,* or setting aside preconceptions, approaching the analysis with a disciplined intent to understand the essence of the phenomenon.

The second step involves *free imaginative variation,* which entails removing elements of an object to reveal its essential features, or *essence* (Dowling, 2007, pg. 133). The essence of an object is defined as the integral structures or dimensions of the phenomenon that cannot be removed without losing its integrity. Finally, the third step is to describe the essential dimensions of the object after Husserl's procedures have been applied.

Husserl's *transcendental phenomenology* greatly influenced subsequent phenomenological methods. Concepts that he introduced, such as description, reflection, and bracketing continue to be used in social science research (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, Husserl's German assistant, Heidegger (1889-1976) was among the first to introduce a shift away from *transcendental phenomenology* (i.e., descriptive) to *hermeneutic phenomenology* (i.e., interpretative). In contrast to Husserl, Heidegger questioned if knowledge can exist free of interpretation. For Heidegger, making *meaning* of the "lived-world of things, people, relationships and language" is critical (Smith, 2009, p.16). In his view, meaning makes the world *significant* rather than just *existent*. His approach to phenomenology is founded on the ontological view that "lived experience is an interpretative process" and goes beyond what description can achieve alone (Racher and Robinson, 2003; Dowling, 2007, p.133). Central to Heidegger's approach, is the concept of *intersubjectivity,* the notion that an individual is a 'person in context'. *Intersubjectivity* describes the "relational nature of our engagement with the world," and "our ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other" (Smith et al., 2009, p.17). For instance, his term *historicality* or the culture, previous experience, and background of an individual, shape a person's understanding and experience of the world (Laverty, 2003).

Parallel to this study's focus on identity transformation and ecological factors that shape identity, Heidegger believed that the individual is "always already *thrown* into the pre-existing world of people and objects, language and culture, and cannot meaningfully detach from it" (Smith et al., 2009, p.17). To expand his argument, he introduced the phrase 'being-in-the-world' that refers to the ways "human beings exist, act, or are involved in the world" (van Manen, 1990; Dowling, 2007, p.133). Later on, Heidegger shifted his phenomenological approach from "being-in-the-world" to gaining insight into the *meaning* of the phenomenon of interest.

Since it was first introduced as a descriptive science in the 20th Century, phenomenology has gained international attention for its use in the social sciences, particularly in psychology, to understand the human experience. The following subsection reviews the hermeneutic phenomenological method to psychological research.

The Methodological Approach to Hermeneutic Phenomenology

After carefully reviewing the methodological strategies used in qualitative research, I chose to use the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of Central American and Mexican undocumented women. By collecting their first-hand experiences of migration, I attempted to study how they negotiate multiple ecological influences on identity transformation. Heidegger's Hermeneutic phenomenology served as a framework for this study and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, a related method, will be used to guide the data analysis.

INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was originally developed for studies in health psychology as an alternative to the quantitative research that dominates this field. As a

61

qualitative method, IPA aims for *theoretical transferability* rather then *empirical generalizability*. Using IPA allows researchers to collect data on how participants perceive the world around them, as well as analyze the meaning the participants make of their lived experience (Murray, 2014). The methods of IPA are ideal for exploring the complexity of the identity transformation process that occurs as a result of migration (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Additionally, IPA is concerned with a micro-level analysis of individual experience, or "the texture and nuance arising from the detailed exploration and presentation of actual slices of human life," making it an appropriate data analysis tool (Smith et al., 2009, pg. 202).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis has been widely used in exploratory research on identity, particularly to study transitional moments in life, such as the experience of being a first-time mother, patients undergoing HIV treatment, and migratory transitions (Smith et al., 2009). This *idiographic* approach aims to understand a particular phenomenon within a particular context (Smith et al., 2009). Delving deeper into the unique experiences of immigrant women, it is critically important to consider the larger social, political, cultural contexts that impact participants.

Smith et al. (2009) stated that IPA researchers should follow three philosophical *areas of knowledge*: hermeneutic, idiographic, and contextual. First, hermeneutic knowledge involves going beyond description to incorporate interpretation. Second, idiographic knowledge attempts to capture the *essence* of each particular case -- what the "experience was for *this* person and what sense *this* person is making of their experience" (p. 195) Finally, contextual knowledge is defined as "the interpretation of the meaning for a particular person in a particular context" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 195).

The *hermeneutic circle* is one of the most notable features of hermeneutic

phenomenology. As an analytic strategy, it is focused on the "dynamic relationship between the

part and the whole," that is, "to understand the part you must look at the whole and to understand

the whole you must look at the parts" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). During the data analysis

process, the *hermeneutic circle* describes the dynamic relationship between the interview data,

the way the researchers interpret that data, and the meaning researchers derive from the analysis.

Similarly, during the interview process researchers also engage in a *double hermeneutic* as they

try to "make sense of the participant trying to make sense" of her experience with the

phenomenon (Murray, 2014, p.17; Figure 5). However, as the participant recounts her narrative,

the researchers' interpretation is dependent on the participant's interpretation of her experience.

In other words, as researchers attempt to make sense of what a participant is saying, they can

only experience the phenomenon secondarily through the participant's narrative.
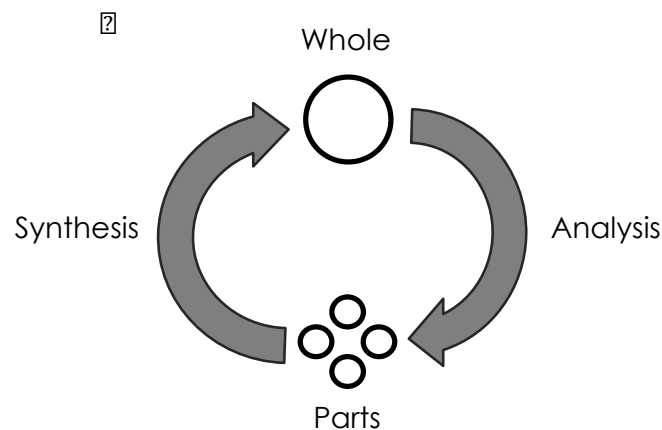
Figure 5: Double Hermeneutic Circle

Following certain models in cognitive psychology, Smith (1990) defines cognition as "a

complex, nuanced process of sense- and meaning making" (p.191). Smith (1990) conceptualizes

cognition as a dynamic function, assessed "indirectly though people's accounts and stories,

through language, and ultimately, meaning making" (p. 191). This cognitive meaning making process utilizes language, culture, and narrative to contextualize a person's positionality in the world. Language, for instance, is a tool that shapes, limits, and enables a participant's interpretation of her experience (van Manen, 1990).

Similarly, French philosopher and phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty described the embodied nature of our relationship to the world and central use of language and embodied speech to express an individual's subjectivity. Similar to language, memory is utilized to recall experiences vicariously as it is "transformed by the sands of time," executed through language, and with the assumption that "the subject is no longer exactly who they were when they underwent the experience" (Murray, 2014, p. 23). One rewarding challenge of phenomenology is *parole parlente* (speaking speech) in which the researcher becomes "witness to a participant's struggle to make sense of their experience in language and in dialogue" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 24). Following the work of Merleau-Ponty, Murray & Holmes (2013) state that subjectivity is founded "upon a dynamic relation built in and through embodied place and speech" (p.16). Thus, speech represents a struggle process, understand, and share the content of their experience to others.

In summary, IPA has the potential to reveal a person's positionality in relation to a phenomenon, as well as their 'mode of engagement' with a particular event. This approach aims to examine how people make sense of their lived-experience in relation to the phenomenon and the meaning they attach to the experience. More specifically, a core principle that guides IPA, that is, a commitment to understanding how participants make meaning of their experience within a particular context, compliments the goals of this study.

Establishing Trustworthiness

As the researcher, my priority was to maintain the integrity of the data and make interpretations that accurately reflect the meaning provided by the participant. In dominant or conventional quantitative research, trustworthiness is achieved through internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Established qualitative researchers argue that a naturalistic qualitative approach utilizes analytic tools that reflect tools used in quantitative research. These qualitative tools are truth-value (i.e., credibility), applicability (i.e., transferability), consistency, and neutrality (Lincon & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998).

Credibility. Credibility provides internal validity for qualitative research. Although there are many ways to achieve credibility in this study (i.e., Prolonged Engagement, Triangulation, Peer Review, Negative Case Analysis, Clarifying Research Bias, Member Checks, Rich Thick Description, External Audits), I used Creswell's economic formula to guide the process. This formula effectively meets the verification procedures through the use of two or more methods. For this study, I used triangulation, thick description, and member checking.

I used various sources such as reports, academic literature, newspapers, and immigration policy to complete triangulation (Anderson, 2008; Cohen, 2000). Currently, irregular immigration is on the frontline for politics, news, and academic research and the local, national, and international level. This information can help conceptualize the ecological effects on immigrant groups.

Secondly, the use of thick description was possible due to the in-depth interviews that provided detailed descriptions that can be transferred and utilized in other settings (Creswell, 1998). Achieving thick description relates to the "multiple layers of and culture and context in which the experiences are embedded" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Therefore, interviews took place in their home, which allowed me to observe the participant's world through a cultural lens. At

times the family was also present, and so the interaction between the participant and family members was also observed and noted. As the researcher, I kept memos and field notes in addition to the interview, thick description became a foundation for the analytic process. Finally, member checks were initiated to validate the emerging themes in the data. A member check is a process in which participants have an opportunity to assess whether the researcher's interpretations and findings are accurate based on the participant's data (Doyle, 2007; Merriam, 1998). While analyzing the interview content, I consulted with participants to confirm if the coding and interpretation their responses reflected the essence of their experience.

Transferability. Transferability in qualitative research determines the applicability of the results and is mirrored as a measure of external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Due to the limited number of participants from just one Central American country, I expanded my research regionally to include women from both Central America and Mexico. As explained, there are more benefits than risks in studying both groups together in the effort to understand how identity transformation relates to migration. The women occupied different civil strati (i.e., married, single, divorced, and separated), as well as the number of years they have resided in the United States. I considered these factors when analyzing the data to further discover the *essence* of the phenomenon. For example, the number of years a participant has lived in the United States may be associated with their ability to navigate through institutional systems without revealing their undocumented status. The results obtained through this study may have applicability to general immigrant women populations from Mexico and Central American due to the diversity of the sample. The effectiveness of IPA is evaluated in how much it can unveil within a larger context. In this case, I hope these findings contribute to current gaps in literature pertaining to outcomes

in acculturation/ acculturation models, and identity transformation due to migration. This form of transferability strengthened the external validity of the research.

Dependability and confirmability. Dependability requires that the research conducted be reliable and replicable in other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, maintaining the integrity of the data and assuring that the interpretations of the data accurately capture its meaning helps to strengthen the reliability of this research. Transparency can enhance the quality or goodness of the research. I as the researcher can achieve this process through an audit trail. This audit trail included the memos, field notes, and a research journal used when analyzing the data. These steps may guide future researchers to engage with their material in a similar way and extend their understanding of their sample. These measures may reproduce similar results through the same methodology, thus, achieving replicability. My faculty mentor assisted in the process as an experienced researcher on immigration research, and help to insure the accuracy of the data. The literature review serves as a form of supplemental validity. Through this process, I learned about the contributions that already exist in the field and address the gaps. As a broader audience must understand the information, this project was peer reviewed and any jargon used was explained or omitted. Triangulation was partly achieved through other documents linked to the data collected. I also used thick description and member checks as ways to increase reliability for this study based on a hermeneutic phenomenological framework dependent on researcher interpretation. Other methods to improve triangulation were used during the coding process as described below.

Role of the Researcher

I recognize the challenge of separating my personal experiences, worldview, and previous encounters that helped shape ideas and knowledge that led me to this research topic.

Nonetheless, as a counseling psychology student, I have an increased awareness of the preconceived notions and bias researchers may have. Therefore, I had a responsibility to be transparent about my assumptions when analyzing the data (Smith, 2015). This process was strengthened through my constant critical self-reflection throughout the study and analytic process. Strauss (2008) also suggested the thoughtful use of analytic tools and producing a personal journal when performing the data analysis. Constant reflection and awareness improve our critical reflexivity (i.e., thinking about our assumptions, values, and actions), which is important in our roles as researchers and practitioners (Anderson, 2008; Cunliffe, 2004). Reflexivity is a cyclical practice intended to stimulate new realizations throughout data collection and analysis process (Smith, 2015).

During my first years in graduate school, my research interests shifted toward immigrant women's experiences in the United States. My choice of practicum placements was motivated by my desire to work with immigrant women detained at the Don T. Hutto Detention Center near Taylor, Texas. Through this experience, I learned so much about the experiences and worldviews of Central American and Mexican women attempting to immigrate to the United States. I learned there is an untold story of their lives in their country of origin that must be recognized. A high percentage of the women exhibited symptoms of depression, anxiety, and real distress heightened by their situation and rooted in their life experiences. I also provided one-on-one sessions with undocumented women in the Austin community who shared common challenges with women in the detention center. Many of the therapeutic goals for both groups were to gain some form of control in their lives and identify strengths.

As a researcher, gaining access to this population can be challenging. Even as a member of the community, there is extreme sensitivity to an individual's immigration status that requires

a deep level of trust. Thus, I relied heavily on the snowball technique with my contacts in the

community and organizations. Referrals through the snowball technique are a strong form of

buy-in to access more participants within a network (Anderson, 2008).

Research Questions

In the methodology of IPA, research questions are initially designed to be open-ended.

This approach achieves the phenomenological goal of gaining rich descriptions while initiating

the interview with questions that support the study's research questions. The focus in IPA

structured questions remains on the personal meaning- and sense-making process within a given

context among individuals who participate a common phenomenon (Smith et. al., 2009). As the

data collection continued, the questions evolved, became more refined, and probed for further

insight into developing themes detected in previous interviews. The research questions were

refined to fall in line with developing themes to unearth further detail until theory embedded in

the data collected about the phenomenon emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The research

questions developed in the first stages of the study are detailed below. While these questions

guide the research design and interview questions initially included, I had a responsibility to

maintain the integrity of the data collected and remain aware of how personal biases or

predeterminations influenced the interpretation of the data.

> **Research Question 1:** What is the process of acculturating to a new system or way of
>
> life as an immigrant woman? a) What are the different ways immigrant women navigate
>
> and cope within their *context of reception*?

> **Research Question 2:** How do ecological factors (e.g., social, political, cultural) in their
>
> country of origin and the United States shape new identity formation? a) How do

different factors, especially the immigration experience, challenge or reinforce identity formation?

Through this methodological lens, we can begin to identify contemporary social issues experienced repeatedly by women from Central American countries and Mexico and how these same issues are experienced again in the United States, after the immigration journey. My research goal is to bridge women's experiences in their country of origin to explore how identity is reconstructed in the United States. Specifically, I would like to understand: a) how socialized their gendered roles are and how experiences interacting with ecological factors in two different environments reinforce or challenge such roles and, b) how they negotiate their new identities with their undocumented status—an imposed identity dimension not experienced in their country of origin.

Methods

Approval by the Human Subjects Committee. The Institutional Review Board approved this study (study number: 2016-05-0014; approved and renewed 06/09/17). This study complied with the guidelines for human subject research required by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin. Additionally, this study initiated recruitment and completed pilot interviews to inform future study interviews.

Participants. I interviewed 14 undocumented immigrant women from countries in Central America ranging from El Salvador, Honduras, and women from Mexico as my target population. Women selected for this study were recruited on a voluntary basis, and identifiable information, other than demographic (i.e., country of origin, age, length of time in the United States), was not used due to the sensitive nature of their immigration status. Many of the women experienced some form of gendered oppression in their country of origin and oppression in the

70

United States. Research participants were women who are currently undocumented due to unauthorized entry into the United States or have an expired visa. Their places of employment were primarily in the service industry, childcare, or domestic work. The women mainly lived with extended family, with immediate family, and/or with children of their own.

Women were recruited through personal community connections, church organizations, and other immigrant service organizations in multiple cities in Texas. I conducted these interviews with the purpose of clarifying gaps in the research on identity formation for women in Central America and Mexico and the impact of immigration after living in a new country. These women, with the exception of one participant, have lived in the United States for at least five years, consistent with the influx of northern migration due to the increased violence in the Northern Triangle and Mexico (Fuentes, Duffer, & Vasquez, 2013). These women varied in their marriage status and many had children born in the United States or still residing in their country of origin. The women are currently living in Texas in the following cities: Austin, Houston, and or a surrounding area and be at least 18 years of age.

It is also important to note that IPA recommends recruiting a homogeneous sample of participants who can speak to the phenomenon of interest (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Accessing participants from the same country of origin (a more homogenous group) was difficult due to the sensitive nature of their immigration status. Thus, I expanded inclusion criteria to women from Mexico *and* various Central American countries. While the expansion of inclusion criteria to various countries of origin may introduce more heterogeneity into the sample, concentrating on the intersection of immigration status and gender narrowed the focus to a particular experience (Hefferon & Rodriguez, 2011). In fact, this may improve the quality of the data collected, as IPA recommends fewer and *richer* cases to accomplish a successful analysis.

The diversity in the sample may produce narratives of migration that are more representative of the experience (Anderson, 2008).

RECRUITMENT

Following the guideline of IPA, samples were selected purposively so participants can provide critical insight, or 'represent' a particular perspective, into the specific phenomenon (Smith, 2009, p. 49). Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through announcements made by community, religious institutions (e.g., local churches), and community gatekeepers such as organization leaders (e.g., Casa Marianella director). The recruitment process took place by word of mouth (snowball recruiting) with potential participants expressing an interest to the gatekeeper or me directly. The gatekeeper and/or I then provided the potential participant with my direct contact information. The potential participant then initiated communication with me via telephone call to coordinate interview logistics. As the researcher, I am fluent in Spanish and provided any form of communication in the participant's native language (e.g., Spanish). I contacted potential participants via telephone and community on-site visits. During the phone conversation, I provided potential participants with a description of the study and with any additional details of what would be expected if they agree to participate in the study in Spanish. If a participant expressed interest in the study, I provided each participant with a consent form that verified my role as a researcher and affiliation to The University of Texas at Austin, provided a brief summary of the study, and requested for an interview.

OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT

Consent forms were used to provide the participant with information about the study and their rights of participation. Additionally, I applied and was approved for a waiver of documentation of consent since the participants I worked with are undocumented and, therefore,

I could not maintain any identifying information for their protection. If requested, I provided the participants with a copy of the consent form in Spanish.

DATA COLLECTION

Individual interviews with immigrant women were my primary method of data collection. Through the use of qualitative research, more specifically IPA, I aimed to collect data on the subjective experiences of participants to capture the universal experiences of undocumented immigrant women. The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of how environmental factors influence gender identity formation, and the transformations women experience through the process of migration.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN INTERVIEWS

For this project, I conducted semi-structured interviews while also engaging in participant observation. This semi-structured, one-to-one approach to interviewing tend to be the preferred means of collecting data for IPA (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005- IPABK, p. 57). Additionally, a good interview is essential to IPA, therefore, a researcher's deep engagement with the participant's narrative is critical (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The interviews for this project took place in the participants' homes, were conducted in Spanish, and voice recorded with the participants' consent. Utilizing an *interview schedule* (i.e., a loose agenda), a series of interview questions were prepared to help frame the initial conversation while, more importantly, allowing for a participant-led approach. Interview questions were open-ended, giving participants freedom in their responses and allowing me to identify new issues and common experiences not previously considered. Along the lines of IPA, the aim was to perform in-depth interviews so participants could provide rich and detailed first-person accounts of their immigration experience. The questions included in the interview were designed specifically for

this project. Primary questions gathered information regarding the differences and commonalities in living experiences for women in their country of origin in comparison to their host country, challenges they confronted due to their gender, and how they approached problem-solving.

As previously mentioned, the primary investigator completed 14 interviews for this study. Each 2-3 hour interview aimed to gather rich and detailed information from the participant. Qualitative researchers suggest obtaining quality over quantity of data (Charmaz, 2000). The number of interviews suggested for a qualitative study depends on the level of controversy and complexity of the research topic (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In IPA and its commitment to *idiography*, fewer participants examined at greater depth is more important that obtaining broader descriptive analysis of experiences (Reid et al., 2005). While my target sample pool was 15, the ultimate goal was to obtain rich data (i.e., participants are given time to express their stories, reflect, and develop further understanding of their experience). The use of in-depth, in-person interviews allowed for a stronger qualitative analysis by gaining insight into the worldviews and inner psycho-emotional processes that created meaning through a cultural lens (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). The use of narratives closely resembles the appropriate cultural interaction similar to storytelling and "testimonios" proved to be comfortable for participants (Huber, 2012). This method also allowed for new discovery as life experiences are told and re-told (Creswell, 2003).

General demographic information was also collected at the beginning of the interview process. Participants were asked to answer on their civil status, the number of family members in the United States, number of children and their whereabouts (i.e., country of origin or in the United States), nationality, and date of arrival to the United States. This information was used during the comparative case analyses. I voice recorded each interview and included select quotes

and phrases from participant responses in the manuscript. This process was an effort to connect salient experiences, challenges, and the resiliency of Mexican and Central American women reconstructing a new life in the United States. This study completed formal and informal interviews with voluntary participants and documented analysis to providing critical analyses on this topic.

MEMOS, FIELD NOTES, AND TRANSCRIPTION

To advance my qualitative research, I employed memos after each interview to record my thoughts and realizations of the information provided by the participant. The memos detailed participant nonverbal reactions, research thoughts, progress in the interview session, and were completed as soon as possible after each data collection session. The field notes contained possible working themes and conceptualizations. This information guided how I approached future meetings and what questions needed further understanding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As the interviews were expected to reach 2-3 hours, I reserved time for transcribing interviews and analyzing the data after each completed interview. The primary researcher completed all interview transcriptions in Spanish and translated the selected quotes into English. I, the primary researcher, also employed diagrams during the analysis, discussed further in the following section.

Analytic Strategy

In qualitative research, the researcher utilizes phenomenology to analyze the data for emerging themes (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009; Dowling, 2005; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2005; Wertz, 2005). Similar to other qualitative approaches "the essence of IPA lies in its analytic *focus."* It is the responsibility of the researcher to enact this *focus* "toward our participants attempts to make sense of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, pg. 79). The narratives shared

during the interviews become a meaning-making process that captures the "lived experiences of several individuals about a phenomenon" and the study of phenomenology allows the researcher to investigate the *essence* of this phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, pg. 51). When participants have undergone a transformative experience in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of their experience. IPA supports the analysis of transformative experiences in two ways. On one hand, it engages with the participants' reflection of those experiences and on the other, it focuses on details of the meaning-making process (Smith et al., 2009). This subsection presents strategies to engage in *researcher reflexivity* during the analysis, as well as steps toward analyzing the data as suggest by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009).

Self-reflection of researcher

Within qualitative research it is important for the researcher to perform *researcher reflexivity* throughout the study to understand how their own experiences and perspectives of the world impact the research process (Morrow, 2005). In this study, I self-reflected by keeping record of personal experiences and reactions, as well as discovering hidden biases during their involvement in the study. As previously described, the audit trail completed during the study was also used to enhance the analytic process. The audit trail notes were a collection of hunches, interpretations and queries made by me to keep their interpretations transparent during the analytic process. This practice allowed for the participants' narratives to remain the source of theme emergence throughout the analysis. Another strategy to confirm my findings were "in fact grounded in the lived experiences of the participants" was to utilize participants' direct quotes (Morrow, 2005, p. 256).

As previously described, researcher engagement in a *hermeneutic circle* can maintain the integrity of the data. That is, I as the researcher revised my understanding, pre-conceived

notions, and biases of the phenomenon as they began to analyze and interpret the data (Smith, 2009). Finally, I also consulted with colleagues who are involved in similar work and participate with the population of interest. These colleagues served as a mirror during the investigation and analytic process (Morrow, 2005).

Analyzing the Data

Phenomenology served as an analytic framework that enabled me to "systemically make meaning of or interpret the data" (Morrow, 2005, p. 256). To accomplish this, IPA requires time, reflection and dialogue --making smaller data sets more ideal. Additionally, scheduling interviews 1 to 2 weeks apart allowed me to take caution during the interpretative analysis, since IPA findings are built cumulatively. Between interviews, I transcribed and coded the data collected from the interviews. After a series of interviews were completed, coded themes were further analyzed to gain meaning across cases. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is guided by moving from the particular to the shared and from descriptive to interpretative (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, IPA results are based on several analytic strategies. Although the literature describes several analytical approaches, Smith et al. (1990) offer a set of procedures, composed of four critical steps, to complete this dynamic process.

As the researcher, I began this analytic process by immersing herself in the interview transcript and performed a close line-by-line analysis of experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of the participant (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). In other words, I read and re-read the data until the participant's voice became the *focus* of the analysis. Additionally, I recorded their first impressions and notable observations of the data in their research journal. This first step was completed when patterns in the interview began to arise linking together sections of the interview (Smith et al., 2009).

77

The second step initiated the analytic process and required the most time and detailed attention to the interview content through exploratory noting (Smith et al., 2009). In this step, I *explored* the "key objects of concern," that is, the participants description of relationships, processes, places, and events in their life. Then, the *meaning* attached to these objects was further examined through the participant's use of language to describe their experiences. My aim was to produce a detailed and comprehensive set of comments about the data. These comments were then categorized into three sections: 1) in descriptive comments I described the context at face value, 2) in linguistic comments I explored how meaning is communicated through language such as metaphors, and 3) in conceptual comments I moved toward an overarching understanding of the topics discussed in the interviews. This fluid process of engaging with the data and creating *meaning* pushed the analytic process toward the next level of interpretation. That is, the commentary completed during the first stage of coding was then included in diagrams or charts and used to guide future coding sessions. This step linked any potential connections in the dialogue, and contributed to the next level of abstraction in the third step (Smith, 2009).

The third step in the IPA process is the development of *emerging themes*. This step allowed concepts to arise straight from the interview content while shifting the focus to higher-level data such as provisional notes and exploratory comments completed in step two (Smith, 2009). This process continued for several rounds during coding until I reached a point of saturation, meaning the data provided by the participants thoroughly explained all the concepts in each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Finally, the fourth final step of the analysis took the organized themes of each interview and required me as the researcher to develop higher-level organization charts and diagrams. I

then began reflecting on how the themes fit together. It is important to note that not all *emerging themes* were incorporated in to the final stage of the analysis. The aim of this step was to develop a thematic structure by printing themes out and physically moving them around to group related concepts together and identify patterns of experiences. In addition, the creation of 'super-ordinate themes,' or the clustering of emergent themes that fit a particular pattern can be accomplished through *abstraction*. During this final step, I made sure that the *meaning* interpreted from each concept reflected the meaning conveyed by the information across interviews. Thus, the IPA process allowed me to organize data into emerging themes during the analyses period, thus creating the analytic frame in which the *essence* of the phenomenon is uncovered (Smith, 2009).

I wanted a research approach that maintained the integrity and illuminated the phenomenon of interest by studying the experiences from the perspective of those who lived through the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Due to the subjective transformative nature of identity, which is a very personal and inner process along with the chaotic dynamic of living with uncertainty as undocumented, the goal was to follow the data through a small, multiple case design (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Research on the transformative identity of immigrant women is limited and often found only in a subset of acculturation in which mainly ethnic and cultural identity are discussed. Due to the limited information on this topic, this study required an exploratory approach primarily dependent on participant information as the basis of analysis.

Chapter 4: Results and Integrated Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the transformational experience of migration for undocumented immigrant women from Mexico and countries in Central America. Additionally, this study sought to explore how a range of socio-ecological factors affect immigrant women's identity formation and to analyze the lived experiences of women who are still in the process of reconstructing their lives in the United States. My hope was that these findings would help clinicians to reduce negative outcomes in acculturation by considering pre-migratory experience in more depth and provide a strengths-based perspective for practitioners who work with this significantly growing population.

Literature on identity formation indicates that the immigration experience can influence the individual's psychological process as well as the deconstruction and reconstruction phases of identity transformation (Gonzalez-Gonzalez and Zarco, 2008). While the construction of identity takes place within the country of origin, which informs the individual about their positionality within their society, migration uniquely impacts their identity by removing the individual from their original context and exposing them to a new environment, thereby initiating a process of de-construction. After some time, the individual begins to reconstruct, develop, and stabilize a new identity, or sense of self, while potentially also maintaining their heritage culture. The latter two processes have been described in existing acculturation models, most notably Berry's (2005) Bidimensional Model discussed in chapter 2. However, in this study, I focus on the initial constructive phase of pre-migratory identity and examine how it informs the latter two phases. Therefore, I investigated the following two research questions: 1) How do socio-ecological factors, both in the country of origin and in the United States, shape immigrant women's identity formation? Specifically, how do different factors challenge or reinforce this identity formation?

2) What is the process of acculturating to a new society as an immigrant woman? What are the different ways that immigrant women navigate and cope within their context of reception?

Using the phenomenological methods approach described in chapter 3, I identified six superordinate themes, each of which is comprised of several subordinate themes (i.e., Move Forward Mentality, Adultification, Hardships of Immigrant Identity, Self-Actualization, Sense of Belonging, and Fear of Deportation). In this chapter, however, I present findings within four sections as described in Table 2 below. First, I describe three key socio-ecological factors that shape women's identity formation pre-migration. These include familismo, adultification, and the negative treatment of women. Second, I explore political, economic, and social factors that influence women's decisions to migrate including violent conditions and economic hardships. Third, I describe the strategies that women use to navigate the challenges of acculturation. Finally, I present the common challenges involved in the acculturation process such as the fear of deportation and family separation, post-migratory financial challenges, the strain on intergenerational family relationships, immigrants being criminalized, and inter-Latino discrimination.

Table 2. Participant Demographics

	Age	Employment	Country of Origin (C.O.O)	Years in the United States	Children	Marital Status
Gabriela	43	Stay at home mom	Mexico	20	4	Married in United States
Mariana	41	House cleaning	Mexico	24	3	Married in United States
Valeria	60	Caretaker	Honduras	33	3, 1murdered	Separated, Living with new partner in United States
Veronica	39	Stay at home mom	Mexico	23	4	Married in United States
Sylvia	49	House cleaning	Mexico	13	3	Married in Mexico
Paola	45	Factory worker	El Salvador	17	3	Married in El Salvador
Dalia	35	Unemployed	Honduras	1.5	2, 1murdered	Single
Natalie	34	Stay at home mom	Mexico	10	3	Married in Mexico
Marlen	36	Factory worker	El Salvador	21	2	Divorced in United States
Ana	33	Waitress	Mexico	17	1	Single
Ofelia	20	Student/ Service industry	Mexico	13	0	Single
Victoria	28	Stay at home mom	Mexico	9	1	Living with Partner
Consuelo	38	Housekeeping	Mexico	22	3	Married in Mexico
Sofia	59	Various Jobs	Mexico	20	3	Married in Mexico

Table 3. Coding Table

SECTION	Themes

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE WOMEN'S IDENTITY FORMATION PRE-MIGRATION	Familismo
	  -Overprotection
	Adultification
	    -Employment During Childhood
	    -Sexualization at an Early Age
	    -Negative Treatment of Women
	    -Intergenerational Strain

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WOMEN'S DECISION TO MIGRATE	Parent's Decision to Migrate Violent Conditions in the Country of Origin -Sense of Safety

NAVIGATING THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS	Autonomy and Independence
	Seeking Better Future for Children
	Move Forward Mentality
	    -Overcoming Adversity
	    -Goal Oriented Mentality

CHALLENGES OF ACCULTURATION	Financial Struggles Fear of Deportation Interactions with Law Enforcement Confiscation of Life in the United States Living with Trauma Relational Strains of Migration Criminalization Inter-Latino Discrimination

Pre-Migration Factors Affecting Women's Identity Formation

In this section, I discuss key socio-ecological factors that were found to affect participants' identity formation pre-migration. I found that three types of socio-ecological factors shaped women's identity formation in their countries of origin: familismo, adultification, and negative treatment of women.

Familismo. Many of the participants' experiences demonstrate the rooted cultural values of *familismo* (familism), which informed their pre-migratory identity. Familismo is a significant value that shapes Latino worldviews; in essence, familismo is the view that the identity of the

family unit is more important than the individual identity of any family member. Familismo comprises three components: 1) responsibility to provide for the family, 2) seeking family as support, and 3) the use of family as a reference for behaviors and attitudes to practice (Duenas, 2017, p. 180; Kapke et al., 2017; Marin & Marin, 1991). The results of this study confirm the importance of familismo as a reinforcement for women's pre-migratory sacrifices and as a motivator for migration. Below, I describe one form of familismo that affected some participants' identity formation such as overprotection.

Overprotection. In this section, I present findings that reveal the sense of overprotection some women experienced while in their country of origin. Some participants described how their parents took precautions to shield them from potential threats in their environment due to their gender. In response to research question one, the experience of overprotection appeared to shape women's identity by limiting their sense of autonomy and causing them to doubt their ability to operate independently outside of their immediate environment. In response to research question two participants described how migration pushed them to grow out of their early experiences of overprotection in order to navigate and cope with demands of acculturation. As previously mentioned, the pre-migratory socialization of immigrant women remains understudied in existing research (Berry, 2005). Some critical insight into women's pre-migratory experiences has been gained through topics such as migratory grief (Espin,1987), trauma experiences in women's country of origin (Kaltman et al. 2011), and the rise of female migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Thus, the results of this study may provide some new insight into how pre-migratory experiences, such as how women are socialized, inform acculturative outcomes for this specific sub-population.

One participant, Consuelo, presented the overprotection of women as a form of differential gendered treatment in her pre-migratory environment. Growing up in Mexico, she was often told that she needed to be more protected because she was a girl. For instance, she was often expected to remain at home and not leave without a chaperone. Consuelo recalls that as a child, she was very social, but because her mother constantly overprotected her, she had a limited ability to interact independently with her environment. Consuelo later came to realize how this socialization impacted her hesitation in decision-making, particularly as she adjusted to her new life in the United States. While Consuelo did not resent the precautions her mother took to protect her, she asserted this may have delayed her process of self-actualization.

> I was a girl who wanted to have friends. Very social. Yes, and as a matter of fact I had an older aunt, she was very serious. And we always wanted to go out and play. My mom would never let us play at other friends' homes. She would not even let us play outside other people's homes. The kids, classmates would always have to come to my house. Because she wouldn't let us leave the house.- Consuelo

Consuelo's pre-migratory self-concept[14] was shaped by her mother's repeated assertions that the environment was not safe for women. This self-concept, however, was transformed during the post-migration phase when Consuelo faced her husband's deportation. In order for her family to economically and emotionally survive her husband's absence, Consuelo became the primary pillar for her family—a role she continues to maintain today despite her husband's return. Veronica also described pre-migratory experiences of overprotection, or "sobre protejida." Both women also had mothers who were deeply religious, a socio-ecological factor unique to their experiences of overprotection compared to other participants.

While Consuelo and Veronica experienced familismo in the form of overprotection, many participants experienced a distinct consequence of familismo: adultification. Rather than

---

[14] In this dissertation, I use the terms self-concept to describe a participant's self-perception and mentality. Scholars define this terms as "the individual's belief of themselves" (Jenson, 2007; Higgins, Klein, & Strauman; 1985).

being shielded from independent experiences, these women were challenged to take up adult responsibilities at an early age. Along the tradition of familism both overprotection and adultification emphasize the importance of family despite their juxtaposition. The following section describes how pre-migration experiences of adultification affected participants' identity formation as well as their post-migration acculturative process.

Adultification. Adultification is another socio-ecological factor that shaped participants' identity formation prior to migration. This term refers to the sacrifice and early maturation participants underwent at an early age to support their families and meet the demands of their environment. Burton (2007) defined *adultification* as a set of "contextual, social, and developmental processes in which youth are prematurely, and often inappropriately, exposed to adult knowledge and assume extensive adult roles and responsibilities within their family context" (p.329). The current understanding about adultification for women within a migration research is defined through aspects of marianismo such as placing others' needs before their own. In particular, research on Latina youth in the United States finds that Latinas socialized to take on more responsibilities than their male counterparts (Sanchez et al., 2016; Villaruel et al., 2009) This intergenerational message, however, has been studied more with Latino youth than the population of interest for this study.

Although the age of work responsibilities and type of work varied, nearly all participants reported feeling a critical need to contribute to their family's economic well-being, and in some cases, take on adult responsibilities beyond their psychological and emotional developmental capacities. For example, several participants recalled that in the communities where they grew up, children would often work before or after school (if education was even an option) as early as the age of seven. In addressing research question two, the results presented in this section also

reveal how these pre-migration adultification experiences informed participants' post-migration acculturative process. In many ways, participants believed that these early experiences of pain, work ethic, communal responsibility, and grit prepared them to endure the hardships of migration. Participants described three main types of adultification that they experienced during childhood and early adolescence: employment, domestic caregiving responsibilities, and sexualization.

Employment during childhood. Marlen's upbringing was typical of other women interviewed in that children in her country of origin were expected to grow up faster than children in the United States. Marlen described the different forms of employment that her older siblings pursued to help support her mother and younger siblings: "I was mainly with the younger siblings because the older children had to go out and work in order to help our mother with household expenses." Like Marlen, many participants found it difficult to advance their education due to their family's economic needs. As a result, most participants in this study, with the exception of two who were able to continue their studies in the United States, left school in their country of origin before the age of 15 to support their families.

Paola described a similar experience of adultification in El Salvador, where children were socialized at an early age to take responsibility and contribute to their family and community:

> I want my kids to move forward and to study something other than what I was doing. It's common for a child at 7 years of age to work like an adult in agriculture. At 11 years of age, they already have to know everything. People over there are closed off and that's abuse. If they hit a child, they say that it is normal and that it is the way they were taught. But that is not normal. People over there don't see it that way. -Paola

Working in the fields as young as seven years old was socially accepted and normalized as a way of life in El Salvador. Paola observed that children were expected to grow up faster there than in the United States. In particular, she emphasized that these two countries have distinct

perspectives on what would be considered child abuse. Paola believes childhood abuse is conceptualized with stricter laws in the United States than in her country of origin. Moreover, while this type of behavior was normalized or acceptable in El Salvador, Paola stated it did not make it right. Paola revealed there is much pain associated with her childhood and how she was expected by her grandfather to perform responsibilities for a traditional adult female role, such as cooking, cleaning, farming, and serving him all at the age of seven.

Some participants reported that they left their home at an early age, sometimes as early as 11 years old, to help support their family economically. Ana, for instance, began working outside her home at the age of 14 after realizing her time would be better spent working to help her family than attending the small-town school where the teacher would only show up a few times a month. Ana recalls she decided to stop going to school on her own. This motivation to work prompted Ana to seek employment in a different town from her parents' home. Her first employer was a woman who owned her own business and offered her a place to stay in her home. Ana stated that she learned many skills to run a household from this employer and admired her for her independence.

> I started working in Mexico when I was 14 years old. I worked as a housekeeper. I worked in an older woman's home and I would stay with her. I would clean the house and I would also cook and prepare her meals… the town was four hours away from home. Soon after I sent for my brother to join me to work. After he came to work with me at the ranch, my mother and father came to the town. Since they did not work, my brother and I supported them financially.

Ana, like many of the participants, felt a need to contribute financially to support their family at an early age, reflecting values of familismo. Consequently, many had to work far from home to secure employment—an aspect of adultification. Typically, the participants were

employed by a house where they would take care of the house cleaning and child care (if children were present).

Consuelo experienced a similar form of adultification when she left school and began working at the age of 17 to provide for economic needs and without parental guidance. In Consuelo's case, her mother's death prompted her to begin seeking employment. Though Consuelo wanted to continue studying, her father did not have the economic means to support her education in Mexico. Therefore, she sought employment in different places, always in search of a place she could feel comfortable in. At the age of 18, Consuelo had a friend already working in the United States who encouraged her to migrate to seek employment. Consuelo, motivated by her friend's economic independence, decided to migrate to the United States on her own. Though Consuelo did not take this decision lightly, she already had a heightened sense of freedom that made the migratory experience less intimidating and more, as she described it, like "an adventure."

> These are reasons why I came, as I said…my mother died when I was 16 years old. At 17 years old I started to leave my house. I wanted to get an education, but I couldn't. And so I went to various places in Mexico looking for work. I didn't find my place where I could stay. I had a friend from my childhood who had been in the United States, in Brownsville. And she invited me. She told me "Let's go." And since I saw that she was a bit better off, since I worked in Mexico, I left. At around 18 years of age I came here. - Consuelo

As Consuelo's father remarried and began a second family shortly after her mother's death, Consuelo had to make life-altering decisions such as migration on her own to provide for her economic needs. In this instance, Consuelo's sense of freedom was coupled with the autonomy she had to practice in the absence of parental guidance.

Domestic caregiving responsibilities at an early age. In addition to seeking employment, many participants experienced adultification by taking up domestic caregiving responsibilities at

an early age. In some cases, such as Gabriela, participants were employed to care for children who were only a year or two younger than themselves. However, their childhoods lives, due to economic need, were drastically different from those of the children they helped raise. These participants faced demands from their environment more advanced than developmentally appropriate. However, due to their strong sense of familial responsibility (familismo) coupled with their need to survive, they felt called upon to contribute regardless of their age. In the following excerpt, Gabriela explains her adultification experience and how she learned to become a maternal figure as a young girl:

> It's very different. Like look at me, no one shows up knowing how to be a mother. No one shows you how to be a mother. I think it's something that that in my my my life I have gone through. I don't think anyone taught me, I think my father taught me a lot, but you know a man doesn't tell you the qualities you you have. You start discovering it yourself and since you're capable of discovering so many things, you're not able to discover what it's like to be a mother until you are a mother.

> You think someone taught me how to be a mother? You think someone taught me how to change a diaper? You think that when I was 11 years old someone taught me how to change a diaper, how to prepare a bottle of milk? You think they taught me how to iron? You think that I taught myself that I taught myself how to cook rice and make a bed? NO! Your attitude, because where do you get your attitude from? From yourself! You have to do it, no one no one no one learned, we have to learn. There's no other option. There's nothing else besides learning about what we need to know. – Gabriela

Gabriela's recollection of her pre-migratory experience is filled with pain and loss. Gabriela's own mother died in childbirth, and she emphasized that no one taught her how to take on motherly tasks. She stated that everything she has learned was through her own initiative and grit. "No one teaches you how to be a mother," she stated, "you have to discover how to be a mother." With pride, she stated that at age 11, she taught herself how to seek employment, learn how to complete her employment tasks in raising children, and later embody her role as a mother

with her own children. "Your attitude is your essence," she repeatedly stated, "you have to learn… when you have no other option" and "do the best with what you're dealt."

Another way in which women experienced adultification was by taking responsibility to support family members who struggled with mental illness; this responsibility involved learning to navigate social and economic support systems at an early age. During the early years of her childhood, Natalie lived in Mexico with her mother and her two younger sisters. All three daughters were able to attend private school because their father migrated to the United States to work and pay for their schooling. After Natalie's mother began to struggle with severe depression, however, Natalie attempted to relieve her suffering by taking on more household responsibilities and caring for her sisters. At the age of 15, Natalie tried to shield her sisters from their mother's struggle and their father's absence. At one point, she was considered "ungrateful" because she expressed her displeasure about her father's absence and willingness to sacrifice attending school to have him return home.

> For me, it's very sad. How the majority cries and everything. I always tried to make sure my sisters did not notice anything. I am not sure if I did it consciously or unconsciously, but I always tried for them not to know anything. I mean they didn't know anything. I mean I would be in charge of everything almost like a mother. Sometimes, even my own mother… I think that sometimes she couldn't handle things. I always tried to help her. I felt like a mother hen and her chicks. Ever since I was young my mother always depended in me. When I was 10, I started caring for my one-year old sister. Look, all these years my sister would mind me more than my mother. -Natalie

Natalie learned how to navigate her environments and networks to acquire the medicine her mother needed within the economic limitations of the household. Natalie expressed that this pre-migratory experience of becoming the maternal caretaking figure in her family as well as enduring the consequences of family separation due to migration shaped her into the person she is today and the worldview she practices with her own family as the maternal figure. This

experience of early adultification provided Natalie with a sense of determination, perseverance, and adaptability that would later strengthen her identity as an adult and mother post-migration.

Natalie's life in her country of origin was centered around navigating systems and experiences of pre-migratory family separation due to parental migration. Therefore, the theme of adultification also presents itself in the intergenerational experience of migration as Natalie, and other participants, began to prepare her children to navigate the American system on their own in case she and her husband were deported. Consumed by the news stories of immigrant deportations, Natalie, like several other participants, realized she would be forced to have the difficult conversation with her children disclosing her documentation status and why the deportations they watched on the news could one day directly impact their family.

> Even with having family here [in the United States], my children are not used to being with my other family members. We had to tell them [about our immigration status] because if something happened they would have to know what would happen next. Now, I am more relaxed because my daughter is older and she could help raise her younger brothers. -Natalie

Just as Natalie once cared for her mother in her father's absence, she has prepared her 15-year-old daughter to care for herself and her two younger siblings in case Natalie and her husband are deported back to Mexico. Natalie believes her ability to navigate systems and connect with networks became a skill of survival and consequently was ingrained in her parenting. Natalie's approach to raising her children appears to represent the internal distress Natalie experiences due to anticipated deportation and repetition of family separation due to migration. Thus, this study provides insight into the phenomenon of repeated family separation and the disruption of the self in identity formation, first, through the sense of abandonment of their parent's migration and second by their own deportation while their children remain in the United States.

Sexualization at an early age. The third form of adultification that participants described was being sexualized at an early age. According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, nearly 46% of females in Mexico reported experiencing some form of sexual assault during adolescence and limited research exists about the sexualization of women from countries in Central America (OCDE, 2018; Mendoza-Meléndez et al., 2018). The findings in this study potentially add to the research discussing women's early sexualized experiences in their country of origin. As mentioned in chapter 2, the effects of pre-migratory trauma (particularly sexual trauma) on identity formation and acculturation remain understudied (American Psychological Association, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2011).

Several participants involuntarily experienced sexualization as young girls, which led to long-term effects in adulthood. For instance, Ana felt sexualized as a young working woman in Mexico. Months after working in her initial employer's house, Ana sent for her brother and parents, who found a small home in the town nearby. Ana brought her parents to the town so that she could look after them and provide for them financially, and so that they would no longer have to work. Soon after, Ana decided to find additional employment to better provide for her family. She began working as a store manager in charge of the shop inventory by age 15. Not long after, Ana experienced sexual advances by the 40-year-old store owner, who said that he wanted to marry her:

> Since I had made the decision not to attend school… because I needed money
> for the house. I felt protected when my brother came. And I felt good and the lady
> loved me a lot, she was very friendly. And then, I stopped working with the lady
> because my parents came and we needed more money. I started working at a store.
> Now. I was the one who administered the store. I ordered the products and
> everything that was sold and I organized the store. The owner would allow
> me to administer the store. But afterwards, I think the owner got separated
> from his wife or I don't know. He told me that he liked me and that he
> wanted to be in a relationship with me and marry me. Not me! He was a man
> and I was a girl. I was like 15 years old and he was already 40. And I told him

I was leaving. -Ana

Ana, a young adolescent, was able to set boundaries with her employer and soon quit working at the store. When the store owner's sister asked Ana why she was leaving, she preferred to keep the inappropriate experience to herself, though she suspected the sister already knew. These forms of inappropriate sexual advances impacted how other participants related to their environment long-term. For instance, Victoria described how her sexual assault makes it difficult to trust anyone with her daughter, including her daughter's father:

> One stays traumatized in that aspect that all people can either do something or they can damage it. And as a matter of fact, with her dad, her dad is good and all, but I take care of her a lot. And he tells me, "why don't you trust me?" And I tell him, "I don't trust anyone. I have to take care of the babysitter." And he tells me, "no, well that's good, don't trust me nor anyone else."- Victoria

Almost half of the participants in the study also reported a previous history of inappropriate sexual advances or severe sexual assault during their adolescence and young adulthood. Some participants even discussed how their previous sexual trauma had affected the way they raised and socialized their daughters, in particular, in the United States. These gendered pre-migratory (and, for some participants, post-migratory) experiences of sexual assault created an intergenerational trauma that impacted their style of parenting within a context of reception they did not fully trust. Victoria echoed similar childhood sexual trauma as Ana and stated, "I am traumatized because I learned anyone could cause you harm." She goes on to rationalize that although she recognized her husband, the father of her daughter, would not cause her harm, she could trust any man with her daughter because of the traumatic experiences she had had as a child. As an immigrant mother, Victoria became even more hypervigilant of her environment to assure her daughter's safety. For instance, Victoria also experienced sexual assault as a recent

94

arrival when cleaning houses. This traumatic experience impacted her level of interaction with her environment, thus causing her to experience separation as an acculturative outcome.

Negative treatment of women. The previous sections examined two key socio-ecological factors that shape women's identity formation in pre-migration contexts, employment during childhood and sexualization at an early age. In this section, I analyze a third socio-ecological factor that shapes participants' identity formation: negative treatment of women in their countries of origin.

For many Latina/os, traditional gender roles, such as Marianismo, dictate that females should be "submissive, chaste, and dependent," while the traditional male role is to be "dominant, virile and independent" (Comas-Diaz, 1987; Rafaelli et al., 2004, p. 288). Latina adolescents may have psychological benefits from adhering to traditional gender roles and the expectations of their families because adhering to these values may increase harmony with their families and reduce parent-adolescent conflict, which is found to greatly impact mental health. However, in other circumstances such as heightened familial stress, strong familism values may increase Latina youths' feelings of burdensomeness and increase their state of risk (Gulbas & Zayas, 2015).

Given the distinct socialization of men and women in their countries of origin, women often discussed how the treatment they received due to their gender molded their worldview and relationship with their environment. As discussed above, while some were overprotected during childhood, others recalled being sexualized at an early age or witnessing the mistreatment of older women in their family; all of these experiences informed their self-concept as women.

Inter-partner violence (IPV). Some participants reported that pre-migratory exposure to accepted Inter-Partner Violence (IPV) within their homes and communities informed their self-

concept and their sense of the burdens they must accept as women. Valeria, a participant who migrated to the United States from Honduras, described how her pre-migratory experiences with abusive men motivated her to escape and migrate to the United States:

> The fear. Fear of that man. I was afraid of that man. Yes, I was afraid of him because he would threaten me a lot, many times he would tell me, "Or I am going to kill you!" "If you leave me, I am going to kill you and you're not going to take anything from this apartment." He would tell me. "And if you try to take something, I am going to turn you into pieces." He'd tell me. Since I pretty much had bought everything. Mmhm. I bought almost everything here too. Yes me, I was the one who wanted to live like this. 'No one in Mexico, no one lives luxurious,' he told me. But that is in Mexico. Here, you are not in Mexico. -Valeria

Valeria recalled the pain this man caused with tears in her eyes. Her unresolved grief centered on the decisions she was forced to make in order to escape her abusive relationship speaks to the sacrifices many of the women in the study made in the hope of finding freedom and safety. She recalled everything she was forced to leave behind in order to escape the grasp of her partner. With the lack of laws to protect women against violence in her country, Valeria saw no alternative but to leave Honduras entirely.

Valeria stated that the "fear [she] had of that man" was psychological torture. There were multiple times he threatened to kill her by "cutting her into pieces." Although Valeria owned a successful secondhand store at a flea market and shared the majority of the property with her partner, she offered to leave everything to him in exchange for his permission to migrate to the United States. Once in the United States, though she was resourceful and able to rebuild her wealth, Valeria found herself in another abusive relationship with a Mexican immigrant who dominated the relationship despite her ownership of capital.

Another participant, Ofelia, described the gendered division she observed while growing up in Mexico. Ofelia spoke about the struggle for women to feel safe even with male partners in

their own family due to fear of physical abuse. Ofelia grew up in both Mexico and the United

States during her formative years and was a young adult at the time of our interview. This bi-

cultural experience allowed her to critically reflect on the similarities and differences between

the treatment of women in both countries. As an astute and devoted student, Ofelia showed an

incredible capacity to analyze how the environment informs one's self-concept and reflect on

how her personal experience could be understood through a migratory lens. She provided an

intimate example of how the environment impacted both her identities as a woman and as an

immigrant.

> I feel that… no. I feel that for Mexican women in the United States it's the same as being a woman in Mexico. But here I feel that men are more aware… a little more cautious with what they do because they know there are stricter laws here. But then again, they know that the women won't call the police or do something or we're scared to do something because we don't want to feel the guilt that we did that to them. But they have been doing so much to us all these years. So it's so complicated, really complicated. - Ofelia

While Ofelia stated that women's experiences in the United States were similar to their

gendered experience in Mexico, she described the cultural awareness and social disapproval of

gender mistreatment as higher in the United States. In one sense, she saw the environment's

efforts to incorporate laws to socially reinforce the protection of women, and she recognized that

these laws act as a protective factor for immigrant women. However, the mistreatment of women

can still occur in the immigrant community due to the group's undocumented status. Their

undocumented status acts as a risk factor because women fear their report of maltreatment will

lead to the arrest of their loved one. Therefore, abusive partners know they can get away with

violent acts against women because of the women's sense of guilt if the perpetrator is deported

as a result of being arrested and processed through the system. This guilt is also related to the

aspects of familismo (Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Valdiviesco-Mora et al., 2016). Ofelia stated that

domestic violence is common within the immigrant community where she lives.

> Well I think… I've never thought that I was less than… Well I guess yes… I've always known women are worth a lot more, that we are worth so much. But I guess the society that we live in and what we are surrounded by, we just… even without realizing it we hold ourselves down. And we let other people just take advantage of us even when we don't realize that, and then we ask ourselves why we are treated the way we are. And that is because we let them do it to us…. Because we are so used to it. That it is something I guess is normal to us. And I believe yes that too… Normal for me to see my dad hit my mom and even here in the United States he tried so many times or whenever he would get drunk is when the violence would happen. And so many times, I have wanted to call the police into something because it's not right, but then I am held back by the fact that… what if they take my dad? It's going to be my fault. But I shouldn't feel that way, should not be scared … but I am. But maybe if one of those times I would have called someone or asked for help, then maybe he would value us more. Or value the fact that we are women… And maybe it was wrong to not call the police…. I don't know. -Ofelia

Many participants in this study echoed Ofelia 's idea that women become victims of

maltreatment by men due to the lack of laws to protect them in their country of origin and, later,

because of their undocumented status in a country where these laws do exist. This complex

interaction of factors affecting the safety of immigrant women was further complicated when

children witnessed their mothers being mistreated, potentially creating intergenerational trauma

in the post-migratory phase. Ofelia, for instance, described witnessing her father physically

abuse her mother:

> And sometimes I question myself, and I asked my mom why are you still with the person who has never treated you right. Why? How is that… you look at your parents and it's an example that you follow. Well you have the choice to follow the example or be your own person, and I just don't understand why she would want us to see that as an okay. And sometimes I question how much she values herself as a woman because I told her sometimes that I love my mom and I feel that she is the strongest person ever but I don't understand… why be with the person who does not want you?.... but then again that was also me just a few months ago; being with the person who didn't value me. and it's very hard to be a woman it really is. - Ofelia

The judgment that developed from the complicated emotions Ofelia had toward her

mother resulted from the domestic violence she witnessed between her parents. Although her

father was the perpetrator of the physical abuse, Ofelia questioned and judged her mom for remaining in an abusive relationship. She further explained that she recognized intergenerational patterns of domestic violence and resented that her parents provided this type of relationship as a model. Ofelia stated that an individual has the autonomy to choose who they are, yet she doubted her own ability to engage in a healthy relationship with a partner. While she resented both parents, Ofelia blamed her mother, specifically, for not exercising her autonomy by leaving the relationship. She was confused about how to view her mother; although she saw her mother as the "strongest person ever," she also questioned whether her mother knows her worth. This became a struggle between idolizing and pitying her mother. Then Ofelia questioned if she may be projecting toward her mother because she was also sexually and physically abused by her first boyfriend as an adolescent.

Witnessing the presence and social acceptance of interpersonal domestic violence in her pre-migratory community, Ofelia came to feel disrespected due to her gender. She described Mexico as a patriarchal society that socialized women to forgo their self-worth because "it was normal to witness domestic violence." Ofelia was perplexed by the dilemma women faced: they were socialized to put others' needs before their own, but then blamed for letting others take advantage of them. This experience re-emerged after their migration to the United States when her father, intoxicated, would try to abuse her mother physically. While Ofelia wanted to stop the violence against her mother, she feared calling the police would result in his arrest and, consequently, his deportation. In these cases, her father, a male figure in her life, and his needs would be prioritized even over her mother's basic need for safety. She often faced the challenge of having to choose between her parents, and, despite her resentment, her father always took

precedence due to the family's undocumented status. Ofelia maintained her self-doubts over these decisions.

Ofelia, like the majority of participants, reflected on what it meant to come from a very traditional Latino family and the social contexts of their country of origin. Women are taught to choose one partner to date with the intention to marry. This cultural socialization informed Ofelia's decision-making and rationalization to stay in an abusive relationship with her first boyfriend, and it isolated her by discouraging her from seeking help from her family. Ofelia shared that beginning to date in the United States made her more open to different types of dating experiences, but she still felt it was safer to follow the familiar process she had observed in her country of origin. She recalled shutting down completely when her abusive boyfriend left for college and broke up with her. She realized that in the process of "pleasing [her] boyfriend," she had lost who she was. She now realized how her desire to marry him and follow social expectations was so strong that she was willing to overlook the emotional and psychological abuse that dominated the relationship.

> But I am just embarrassed to say that I went through so much, when many times she told me a relationship was about being happy. No, wasn't supposed to let that happen… The way I was. [cries] And I am not the person to open up to people, and it's just hard to tell them what I am feeling because I feel like I can handle it myself. Sometimes I guess I can't. And sometimes you need someone.

> Well I come from a very traditional family so you choose one guy and that is the guy you're going to marry and that is that you're going to spend the rest of your life. So when the breakup happened, I think I got caught up and thinking he was to be the only person in my life. So I just closed out on so many experiences because I wanted him to not get mad at me. So it was an abusive relationship… Because I was always so caught up on making sure they were okay with everything that I lost myself.

Ofelia tried to hold the complexity of her personal experience with intimate partner violence (IPV), witnessing her mother's victimization of domestic violence, along with the contradictory messages and values her mother would instill around healthy relationships. During

her formative years in Mexico, Ofelia witnessed her father drink and then become violent toward her mother. There were times when they would escape to their grandmother's home for several days, but then return and ignore the violence that had occurred. When they migrated, Ofelia hoped this IPV would become part of her family's past. She believed that United States laws could protect her mother; however, she later discovered the complexity of how their undocumented status would compromise the fundamental human right of safety.

In the interview, Ofelia took long pauses when she disclosed how she struggled to call the police because of the potential shame that could follow her father's consequential deportation. Nearly all the participants stated it is common for the immigrant community to associate police officers with ICE due to increased opportunity for collaboration. She expressed personal shame in revealing her trauma with IPV during her first relationship at 16. Ofelia shared that she was also a victim in an abusive relationship and feared that she would disappoint her mother if she disclosed this, because her mother did not approve of her relationship. As a result, Ofelia became closed off to others in order to protect herself. She attempted to cope with the trauma of her abusive experience and the IPV she witnessed with her parents by depending on only herself, although she recognized that she needed help. The familial patterns of IPV present in this participant's pre-migratory experience were reinforced during her family's post-migratory phase, except that now, IPV was doubly exacerbated by both gender identity and undocumented immigrant identity. Ofelia 's experience, along with other participants present the potential consequences of Mariananismo and familismo discussed in the literature.

Natalie was another participant who described how watching her father mistreat her mother shaped her identity and the dynamics of her own marriage. Women in Mexico, she stated, are socialized to be "fearful and complacent" and to be more "dependent." Natalie learned about

101

relationship dynamics during her youth when she witnessed the verbal abuse her father would

inflict on her mother:

> My mother. I always…[cries]…I always saw that she wasn't emotionally well…my mom
> is extremely, extremely, or was because she already revealed it…was very submissive.
> And my dad wasn't bad, he wouldn't hit her, but he was a very chauvinist man. And
> sometimes words hurt more than the hits. And so I always wanted to be more and more
> for my mother. So she wouldn't suffer. Up until now I think that…well it also hurts me
> for my sisters and my dad as well. But I always concentrate more on my mom, on my
> mom always.

With tears in her eyes, Natalie disclosed the pain she still held in witnessing her mother suffer

because of her father and the desire to care and protect her. While she clarified that her father

was a "good man" who never physically hit her mother, he was verbally abusive toward her,

especially while intoxicated, and this abuse caused her mother to fall into a deep depression. She

described her mother as a resourceful woman who would hide money from their father to pay for

their children's private school education before he spent it all on alcohol. Natalie described her

mother as a submissive person who paid the consequences of an abusive relationship. The need

to care for her mother and protect her mother at such a young age was part of Natalie's

adultification experience, discussed earlier in this section. Natalie also stated that she continued

to feel a sense of loyalty to her mother because of her sacrifices and suffering.

The shifts in gender roles due to migration present themselves regularly in participant

experiences. Many women in the study reported that while they faced many hardships and

barriers being undocumented in the United States, they also practiced more autonomy as women

in the United States than they did in their country of origin – despite their undocumented status.

Natalie stated she "was never afraid to insert herself in challenging situations" while in

Mexico. When she married, however, she began to endorse these characteristics to oblige social

norms. When Natalie and her family migrated to the United States due to increasing violence and

economic opportunity, she was then exposed to an American environment that provided more

social space for women to become more independent. She witnessed herself transform from a

submissive wife to endorsing more egalitarian traits in her marriage. Natalie reported she had

grown tremendously through her migratory experience and being exposed to two distinct cultural

environments. She asserted that she needs to return to Mexico one day; she now has endless

ways to continue practicing her autonomy.

> Well, I think I've always been nosey anywhere. Hahaha…always nosey and not afraid to ask when I need to. But…I did learn how to do more things. I learned how to drive. How do you gather more courage to be more independent? In Mexico I was more scared…well, I've always tried to do things correctly right…not trying to do bad things. But the more you listen closely, the more scared you get. [Why?] Well I don't know if it's the way you were raised or your family. But basically, I got married and I didn't drive, so I got married with the mentality that, I have to get married to be received, I have to get married by the church to do the correct thing. And my husband and I have to wash, iron and cook food. I have to make him lunch. But not here, here we are the same. It's not about not being responsible because I still keep on doing the same thing with him but now I don't stand up to make the coffee. Because I can't anymore. But living here does wake you up a lot. - Mariana

Mariana described how working in the United States and growing her sense of

independence outside the home had helped her experience a new sense of freedom outside her

husband's control. Mariana reported she has felt empowered in her marriage because her

children recognized the financial contributions and efforts she made for the family. She

explained how her children are more loyal to her than to her husband because they witness her

hard work. This loyalty reflects the similar dynamics Natalie and Ofelia reported toward their

mothers because of the suffering and contributions to the family.

> They get bothered a lot when my husband gets in a bad mood because they look at what I do. I, who had to do everything. I am the one who has to take everything out, me. So that's something that gives me a little bit more courage. Sometimes I have had problems with him, he has been chauvinistic and everything and yes, I do get scared. Before he'd leave me, but not anymore. Now, if he tells me this or that, I had already told him once before to leave. "Leave and what do you think, leave. I am not going to let you treat me the way you want to treat me anymore." So I feel more free now. Right now, he can't ask

me, where are you? And I respond: "don't tell me to tell you in which house I am working at because [my employers] changes things around last minute. I can take another route or I can return, don't tell me to let you know where I'm at. I don't have to be giving you any explanations."

Mariana described her transformation from being a submissive wife because she "feared" her "machista" (male chauvinist) husband to no longer tolerating the mistreatment and at times telling him to "leave." Mariana expressed that she now values herself and practices her autonomy more because she realizes how much her family depends on her. She no longer tolerates her husband's micro-management or investigating her while at work, needing her to inform him of her whereabouts and being controlled. She now "respects" herself more and does not need to continually explain herself to overwhelming demands. Though her independence has created strain in her marriage because her growth has seemed to threaten her husband's sense of control, Mariana has learned to reinforce boundaries to reduce the impact of her husband's dominating pressure. Mariana links being a working woman to her children's sense of loyalty and strength to no longer tolerating mistreatment.

Furthermore, immigration plays a role in identity transformation as women leave their country and arrive in a new country, where they assume an additional layer of identity: immigrant identity. While gender identity became less marginalized when seeking opportunities for employment and self-actualization in the United States, women continued to encounter tensions and hardship in their relationships with partners, coupled with the hardship of less legal protection due to their undocumented status. In this study, nearly half the participants encountered some continued form of gender marginalization within the immigrant community such as they had experienced in their country of origin. The findings align with previous research on partner relationship patterns within the context of migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007).

One of the most common challenges women presented in restructuring their lives and relationships in the United States was encountering a repeated social hierarchy where women could still be treated as "less than" by their immigrant partners. However, now they also experienced a second marginalized identity as immigrants. Their undocumented status further complicated their sense of safety and set barriers to their migratory goals. Nevertheless, the participants persevered. There was a wide range in the types of hardships women experienced within the context of the immigration experience. At the time of the study, all participants except for one, shared a difficulty they faced due to their doubly marginalized identity as women and as immigrants. Some participants reported that gendered experiences of hardship in their country of origin catalyzed their decision to migrate, whereas others linked their immigration hardships to the post-migratory challenges of reconstructing a new life in the United States.

Factors That Influence Women's Decisions to Migrate

In this section, I present political, economic, and social factors that influenced women's decision to migrate such as experiences of violent conditions and the desire for safety as well as limited opportunities in their native country due to gender. Participants in this study described how their decision-making process specifically impacted them as women. The decision to migrate presented heartache for the women interviewed, despite having valid socio-ecological reasons for leaving their country. While some participants' decision to migrate was motivated by a desire for more autonomy, other participants (including Paola, Ofelia, and Veronica) stated that others had decided for them. Others described their migration as a forced economic decision, and a significant number of participants explained that disruption of violence increased their need to flee circumstances in their country of origin. Some studies (Jensen, 2007; Rambaut, 1991) have found that migration decisions are typically made by multiple members of the family or

105

community rather than the individual alone. Nearly half the participants in this study discussed their decisions to migrate in ways that align with the results of migratory decision patterns from previous research. However, as previous research has reported that the internal distress of the decision-making process has received limited attention (Cordero & Kurz, 2006; Hsieh, Apostolopoulos, Hatzudis, & Sönmez, 2016), the findings in this study may provide insight into the internal distress that followed the decision-making process for all participants.

Parents' decisions to migrate. As previously mentioned, Ofelia was never part of her family's decision-making process to migrate to the United States. Ofelia 's sudden discovery that her life trajectory would lead her to a different country took place one day after she came home from school. She recalls her parents' reasons for migrating below:

> So I guess the original plan was for them to leave and for us to go after when they were stable. That my mother never wanted to leave us. And sometime later… I just remember coming home from school and there was a little suitcase waiting for me. That day I was supposed to go to church school and my mother told me that I was not going to go to church school, but they did not tell me that we were coming to the United States. All they told me was that we were going on a trip. Then when we got to the bus station. They told me that we were not going to come back. So I did not have any time to say goodbye to my friends. And I remember coming on the bus, when he got on the bus I was crying. My mother told me Pat I kept crying they were going to think that they stole me so to stop crying. Then way past my church school and I saw my cousin who is my best friend and I played with and he was there and I just say goodbye through the window. That was the last thing I remember from where we left. -Ofelia

Although Ofelia had never discussed the series of events that led to the family's migration, she believed that her parents decided the family would migrate because her mother did not want to leave them behind. She recalled coming home from school finding her suitcase packed waiting in the hallway. Even at that moment, she was not told they were migrating to the United States, rather that they were taking a trip. This unexpected departure represented a disruption and loss of her life in Mexico. Shortly after they arrived at the bus station, her mother informed her they would not be returning from their trip. This news overwhelmed Ofelia and led

her into a state of shock for the remainder of the journey. Ofelia recalled the family's migration journey in great detail from the point of departure from her home town, through the process of crossing the river and having to leave all her childhood belongings behind, to the first night they reached American soil. To this day, Ofelia recalled the difficulty of adjusting to a new context of reception as an adolescent. She and her mother recalled the pleas Ofelia and her sisters would make to return to Mexico during the first year of their arrival.

Another participant whose parents decided to migrate to the United States was Veronica. Her mother, distressed by the increase of violence in their community and lack of male presence in their family, decided that she, Veronica, and Veronica's sisters would all migrate to the United States. When Veronica arrived in the new context of reception as a 16-year-old adolescent, she quickly learned how different her upbringing was from that of her American classmates at school. She described American adolescents as much more independent, which "scared" her. Veronica stated that during her first year of arrival, everything scared her, mainly because she did not know English. Within two weeks of her arrival, Veronica's mother enrolled her in high school where she was overwhelmed by the foreign nature of the American school system. Feeling isolated and lost, Veronica recalled crying in the bathroom stalls for months because of the difficulty to adapt. As a result, her personality changed (self-concept) as she became more insecure, which was the opposite of who she was. In this process, she lost herself and avoided building social connections fearing rejection because of her lack of English skills. For months, Veronica begged her mother for them to return to Mexico, and each time her mother would request six more months as time to help smooth the transition.

> I was 16. And very naïve. And I feel that sometimes when parents protect you a lot, I feel that sometimes they do damage, because I felt that way with my mom. And here it was completely different. The youth here are more independent. And when I got here, I was afraid of everything. I felt very scared. Starting with the language. I got here to the US

and in 2 weeks I entered high school. I didn't know anything about English. I didn't know anyone. The school was huge. It was very different from my previous high school. I think I had a personality that… wasn't too secure. I wouldn't speak to anyone. But not because I didn't want to speak, but because of the fear of not knowing the language and because of the rejection of the people…that's all different…Americans, Afro-Americans, Hispanics, and everyone.

So I'd tell my mom I wanted to go back. And she told me, just give me 6 months. If we see that in 6 months you don't feel good, we'll leave. But she'd tell me the same thing every 6 months. [laughs] - Veronica

Economic factors. While for some participants, migration was imposed on them by other family members or by threats to their safety, other participants were able to practice their autonomy in making this life-transforming journey. However, economic factors also contributed to their decision-making process. Ana, Consuelo, Gabriela, and Sofia talked about their desperate financial situations, and due to the limited resources for women to advance in their country, many sought opportunities to obtain employment in the United States.

Ana's process of deciding to migrate occurred over six years and was affected by multiple factors. While Ofelia and Veronica's parents migrated them to the United States, Ana's parents decided to keep her in Mexico, though there was an opportunity to stay in the United States while visiting her brothers in Atlanta, Georgia. Ana recalled spending a year in the United States and going to school at the age of nine, where she learned English skills that have benefitted her as an adult.

Today, Ana stated she lost the opportunity to become a DREAMer because her parents did not believe it was appropriate for a young girl to stay in the United States despite allowing her older brother of two years to remain behind with family. Ana's experience of migratory journey was dictated early in her life by her gender. Ana's mother explained to her that males are better able to protect and take care of themselves than young girls. With regret Ana shared,

108

"Now [her] brother is a DREAMer and [she] is NOT" because "[her] parents robbed [her] of the opportunity because [she] was female." Ana believed that this form of gender-based overprotection limited her opportunities in life.

> I was in a school. Because I studied here. I came when I was 9 years old. I got to this country and studied in elementary for 2 years. And then in middle school, and then I returned to Mexico. I lived in Atlanta, Georgia for 6 months because she worked with the older siblings. So I was there for 6 months, but I didn't study there when we returned from Houston to say goodbye to our siblings and return to Mexico. I didn't want to go to Mexico, but I was a minor. My mom told me, "You can't stay here, because you are a minor." And I asked her, "Why is my brother staying?" And she told me, "Because he is a man, and he can protect himself more." He is a DREAMER, my brother. I tell my mom, "I could have been a DREAMER too if I would have stayed here." -Ana

Ana's narrative provides another illustration of Mexican women's pre-migratory experience of limited autonomy and overprotection by members of their family. The women in the study often compared their experiences in childhood to their male siblings. While some could not identify a difference in gendered treatment, other participants recalled defining events that were informed by the distinction of gendered treatment.

Despite early limitations imposed on Ana, her move forward mentality and resourcefulness led her to mature early in Mexico and prepared her to advocate for herself when the next opportunity to migrate presented itself at the age of 16. Ana had proven to her parents that she could not only care for herself but also become the sole breadwinner of the family in Mexico. So when one of her brothers returned to Mexico to visit the family, Ana made the decision to migrate and accompany her brother on the journey back north. Ana declared to her family that she did not fear the migration now as a "grown woman." She was firm in her decision, and her family accepted it.

> When one of my older brothers went to Mexico for vacation and I told him…he told me, "You want to come with me to the US?" And I told him Yes! He told me, "I'm joking." And I told him, I'm not joking, I really want to go with you. And he said but mom…and then I told my mom that I was going to leave…I'm going to leave to the US with my

brother. And she told me, "Are you crazy? You are a woman." And "I don't care", I told her…"I'm a woman but I've known how to act like one and I'm not afraid, I'm going." She told me, "Ok. If you already made that decision, what can I do?" My mom told me that. I told her that when I was 16 years old. And my brother said, Ok let's go. -Ana

Violent conditions. Many participants' decisions to migrate were motivated by the desire to seek a sense of safety and escape from violent conditions in their country of origin. Some participants had personally witnessed or escaped violence, while others feared for the lack of safety as their community's future grew increasingly uncertain. Regardless of the reason, most of the participants shared a desire to provide security for themselves and their children. The growing violence in their community dictated their decision to migrate north and remain in the United States for as long as possible.

When Consuelo's husband was deported to Mexico, the trauma he experienced there motivated him and Consuelo to keep their children in the United States and shield them from the threats present in their pre-migratory communities. Although her husband would initially shut down during any discussion related to his deportation, he now cries when he shares what he experienced during the time of his deportation. Consuelo no longer recognized the beautiful and peaceful Mexico she left as a younger woman. Rather, she now recognized the potential threat to safety that returning to Mexico would pose for her and her family.

> Now that I am here and [my lifestyle] it's more relaxed. To live better, both economically and more secure, being in this country, they put more effort in everything. Although they pay you the minimum. But other people do not see it that way, even though all we want it to be ok and be a little safer. We come here, then we ask… well are we safer here or are we safer in Mexico? Of course, there are a lot of people in Mexico willing to risk their lives to come to the United States, because surely they would be safer here than they would in their own country… the way things are in Mexico right now.

Participants reported that undocumented immigrants are more motivated to remain in the United States due to the growing uncertainty of their home country. For instance, Consuelo explained that although undocumented immigrants are paid lower wages due to their status, they

110

remained in the United States because their desire to remain in a safer environment, including

providing their children with an education, outweighed many forms of discrimination (including

unequal pay). Consuelo also struggled with the rejection from the current socio-political attitudes

within the context of reception. She expressed the perplexity of how members of the dominant

group who orchestrate anti-immigrant rhetoric cannot see that most immigrants are seeking a

basic sense of security and safety. She began to question where immigrants are safer due to the

covert and targeted forms of discrimination by the context of reception. Immigrants, she stated,

are willing to risk their lives to find refuge in another country and leave the only life they have

ever known behind without the certainty they will ever return. This worldview supports the

pattern that immigrants are willing to sacrifice their freedom for safety and adding stressors

while reconstructing their identity in the United States. The immigration journey entails many

forms of sacrifice followed by much uncertainty and expected grief.

> It started since 2010...009. These types of things have always been seen in Mexico but it started being noticed more when the Los Zetas cartel arrived. So the Gulf started to fight more with the Zetas. And there was an pact among them…living in Matamoros was…you couldn't do anything anymore. Nothing.

Like Consuelo, Victoria described her migratory journey north as a search for safety that

her pre-migratory community could no longer offer. Victoria remembered how the War on Drugs

impacted her community as the violence between Mexican cartel groups and the Mexican

Federal government reached a peak in 2009. She explained that once the Zetas entered the town,

the "show" began with violence, and regular life in Matamoros ceased to exist.

> Well, I'd say it was calm to be with your kids in Matamoros. But you wouldn't know who they'd encounter because they fight among themselves. And they could have died there because of a missed bullet…it's frustrating if you have children. Without knowing if you are going to be okay now or tomorrow. That's why I decided to come here, because of my daughter. Well, you are already going to be a mom…you're used to this life, but why are you going to do this to your daughter, give her a life you don't want. If it

were still the way it was in my childhood, I'd still be there. But it's not like that anymore. Now it's more dangerous.

Victoria explained that for the most part, Matamoros was calm but exceedingly unpredictable. Families were vulnerable to cartel confrontations in the middle of town squares or randomly in the street. Unfortunately, many civilians became collateral damage to gun violence. Victoria explained how this unpredictability was especially frustrating for people who had children. When she became pregnant, she decided it was no longer an option to remain in Matamoros, especially after her partner received death threats from a member of a cartel group who had previously attempted to court her. She explained that while she had grown accustomed to living amid cartel battles, she could not justify bringing a child into this environment:

> My boyfriend and partner "You know what, let's go." And I told him, "no I don't want to leave. All they want to tell you is not to do anything to me, to treat me well and that's it." He said, "No but he loves you. At 19, I was already pregnant with my daughter. And he told me, "let's go, [her name]". And I'd tell him, "No, I don't want to leave." I didn't have the intention of leaving. My sister had just had a girl, my little niece. And I'd say how am I going to leave her if the girl was everything to me. And I'd say, no no no I can't, I can't. And he'd tell me, "Let's go, let's go, let's go." Then they stopped him again. The same ones and they told him. And afterwards, days later they went to look for him at my house. And I told him, fine let's go with my aunts and uncles. I think if we get there, they won't tell us anything, they'd help us. But we agreed not to tell anyone about that.

Victoria's decision to migrate to the United States was prompted by the danger her partner faced because of the former friend who was attempting to pursue her. She was 19 and pregnant with her daughter, and her sister had just given birth to her niece that she adored. However, after they were directly warned by cartel members to leave town, her partner became more determined for them to flee to the United States. The terrifying conditions she and her partner faced forced Victoria to leave the life she had behind and seek refuge with her aunt and uncle in the United States. Although she was initially hesitant to leave her community, the

112

danger she and her partner faced forced them to leave in secret without the closure of saying goodbye to family members.

Another participant who grew fearful of the turmoil of violence in her community was Veronica. She recalled that her pre-migratory neighborhood was very unsafe as a child and adolescent. Raised by a single mother, Veronica understood why her mother wanted the family to migrate and rejoin her oldest brother already in the United States. Veronica recalled her mother would continuously worry something would happen to them due to the increasing crime in their neighborhood, especially because it was a household of only women. This recollection also underscores Veronica's sense of overprotection as a child. Veronica recalled many of the horrible things that happened to other people around them shortly before her family migrated:

> In Mexico, the neighborhood we were in was NOT a very good neighborhood. And so one of the reasons my mom wanted to come with my brother was because since most of us were women, she wanted…Well there was some fear because there was a lot…there was a lot of delinquency and all that, and she didn't want anything to happen to us because sometimes she had to work and she'd get out late so we were alone during the day. We'd walk to school alone. So thank God nothing ever happened to us, we didn't have ugly experiences, but they would tell us about other people. And that was another reason why my mom decided to move us here.

Veronica recalled that as a young adolescent, she would walk to school in fear. Therefore, she would always join groups of students walking to school, even if she did not know them. Her hypervigilance never allowed for her to walk alone or stray from the school route. This fear was reinforced when a close childhood friend was raped at the age of 15 on her way to the same school.

> Yes, I'd get scared, I was even scared of walking to school by myself. I would try to find people who would pass by, even if I didn't know them, who were students at that school and who would pass by the direction I was walking towards so that I wouldn't go alone.

> I think that something my friend went through when she would walk to school and was raped, also made me very scared. I was about 14 years old and she was about 15 years

old. So I'd be very scared. Because it was around the same time that the earthquake of '85 occurred. It was in that same year that this happened to me. Because there were a lot of people that were transferred from other communities to where I lived. There were a lot of people from other areas, so they stayed around 3 or 4 blocks from where I lived, all that was filled with temporary homes and a lot of people from all over that we didn't know…so it's a little more ugly, more difficult.

Much like women experienced increased threats to their safety in their country of origin due to their gender, some of the participants also discussed how the increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric was beginning to threaten their sense of safety and sense of belonging here in the United States. For example, Sofia described the hardship her family was enduring since the recent increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric:

> The President definitely does not want us here. That is all we have experienced since he has been in power. And I am not sure why so many people will not hire people if they do not have papers. There is no work and it is harder. I remember when I first came here and it was a lot easier to find a job, without papers, than it is now. My husband has not been able to find a job for three years. Because he could not find work I was the only one that had a job. Will one has to find a way to keep moving forward. But one struggle a lot, one struggles a lot for everything.

Navigating the Acculturation Process

In the previous section, I described two kinds of factors that motivate women's decision to migrate: economic factors and violent conditions (pre-migration) and how they informed identity formation. Now, I shift the focus to the acculturation process itself (post-migration). Specifically, this section explores the ways in which women navigate the process of acculturation and how identity begins to deconstruct and reconstruct through the interactions with a new socio-cultural environment. This section presents four key ways in which immigrant women navigate the challenges of the acculturation process: 1) cultivating a sense of belonging, 2) seeking increased autonomy and independence, 3) seeking educational opportunities for their children, and 4) developing a "move forward mentality."

114

Sense of belonging. The Social Identity theory of intergroup conflict, coupled with a migratory lens, helps to explain the constructive, de-constructive, and reconstructive process of identity for immigrants entering new cultural environments. Research in social psychology explores how group identity drives behavior and influences our belief system (Ashmore et al., 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). While in their country of origin, individuals identify as members of their community, and although limited by particular gendered socialization, they can still exercise the full rights of citizenship granted by their government. As women, however, participants discussed how their gender was marginalized. As an immigrant in the United States, the identity of an "outsider" is imposed by the context of reception during the process of reconstructing a new life.

Consequently, immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, become part of the less dominant stratified group within the social hierarchy of the United States. Culturally speaking, the members of the dominant group perceive the process of navigating through the ecological system to be more fluid and, therefore, they value a more individualistic approach to advancing social mobility. However, members of the stratified group may feel stuck in their position within the ecological and cultural system and sense the "impossibility of getting out" (Ashmore et al., 2001, pg,73). Therefore, members of this group depend on a collectivistic approach to seek social change.

The sense of belonging theme reflects the constructive, de-constructive, a reconstructive process of identity transformation in respect to connections to community and group membership. For instance, in their construction of identity, participants learned and informed their sense of self through the interactions with the communities in the country of origin. As immigrant women left their homes and migrated to the United States, their connections and

115

immediate interactions with their native communities drastically decreased, bringing about the deconstructive phase of identity transformation. Finally, as women began to reconstruct new identities in the United States, they began to create a new sense of belonging with immigrant communities consisting of different national Latino origins. They described these networks as a migration tapestry where underprivileged immigrants were bound by similar hardships, pain, and hope and stating, "because I was there too."

These participants' pursuit of a sense of belonging speaks to the human need to feel connected to others. Participants sought out post-migratory communities (or "migration tapestries") in the United States in order to reduce the sense of isolation and othering imposed by their context of reception. The formation of these communities demonstrates participants' compassion and sense of understanding of other migrants who had endured migratory hardships similar to their own, particularly those who shared the challenges of undocumented status. This result aligns with previous research on the creation of social networks driven by the socialized value of collectivism practiced by Latino immigrants (Ademas & Duenas, 2017).

Women in this study expressed a feeling of connection to other immigrants who had recently arrived from other countries after attempting to escape the violence in their homes. For example, Victoria, an immigrant from Mexico who has been in the United States for seven years, describes her sense of compassion and solidarity with other Central American immigrants:

> It's ugly because I don't think about me, I think about other people. I cry for those who are marching [through Mexico], living in Central America, it breaks my heart. To see the moms with their babies suffering to come to another country. -Victoria

As many of the women left behind family and community in their country of origin, they also sought to build new support networks while re-establishing themselves in the context of reception. These networks typically combine a family already established in the United States

and other Latino immigrants from different countries. The within-group diversity of these immigrant communities in the United States often contributes toward shift in the individuals' identity and group membership within a cultural environment. This process is a co-occurring as the context of reception tends to group immigrants from different Latin American countries into one social category, and immigrants, due to the increased exposure of different Latino nationalities brought together by the unifying experience of migration, re-establish new communities and support networks together.

Furthermore, the participants discussed how the undocumented migration experience unifies Latinos in the United States because their undocumented identity becomes more salient than their respective nationalities and tends to dictate their experience within their post-migratory environment. The geographic proximity and frequent interaction with other nationalities also speak to the transformation of identity and informs individuals' meaning-making process of Latino identity. The with-in group diversity of immigrant nationalities in immigrant communities speaks to the shift in how one may identify within in pre-migratory and post-migratory environments. While participants did acknowledge the presence of inter-Latino discrimination within the immigrant community (which I will discuss later in this chapter), the women in this study generally expressed compassion for the newer wave of immigrants. Although these immigrants came from different countries, participants connected to them because of their shared goals of seeking a safe environment for their families, particularly when their fellow immigrants were also mothers.

Dalia, who immigrated to the United States from Honduras, voiced compassion toward other immigrants while listening to news coverage of those immigrants being detained in an immigration center just as she had been. Soon after her son was murdered by MS-13, she fled

with her four-year-old son to escape threats of violence and undertook an increasingly dangerous migration north to seek asylum in the United States. As a mother who witnessed her four-year-old son endure migration hardships that even stronger adults could not withstand, Dalia reported constantly thinking about the children who are still enduring the hardships of migration and detention. While listening to the news in her brother's living room, she realized how politics against migration have worsened. Once an Honduranian business owner, Dalia must now depend entirely on her brother in the United States and attempts to manage the distress caused by the pending uncertainty of her potential deportation to Honduras.

> Yes, yes I see him [the president], the news airs it several times a day… seeing how the children are, watching everything they say, watching everything. Well, I don't understand but I hear it. All that is enough enough enough…because that only causes me to think. Seeing all the children makes me think about when I came, and if that would have happened, if they would have taken him away from me! Ehhhh! But it's been more…so thank God none of that has happened to me. But the situation of the kids does hurt. Because I was there too. -Dalia

Dalia grappled with the transformation she had undergone in the previous year. Still grieving the loss of her son, Dalia was attempting to move forward and reconstruct a new life in the United States in order to maintain the safety of her younger son and one day bring her 15-year-old daughter from Honduras. Even her experience of transnational motherhood spoke to the difficult decision and grief she experiences in leaving her daughter behind with family. In the limited time she has spent in the United States, Dalia had undergone a drastic identity transformation from a community member in her home country to a grieving mother and asylum seeker, in addition to undergoing legal processes that identify her as a criminal. This insight is consistent with previous scholars' claims that while each immigration journey is unique, the overall immigrant experience affects every aspect of life for these individuals (Meyers, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2006). Because of the overwhelming hardship Dalia has endured herself, she

118

sympathizes with the collective pain the migrants depicted through the news share. While in a high state of distress due to her own uncertain future, Dalia was still able to relate to the desperation of other migrants from different countries who are seeking the same opportunity she sought.

Autonomy and independence. This section describes the ways in which participants learned to hone their autonomy and independence through the challenges of migration. In response to research question two, this section describes how immigrant women navigate the acculturation process by seeking autonomy and independence, often through professional and economic advancement. During their pre-migratory years, women's most salient identity in their country of origin was their gender, which dictated their opportunities and autonomy. While in the United States, however, women discovered that their migratory status became more salient; they continued to face barriers based on immigration status, but their opportunities for advancement became less constrained by gender.

Sofia described traditional expectations practiced in Mexico, where she felt that women had limited autonomy beyond their home. This limitation, Sofia believed, created a sense of internal fear that at times prevented her from interacting or participating with the outside community. Since her exposure to more egalitarian gender norms in the United States, however, she has learned to navigate a new environment with increased autonomy and self-worth. She states that in essence, she has "rebelled" from traditional Mexican social expectations. She believed her exposure to a different cultural environment enabled her to become more independent in the United States than she was in Mexico.

> Well I think I'm more independent here than I was in Mexico. Because as I've said before, in Mexico I'd be at home, but not here. Here, I'd reveal myself as Gloria Trevi would say. That I don't have as much fear as I did before. For example, the day-to-day for a Mexican woman involves waiting for her husband to get home to serve him. I am

the same, but now I'm not afraid to go to the store alone for example. I don't have to depend solely on him, it's not like that anymore. I let go of my hair, I go alone. -Sofia

Sofia stated she is no longer scared to navigate her environment and believed that the gendered limitations placed on her by her pre-migratory experience perpetuated the fear that prevented her from pursuing goals outside her home. Now, however, her marginalized identity as an undocumented immigrant presented new limitations that she had not faced in Mexico. Due to migration, Sofia's self-concept had been informed by two distinct environments that marginalized different aspects of her identity and influenced how she approached her interactions within each. While in Mexico, she felt limited due to her gender identity; in the United States, she believed her undocumented status coupled with her gender dictated her post-migratory life.

Seeking better future for children. Nearly all participants expressed fears that their families would be separated due to deportation. If parents were deported, they would expect their children to remain in the United States to complete their studies, regardless of their age. The worries they anticipated for themselves were economic struggles they would have to endure as single mothers attempting to rely on one limited income to support their children in the United States. Participants often emphasized that despite the frightening possibility of parental deportation, their children's education remained a priority. The mothers in this study agreed that their primary goal was to support their children's education, even above family reunification.

These difficult decisions speak to the value of familismo. In the past three decades, research has found that parental socialization and prioritization of familismo has been linked to positive academic and psychological outcomes of Latino youth (Quintana & Vera, 1999). In this study, however, the value of familismo is also found to be a driver within the context of deportation. During the acculturation process, immigrant women negotiate their identity through daily encounters and cultural socialization. For example, they negotiate identity in places of

employment, when utilizing modes of public transportation, or when engaging in school-related communication on behalf of their children (Dreby, 2012). For instance, immigrant mothers must learn to navigate the education system on behalf of their children despite language barriers and negative expectations of families with low resources within their contexts of their reception. These interactions demonstrate women's abilities to navigate through new ecological systems; their identities evolve as they fulfill new environmental expectations. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on acculturation by finding that undocumented mothers, even if deported, are willing to sacrifice being geographically close to their children in order to prioritize their American education.

Like many other participants in the study, Victoria highlighted the value she assigned to her daughter's education in the United States. Victoria appreciated how the "United States education system has stricter laws and regulates a child's education" when compared to Mexico. Victoria stated "unfortunately education is not as prioritized in Mexico," and if a child does not want to study in Mexico, they no longer have to attend school.

> Sadly, in Mexico the parents or the people let kids stop going to school if they don't want to study anymore. And not here. Over here by law they have to go to school and they have to be good. And that's what I like about the United States. I…I push my daughter…my mom would push me, but I didn't pay attention. And I tell my mom. But it's just that. For my daughter…I prefer my daughter to study in the United States. For me, it is going to be a better education. And it also has its pros and cons right? But giving her this education has to be a good thing.

Victoria reinforced these American institutional principles at home by demanding and supporting her daughter's best efforts. She recognized that United States education still has its drawbacks, but it is a better education than in Mexico. By having her daughter remain in the United States, Victoria could continue to prioritize her future more effectively.

> And there was a boy that would say, "teacher, my dad sells marijuana." Kids are very innocent but because they know all that already. And that's what you have every day in

Mexico. Because of drugs and everything. Before I left, there were many groups who would fight in plazas and everything. Little children…over there, if you see a big truck, they are drug dealers, it's very rare to see a truck of the year that hasn't been stolen or where the owner isn't killed. You can't have luxurious things. So my friend and I were going. And we didn't have a lot of gas with the fuel light on. Worried. And there were 2, the kids were in front, the trucks and the drug dealers were behind. And the kids look through the windows. And the mom…tells them, take out the guns. They scream. And the ones behind us take out very big "horns." Big guns. And both of us were extremely surprised. They're yelling at the kids to take out the guns. And they are taking them out. And the moms laugh and laugh. And I said, no, what's this? Is this normal? And I say, if they're teaching the kids that, that's what they will be doing soon. -Victoria

Many of the participants often compared the American education system to that of their country of origin often appreciating the opportunities and the quality of education their child could obtain in the United States. Victoria made a clear contrast between the educational aspirations her daughter has while residing in the United States and the limited opportunities she could have in Mexico with the family's low income. Victoria explained that her sole motivation to remain in the United States and avoid deportation is to prevent exposing her daughter to the drug violence and glamorized cartel culture in Mexico. Specifically, she recalled a pre-migratory experience in Mexico where she observed an interaction between two mothers and their children idolizing and requesting two cartel soldiers to bring out their guns. Shocked by the exchange, Victoria realized how young children in Mexico already know about guns and drugs after witnessing so much violence in these communities. At this time, Victoria was already pregnant with her daughter, and she began to fear that her child would lead the same inevitable childhood in Mexico. She questioned if this was the new "normal" in her community and, if deported, would she have to confront the violence and danger she fled years ago?

Well, I think I wanted…or want something better for my daughter. My daughter wasn't born here so, and with how ugly things got in Mexico, I was scared. Our own neighbors would go through unpleasant things like stealing girls and they'd take them. And then they'd prostitute them. So I got scared to return. So we have to be strong for her. Because I tell her, if one day you have to return, you are already bigger. You already speak English, you are more awake. Well, if we get there you'll be able to defend yourself in

any aspect right. She's not innocent anymore, she knows what's dangerous and what's not. I think that's it. – Natalie

Despite the growing effect of the "othering" experience fueled by negative messages and persecuting political climate on undocumented immigrants, participants' primary reason for remaining in the United States was to seek educational opportunities for their children; another closely related primary reason was to assure their children's safety.

Move forward mentality. In addition to cultivating a sense of belonging, building independence, and prioritizing their children's education, women in this study navigated the acculturation process by maintaining a "move forward mentality." The majority of the participants practiced this move forward mentality during both pre- and post-migration experiences; they felt that they no other choice in order to survive.

The move forward mentality took two principal forms among participants in this study: 1) overcoming adversity and 2) pursuing goals. Immigrant women enacted the move forward mentality to overcome the adversity they faced due to their gender or socioeconomic status (i.e. ecological demands) in their country of origin, as well as the adversity they faced in their context of reception. In addition, they enacted the move forward mentality by pursuing their personal and professional goals (both pre- and post-migration). In response to research question one, I found that pre-migratory experiences (such as the cultural messages and socialization women received in their country of origin) informed the development of this move forward mentality as an essential component of these women's identity. Although participants faced a wide range of hardships, common unprompted phrases through all the interviews included "para seguir adelante" (in order to move forward), "my hopes have always been the ambition to keep moving forward" and "better to move forward"! The participants described this mindset as instinctive yet difficult to maintain. The move forward mentality seemed to connect all the women; it reflected

a psychological characteristic that has helped them navigate the challenges of their pre-migratory and post-migratory environments.

This move forward mentality closely relates to the migration literature on psychological concepts such as resilience (American Psychological Association, 2010). It also reinforces arguments for utilizing a strength-based approach with migratory populations, in particular from a trauma-based perspective (Radan, 2007). As such, the findings of this study contribute to the limited but growing body of literature exploring how immigrants cope with stigma and how they overcome hardships associated with immigration (Padilla & Perez, 2003). In addition, this move forward mentality reinforces a strength-based approach to counseling by integrating such cultural resources into their post-migratory narrative. In this section, I analyze two key ways in which participants expressed the move forward mentality: by overcoming adversity and by pursuing their goals.

Overcoming adversity. This section links pre-migratory messages women received during childhood to the ways they learned to overcome the hardships of migration and undocumented status. One form of the move forward mentality is participants' ability to overcome adversity. Migrating to a new country and reconstructing a new life in a community that is different from the one in which they grew up was a challenging and transformative experience for all of the women interviewed. They described this migratory experience as one of the most difficult endeavors they had experienced in their lives. Both the expected and unexpected challenges reflected in other immigrants' stories felt true to them, from the reasons they left their country of origin to the hardships they continue to encounter even years after reconstructing their lives in the United States (I will discuss these challenges further in the following section of this chapter).

Marlen described her move forward mentality—or her belief that "one has to find strength where there is none" —as the element that helped her survive the Salvadorian Civil War of the 1980s as a child, after she witnessed the massacre of her father and brother in front of their home. Her mother was left widowed with six children, whom she struggled to feed every day. A few years later, Marlen became a mother at the age of 14 in El Salvador, by a then 21-year-old man who is now her husband. In hopes of seeking economic opportunity for their family, Marlen's husband migrated to the United States. Upon his departure, Marlen began to re-experience the hypervigilance, uncertainty, and vulnerability from her past. Despite this mix of emotions, Marlen reported that her ambition in life was to move forward with her family despite the psychological discomfort of a traumatic past: "My hopes have always been the ambition to keep moving forward." The adversity she and her husband sought to overcome was a war-torn country and the economic paralysis that followed.

Marlen continued to face adversity after her migration to the United States. In her own search for the American Dream, Marlen quickly learned that being an outsider and a woman in the United States presented unique challenges different from those faced by other groups. She described her experience as of being an immigrant woman as difficult:

> My experience… in being a immigrant woman… has been difficult. A difficult experience, because in order to advance… I believe… I have seen… there have been more challenges to move forward [for undocumented immigrants] than it has for others with papers. And for men also. I mean the differences for men and women, women's are more difficult. But I am always trying to move forward with sacrifices. Always looking at toward the goal. – Marlen

Marlen shared that being an immigrant woman in the United States has been very difficult, more so because undocumented immigrant women have to overcome more barriers than others (such as immigrants with documentation or even undocumented immigrant men).

She described herself as a "luchadora" (a fighter), who is constantly fighting battle after battle and willing to sacrifice their own well-being for her daughters. Marlen understood the social hierarchy within her context of reception and her position within this system due to her "outsider" status; her move forward mentality was an internal resource that had helped her cope with this adversity as she navigated the acculturation process.

Another participant, Sylvia, migrated with her husband and two daughters from Mexico 13 years ago. Sylvia, primarily a stay-at-home mother, reported being content with her life in Mexico until her brother's illness coupled with her husband's desire to seek economic opportunity brought her to the United States. It took a lot of convincing from her husband for them to migrate; however, Sylvia's sense of sibling responsibility to care for her dying brother required no further reason. The family, who had imagined their future in Mexico, packed up minimal belongings with their two young daughters and began the journey north. While it was difficult leaving her home in Mexico, Sylvia reported she did not realize the adversity she would have to overcome while migrating to and during the years of reconstructing a new life in the United States. The migratory experience has tested Sylvia repeatedly. However, Sylvia reported that her difficult childhood, overshadowed by father's abandonment and poverty, prepared her for the trials of migration. Sylvia described her move forward mentality in the following excerpt:

> Well like I mentioned, my childhood was very difficult. Sometimes very sad things would happen… but I would recover… you have to move forward. I had to change because things would happen. The sad and hard things that would happen in my home town, people would just become stronger. What I lived… growing strength is what one does. When one falls, one must pick themselves back up again and continue. Even though things are difficult.

Sylvia reported, overall, she believed she had a content childhood, despite the significant trials that haunted her upbringing. It was at these times in her early years that she learned to apply a move forward mentality as a child, "because unexpected things would happen and one must still

continue in life." Furthermore, Sylvia described the move forward mentality as a "process that includes failing, but more importantly, picking yourself up again." She added that "life experience and hardship build strength because sometimes there is no other choice, you have to continue." Sylvia later went on to explain how this mentality helped her cope with the difficulties of being an immigrant woman in the United States:

> Getting here and knowing I have to continue moving forward, from here to paying the rent, from here to paying the bills…things that are not just being spent on food and that have to get done. Sometimes I start thinking…when I first got here, I felt like I needed to work in order to pay the bills. And from where'd I go…there are many things that have happened that have made me stronger. Much bigger.

Sylvia recalled the shock she experienced adapting to the fast-paced life style of the United States and the need to constantly work to provide for basic needs. She learned quickly that one has to produce in order to survive in this country; therefore, her move forward mentality complemented the American production mentality. Sylvia explained that she became even stronger by developing a work ethic that matched the means for survival for her family in the United States. Sylvia believed every hardship experienced was an opportunity to apply the move forward mentality and as a result become stronger each time. Migrating to the United States was just one more of these hardships.

Another participant, Mariana, migrated when she was 17 years old and has been in the United States for 22 years. After being terminated from her first job flipping burgers as a young mother due to her documentation status, Mariana continued to persevere. She recalled the adversity from her past, including her family's criticisms, and how far she had come in building a thriving business and hopeful for future plans:

> While I was working, they fired me because my documents weren't coinciding with the law. I had to leave. The man told me that if I fixed the situation, I could return. The path brought me to cleaning houses. I've been seeing that this type of business has been

growing, therefore I want to have my own house cleaning company. Since it's growing, I think to myself, what can I do? I make my business with people who only speak English even though my English isn't the best. And I'm really happy because I am filled with work opportunities. One lady told me she didn't want me to leave. But I also don't want to spend the rest of my life cleaning houses.

Despite everything, I've come a long way. I will show my family that I could move forward. My father told me I wouldn't be able to afford rent, but I will show him that I can. Maybe he's right, but I am paying rent as if I was paying my own home. But it's not going to be solely mine because if my father dies, half of it will be mine. Sooner or later I will leave, therefore I'm not going to wait until they ask me what to do. I don't want to leave.

Mariana took pride in the knowledge that her employers appreciate her hard work, but she also saw this work as her contribution to the daily functioning of her context of reception. Despite the hardships she faced when she first arrived in the United States, she has continued to persevere, motivated by the knowledge of the limited options she could pursue in her home country.

Women in this study most frequently described the limitations of social and economic advancement in their country of origin due to their gender. While women face adversity in their pre-migratory environments because of their gender, they also recognized how their gender coupled with migratory status marginalized them further in the United States. Mariana felt fulfilled because she has a lot of work but stated "you find yourself in a place where you know you will not advance without papers." Sometimes, she questioned her ability to run a business with limited English because, like other participants, she views language as social capital. Participants of all countries and national origins used the move forward mentality as a way to overcome specific forms of adversity tied to their identities as a woman in their country of origin and then as an immigrant in the United States.

Goal-oriented mentality. In addition to overcoming adversity, participants demonstrated their move forward mentality by using a goal-oriented approach to navigate the challenges of

migration, such as working outside of the home. As many of the participants spent part of their

adulthood in their country of origin, they described how this goal-oriented mentality departed

from the traditional socialization of women, who were expected to remain in the household while

husbands pursued a career. For some, this mentality always drove their decision-making process

while creating their businesses; for others, it was not until they migrated to the United States that

they finally put their goal-oriented mentality into practice.

Mariana, now a 39-year-old mother of three, works every day of the week except for her

children's birthdays. Attempting to free herself from her parents' toxic household fueled by

alcohol abuse, she married a man eight years her senior and became pregnant within her first

year of arrival. After getting married, Mariana and her husband decided to return to her

husband's home town. Mariana recounts how her ambition and goals, or in her words "my life is

my life and I am going to try to be happy" quickly made her change her mind about leaving the

United States:

> I went to my husband's city, it was more of a town, a ranch.["rancho" in this sense just
> means rural village] I worked in that town back in Mexico and I earned about 50 pesos.
> With 50 pesos I was only able to buy 1 pound of meat. That was it, I had nothing left
> over. I decided no, my son can't live here. And I wanted to abort him and I said, no no
> I'm not going to let him live here. Because that's not life. There is nothing there. It was
> then that I returned to the United States.

Mariana's migratory experience resembled other participants' journeys, which also

involved temporary stays in the United States before deciding to remain here long-term. In this

temporary return to her country of origin, Mariana realized that her life goals would be

impossible to achieve in her home country. She wondered where her life would be if she had

stayed and explains that she would not have the life she lives now if she had not migrated to the

United States. She recalled being faced with the difficult considerations of aborting her

pregnancy or living a life where she would always struggle to make ends meet. She realized she could not have a child in Mexico, and despite her husband's objections, Mariana, while pregnant, packed up her belongings and migrated to the United States once more. Mariana remembered her old friends from grade school looked drained during her brief time there. She explained that she may not have a lot in the United States, but she is able to provide for all her family needs—something she would not be able to achieve in Mexico.

Mariana was building her own house cleaning business and reports feeling proud of the independence her work has provided her in the United States. Mariana further explained the house cleaning business is only the first step to her life plan. Her real dream is to be a party planner. Although Mariana recognized the uncertainty present in her future due to her documentation status, she continued to focus on her career goals: "I want to have my own house cleaning business." She wanted her children to be able to say, "my mother has her own business and its true." Reflecting on her life path, Mariana realized that although her migration journey was difficult (especially while she was pregnant), her decision to return to the United States was one of the best decisions in her life. Mariana made it clear she had no regrets or reservations in choosing to build her future and her children's future in the United States.

Challenges of Acculturation

In the previous sections, the findings focus on how pre-migratory context and environments that have informed participant's identify formation. This section and the following section, the findings discuss the socio-ecological factors women experience while being undocumented in the United States and how their identity is impacted. This section presents five common challenges involved in participants' acculturation process: 1) financial struggles, 2) fear

130

of deportation and family separation, 3) strained family relationships, 4) marginalization by dominant groups in the United States, and 5) inter-Latino discrimination. This section describes how each of these challenges affected participants' identity formation.

Financial struggles. In addition to the pre-migration economic hardships described earlier in this chapter, the women in this study have also experienced financial struggles within their context of reception. Prior to migrating, many participants' economic challenges stemmed from the lack of economic opportunity and barriers for economic advancement for women. In contrast, their post-migration financial struggles were often due to their undocumented status, as mentioned previously, which impacted their acculturation process and their identities as immigrants. Despite these difficulties, most participants felt that they were still able to provide for the basic needs of their family by working hard and adopting the United States mentality of productivity.

Women's gendered experiences of migration were particularly prominent in their interviews. Ana, a single mother, discussed how her double marginalized identity as a woman and immigrant presented unique challenges that she and the daughter that depended on her anticipated if she were deported back to Mexico. She recognized that being an immigrant single mother added another layer of difficulty for her. In addition to the constant fear of deportation, Ana worried whether or not she would be able to financially provide for her family.

The possibility of financial struggles due to the limited opportunities for women in Mexico increased Ana 's anxiety about a potential future back in Mexico. Like Paola, she recognized that in her country of origin it would be impossible to support her daughter as a single mother; in the United States, this goal was more attainable, though she would have to work toward it every day. At least, she stated, in the United States though "being a single mother

131

is already hard," it is possible to maintain financially support a family even with an

undocumented status.

 How am I? Being a woman…single with kids is hard…and being immigrants makes it even harder. Living and thinking that they will deport me, I have a daughter, how am I going to care for her? My country is hard, I can do it here, but I have to be working constantly, I don't have any support. In Mexico it's worse. Where am I going to leave her? With who can I leave her while I work? It's hard.

Paola shared a similar perspective on the demands of the American way of living;

however, she preferred the constant work lifestyle to the few options for women in her home

country. Paola stated that the fast-paced American lifestyle makes maintaining a home and

marriage difficult because "you never have enough time." They compared this experience to their

country of origin, where the women were expected to care for the house and family but are

limited in their involvement and choices outside the home. Throughout the interviews, women

reported that their pre-migratory gendered roles were much more defined and, therefore, limited

their work outside the household.

 It's very difficult. Why, because of work…like it's not the same as our countries of origin, where they stay at home, not here. With kids, there is time for kids, time for your partner. And it's like you have to do a thousand things to survive, for what reason? Because I'm going to work, and you can't forget about your kids, about the food, about your home. It's very different from over there to here.

 Well, in El Salvador it's difficult in that economically speaking, it's not there. But in the way that you dedicate more time to your family, the mothers don't need to work. Over there it's like the man works and the woman stays at home. In that way, it's extremely difficult to survive. But I feel that life is better here, in that it's easier financially, you can work and you can be organized and say I am going to do this and you do it. You propose something and you do it.

In that way, I think that in this country…they don't depend on men as sole providers…like it's more free for the woman. Don't feel pressured that you will be here, and the woman is more…at least that's how I feel. In that just because I have a partner, I won't be able to do something. Yet, if marriage ends up being good for me, good for us, good for my person, I am going to do it. And, in that way, I feel that in this country, and in your child's education, it's very different.

132

They recognized that there were limited ways to advance economically despite working very hard in their country of origin, especially for women. In the United States, however, women reported that they gained autonomy and could contribute more toward family advancement, which sometimes resulted in more equal footing in their relationship with their partners. They believed if one has grit and dedication, takes action and are willing to work a variety of demanding jobs in the United States, it would be possible to achieve their economic goals. Paola recognized that in the United States, one has to maintain high productivity with long hours or multiple jobs to advance themselves; this is especially true for a single mother who is undocumented. Participants echoed this difference in the pace of life for American culture and that of their home country; many longed for more time with their children. Despite their desire to spend more time with family, immigrant mothers in the United States often have to work to help provide for basic family needs.

Paola's account of the socio-cultural treatment of women, both in her country of origin and then in the United States, demonstrates a shared experience of the participants in this sample: expressing forms of injustice, inequity, and limited autonomy they only came to recognize because of their migration experience. Paola, also a single mother who worked two jobs and slept an average of four hours each night, shared the common perspective that it would be difficult for single mothers to provide for their families if they returned to their country of origin. She stated this was almost impossible because of the gendered discrimination for economic advancement, in addition to the general economic limitations her country of origin faced. Paola and Ana, along with other mothers in this study, expressed a similar view that working in the

United States was demanding but enabled them to overcome the limitations traditionally imposed upon women in their country of origin.

Natalie had been through several unpredictable events in her life, including her husband's car accident. It was partly due to these unforeseen experiences that Natalie emphasized the importance of saving every possible dollar. She explained that undocumented immigrants have less economic freedom and autonomy with employment. Natalie recognized that she no longer has the same financial networks or access to loans as she did in her country of origin. Therefore, her family must be financially prepared for every step they take. The American life, she believed, grants a better quality of life, but one is always struggling to make ends meet:

> If you accomplish saving a penny, it's because come tomorrow you know you'll have expenses to pay. Because if you are saving money right now, you know that in August you will have to buy a backpack, shoes…and so that money will be spent. It's not like Mexico where you receive vacations, loans, utilities, savings...here…if there is going to be a party, you will have to prepare with time because no one here will give you extra money. So we didn't have money.

Participants described the financial limitations women faced in their country of origin due to the social attitudes of gendered economic prosperity and women's roles within the household, some participants spoke to the way their sense of self was informed by a new context where their self-worth and sense of contribution, as well as autonomy, increased.

Deportation. A second challenge involved in participants' acculturation process is living with the threat of deportation. The uncertainty of *when* or *how* an individual and/or a family member is deported contributes to the distress experienced during the reconstruction of identity and narrative of the "other" as an immigrant in the United States. Throughout the interviews, participants demonstrated a shared mentality that the undocumented immigrant experience is a form of "lottery," where some individuals succeed and others fail, regardless of their country of origin, gender, age, access to resources, and time period of migration. Further supporting this

134

concept, participants shared experiences where unexpected circumstances, sometimes outside their control, resulted in the deportation of a family member. This section primarily responds to research question two, as it describes ways women experience acculturative stressors due to socio-ecological factors and the ways they attempt to cope with those stressors.

Although the selection criteria for this study required participants to be women, their narratives about the direct impact of deportation were dominated by the deportation of male family members (i.e., partners, fathers, or brothers). These findings align with statistical data from The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) indicating that deportation of Mexican and Central American men has increased tenfold between the years of 1993 to 2011 (United States Department of Homeland Security Yearbook, 2012). This increase in deportation has left many immigrant mothers to maintain a single-parent household (Doering-White et al., 2016). The deportation system is heavily represented by male deportations, potentially reflecting their higher levels of interactions with the environment. With the rise of deportations, there is also a corresponding rise in numbers of dependents left behind in the United States.

Women in this study reported taking several steps to try to protect their families against deportation, while their male counterparts appeared to have a higher level of interaction with environments linked to risk factors that resulted in their deportation. The majority of participants expressed a mentality that if one follows the law and remains undetected by the legal system, they, will not encounter problems related to their immigration status. This mentality supports the mainstream, widely recognized narrative of undocumented immigrants "living in the shadows" in the United States. Additionally, this rationale appeared to serve as a form of cognitive dissonance for participants attempting to cope and falsely fill the need to have some control over their destiny (e.g., remaining in the United States). However, the indiscriminate nature of the

undocumented immigrant experience at times presented situations that resulted in deportation, regardless of the presence of protective or risk factors. Below, I describe three aspects of participants' concerns about deportation: 1) interactions with law enforcement, 2) fear of the confiscation of the life they build in the United States, and 3) living with trauma.

    Interactions with law enforcement. Consuelo's husband was deported to Mexico four years ago, after being arrested for drinking and driving on his way home from work. The impact of this deportation on the family's mental health, as well as the high probability that members of their family could be deported again in the future, formed the core of Consuelo's narrative. Consuelo recalled the anguish and confusion surrounding his case and her desperate attempts to find a lawyer who would petition for his stay in the United States. Despite her efforts, Consuelo's husband was deported, while she and her children remained in the United States. Consuelo summed up her experience during this time, and the impact deportation had on her family, below:

> There was a time I was calm, as I said, since I didn't know too much, I wouldn't look at things like this. I did start meeting people afterwards, learning about their lives and learning that it was a bit difficult to be here. I got used to it for some time. Perhaps now, it will be 4 years since they deported my husband, so I went back to that fear. Not for me, but for my husband. He is very scared now for the changes that have been going on lately. He says that at any moment, they can deport him again. So it's our fear because as I tell him, if they deport him, my kids, they are older now. And to make a change this big for all of us to go back to Mexico, I would not do it. So, I tell him that I would stay the necessary time with my children in the United States. And especially how Mexico is at the moment.

Shortly before her husband's deportation, Consuelo had begun to interact more with the community outside her immediate family. Through these interactions, she learned that the undocumented experience presented hardships for immigrants in various ways. She also discovered how increasingly difficult it was for undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States. The hardships and uncertainty she described contributed to a collective chronic

trauma. When she was faced with the reality of deportation, she began to recognize the raw consequences of family separation. Consuelo stated that during this time, she worried more about her husband's and her children's well-being than her own. In particular, she wondered how her children would experience the difficulty in adjustment if the family moved to Mexico, as the only lives they knew were within the borders of the United States. Therefore, despite the separation from her partner, she decided to remain in the United States with her children, primarily because of the violence that she knew consumed Mexico.

> Yes, when my daughter was very little she was very close to her dad. My oldest son felt it a lot because he was also close to his dad, he even had problems in school. He had help from the school psychologist. But they didn't pass…because a lot happened when my husband was in Mexico too…so now, he tells us to go to Mexico.

Consuelo described how her children were left traumatized due to the deportation and absence of their father. She recalled how her six-year-old daughter was the most attached to her father and would constantly ask for him. Her oldest son, who also had a close relationship with his father, began to have problems at school that required psychological intervention to help reduce the distress of his father's absence.

In many cases similar to Consuelo's, parents may lose custody of their children—not because they are suspected of being abusive or neglectful, but because of their undocumented status and potential detention or deportation (Cervantes et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012). Children of deported parents who are placed in the foster care system face additional risk factors such as home and school instability likely disrupting their education and negatively impacting the child's mental wellness (Dreby, 2012). This form of family separation can have significant negative repercussions on United States children in "mixed status" families and lead to detrimental consequences for the next adult generation of Latinos in the United States (Dreby, 2012; Fuentes, Duffer, & Vasquez, 2013) as they seek higher education and employment. A report issued by the

Urban Institute (Chaudry et al., 2010) presented the traumatic effects for children whose parents were detained during an Immigration and Custom Enforcement's raids. For instance, children were found to exhibit multiple behavioral changes including anxiety, frequent crying, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, withdrawal, and anger (APA, 2011). Furthermore, children of undocumented parents may experience more internalizing symptoms of anxiety and depression due to present familial stressors such as acculturation, fear of deportation, and hopelessness (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010).

Most notably, Consuelo recalled how her husband completed the immigration journey once again to reunite with his family; however, he was not the same man when he returned.

> My husband suffered violence when he was [deported] to Mexico. He tried to cross the border to be with us again. He tried to cross "illegally" again but the people he was with kidnapped him. So, therefore, he has now lived that 'life' of everything that is going on in Mexico. That is why he says 'I saw so many things that I do not want my children to see or to go through any of it.- Consuelo

During the period of deportation, Consuelo reported, her husband witnessed violence that threatened his sense of safety while he was residing at the border and awaiting his attempt to reenter the United States. To this day, her husband remained traumatized by the violence and the murders he witnessed during his time in Mexico. However, the most traumatic event that continued to haunt him is his kidnapping while attempting to cross the border.

> Now, with time yes. As soon as he got here. We also had a lot of problems because he changed a lot. I don't know if he was in shock, or traumatized because of what happened, but he got here very different.

Consuelo described a man she did not recognize upon his return. He had changed as a result of the trauma he endured while he was deported, and this change caused problems in their marriage. For months, she attempted to help him process the trauma he kept bottled up, yet only years after his return did he begin to share his painful memories. Together, they realized that

while deportation is a possibility in their future, their children would remain in the United States

to secure their safety.

> I don't want to be noticed, it worries me. Because at any time, like now if the police stops
> you, they will ask you for your documents. So you're filled with a bit more nerves. But
> after a while of being here, it will be what God wants. Whatever happens, if it's up to my
> husband, from the moment all these changes started, he would say, "let's get the kids and
> go to Mexico." And I tell him, wait, everything at its time. If they are going to deport you
> or me, okay, whoever needs to leave will leave, but not our children. And he was more
> calm. But before, he worried a lot more, "what am I going to do in Mexico if they deport
> me?" But not anymore.

As Consuelo's narrative illustrates, the psychological impact of the pervasive uncertainty

surrounding deportation was, at times, unbearable for participants' families. Therefore, in

response to research question two, I find that women used their faith to cope when confronted

with the consequences of deportation. Consuelo found the only way to cope with the uncertainty

was to leave her future in God's hands. The increased negative portrayal of undocumented

immigrants in the United States provoked fear in Consuelo. However, her anxiety decreased

when she sought radical acceptance of the possibility of deportation. For many of the participants

like Veronica, Ana, and Sylvia in trusting their future to God freed them from some of the

distress caused by the uncertainty of that future.

Several women described the impact of male family member's deportation on their

personal well-being. For example, women often worried that their male relatives' engagement in

high-risk behaviors would result in deportation:

> But many times, I tell them it's because they looked for it. Because one of them had a
> deportation. And we hoped he didn't drive too much, or got into problems…because he
> already had problems with the law. And he didn't care. He went with his friends and
> there was a litigation with a restaurant. The police came and took him. His friend has
> documents and he doesn't. His friend left and only paid a bond. He left. But since they
> see he doesn't have anything, no kids, no family, nothing, they told him, why are you
> going to stay in this country if you don't have anything. So he had to leave....And they
> told him, you can't anymore…if you're here, don't be out a lot…in the evening. And he

says, it's just that I didn't have problems, it was my friend, I defended him. The police came and took them all. – Ana

Ana had eight brothers and one sister, and she expressed that she worried constantly about her brothers—all of whom were undocumented, except for two. Of these eight brothers, she explained, two had recently been deported despite her constant warnings to stay out of trouble. One brother was deported three weeks prior to his scheduled immigration interview, and although he had been deported once before, he ignored the family's pleas to stay out of trouble.

> And I told him, when you do something like that, the police has to take everyone because they don't know who caused the problem. I know because of my time spent working in the restaurant, I know how those cases work, I know a lot about the cops because of the restaurant. Because of the location of my job. And I tell him, you should never intervene because of a friend. If your friend is in a problem, leave. Because if not, you are also at fault in that situation. A policeman told me that.

During her interview, Ana recalled the many times she warned her brother not engage in any behavior that would attract the attention of law enforcement. As a single mother, Ana depended on the wages from her restaurant employment. Therefore, Ana worked six days a week, which granted her consistent professional interaction with police officers who were hired to maintain order during the daily and nightly hours. At work, Ana developed and cordial and professional relationship with these coworkers and learned a great deal about navigating the legal system while being undocumented. She stated, "I was warned to avoid any altercations that would occur at the restaurant," and she also, "repeatedly communicated to [her] brother to remove himself from potentially harmful situations." Despite Ana 's pleas, her brother did engage and an altercation while attempting to protect his friend. The altercation resulted in his arrest, legal processing, and consequently, deportation.

> Well how the police officers, at my restaurant, work for 3 to 4 hours at night to take out the people who are too drunk. They don't have contact with ICE. As our boss says, we pay them, we pay them for their service not so that they can question us. Or tell us, oh look, there are undocumented people.

140

Ana believed her common employment with the officers mediated her interactions with law enforcement and acted as a buffer in respect to her documentation status. Even the owner of the restaurant explained to his undocumented employees that the police officers present were employed to protect them, not to deport them or contact ICE.

> Different…in that when I grew up, you could go outside and play. You could go to the store. With neighbors. You could be out on the street very late and nothing would happen to you. And now that this is happening, you can't be out past 9 or 10:00 at night because you don't know if there will be an encounter with the police or another person meaning it's dangerous.

While participants generally avoided interactions with the police in the United States due to their undocumented status, their perceptions of police were also shaped by tensions with legal authorities in their home country pre-migration. Victoria was another participant who lived in limbo between deportation or remaining the rest of her days in the United States. Victoria recalled a different time in Mexico, within her home community, where children could go out to play without compromising their safety. Now, the lively activity she remembered from her childhood neighborhood no longer existed. Regrettably, she explained how dangerous activity due to drug violence wages on the lives of the community she knew growing up and left behind. This is the reality Victoria feared she will return to if deported in the near future. To Victoria, the suspicion of the drug cartel soldiers and local Mexican police was one and the same. In her eyes, a Mexican citizen could not trust their safety to either side of the War on Drugs.

> The government no. Between them [the cartel groups] they left mantas [hanging placards or signs]. On bridges they place their mantas, yes they tell you to leave your messages. They also speak through Facebook. They leave Facebook videos, they are covered up to their faces and they tell you, "dejen dar a la madre"(an insult). That's what they say. Between them. But the government always comes in and stays there. It becomes very ugly when the soldiers are with them. And the soldiers don't respect you either. One time, my sister and I were in the city. My sister was pregnant. They pointed a gun at her. And they said leave, why are you here, there was no one blocking the street and I told him, "Hey who do you think you are? That because you have a weapon you can point it at

141

her?" My sister tells me be quiet, you can't tell them anything. She said you can't tell them because they are from the government. I am not anything I said. Nothing is happening. They were about to block the streets because they were going to leave some. But the path was empty, they shouldn't have done that to my sister who was pregnant and very scared. I was driving and I got so angry that if I got out of the car, I would have hit them. Obviously, you can't do that, but you think it.

Victoria recalled interactions with the government military forces that occupied her hometown to combat the growing cartel presence in the region and the battles that resulted from territorial disputes. Victoria stated every time the Mexican government intervened, the situation became "uglier." She also stated, "the cartel soldiers did not respect you and the government soldiers did not respect you." Victoria viewed this as a shameful and embarrassing betrayal against the Mexican people. She recalled a specific time when a federal soldier pointed a gun directly toward her sister's pregnant belly because she had unknowingly entered a prohibited zone. Victoria described herself as a transparent woman who is not afraid to confront anyone. Therefore, when she witnessed the soldiers' careless and offensive abuse of power, she spoke up to defend her sister. The soldier's action was unjustified, and she would not submit during the interaction with legal authority.

Victoria's recollection of this pre-migratory experience of law enforcement remained strong. Previous encounters with police in her country of origin socialized Victoria to avoid any interaction with law enforcement, regardless of the circumstance. This mentality was challenged, however, during a visit to the emergency room while in the United States, when her infant daughter stopped breathing. A police officer came to her rescue while a nurse was discriminating against Victoria. The police officer spoke Spanish and reminded her of her "rights as the mother of the patient," telling her "to speak up for herself and not stay silent." When Victoria remained unchallenging toward the nurse's discriminatory behavior, the police officer took action to change the nurse and help her.

Additionally, the police officer reminded her in hospital they "cannot discriminate or ask for your immigration status." The contrast reaction that Victoria exhibited between the Mexican soldier with the gun and the discriminating nurse in the emergency room defined the interaction between power dynamics within two different cultural contexts and the oppressive "othering" effect of an undocumented status. Viruell-Fuentes (2011) explains how first-generation immigrants experience racialization in the United States, which frames their migration experience through confusion, pain, shame that further complicate acculturation.

Victoria and her husband remained by their infant daughter's bedside at the hospital for the remainder of the night. At 3 a.m. the baby stopped breathing. The unit went into code "red" as the medical providers rushed to the room, and Victoria began to give her daughter CPR. When the doctors reached the room and stabilized the infant, they were astounded by this mother's instinctive action. Although she did not understand English, Victoria recalls every detail of that night and says that "the doctors attempted to communicate to [her] that she had saved her daughter's life." Like many other participants, Victoria had always second-guessed her decision of migrating to the United States and living her life as an undocumented immigrant. She recalls this is the moment she was convinced she "had made the right decision."

When asked to share about the changes in her life since the increased tension against undocumented immigrants, Victoria expressed she continued to live her life the same way she always had since first migrating to the United States, however, this was not in the absence of fear. Victoria recognized that she needed to continue living her day-to-day life despite changes in the political climate. For instance, Victoria recalled how immigration enforcement would scour the streets of the Valley in South Texas, and no one would become fearful. Now, however, there is an increased tension among undocumented immigrants that is ignited by the presence of ICE.

To buffer against the impact this fear, Victoria, like Ana and other participants, practiced the "do no wrong and avoid deportation" approach.

Like other participants, Victoria recognized that by crossing the border without papers, they were not abiding by Federal immigration law, and like other participants, Victoria also wondered how to be granted access under the current immigration system effectively.

> I don't know. I live the same way. With a bit more fear, but the same. I say that if you're not afraid of something that you've done, you don't' have a reason to, I don't know…for example, migration would pass by the streets in the town I lived. You don't have a reason to be scared. My aunt says, you don't get scared? And I tell her, no. Why am I going to get scared? The only thing they can do is return me to my country. I don't have any crime on my record, I haven't done anything bad. Coming here without documents, that yes. But what do they want. I could have married someone for my papers, I would have had everything. But it also doesn't interest me. Like marrying someone for papers never made me.

Family separation due to deportation may be especially impacting immigrant women who identify as the primary caretaker of the family and strive to maintain the family system. Current migration policy excludes women from opportunities and protections the system provides as it ignores the unique needs of immigrant women (Cervantes et al., 2015). Although women and children make up three-quarters of the United States immigrant population, their opportunities for visas were highly limited prior to 2013 because their application for visas did not fit the criteria/categories of an outdated immigration system (Cervantes et al., 2015).

Confiscation of life in the United States. For many participants, deportation represented the confiscation of the life they had constructed in the United States. Women believed that if they were deported, they would be forced to reconstruct a new life and their country of origin with nothing to show from their years of hard work in the United States. Ana, a single mother

whose daughter was born in the United States, described how she built a life for her and her daughter and how difficult it would be to begin a new life in Mexico if she were deported.

> This goes on, you always have to be afraid that they will end up sending you to your country. That dreams fade away. From one day to the next, all that you have lived, all that you have dreamed…I don't see any comparison in Mexico because part of my life has been in the United States. If I go to Mexico to start something new…it's something new for my daughter. For the both of us. I'm not too attracted to 2 places. I adapted here, but I've been here for many years. But in Mexico, I don't know, I don't want to think about that.

Ana recognized how hard it is for a single mother to provide for her family in the United States and fears the challenges she would encounter in Mexico as a woman. Her days are consumed in fear of deportation, which would change her life completely and strip away the opportunity to realize her dreams. Ana explained that it is difficult for her to imagine a life in Mexico because she has spent most of her life in the United States, and her daughter has only lived in the United States. Because the possibility of starting their lives over in Mexico is so distressing, Ana usually attempted to avoid the subject altogether. Her low level of distress tolerance may have been fueled by the lack of resources and information available to help undocumented immigrants in her situation address the consequences of deportation.

On the other hand, some of the women in this study demonstrated increased levels of distress tolerance when day made legal preparations for their children in the case of their absence. For instance, Consuelo reported she had filed for dual American- Mexican citizenship for all three of her children in case both parents were deported to Mexico and the children remained in the United States.

Living with trauma. Natalie, a mother of two American-born sons and one Mexican-born daughter, explains that her primary fear, if deported, would be exposing her daughter to the violence and danger women face in her community in Mexico. She goes on to explain that

former Mexican neighbors recently experienced horrific kidnappings of their daughters forced into prostitution. Although her daughter is only 15 years old, Natalie believes this age grants her sufficient wisdom and independence to care for herself and her younger brothers if both parents were deported. Natalie worries about her daughter's documentation status; however, her fear for her daughter's safety in Mexico due to increased crime and violence toward women and children dramatically outweighs the fear of the hardships her daughter faces without papers in the United States.

Because immigrant women are the central pillars of the family, ideas they endorse can influence the upbringing of their children in the United States. For these reasons, women are considered to not only be "cultural carriers" but also sources of guidance regarding the "proper" way "such symbolic identities for future generations" should be reproduced (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989, p. 9). American-born daughters of immigrant parents, for example, bear a greater responsibility to uphold cultural norms and maintain traditions than their male counterparts (Billson, 1995; Doering-White et al., 2016; Espiritu, 1997; Williams et al., 2002; Soto, 2012).

This adultification process that Natalie had to undergo due to her parents' high risk of deportation also speaks to the intergenerational form of parenting. In Mexico, Natalie had to perform tasks beyond her developmental years to help her family function within a demanding environment. Mirroring this process, now Natalie's daughter repeated the cycle due to the risks associated with her parents' migratory status. Natalie feels proud of raising an independent woman and expresses particular pride in her daughter's ability to speak English. Much like Consuelo and Veronica, Natalie viewed her daughter's English skills as a protective factor, a tool she could use to defend herself and practice her autonomy while navigating the American system.

The psychological impact caused by the uncertainty of family separation had forced

Natalie and her children to navigate the world with a heightened defensiveness toward their

environment. Consequently, Natalie had her children practice forms of adultification in case both

parents are deported. According to Bronfenbrenner (1988), an individual's characteristics and

their microsystem are thought to have a direct impact on the individual, whereas the mesosystem,

exosystem and macrosystem are thought to have indirect impacts on the individual, though they

can influence the individual on a personal level. Additionally, the macrosystem is comprised of

larger societal forces such as culture, ideology, religion among others. These aspects of the

macrosystem are also thought to impact individuals indirectly by influencing the policies and

procedures of the exosystem. For example, Natalie's interactions with media messages and

political rhetoric from the exo- and macrosystem informed her that she is no longer welcome in

this country and her children need to be prepared for the consequences.

> It's very traumatic when you watch TV and see other peoples' situations. When they say, he did this and this…and you think, well, it's because he did something bad and that's why they arrested him. But when you hear about cases in which the person did nothing wrong, and they still separate them. That's when you feel that pit in your stomach and lose your appetite. Honestly, because you never know when you'll be in that situation so it's truly very, very traumatic. And you wander whether you should just wait. Ay, when that day comes, and I still am traumatized…and I continue "chingando" ["fucking" going] because you don't stop working…or I return…to see how it is over there. I mean over there the situation is really bad.

Natalie initially shared the same "do no wrong" mentality as other participants. However,

after staying informed by the news consistently, she began to realize that individuals who had not

engaged in unlawful behavior were also being deported. This realization began to trigger stress

and somatic pain for Natalie. One deep source of distress for Natalie was the uncertainty about

when deportation could happen. Therefore, like Consuelo and her husband, Natalie believed she

had two choices: 1) to continue her day-to-day tasks and tolerate the fear of deportation or 2)

147

return to Mexico on her own accord and confront the violence that overwhelmed her community in Mexico.

Natalie explained she constantly contemplated these two choices, which caused her a lot of anxiety, and that the only way to cope was to distract herself with day-to-day tasks. Natalie stated this link between her and the current phenomenon of family separation—the possibility that her own family could be separated—is traumatizing. This form of concealed trauma that isolated many of the participants was fueled by the uncertainty of deportation and the thoughts of how their absence would affect their children.

> It does impact you. You see an accident and you don't know if your husband is there. What year was it that Angel crashed? Last year? Last year my husband got into an accident. An accident for that any other person in the United States would just be an accident…. We had already pictured ourselves [deported] in Mexico because, my husband, he is a person who gets easily afraid. And he speaks to me and says, "I crashed."

> And I'm here, not remembering if I was waiting on the kids, but the nerves get the best of you and you imagine they're taking him. And a white police officer came, an American. And he is arguing a lot and another one came, "they are going to take me." You become traumatized. Because the reality is that you live day by day.

Natalie recalled a recent event where deportation became a likely possibility and her family's life. She remembered her husband calling her one day in a panic because he had just been in a car accident and police officers were being called to the scene. "They are going to take me," her husband explained as he observed on American police officer call for another patrol to join the scene. Natalie was already imagining her life back in Mexico due to a random car accident that had the power to change the course of their lives. She stated, "a simple accident brings more severe consequences for undocumented immigrants." For Natalie, you have to cope with life one day at a time because of the anxiety not having proper documentation can provoke.

She explained it was a rational reaction for your anxiety to spiral out of control because the

consequences of your daily decisions are uncertain but more severe if you are undocumented.

> For a few months after we continued checking the door. But it did continue for many
> months. I had to sit with my husband and explain to him that he had to go to the doctor
> and I had to do something because he was going to get sick and he was the one who
> supported me here. And if you die. Because it was very drastic,
> But he did get very scared because the police called another police, but because the
> computer didn't work. And the good thing is that a Hispanic police officer came. But the
> problem was that my husband crashed with an American [driver]. So the Americans were
> also there…like very arrogant…like racist. Saying "He was a Hispanic obviously"

Natalie described how traumatic this unfortunate event was for her husband, despite it

being a minor accident. It was unpredictable, and random events such as these can continue to

have lasting effects of trauma for undocumented individuals. For instance, this experience was

layered with the threat of possible deportation, interaction with police, and prejudice and

discrimination from the American driver. Her husband's health was drastically compromised and

reflected the lasting effects of one wrong move. The interaction with the police was very

traumatic for her husband due to their potential communication with ICE. She stated her husband

lost a notable amount of weight and sleep due to fear that he would be deported. The family

allowed community rumors such as "if police officers do not arrest you at the scene, ICE will

come to your house" to haunt them and impair their daily functioning. For months, they would

not open the door to anyone they were not expecting. In her eyes, it became a collective trauma

for the family. "You are always only one wrong move away from being deported," she

explained.

For many of the women in this study, deportation resulting in family separation was

antithetical to their efforts of migration if reuniting with family already in the United States.

Additionally, migration had already presented a form of family separation they had to overcome

already once in their past whether by their parental migration and being left behind as a child, or their migration to the United States and the children and family they had to leave behind.

Relational strains of migration. Participants described how migration has strained their intergenerational family relationships. They described these relational strains of migration as a challenge during the construction of their identity in their country of origin due to parental migration and again as another challenge to acculturation due to the threat of deportation. As Paola and others mentioned, some participants experienced a sense of abandonment during childhood when their own parents migrated. This often led to adultification, as parental migration caused participants to take on more advanced responsibilities to maintain the functions of the household in their country of origin. Paola, for instance, spoke to her role as a caregiver for her grandfather and then again for her younger half-siblings and the problematic relationship that resulted with her mother.

Paola's mother migrated to the United States when she was two years old and left her in the care of her maternal grandfather, who lives in the countryside of El Salvador. Paola retold her childhood in tears, revealing complex emotions and resentment, fear, and abandonment. As an adult, Paola realized that she experienced abuse as a child. She expressed the hate and suppressed fear she had toward her grandfather and mother for having endured so much as a child. In particular, Paola expressed as a sense of abandonment by her mother who migrated to the United States while she was still an infant.

After years of waiting on her grandfather hand and foot, Paola received a visit from her mother informing her that she would be going to live with her in the United States. Paola expressed she was overwhelmed by the unexpected reunification with her mother and began to imagine what her relationship with her and their life in the United States would be like. She

believed that because her mother had left her behind in El Salvador at an early age, her mother would attempt to regain her love with gifts, very much how she saw other kids in her community receive gifts from their parents who had migrated to the United States. However, Paola stated, it did not take long to realize that the hardships she endured under the care of her maternal grandfather were only preparing her for what awaited her in the United States.

Paola's bottled-up pain after being taken advantage of and mistreated by her maternal grandfather after her mother left her to migrate to the United States dominated the course of our interview. She reported that her maternal grandmother died during her infancy, and when her mother left her behind with her grandfather in the countryside of El Salvador at the age of six. She recalled how he expected her to take over all of the traditionally feminine housework despite her age. She described her relationship with her grandfather as very painful. As a young girl, Paola felt the void of not having a mother and a father. She always felt alone and learned quickly that living in the country was about survival; in this setting, children are expected to grow up fast in order to survive. In some ways, she tried to justify the mistreatment she experienced by her grandfather by stating that child abuse is conceptualized differently in her country and that these early experiences strengthened her internal resources for independence and survival.

At the age of 11, Paola left El Salvador, the only home she had ever known, and took the 15-day migratory journey with a group of strangers while her mother, who at the time had a visa, flew back to the United States and awaited her arrival. Paola recalled details of her journey and the resentment she felt toward her mother, who forced her to take the dangerous and unpredictable journey on her own. While Paola believed migrating to the United States would offer new opportunities and time to rebuild a relationship with her mother, who would try to regain her love and provide an American education, she soon learned her mother did not value

her the way she valued her American-born children. Upon her arrival to the United States, Paola

realized her mother had brought her solely to take care of her younger half-siblings. For several

months, Paola began to understand the extent of her mother's motives when she neglected to

enroll Paola in school and instead care for the housework and childrearing. Paola recalled taking

her younger siblings to school at the age of 12, walking 30 minutes each way.

> This topic has always been very… very difficult for me. This topic of being… I… my mother sent for me when I was 11 years old. I finally came to know her when I was 11 years old. When I was turning 10 she came to visit me [in El Salvador], and she came to propose that she would bring me [to the united states]. So she told my [paternal] grandmother… when I was 6 years old I left my [maternal] grandfather, and my grandmother began to raise me. But she did not tell my grandmother how she was going to bring me [to the United States]… When I arrived here, my half-brother was four years old. My half-sister was two. At that time [I realized] my mother had only brought me here solely to help raise them. To take care of the kids. She would work 5 hours a night cleaning offices and her husband worked all day. So she would wake up at 11 am and it would fall on me to take the kids to school. I would take them by myself… walking. We would walk for 30 minutes each way to drop off my little brother at school. But my mother, she never enrolled me in school. - Paola

Paola spoke to the generational strain of migration on parent-child relationships. While parents

migrate to the United States, they are often faced with the decision to bring their children to the

United States or leave them behind with family. For many of the women in this study, when a

parent did migrate, they would be left with their grandparents who raised them until parents sent

for them. Paola revealed the sense of abandonment that plagues many of the children left behind.

While participants' experiences and understanding of parental migration varied, the relationship

formed with their grandparents reflected more of a parental relationship that blurs the

generational roles within transnational families. It appears that the adultification she experienced

in her home country was reinforced by the expectations she had to fulfill in the United States.

This pre-migratory experience of family separation due to parental migration appears to

impact critical stages of attachment and parent-child relationship development; participants

viewed this separation, regardless of the reason for parental migration, as abandonment. At least six participants described being abandoned by a parent or partner due to migration at one point of their lives. Four of these participants also discussed how their parents or partners created a second family in the United States while they remained behind in their country of origin. This knowledge appeared to further strain the relationships between participants and these family members, resulting in problematic relationships. These findings also support the growing research on mixed-status sibling relationship dynamics in the United States (Abrego, 2016). Another participant, Veronica, shared a story of a close friend who experienced similar migratory struggles.

While Veronica reported having been protected by her mother as much as possible during her pre-migratory years, she described a friend from El Salvador who shared similar migratory hardships to Paola. This friend lost her father at an early age and subsequently lost her mother to depression due to her father's death. The mother then migrated to the United States and began another family while her friend stayed behind in El Salvador. After her mother sent for her at the age of 15, Veronica's friend was left to fend for herself and learn to navigate the American cultural environment on her own. This process of adultification was two-fold as Veronica's friend grew up without either of her parents beginning at the age of six in El Salvador, an experience a number of participants reported due to parental migration, and then again when her mother made it clear bringing her to the United States would be the final parental act she would perform for her.

There are many layers of grief associated with this particular woman's experience, especially in the repeated rejection by her mother once due to mental health, then migration, then excluding her from the new family within the American context.

One of the people is still my friend. She suffered a lot in her country before coming here. She lost her father in her country and she also lost her mother due to depression because of her father's death. The mother left them and came to the United States when she was about 6 years old and didn't return until she was 15 years old. My friend's mother returned with documents for her and brought her to the United States. Once there, my friend's mother told my friend, 'Ok you're here, it's your choice whether you want to study or work, but you're on your own.' The mother already had another family. So my friend felt like nothing else supported her. Her mother had returned for her after so many years. I remember when my friend had to walk a long distance which included walking underneath a bridge at night from school. And her mother had a car and would not pick her up. She'd tell my friend that her husband would get mad at her if she went out at night. In that regard I always felt bad for my friend. I would always look at the differences between my mother and my friend's mother. My mother was always a mother She would always try to protect us even as we got older. We wouldn't be able to walk to the corner at night without her saying it was late. And I would think, how does that lady not see what my mother sees. My friend walked that whole time. But I also notice that of the people who really want to do something because she did suffer a lot. When we got to 10th grade, she moved to California and I didn't hear back from her after that I think for about 8 years.

At the age of 15, her friend was forced to learn the dynamics of new environments, learn what it represented to be an undocumented immigrant, and experience another form of abandonment from a mother who made it clear to reject her and prefer her two American-born children. The impact on attachment due to migration appeared to affect several participants who had at least one parent migrate to the United States, some of which also started new families with another partner. The migratory experience appears to create a ripple effect on the relationships immigrants have with individuals from their country of origin. In particular, the dynamics of attachment between parents and children appear to have pre-migratory experiences of family separation and abandonment—similar to the effects of deportation for children left behind in the United States.

Criminalization. Another challenge of the acculturation process was the experience of feeling marginalized, "othered," and perceived as criminal within the United States. Within the context of reception, dominant groups impose labels and identities onto stratified immigrant

154

groups. This theme speaks to the ways in which different levels of the macro-systems, such as

legal institutions and messages from political rhetoric, inform lower levels of the individuals'

ecological system and the interactions they have within the meso-system. In accordance with

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1998), the results in this section reflect the

processes of interaction between the environment and the individual. In addition, however, this

study paired this ecological systems model with Intersectionality (1993) , obtaining unique

insight between macro-system interactions and salient aspects of an individual's identity. For

instance, considering an individual's immigration status, macro-system labels such as "criminal,"

"illegal," or "drug dealers" informed social attitudes and ways communities interacted with

immigrant individuals. Additionally, results in this study support and may add to the literature on

acculturative stress, stigma, and migration by revealing how participants rejected such labels

from the environment but also expressed the distress caused by the social attitudes and

impositions of negative labels that were not congruent with their identity. The results in this

section support other research findings that state immigrants internalize such stigmatized labels

(Abrego, 2011; Massey, 2007); additionally, they also align with studies that signal the

detrimental effects negative labels can have on mental health (Abrego, 2011; Massey, 2007;

Woodward, 2004).

Social Identity theory also helps to explain how strong group salience, that is, the level of

identification individuals feel with a particular group, leads to increased discrimination within an

environment of distinct social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The criminalization of

undocumented immigrants and increased social use of terms such a "illegals" to address groups

of immigrants has further marginalized immigrants and increased the division within groups

(Shattell, Villalba, & Stokes, 2009). With the recent increase of scapegoating of the influx of

asylum seekers in the United States, anti-immigrant rhetoric has dominated the mainstream media and strengthened institutions seeking to identify, detain, and deport individuals without authorization to reside in the United States. This popular association between undocumented immigrants and acts of criminalization perpetuates the distress caused by the incongruence of the environment's labeling of undocumented individuals as "illegals" or "criminals" and the individuals' self-concept. Additionally, in accordance with labeling theory mentioned in chapter 2 (footnote 7), individuals begin to internalize these environmental messages and exacerbate the "otherness" process already present as outsiders.

Dalia spoke to the inaccurate depictions of immigrants in the media and how the current administration disseminates messages that portray individuals crossing the border without papers as criminals:

> Yes…yes it does affect me…but I had to save my life and the life of my children. It hurts, it hurts a lot. Because that is discrimination. This is a discrimination. But God will help us. Yes, it hurts because it hurts. But it hasn't changed the way I see myself because I know I'm not a criminal.

She described how immigrants are caught between seeking safety and being criminalized. Dalia, like other participants, discussed how the negative portrayal of immigrants by the media and government negatively impacted their self-concept by feeling unsafe and rejected, and the narrative of them sacrificing their freedom for safety in the united states was constantly discredited. She recalled her experience at the detention center and how it was very hurtful being processed, detained, and told she broke the law like a criminal. Dalia, with limited control over her family's future, utilized her faith to cope with distress. This distress was a composition of grief associated to leaving her country, the sense of rejection experienced by her context of reception, as well as the criminal identity imposed upon her. While in her country of origin, Dalia had felt oppressed as a woman who was vulnerable to the violence in the community, she

now felt oppressed as an immigrant vulnerable to the political climate of her context of reception.

In the post-migratory phases of de-constructing and reconstructing their identity informed by the interactions of their environment, the added layer of immigrant identity begins to dictate the individual's self-concept. For example, prior to migrating, Mariana described herself as a "submissive woman." After migration, she conceived herself as someone who is not going to "be controlled" and someone with "valor" (worth). Their experience within a new environment begins to challenge the previous understanding of the self and position in the social hierarchy of the environment. While participants described being marginalized due to their gender in their country of origin, now they were marginalized because of their migratory status which contributed to the othering effect produced by an environment that rejects different aspects of their identity.

> When the [trump] came in and they started to say so many things, I thought, "ay, I had to leave." And I felt bad. And now I think, I say, okay now it's okay. But I'm not a delinquent, I haven't assaulted anybody. All that he says, yes there are people like that, I'm not going to say, "Oh us Mexicans are all good people". Yes, there are bad people, but just as there are bad people, there are good people. If you don't have anything to do with it, what's it to you? [shrugs] If immigration comes to get me and sends me to Mexico, I'll say okay, that's fine. Well, as long as I find a way in which my son can go to Brownsville each day for school, I say it's okay. It's bad because I think, I don't think about myself, I think about other people. I cry for the marches that are coming from Central Americans. My heart breaks to see mothers with their children suffering to come to a country, that yes – the United States is very good, but you also suffer a lot to earn a living. And I ask, why do people have to leave their countries and come to another? Right? If Matamoros didn't have too much violence, I wouldn't have left.

Victoria discusses her suspicion that the anti-immigration rhetoric would change the social climate and sense of safety for undocumented immigrants in the United States. While she recognizes that not all undocumented immigrants avoid committing crimes, she believes that the "majority" are judged by the actions of a few.

157

Participants described how this generalizing approach, in which the "majority are judged by the actions of a few," denied the diversity and heterogeneity of immigrant groups and made them more vulnerable to biases, prejudice, and discrimination. Although Latina/os in the United States being a diverse group racially, culturally, socioeconomically, linguistically, and in terms of generation status, the words "Latina/o" and "Hispanic" have often been used interchangeably to refer to individuals whose ancestors originate from Latin America (Katiria Perez & Cruess, 2014). While the context of reception's use of the term "Latino" to describe multiple groups in the United States does not, in itself, create problematic tensions with the environment, the dominant group's tendency to apply racist and othering terms to categorize diverse ethnic, racial, and immigrant groups into one may contribute to attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia. Thus, marginalized groups tend to be judged based on the actions of one or few members, and they and are labeled and generalized as "all the same."

Socially, participants described building new communities with immigrants from different nationalities and immigrant statuses. The shared collectivistic values of their pre-migratory environments motivated common goals to rebuild social networks and sources of support to navigate the stressors of acculturation. However, participants expressed concern that when dominant groups in the United States treat immigrants as a homogenous group, these dominant groups put immigrants into a more marginalized position and devalue their contributions, as well as their aspirations for a future in the United States. This social and political marginalization reduces immigrants' sense of belonging, despite their accomplishments and the number of years they have spent reconstructing a new life in the United States.

The distress caused by the perceived increase of prejudice attitudes through the media and political rhetoric framing undocumented immigrants as "criminals" forced Victoria to

choose between returning to Mexico under her own agency to avoid the increased political tension against undocumented immigrants or wait for ICE to detain and deport her. She also stated that her family is deported, she will find a way for her daughter to cross the border every day to attend school in Brownsville, Texas.

While the entire sample rejected a criminal identity, the majority of the participants recognized their unauthorized entry or overstayed in the United States. However, they also reported feeling misunderstood about the intentions of their presence in the United States. Many participants rejected the labels of "drug addicts" and "drug dealers," as well as the perception that they were here to "steal jobs." Rather, they expressed a strong desire to increase their sense of belonging with the context of reception and contribute to the American economy through employment or launching a business. Participants described how negative perceptions of undocumented immigrants created an internal sense of distress in their context of reception, despite their attempts to re-construct a new life and contribute to the United States community.

Inter-Latino discrimination. A final challenge of acculturation that participants discussed was inter-Latino discrimination. This term refers to an "othering" process that can create internal distress for members who experience rejection by other Latino immigrants. This form of discrimination, participants stated, was more distressing because while they expected rejection by members of the dominant group, they did not expect rejection by other immigrants. Participants in the study highlighted that discrimination by within group members was usually associated with documentation status and/or length of time in the United States. In response to research question two, I found that inter-Latino (with-in group) discrimination appeared to create more acculturative stress for participants than (between group) discrimination by outside group members. Researchers have recognized the need for further research to explore the variation in

acculturative experiences; the findings in this study highlight the variation of acculturative experiences recognized as a need for further research by previous studies (Adames & Chavez-Duenas, 2017; Dominelli, 2002; Ngo, 2008; Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Participants expected that the "otherness" effect would produce tension with the dominant group due to their undocumented status. They rationalized that some discrimination by the dominant group, though unpleasant, would be tolerable and expected. However, the within-group discrimination from other Latinos produced more distress for the participants. In particular, they identified how generational differences among Latinos created several degrees of separation from the immigration experience. Therefore, only those who had endured the common migratory journey and undocumented status could understand them. Additionally, participants also stated that their continued discomfort as first-generation immigrants lowered their sense of belonging in general. These findings align with previous research on generational differences among immigrant populations (Rumbaut, 2002; Wright & Benson, 2010). However, this study provides insight into the types of discriminatory experiences based on length of time in the United States and documentation status.

While immigrant women described a sense of solidarity with a mosaic of immigrants from different nations, participants also discussed experiences that hindered their sense of belonging within the new context of reception. Some participants described how inter-Latino discrimination challenged their sense of belonging in the United States:

> I know that Hispanics that are immigrants, sometimes they themselves place a barrier for others. They say "well I had to suffer" like you tend to suffer in the beginning... and sometimes they want other people to endure what you went through. To understand or to say, "It cost me to learn the language, it already cost me to go through this." They get in this way that they no longer was to speak the language [Spanish] to more recent arrivals. – Veronica

Veronica recognized the power of language and how it can build connections across groups. Therefore, she had made it a goal for her children to maintain their Spanish so one day they could provide support for other children who are recent arrivals. Veronica hoped to teach her children the same compassion her mother instilled in her and always help recent arrivals. Veronica recalled how it is a critical period for many individuals as it was for her. She further explained how this period could be a reliable indicator of future acculturative experience in the United States. Veronica's experience reflects how the first interactions with the context of reception set the course for future interactions with the environment and reconstruction of an individual's self-concept and sense of belonging in the United States.

The process of learning and using English reflects immigrant women's aspirations as well as the difficulties they face due to their positionality within their context of reception. Some participants discussed how English proficiency became a basis for inter-Latino discrimination, as Latino immigrants who had learned English distanced themselves from other immigrants who were more recent arrivals. Veronica who arrived in the United States at the age of 16 without any prior knowledge of English, and struggled to navigate in her new environment because of the language barriers and fear of rejection by other students in her new high school. There were many moments while in the United States when she witnessed Latinos create barriers for other Latino immigrants. For instance, she stated that immigrants are often motivated by the dominant group to assimilate to their environment and stop the intergenerational use of Spanish. In some form, this means rejecting aspects of their identity and separating themselves from immigrant groups who maintain a strong sense of their heritage. She also witnessed how other, more established immigrants presented attitudes that were less welcoming, motivated by a mentality that "because they had suffered as recent arrivals, so should new immigrants."

The youth here are more independent. And when I got here, I was afraid of everything. I felt very scared. Starting with the language. I got here to the US and in 2 weeks I entered high school. I didn't know anything about English. I didn't know anyone. The school was huge. It was very different from my previous high school. I think I had a personality that… wasn't too secure. I wouldn't speak to anyone. But not because I didn't want to speak, but because of the fear of not knowing the language and because of the rejection of the people…that's all different…Americans, Afro-Americans, Hispanics, and everyone. -Veronica

Valeria, once a business owner from Honduras who migrated to the United States to escape the abuse of her partner, experienced inter-Latino discrimination when she began working as a domestic worker for a Latino family in the United States. Although Valeria had raised her own children, she had limited experience being employed as a caretaker. Valeria's dream job was to become a businesswoman and turn a profit on her investments, as she had done in Honduras. However, because her documentation status limited her employment opportunities, especially as a recent arrival, Valeria decided to accept a position as a full-time nanny for an acquaintance's family members, who were of Mexican descent but had been in the United States for many years.

Yes, Hispanics. From Mexico. And so, this one and the woman treated me badly, they called me names and so one day her sister came and saw me crying and asked, "what happened? Why do you cry?" "Because that boy is rude" I told her. The mother doesn't tell them anything. She is against me too and says things to me as well.
The boy was about 10 years old and was really big, "hit her in the face. Slap her face." He said. And in that instance Maggie came and saw me crying. Maggie scolded them and wanted to hit them. She said, "Let's go." [Their aunt] And she took me with her.
I spent about 3 months suffering like that in Laredo, Texas.

Despite the acquaintance's warnings, Valeria began working for the family and soon realized the horrible employment conditions she would endure for three months. Day after day, Valeria was tortured by the family's forms of disrespect and maltreatment. The children of the house would constantly taunt her and cross boundaries, use belittling language, and even slapped

162

her in the face. The parents would always blame her for what appeared to be their children's actions. At times the family would join together to mistreat her. Finally, Valeria's acquaintance one day realized the toxic environment and extracted her from the house. Valeria recalls this experience with unresolved pain due to the chronic forms of discrimination and mistreatment the family used to dominate her due to her migratory and recent arrival status. While inter-Latino prejudice about national origins exists, in this case, Valeria's undocumented status dictated her first months in the United States and made her vulnerable to mistreatment by others. Additionally, being a first-generation immigrant made her a target by a Latino family who had already established their lives in the United States.

Mariana had worked in various industries as an undocumented woman in the United States. As an employee, she has also witnessed and experienced targeted discrimination by other Latinos who hold more power in their place of work. Mariana's experience is consistent with scholarship informed by social identity theory, which shows that perceived limited resources in an environment can create competition between groups and create a stronger allegiance to the dominant, more powerful group with access to such resources (Hsieh et al., 2016; Ramirez, 2010). She believed that in these situations, Latinos with some managerial power were motivated to discriminate against or belittle other Latino employees to try to please their American employers and not be placed in the same category as their subordinates. Mariana believed that in places of work, Latinos in higher positions tend to discriminate against more recently arrived Latinos or Latino immigrants in subordinate positions at work in order to create a distance between them.

> Well, okay. How do you call it. Working at companies is a lot honestly, they treat us, the Hispanics a bit more discriminatory at work. Yes, there is a lot of discrimination. And sometimes it's not even from people that are higher up. It's from our own race. They are the managers, they think they are all that with their papers, that they think they can

discriminate us because they believe that to be in good standing with the boss, they have to enslave us. And the more you work, the more they make you do because they know you can do it. They can also tell you, if it's your lunch time and you still haven't finished your work, they can tell you that you won't eat until you finished your work. Or that you aren't going home. So that is also not good. And well, you can't leave your job because it's hard to find another one. And here, I don't have a lot of discrimination. On the contrary, people treat you well. On the contrary, people tell you to get some tea or bread and you can eat what you want from the refrigerator. So although they are the bosses, they treat you much much better. And being Mexicans, they treat you much better. I have bosses who are Hispanic and yes the Americans treat me much better than the Hispanics. There are people who are Black and I think they demand more of us.

Mariana often struggled with the unhealthy work environment in which managers set unjust demands on their undocumented employees. She realized that the harder she worked, the more work Latino managers gave her, without offering any additional compensation. In times of high production, they would not let immigrant employees eat or go home if the work was not complete and threatened to fire them if they did not stay. This type of oppressive interaction reminded Mariana of how her undocumented status determined her position within the social hierarchy of her context of reception. It was not until she left company work and transitioned into more intimate household domestic work through her agency that she experienced a transformative relationship with her work. Mariana repeatedly shared how proud she was of her housecleaning work and the growing demand for her business. A primary motivator to build her business was the relationships she had established with her house employees. In the excerpt above, Mariana stated that she experienced less Inter-Latino discrimination while working in the domestic labor industry than in other company-based industries.

Concluding Remarks

The pre-migratory and post-migratory identity transformation of participants in this sample varied in experiences. While participants established their lives more and more in the United States despite the limitations dictated by their immigration status, their relationship to

their country shifted a nostalgic past they would no longer find if they returned. Their relationship to the country of origin after many years in the US reflects the transformational experience of migration. The findings on how participants navigated their context of reception align with literature on acculturation. However, the findings in this study also highlight migratory identity formation through a combined ecological and intersectional lens in how socio-ecological factors inform the constructive, deconstructive, and reconstructive process of identity. For instance, this study highlights how immigrant women, who also identified as mothers, prioritize and value their children's education over family reunification if deportation occurred. Second, this study further explored inter-Latino discrimination and how the length of time in the United States, in addition to migratory status, can contribute toward discriminatory attitudes within Latino immigrant groups and further contribute to the identity as "othered." This finding, in particular, works in tension with other findings of solidarity and compassion, further highlighting how the immigration experience is complex and how social identity group formation manifests. Finally, the findings emphasize the aspect of family separation and intergenerational strain as reoccurring themes for participants; once from parents or family migrating to the United States prior, and second, from the threat of deportation and separation from family established in the United States. Thus, the grief and trauma that surrounds family separation and the strain on transnational relationships is not an isolated event. Rather this separation within the context of migration unfolds over multiple stages throughout an individual's migratory journey and informs their interaction with others in their environment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary

Although there has been an increased focus on female migration from Latin America to the United States, there remains little research that examines the lived experience of migratory identity transformation. This study utilized a qualitative approach to conceptualize the transformative nature of identity through the immigration experience of Central American and Mexican undocumented women currently residing the United States. A primary focus of this study was to examine *how* identity was transformed in immigrant women who traveled from their country of origin to reconstruct a new life in the United States. In particular, I was interested in how social, cultural, and political factors in the United States and the country of origin influenced the acculturation process through the intersection of different identity dimensions (i.e., gender and documentation status). The literature on identity, gender, and immigration served as the basis for understanding the economic, social, and political factors that impact the individual's experience in between two different environments (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Tajfel, 1986; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Berry, 2003).

This study also sought to explore how socio-ecological factors in both the country of origin and in the United States informed identity transformation. The findings attempted to describe how socio-ecological factors, both in the country of origin and within the context of reception, have shaped the identity of women through the migration experience. The data collected in the interviews demonstrates how the prolonged exposure to two or more cultural environments, an experience unique to migration, manifests, challenges, or reinforces aspects of an individual's identity over time.

In both the country of origin and in their context of reception, immigrant women experienced themes that reflected aspects of developmental psychology, dimensions of particular treatment as children and as women in their country of origin, social conditions such as poverty, violence, or legalities that informed their experience, conditions in their country of origin that drove migration, and conditions in their context of reception that continue to inform their identity as undocumented immigrants in the United States. The interview content in this study provided insight into *how* the intersecting identities of participants as women and immigrants, specifically undocumented immigrants, interacted with their environment (i.e., country of origin and the context of reception). Findings from these interviews also reveal how shifts in their behavior, and ways of navigating through their environment, are influenced by the transformative experience of migration.

Phenomenological interview methods were used to analyze and produce results for this study. In chapter 4, I presented the six super ordinate themes that were captured by interview content beginning from their pre-migratory experiences, then shifting toward themes that captured both the pre-migratory and post-migratory experiences, and finally, post-migratory experiences. This structure helped to capture the constructive, deconstructive, and reconstructive process of identity transformation.

Firstly, the move forward mentality theme described the process by which immigrant women overcame adversity due to their gender or socioeconomic status in their country of origin, as well as how they developed a goal-oriented mentality to achieve their personal goals resulting in migration. This move forward mentality closely relates to the migration literature tied to psychological concepts such as resilience and scholarly arguments (i.e., immigrant paradox) for utilizing a strength-based approach with migratory populations (Wright,2010;

American Psychological Association, 2010).

The theme of adultification described the sacrifice and early maturation participants underwent in their country of origin to meet the demands of their environment due to their gender or socio-economic status. This psychological process, while difficult to endure for some participants, was also credited to prepare immigrant women in this study to overcome the challenges presented during the post-migratory phase of their migration journey. This theme can provide insight into the process of acculturation in how pre-migratory experiences help to mediate acculturative stress from socio-ecological demands.

Similar to adultification, the theme of self-actualization described the ways in which women interacted with several levels of their pre-migratory and post migratory ecological systems that, in turn, informed their self-concept. Additionally, women highlighted the socio-ecological barriers that prevented them from pursuing self-advancement specifically due to their gender or migratory status.

Hardships of immigrant identity speaks to the difficulties associated to migration as discussed in literature on migratory grief (Espin, 1987), the distress caused by the decision to migrate, participants sense of safety in their country of origin, and the gendered differential treatment also reenacted in partner relationships throughout migration. These hardships were presented both by experiences in the country of origin due to gender and later reinforced within the context of reception due to the participants migratory status. The concept of migratory grief is already supported by current research due the disruption that results from leaving one's home country and confronting new challenges in a foreign environment while processing the loss of their native environment (Espin, 1987).

Sense of belonging, as a theme, described the human experience and need to connect to others in their environment. The sense of belonging theme also speaks to the environment's acceptance or rejection of individuals due to salient aspects of their identity (i.e., gender, migratory status). The sense of belonging also described a shift for individuals in regard to their group identity from their position and pre-migratory communities and their new position as "outsiders" within the context of reception. Additionally, sense of belonging supports the argument posed by social identity theory in the division between dominant and stratified groups as well as the saliency of group membership.

Additionally, the sense of belonging speaks to the human need to feel connected to others. In this regard, sense of belonging captures how undocumented immigrants attempt to build post-migratory communities in the United States to reduce the sense of isolation and othering imposed by the context of reception. The sense of belonging also speaks to the compassion and sense of understanding of other migrants who endure similar migratory hardships as they had. Additionally, participants also spoke to the common hardship experienced by many members of the undocumented community. The symbolic immigration tapestry captures aspects of a reconstructive process of identity in which immigrants build connections and communities with immigrants from other countries.

Under sense of belonging, inter-Latino discrimination described the othering process that can create internal distress for members that experience rejection by previous members of their pre-migratory community. This form of discrimination, participants stated, was more distressing because while they expected rejection by members of the dominant group, they did not expect rejection by other immigrants and their own group. Participants in the study highlighted that discrimination by within group members was usually associated with migratory status and/or

length of time in the United States. Such as the migratory tapestry highlights, participants did not identify immigrant nationalities as a factor of discrimination.

Also, under sense of belonging, criminalization speaks to the labeling an imposition of identities onto stratified immigrant groups by dominant groups in the context of reception. This theme speaks to the ways in which different levels of the macro system such as legal institutions and messages from political rhetoric inform lower levels of the individual's socio-ecological system and the interactions they have within Bronfenbrenner's (1986) mesosystem. Howard Becker's labeling theory helped to explain how labels such as "criminal," "illegal, and "drug dealers" inform social attitudes and ways communities interact with individuals and perceive their position within the system. In this study, participants rejected such labels but expressed the distress caused by the social attitudes and impositions of negative labels not congruent with their identity. Finally, the theme of deportation described the psychological turmoil caused by the uncertainty of family separation, the stripping away of post migratory accomplishments, as well as the post-deportation decisions undocumented mothers make to insure their child's future and education.

Participants discussed how the process of acculturating to a new system presented unique barriers because they were women and undocumented. Additionally, women often reflected on how their pre-migratory experiences also informed their decision-making process while learning a new way of life in the United States. Pre-migratory experiences captured through themes such as move forward mentality and adultification attempt to reflect the resilience, values, and messages women used to reconstruct a new life with their families in the United States. Literature (Berry et al., 2005; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012) on acculturation also supports the need to further consider pre-migratory experiences to inform the

acculturation process. These findings aimed to capture how pre-migratory experiences informed these migration trajectories within the deconstructive and reconstructive phases and inform the current literature on migration and immigrant identity.

Theoretical Implications

Many of the participants underwent a reconstruction of life in the United States shadowed by fear, experiencing an increased sense of isolation due to either being a new arrival or enduring a form of rejection from their context of reception despite their length of time in the United States. Social identity theory captured the psychological impact of migration described in this study, including previous group identities, separation, and the construction of new narratives as well as the construction of the "other" by the context of reception. While participants re-established their lives in the United States, despite the limitations dictated by their immigration status, their relationship to their country shifted a nostalgic past they would no longer find if they returned. Their relationship to the country of origin after many years in the United States reflects the transformational experience of migration.

Through the lens of social identity theory, the migratory experience can create a push and pull identity dynamic for individuals who uproot their lives within one context and transplant themselves into a new cultural environment. While they carry experiences, memories, and messages from their country of origin that inform their identity as women and community members, their exposure to a new context can began to challenge and manifest new interpretations of their positionality within the cultural environment, especially with their identity as undocumented immigrants.

Social identity theory helps to explain human behavior and how strong group saliency leads to increased discrimination both within the country of origin and in the context of

reception. Tajfel and Turner (1986) posit that group membership can shift depending on the environment and contributes to "us vs. them" mentality. Histories of immigration and re-settlement have led to establishing ethnic enclaves and high concentrations of ethnic groups in geographical areas creating limited interaction between native and immigrant groups (Adames & Duenas, 2017).

The experience of migration was described as a disruptive and transformative process, and depending on the identities of the individual, the relationship they held with their pre-migratory environment fulfilled different trajectories. For instance, participants described their pre-migratory socio-ecological and cultural systems as characterized by a dominant collectivist identity. These reported experiences align with research on collectivism and familismo within the migratory context (Alvarez, 2007; Edwards & Lopez, 2006; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy 2006; Lugo et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005). Additionally, the findings in this study also provide insight into how these aspects of familism also speaks to the collectivistic values of the participant's pre-migratory culture that informed their role and interactions with their immediate post-migratory environment.

Despite the heritage collectivist values, however, because of their gendered status, participant's position within the social hierarchy of their country of origin placed them in the stratified group. Research on social identity theory provides insight into this "outsider" status that was reinforced in the post-migration phase due to their added identity as immigrants (Ashmore et al., 2011; Jenson, 2007; Tajfel, 1986). This outsider identity was further reinforced through the context of reception's cultural values of individualism and competitiveness. These challenges add to increased acculturative stress due to group membership.

172

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) also served as an underlying model of identity transformation. Leaving one environment and entering a new environment shifts an individual's position within the social hierarchy as specific dimensions of their identity become more salient than others. Thus, an intersectional framework complements an ecological perspective by highlighting how different dimensions of an individual's identity become salient or oppressed depending on the context in which they find themselves (Crenshaw, 1990; Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Intersectionality helped to highlight the with-in group differences rather than the between which reflects the complex migratory experiences of immigrant community (i.e., decision to migrate, conditions of migration, port of entry into United States, how immigrants become undocumented, age), and also highlights the saliency of identities depending on environment. Intersectionality contributes to the subjective social reality of an individual (i.e., within group differences) paired with an ecological perspective. An intersectional lens helped to inform how a participants' interactions with the environment shaped how they view their new position within a new social hierarchy. Thus, my research focused on how this personalization of identity impacts the identity transformation process and applies women's migration literature and intersectionality theory to analyze my findings. The intersections of identity can be viewed in the construction of identity within the country of origin (salient dimensions of identity may be gender and socioeconomic status) and in the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity dimensions in the United States (salient dimensions of identity may be ethnicity and immigration status).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1986) helps to understand the ways in which salient identities (through an intersectional focus) interacts with the environments to inform human experience and may also help to identify when and where protective or risk

173

factors mediate psychological well-being and acculturative stress. Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1986) coupled with intersectionality (1990), this study was able to capture the psychological consequences of migration that go beyond the cultural elements and daily practices of engagement with one's environment. These consequences also impacted participant's understanding of their own identities within a new social context. As the individuals interacted more with a foreign context different from the culture that constructed their identity, they reported to shift their understanding of themselves and move toward the deconstructive (i.e., removing the individual from their original context and then exposing them to a new environment) and reconstructive (individual begins to develop and stabilize a new sense of self while potentially also maintaining their heritage culture) phases of identity transformation. Participants learned to navigate the legal, political, geographical, and social sectors of their environment in both the pre-migratory and post-migratory phase although sometimes met with socio-ecological barriers.

Socio-ecological barriers at times prevented participants from advancing both in their country of origin and their context of reception. The barriers in their country of origin have been described in the themes of adultification and hardships of immigrant identity. The post-migratory barriers were presented in the theme of sense of belonging. For instance, obtaining a legal status in the United States was viewed as a critical milestone in the path toward self and familial advancement because it granted access to social mobility and an increased sense of belonging while reducing the uncertainty perpetuated by the threat of deportation. However, participants reported the constant changes to immigration laws and the cryptic nature of the immigration system created barriers for social mobility despite their motivation in seeking pathways to remain legally in the United States.

However, these struggles also highlighted their ability to adapt in the face of adversity. Most of the women in this study could recall at least one instance where their path to self-advancement was prevented due to their gender while still in their country of origin. Similarly, women also reported that their undocumented status presented similar barriers to their advancement in the United States. Given the substantial socio-ecological risks facing undocumented immigrants, their journey toward self-advancement makes them more vulnerable to the stressors associated with pursuing migratory goals. These stressors can be damaging to the short and long-term physical and emotional health of undocumented immigrants as well (Suarez-Orozco, 2008). In this study, participants often described the life and death politics of their gender in their country of origin and finding gendered liberation and freedom in American culture despite their undocumented status.

Participants' experience of hardships due to their immigrant identity also related to research on migratory grief (Espin, 1987). Migratory grief remains a dominant phenomenon within the entirety of the global migration experience and speaks to how the migration experience is in itself a process of loss and grief. Grief associated with the immigration experience is often tied to a loss of connection to the country of origin beyond the common cultural factors such as language, food, and institutions. While migratory grief can carry many of the same effects for different immigrant groups, for the women in this study, migratory grief was also associated to immediate initial regret, distress caused by the decision to migrate, varied struggles on the conditions of their migratory journey, and recognition of the continued sacrifice migration entails. Additionally, participants often expressed a nostalgia to their former pre-migratory community but recognized that, if deported, they would return to worsened conditions.

During the grieving process, memory informs the reconstruction of new identities in the host country and shapes how pre-migration experiences impact adaptation to the host culture. In the case of immigrant women remembering their pre-migratory lives, experiences of cultural socialization, family dynamics, and political, gendered, and community violence can be rediscovered. For instance, how strongly a woman identified with her country of origin, whether she had a positive or negative connection to her community, how connected she currently is with her former community, and her reasons for migrating may all influence how she grieves her previous life and reconstructs her new life. For undocumented immigrant women, even the constant fear of deportation can be equated to the anticipatory grief felt by individuals anticipating death; this anticipatory grief is associated with poor levels of coping and overall emotional well–being (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

Clinical Implications

Understanding the interaction between individual identification and macro-level interactions – and the frustrations or stressors expressed by this sub-population can— be important to address during therapy. Through the results we begin to witness how the deconstructive and reconstructive process of identity transformation are informed by women's pre-migratory forms of coping in order to learn how to navigate new environments and further inform a strength-based perspective. The insights in how women cope and re-construct their identity post migration can be used to inform strength-based approaches to counseling.

This research can contribute to the decision-making processes of mental health professionals who treat culturally diverse patients. As the cultural backgrounds of Latinos vary considerably from Mexico and other Central American countries, even beliefs may differ within

the same culture, which represents a large heterogeneous group. Latina immigrants are often guided by cultural expectations around gender while also constantly negotiating with macro-level social and economic structures in their environment that often create inequities and barriers to fulfilling their goals (Abrgeo, 2011).

It is important to note that as cultures are always changing, so are the identities of individuals within those cultures (Knapp, VandeCreek, 2007). For immigrant women, in particular, their identity has evolved significantly due to the exposure of two different environments and the interaction between them. A culturally competent psychologist can strive to learn how to work with this particular sub-group through respectful dialogue around their unique experience of living within two cultures but not entirely being part of just one. Often unaccomplished goals can be misunderstood as resistance when, in fact, the progress is impeded by the environment and not the individual.

It is important to note that the country of origin may have a different conceptualization of identity than that of the host country. I hoped to bridge this disconnect between two environments to understand the entire identity processes for immigrant women. Much of the literature is in consensus that there are a growing number of immigrant populations from Mexico and Central America, yet while there is a discussion of acculturation through macro-level understandings of migration, little knowledge exists regarding the dynamic interaction of pre- and post-migration identity. While part of the literature discusses women's migration and the greater role migrant women are taking on, there is still much more to learn about the roles immigrant women hold as workers, mothers, wives, and womanhood.

Much of the literature on immigrants focuses on the disparities of the population (i.e., trauma, gender-based oppression, low mental and physical health) (Marquez & Romo, 2008).

While it is important to continue to research on how to improve these areas, presenting a strengths-based approach to understand the transformative nature of migrant identity present in this population can advance and increase compliance to treatment in both mental health and medical settings. While this study described migratory challenges and hardships, it aimed to align with a strength-based approach in understanding the key factors that help immigrant women overcome adversity. This study has generated new qualitative data on this sub-population's lived experiences of migration and all its complexity. In addition, this study highlights the strengths and coping strategies not just the negative aspects of immigration that contribute to mental health struggles.

Finally, while there are many theoretical models to analyze the experience of migration, the approach I have used is to study the effects on identity by migration through an ecological systems model coupled with intersectional lens. Through this approach, I was able to discover aspects of identity formation that research utilizing a different framework may not capture or view differently. In essence, having an ecological focus supported by intersectionality (rooted in critical theory) provides insight into how varied acculturative outcomes (i.e., separated, marginalized, integrated, and assimilated) are not solely based on the individual's actions (Crenshaw, 1990; Ngo, 2008). Rather this approach helps to explain how the environment and the socio-ecological factors around the individual help to determine the varied migratory experiences and how different aspects of their identity can result in varied experiences of acculturation. For instance, being an immigrant in comparison to an immigrant woman in addition to being undocumented inform the interaction with their environment. In my analysis, I found these frameworks to yield new insight. Future research can benefit from applying

intersectional and ecological perspectives to provide more thorough understanding of how immigrants interact with their environments.

Limitations

It is impossible to fully capture the adaptation experience of certain immigrant groups whose experiences are heavily impacted by various ecological factors. While this analysis considered a spectrum of historical, social, and political ecological factors that influence the way in which identity transforms for undocumented immigrant women in two different environments, some limitations still exist. There was limited access to the community due to the irregular status of the participants. During the third round of interviews, recruitment for this study became increasingly difficult due to the increased suspicion, distrust, publication, and fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in the immigrant community. Thus, a smaller group was interviewed for this study and therefore cannot be generalized to the larger immigrant community. Although I remained aware of bias and preconceptions during analyses of the raw data, the interpretative process is imperfect. Even so, qualitative data at the micro-level allows researchers to interpret the reality of communities through this sub-population's lens and context.

Future Directions

Furthermore, it is important to understand how a caretaker's identity and experiences can be passed down to offspring and future generations in the United States. Latino youth between the ages of 18 to 34 make up 30% of young adults in the United States and have at least one undocumented parent. Latino youths are projected to be one in three children below the age of 18 of United States population by 2020 (Suárez-Orozco, Birman, Casas, Nakamura, Tummala-Narra, & Zarate, 2011). Sanchez, Flannigan and Guevara (2016) discuss the massive health

179

disparities among Latina youth. Making connections between the socialization and environmental factors that impact Latina mothers, and in turn Latina daughters, can reveal critical information to break these health disparity cycles. Both mothers and daughters share the weight of maintaining cultural traditions for the family (Billson, 1995; Espiritu, 1997; Williams et al., 2002; Soto, 2012) and the value of womanhood (Guzman, 2012). A powerful connection exists between first-, second- and future generations of Latina women. Understanding how Central American and Mexican women internalize, challenge, or maintain different aspects of their identity may provide the key in shifting the discourse on health disparities toward positive rhetoric about this population. Results obtained from this study can contribute to future research Latina immigrant women and their daughters as IPA makes it possible to "gradually build a picture for larger populations" experiencing the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49).

These frameworks can be applied to other migratory populations as it provided this study rich implications for future research, in particular for the individuals such as the 1.5 generation living in the in between. The fluidity of identity of immigrant women appeared through their roles in the family, local community, economy, and international network. The study can help bridge pre- and post-migratory life for international communities, help therapists better serve the needs of this population, and further the understanding of how the lives of first and second generation mixed-status families are shaped.

Parallel to IPA case studies, by considering intersectionality we can begin to identify the similarities and differences of the participants that contribute to meaningful points during the analysis phase. Also, understanding the experiences of immigrant women from a micro-level perspective is absent in the current literature. Further research on this topic can benefit the understanding of the overall functions of immigrant and mixed status families. Finally, the depth

and quality of data that provide meaning to concepts are primarily obtained through the personal

experiences of those we study.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Country of Origin (C.O.O)

  1) What country were you born in?

2) What is your age?

3) Did you marry in your country of origin? Describe your relationship status and experience.

4) Do you have children? Where are they? Describe your relationship with each one.
    - Tell me something about each of them, something that you feel really captures
     something about who they are.

5) Who raised you? Who grew up in your household as a child and adolescent years?
   Describe your relationship to that person(s)?

6) What was your community like growing up? Schools? Jobs?

   6A) Did you experience any gendered-based threat or trauma while in
   your C.O.O?

   6B) Can you describe one of these experiences?

7) What were your reasons for coming to the United States?

8) How did you come to the United States?

9) How was the journey for you?

   -Did you experience hardships?

   -Who helped you?

   -Did anyone threaten your safety?

   -What do you remember most about that journey?

United States

1)How long have you been in the United States?

2)What were your hopes for coming to the United States? Have they changed?

3)Do you have employment? What is your experience?

4)What was it like accessing healthcare in country of origin? What was it like here?

    4A) How is your relationship with your father and mother? Siblings?
    What was it like growing up in your country of origin?
    Has your relationship shifted with them since coming to the United States? How has it
shifted?

    4B) Describe your relationships in the United States. How do they compare to those in
    your country of origin?] *Are your relationships different in C.O.O than in the United
    States (parental, sibling, children, partner, employers)?

5) How do you view yourself now in the United States? Has your view changed since
moving here?

6) What do you consider your strengths? In C.O.O? In United States?

    6A) What do you consider your weaknesses/areas in which you can grow? In C.O.O? In
    United States?
    6B) What struggles have you experienced in the United States and in your country of
    origin?

    6C)What is your definition as a woman? Is it different in the United States than in your
    country of origin?

    6D) What is your experience like as a women living in United States? Is this different in
    the United States than in your country of origin? If so, how?

    6E) What does being undocumented mean to you? How does it feel?

7) Did you experience any gendered/ immigrant-based threat or trauma while in United
    States?

8) How often are you reminded of your immigration status? HOW are you reminded?

9) How do you identify with the term illegal?
    - What is your experience like as an immigrant woman?

- What do you think of the term "illegal" and criminal that is used to describe immigrant groups?

10A) Have you experienced discrimination or prejudice in your C.O.O? From whom? When?

- How have you navigated this situation?

10B) Have you experienced discrimination or prejudice in your United States? From whom? When?

- How have you navigated this situation?

10C) How do these experiences compare in your mind?

11) How has the environment in the United States specifically, the current political discourse around migration, dealing with unauthorized immigration impacted how you see yourself?

11A) What types of messages from the *media/soc. media* personally impact you? How has it impacted the way you see yourself or sense of belonging? Are there ways you are adapting to this situation that you didn't before?

11B) What types of messages *social interactions/work* personally impact you? How has it impacted the way you see yourself or sense of belonging? Are there ways you are adapting to this situation that you didn't before?

11C) What types of messages from *political discourse/ climate* personally impact you? This administration? How has it impacted the way you see yourself or sense of belonging? Are there ways you are adapting to this situation that you didn't before?

12) What do you think are the main misconceptions that people have about undocumented immigrants?

References

Abrego, L. (2014). *Sacrificing families: Navigating laws, labor, and love across borders*. Stanford University Press.

Abrego, L. J., & Menjívar, C. (2011). Immigrant Latina mothers as targets of legal violence. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 9-26.

Adames, H. Y., & Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y. (2017). *Cultural foundations and interventions in Latino/a mental health: History, theory, and within-group differences*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ainslie, R.C.; McDermott, H.; & Guevara, C. (in press). "Therapeutic challenges of Latin American Migrants Fleeing Violent Communities." In: Christian, C. & Gherovici, P. (Eds). *Psychoanalysis in the Barrios*. Oxon:UK.

Ainslie, R. C., Tummala-Narra, P., Harlem, A., Barbanel, L., & Ruth, R. (2013). Contemporary psychoanalytic views on the experience of immigration. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *30*(4), 663.

Ainslie, R. C. (2009). Regression in the construction of the immigrant other. Journal of Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society, 14 ,49-57.

Alegria, M., Mulvaney-Day, N., Torres, M., Polo, A., Cao, Z., & Canino, G. (2007). Prevalence of psychiatric disorders across latino subgroups in the united states. *American Journal of Public Health, 97*(1), 68-75.doi:10.2105/AJPH.2006.087205

Alderete, E., Vega, W., Kolody, B., & Aguilar-Gaxiola, S. (2000). Lifetime prevalence of and risk factors for psychiatric disorders among mexican migrant farmworkers in california. *American Journal of Public Health, 90*(4), 608-614. doi:10.2105/AJPH.90.4.608

American Psychological Association. (2010). Resilience and recovery after war:

     Refugee children and families in the United States. *Washington, DC: American*

     Psychological Association.

Anderson, B. (2008). Illegal Immigrant: Victim Or Villain? Oxford, UK: University of

     Oxford, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.

Anthias, F., & Yuval-Davis, N. (1989). *Woman-nation-state*. Springer.

Anzaldu´a, G. (1987). Borderlands: La frontera: The new mestiza (2nd ed.) San

     Francisco, CA:Aunt Lute Press.

Anzaldu´a, G. (1990). Making face, making soul/hacienda caras: Creative and critical

     perspectives by feminist of color. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Press.

Arcury, T., & Quandt, S. (2007). Delivery of health services to migrant and seasonal

     farmworkers. *Annual Review of Public Health, 28*(1), 345-363.

     doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.27.021405.102106

Arredondo, P. (2002). Mujeres latinas--Santas y marquesas. *Cultural Diversity and*

     Ethnic Minority Psychology, *8*(4), 308.

Ashmore, R. D., Jussim, L., & Wilder, D. (Eds.). (2001). *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and*

     conflict reduction. Oxford University Press.

Bacon, D., 1948. (2008). *Illegal people: How globalization creates migration and*

     criminalizes immigrants. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bauer, H. M., Rodriguez, M. A., Quiroga, S. S., & Flores-Ortiz, Y. G. (2000). Barriers to

     health care for abused Latina and Asian immigrant women. *Journal of Health*

     Care for the Poor and Underserved, *11*(1), 33-44.

Behrman, R., Shields, M. K., & Hernandez, D. J. (2004). Children of immigrant

families. *The Future of Children*, *14*(2), 1-161.

Betancourt, H., & López, S. R. (1993). The study of culture, ethnicity, and race in
American psychology. *American Psychologist*, *48*(6), 629.

Bernal, M. E., Knight, G. P., Garza, C. A., Ocampo, K. A., & Cota, M. K. (1990). The
development of ethnic identity in mexican-american children. *Hispanic Journal of
Behavioral Sciences, 12*(1), 3-24. doi:10.1177/07399863900121001

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International
journal of intercultural relations*, *29*(6), 697-712.

Berry, J. W. (2003). *Conceptual approaches to acculturation*. American Psychological
Association.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied psychology*,
46(1), 5-34.

Bhatia, S. & Ram, A. (2001). Rethinking "acculturation" in relation to diasporic cultures
and postcolonial identities. Human Development, 44, 1-18.

Billson, J.M. (1995). Keepers of culture: The power of tradition in women's lives. New
York, NY: Lexington Books.

Brooks, C., & & Bolzendahl, C. (2004). The transformation of United States gender role
attitudes:
Cohort replacement, social-structural change, and ideological learning.
Social Science Research, 33, 106-133.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard university press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1988). Interacting systems in human development. Research

paradigms: Present and future. In N. Bolgern, A. Caspi, G. Downey, & M.

Moorehouse (Eds.), *Persons in context: Developmental processes* (pp. 25–49).

New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Burton, L. (2007). Childhood adultification in economically disadvantaged families: A

conceptual model. *Family Relations, 56*(4), 329-345. doi:10.1111/j.1741-

3729.2007.00463.x

Caminero-Santangelo, M.(2012). Documenting the Undocumented: Life Narratives of

Unauthorized Immigrants. *Biography* 35(3), 449-471. University of Hawai'i Press. From

Project MUSE database.

Canino, G., & Roberts, R. E. (2001). Suicidal behavior among Latina/o youth. *Suicide

And Life Threatening Behavior*, 31(Suppl), 122-131. doi:10.1521/suli.31.1.5.122.24218.

Canino, G. (2004). Are somatic symptoms and related distress more prevalent in

Hispanic/Latina/o youth? Some methodological considerations. Journal of

Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. 33(2), 272-275. Doi:

10.1207/s15374424jccp3302_8

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Updated May 2015). *Hispanic or

Latina/o Populations.* Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/populations/

REMP/hispanic.html

Cervantes, W., Hafiz, S., Kline, V., Kuhner, G., & Morrow, L. (2015, January). The

Heart of the Matter: Women, Children and the Way Forward on Immigration

Policy. Retrieved from http://www.webelongtogether.org/sites/default/files/The Heart of

the Matter.pdf

Çinarbaş, D. C. (2007). A cross-cultural study of somatization. Dissertation Abstracts

International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 69(3-B), 1944.

Charmaz, K. (2006). "Coding in Grounded Theory Practice" In: Constructing Grounded
Theory. Ch. 3. Los Angeles: Sage.

Chaudry, A., Capps, R., Pedroza, J., Castañeda, R. M., Santos, R., & Scott, M. M. (2017). Facing
Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement (Washington, DC:
Urban Institute, 2010).

Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., Adames, H. Y., & Organista, K. C. (2014;2013;). Skin-color
prejudice and within-group racial discrimination: Historical and current impact
on Latino/a populations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 36*(1), 3-26.
doi:10.1177/0739986313511306

Chavez, S. (2014). The Northern Triangle: The Countries That Don't Cry for Their Dead.
Retrieved from http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/the-northern-triangle-the-
countries-that-dont-cry-for-their-dead

Chin, J. L. (1994). Cultural preferences and children's needs. Ethics and Behavior, 4, 81-
82.

Chu, T., Keller, A.S., Rasmussen, A. (2013). Effects of post-migration factors on PTSD
outcomes among immigrant survivors of political violence. *Journal of Immigrant
Minority Health, 15*, 890-897.

Clark, L., & Hofsess, L. (1998). Acculturation. In *Handbook of immigrant health* (pp. 37-
59). Springer US.

Cokley, K. (2007). Critical issues in the measurement of ethnic and racial identity: A
referendum on the state of the field. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3),
224-234. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.224

Costello, E. J., Mustillo, S., Erkanli, A., Keeler, G., & Angold, A. (2003). Prevalence and

Development of Psychiatric Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence. *Archives*

Of General Psychiatry, 60(8), 837-844.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and

violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299.

Creswell, J. (1998). Chapter 10 "Standards of quality and verification" *Qualitative*

Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions. Thousand Oaks,

Ca: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

approaches. Sage publications.

Comas-Díaz, L., & Jacobsen, F. M. (1987). Ethnocultural identification in

psychotherapy.*Psychiatry, 50*(3), 232.

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics for qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for*

developing grounded theory. (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cordero, A., & Kurz, B. (2006). Acculturation and the mental health of Latina

women in the women, infant, and children program. *Affilia*, *21*(1), 46-58.

Cornelius, W. A. (2002). Ambivalent reception. *Latinos: Remaking America*, 165-189.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2004). On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner. *Journal of*

Management Education, 28(4), 407-426.

Devos, T. (2006). *Implicit bicultural identity among Mexican American and Asian*

 American college students. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology,

12(3), 381.

Doering-White, J., Horner, P., Sanders, L., Martinez, R., Lopez, W., & Delva, J. (2016).

Testimonial engagement: Undocumented Latina mothers navigating a gendered
deportation regime. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 17*(2), 325-340.

Domino, G., & Acosta, A. (1987). The relation of acculturation and values in Mexican
Americans. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 9, 131-150.

Dowling, M. (2007). From husserl to van manen. A review of different
phenomenological approaches. International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44(1),
131-142.

Dreby, J. (2012). How today's immigration enforcement policies impact children,
families, and communities: A view from the ground. *Center for American Progress*.

Doyle, S. (2007). Member checking with older women: A framework for negotiating
meaning. *Health Care for Women International,* 8(10), 888-908.

Ek, L. D. (2009). "Allá en Guatemala": Transnationalism, Language, and Identity of a
Pentecostal Guatemalan-American Young Woman. *High School Journal*, *92*(4),
67-81.

Espin, O. M. (1987). Psychological impact of migration on latinas: Implications for
psychotherapeutic practice. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11*(4), 489-503.
doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1987.tb00920.x

Espin, O. M., Dottolo, A. L., & Palgrave Connect (Online service). (2015). *Gendered
journeys: Women, migration and feminist psychology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Espiritu, Y.L. (1997). Asian American women and men: Labor, laws, and love. Thousand
Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Felix-Ortiz, M., Newcomb, M. D., & Myers, H. (1994). A multidimensional measure of
cultural identity for Latino and Latina adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of*

Behavioral Sciences, *16*(2), 99-115.

Ferdman, B. M., & Gallegos, P. I. (2001). Racial identity development and Latinos in the United States. *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, 32-66.

Fontana & Frey. (1994). "Interviewing: The art of science" *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin, Ed.) Ch. 22, pp. 361-376.

Fortuna, L. R., Perez, D. J., Canino, G., Sribney, W., & Alegria, M. (2007). Prevalence and correlate of lifetime suicidal ideation and attempts among Latina/o subgroups in the United States. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 68(4), 572. doi:10.4088/JCP.v68n0413

Frías, Sonia M.,and Joaquina Erviti, 'Gendered experiences of sexual abuse of teenagers and children in Mexico'. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 38, 2014, pp. 776–787.

Fry, R. (2006). Gender and Migration. Pew Hispanic Center, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/64.pdf.

Fuentes, C. d. l., Duffer, M. R., & Vasquez, M. J. T. (2013). Gendered borders: Forensic evaluations of immigrant women. *Women & Therapy, 36*(3-4), 302-318.

Garza-Guerrero, A. C. (1974). Culture shock: Its mourning and the vicissitudes of identity. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *22*(2), 408-429.

Garcia Coll, C., Crnic, K., Lamberty, G., Hanna Wasik, B., Jenkins, R., Vazques Garcia, H., et al. (1996). An integrative model of the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development*, 67, 1891-914.

Gasana, F. (2012). Irregular migrants' structural vulnerability and survival strategies. *A case study in Bergen area*.

Geronimus, A. T., & Thompson, J. P. *(2004)*. TO DENIGRATE, IGNORE, OR

    DISRUPT: Racial inequality in health and the impact of a policy-induced

    breakdown of African-American communities. *Du Bois Review: Social Science*

    Research on Race, 1(2), 247-279. doi:10.1017/S1742058X04042031

Gil, R.M., & Vasquez, C.I. (1996). *The Maria Paradox.* New York, NY: Perigee.

Giddens, A. (2013;1991;). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late*

    modern age (1st ed.). Hoboken: Wiley.

Ginorio, A. B. (1979). A comparison of puerto ricans in new york with native puerto ricans and

native americans on two measures of acculturation: Gender role and

    racial identification.

Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). "The descriptive phenomenological psychological

    method." In P. Camic, J. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.). Qualitative research in

    psychology (pp. 243-273). Washington, DC: APA.

Giorgi, A. (2005). The phenomenological movement and research in the human sciences.

    Nursing Science Quarterly, 18(1), 75-82.

Giroir, S. (2014). "Even though I am married, I have a dream": Constructing L2

    gendered identities through narratives of departure and arrival. *Journal of*

    Language, Identity & Education, 13(5), 301-318.

    doi:10.1080/15348458.2014.958037

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1st Anchor Books ed.).

    New York: Anchor Books.

Gonzales, N. A., Fabrett, F. C., & Knight, G. P. (2009). Acculturation, enculturation, and

    the psychosocial adaptation of Latina/o youth. In F. A. Villaruel, G. Carlo, J. M.

Grau, M. Azmitia, N. J. Cabrera & T. J. Chahin (Eds.), *Handbook of United States Latina/o psychology: Developmental and community-based perspectives* (pp. 115-134). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Gonzalez, J. (2000). *Harvest of empire: A history of Latinos in America*. Penguin Group.

González-González, J. M., & Zarco, V. (2008). Immigration and femininity in Southern Europe: A gender-based psychosocial analysis. *Journal Of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *18*(5), 440-457.

Gonzales, R. G., Suárez-Orozco, C., & Dedios-Sanguineti, M. C. (2013). No place to belong: Contextualizing concepts of mental health among undocumented immigrant youth in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*, 1174-1199.   doi:10.1177/0002764213487349

Grant, K. E., Compas, B. E., Stuhlmacher, A. F., Thurm, A. E., McMahon, S. D., & Halpert, J. A. (2003). Stressors and child and adolescent psychopathology: Moving from markers to mechanisms of risk. *Psychological Bulletin,* 129(3), 447 466.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903

Guzman, B. (2012). The educational journey of a Latina feminist community psychologist. *Journal Of Community Psychology*, *40*(1), 62-76.

Hacker, K., Chu, J., Leung, C., Marra, R., Pirie, A., Brahimi, M., . . . Marlin, R. P. (2011). The impact of immigration and customs enforcement on immigrant health: Perceptions of immigrants in Everett, Massachusetts, USA. *Social Science*

& Medicine, 73(4), 586-594.

Hayes-Bautista, D. (2004). La Nueva California: Latinos in the golden state. Berkeley,

CA:University of California Press. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.06.007

Helms, J.E., & Cook, D.A. (1999). *Using race and culture in counseling psychotherapy:*

Theory and process. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hefferon, K., & Gil-Rodriguez, E. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological

analysis.*Psychologist, 24*(10), 756-759.

Hein, S. F., & Austin, W. J. (2001). Empirical and hermeneutic approaches to

phenomenological research in psychology: A comparison. *Psychological*

Methods, 6(1), 3-17. doi:10.1037//1082-989X.6.1.3

Hinojosa, M. (Director). (2011). Frontline: Lost in Detention [Motion picture]. United States A:

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

Hinojosa, D. (2018). Working with Transnational Women from Latin American Countries from

a Feminist Therapy Framework: A Guide for Mental Health Providers Working with This

Population.

Hollander, N.(2006). Negotiating trauma and loss in the migration experience:

Roundtable on the global woman. *Studies on Gender and Sexuality,* 7, 61-70.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2007). Doméstica: Immigrant workers cleaning and caring in the

shadows of affluence. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2000). Feminism and migration. *The Annals of the American*

Academy of Political and Social Science, 571(1), 107-120.

doi:10.1177/0002716200571001008

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (1994). Gendered transitions: the Mexican experience of

immigration. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hovey, J. D. (2000). Acculturative stress, depression, and suicidal ideation among

    Central American immigrants. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 30,

    125–139.

Hovey, J. D., & King, C. A. (1996). Acculturative stress, depression, and suicidal

    ideation among immigrant and second-generation Latina/o adolescents. *Journal*

    of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 35(9), 1183-1192. doi:

    10.1097/00004583-199609000-00016.

Hsieh, Y., Apostolopoulos, Y., Hatzudis, K., & Sönmez, S. (2016; 2015). Social,

    occupational, and spatial exposures and mental health disparities of working-class

    Latinas in the US. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 18*(3), 589-599.

Huber, L. P. (2012). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as

    methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of*

    Qualitative Studies in Education, *22*(6), 639-654.

Jaggers, J., & MacNeil, G. (2015). Depression in Hispanic Adults Who Immigrated as

    Youth: Results from the National Latino and Asian American Study. *Best*

    Practice In Mental Health, *11*(2), 1-23.

Jensen, B. T. (2007). Understanding immigration and psychological development: A

    multilevel ecological approach. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 5*(4),

    27-48. doi:10.1300/J500v05n04_02

Kaltman, S., de Mendoza, A. H., Gonzales, F. A., Serrano, A., & Guarnaccia, P. J.

    (2011). Contextualizing the Trauma Experience of Women Immigrants From

    Central America,   South America, and Mexico. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*,

24(6), 635–642.

Kapke, T. L., Grace, M. A., Gerdes, A. C., & Lawton, K. E. (2017). Latino early adolescent

mental health: Examining the impact of family functioning, familism, and global self-

worth.*Journal of Latina/o Psychology, 5*(1), 27-44. doi:10.1037/lat0000057

Katiria Perez, G., & Cruess, D. (2014). The impact of familism on physical and mental health

among Hispanics in the United States. *Health Psychology Review, 8,* 95–127.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2011 .569936

Kemp, C. & Rasbridge, L. A. (2004). Mexico. In *Refugee and immigrant health: A*

handbook for health professionals (pp. 260–270). Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

Kim, B. S., & Abreu, J. M. (2001). Acculturation measurement. *Handbook of*

 multicultural counseling, *2*.

Kim, B. S., Atkinson, D. R., & Umemoto, D. (2001). Asian cultural values and the

counseling process current knowledge and directions for future research. *The*

Counseling Psychologist, *29*(4), 570-603.

Knapp, S., & VandeCreek, L. (2007). When values of different cultures conflict: Ethical

decision making in a multicultural context. *Professional Psychology: Research*

and Practice, 38(6), 660-666.

Kohatsu, E. L., Concepción, W. R., & Perez, P. A. T. R. I. C. I. A. (2010). Incorporating

levels of acculturation in counseling practice. *Handbook of multicultural*

counseling, 343-356.

Kuhlberg, J. A., Peña, J. B., & Zayas, L. H. (2010). Familism, parent-adolescent conflict, self-

esteem, internalizing behaviors and suicide attempts among adolescent Latinas. *Child*

Psychiatry & Human Development, *41*(4), 425-440.

Kuo, B. C. (2014). Coping, acculturation, and psychological adaptation among migrants: a theoretical and empirical review and synthesis of the literature. *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine: An Open Access Journal*, *2*(1), 16-33.

Lagomasino, I.T., Dwight-Johnson, M., Miranda, J., Zhang, L., Liao, D., Duan, N., & Wells, K.B. (2005). Disparities in depression treatment for Latina/os and site of care. Psychiatric Services, 56, 1517-1523.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H.L.K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin,* 114(3), 395-412. doi: 10.1037/0033-   2909.114.3.395.

Larkey, L.K., Hecht, M.L., Miller, K., & Alatorre, C. (2001). Hispanic cultural norms for health- seeking behaviors in the face of symptoms. Health Education & Behavior: The Official Publication of the Society for Public Health Education, 28, 65-80

Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Cliffton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, 102–120. doi:10.1191/ 1478088706qp062oa

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 4*(3), 324.

Levitt, P. (Forthcoming, 2009). Roots and routes: Understanding the lives of the second generation transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.*

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). Establishing trustworthiness. In Y. Lincoln & E. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (p 289-331). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lopez, M. H., Morin, R., & Taylor, P. (2010). *Illegal immigration backlash worries,*

divides Latinos. Pew Research Center.

Maddern, S. (2004). Post-traumatic stress disorder in asylum seekers. *Nursing Standard*,

    18 (18), 36-39.

Marin, G., & Marin, B. V. (1991). *Research with Hispanic populations*. Newbury Park, CA:

    Sage.

Marquez & Romo (2008), Transformations of la Familia on the United States.-México

    Border (pp. 185-208). Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press.

Martinez Jr, J. L., & Mendoza, R. H. (Eds.). (2013). *Chicano psychology*. Academic

    Press.

Mendoza, R. H. (1989). An empirical scale to measure type and degree of acculturation

    in Mexican American adolescents and adults. *Journal of Cross-Cultural*

    Psychology, *20*(4), 372-385.

Mendoza-Meléndez, M. Á., Cepeda, A., Frankeberger, J., López-Macario, M., & Valdez, A.

    (2018). History of child sexual abuse among women consuming illicit substances in

    Mexico City. *Journal of substance use*, *23*(5), 520-527.

Menjívar, C. (2011). The power of the law: Central Americans' legality and everyday life

    in phoenix, arizona. *Latino Studies, 9*(4), 377-395.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.*

    Revised and Expanded from" Case Study Research in Education.". Jossey-Bass

    Publishers, 350 Sansome St, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Meyers, L. (2016). Immigration's growing impact on counseling. *Counseling Today*,

    23-31.

Miranda, Jeanne, Juned Siddique, Claudia Der-Martirosian and Thomas R. Belin. (2005).

"Depression Among Latina Immigrant Mothers Separated From Their Children."
Psychiatric Services 56(6): 717-720.

Molina, N. (2006). *Fit to be citizens?: public health and race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Vol. 20). Univ of California Press.

Moreno, A. B. (2002). Approaches to international migration, immigrant women, and identity. *Day-Labor Work. Abel Valenzuela Jr. 5*, *2002*.

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative researcher in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology.* 52(2), 250.

Murray S.j., & Holmes , D. (2014). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and the ethics of body and place: Critical methodological reflection. *Human Studies,* 37 (1), 15-30.

National Alliance for Hispanic Health. Quality health services for hispanics: the cultural competency component; 2001. 29.

Nawyn, S. J. (2010). Gender and migration: Integrating feminist theory into migration studies. *Sociology Compass*, *4*(9), 749-765.

Ngo, V. H. (2008). A critical examination of acculturation theories. *Critical Social Work*, *9*(1), 1-6.

Organista, K. C. (2007). *Solving Latino psychosocial and health problems: Theory, practice, and populations*. John Wiley & Sons.

Padilla, Y. M. (2013). The central american transnational imaginary: Defining the transnational and gendered contours of central american immigrant experience. *Latino Studies, 11*(S2), 150-166.

Padilla, A. M. (1994). Bicultural development: A theoretical and empirical examination.

Parham, Thomas A. 1954- (Thomas Anthony), White, J. L., 1932, & Ajamu, A.

 (1999). *The psychology of blacks: An african-centered perspective* (3rd ed.). Upper

Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.

Parrado, E. A., & Flippen, C. A. (2005). Migration and gender among Mexican women.

American Sociological Review, *70*(4), 606-632.

Passel, J. S., & Fix, M. (2001). US Immigration at the Beginning of the 21st

Century. *Urban Institute, online at www. urban. org*.

Peña, J.B., Zayas, L.H., Cabrera-Nguyen, P.C., & Vega, W.A. (2012). US cultural

involvementand its association with suicidal behavior among youths in the

Dominican Republic. *American Journal of Public Health,* 102(4), 664-671. doi:

10.2105/AJPH.2011.300344

Penrod, J., Preston, D.B., Cain, R.E. and Starks, M.T. (2003). «A Discussion of Chain

Referral as a Method of Sampling Hard-to-Reach Populations.» Journal of

Transcultural Nursing 14:100.

Pessar, P. R., & Mahler, S. J. (2003). Transnational migration: Bringing gender in.

International Migration Review, 37(3), 812-846. doi:10.1111/j.1747-

7379.2003.tb00159.x

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with

diverse groups. *Journal of adolescent research*, *7*(2), 156-176.

Polo, A. J., & López, S. R. (2009). Culture, context, and the internalizing distress of

mexican american youth. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent

Psychology, 38*(2), 273-285. doi:10.1080/15374410802698370

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). Legacies: The story of the immigrant second

generation. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Radan, A. (2007). Exposure to violence and expressions of resilience in Central

American women survivors of war. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment &*

Trauma, 14, 147-164.

Raffaelli, M., & Ontai, L. L. (2004). Gender socialization in Latino/a families: Results from two

retrospective studies. *Sex Roles, 50*(5), 287-299.

doi:10.1023/B:SERS.0000018886.58945.06

Ramirez Garcia, S. I. (2010). *The Latina/o mental health paradox or racial/ethnic*

disparities depression among new immigrants to the United States.

Ramirez, M. (1984). Assessing and understanding biculturalism-multiculturalism in

Mexican-American adults. Chicano psychology, 2, 61-74.

Raymond H. C. Teske, Jr, & Nelson, B. H. (1974). Acculturation and assimilation: A

clarification. *American Ethnologist, 1*(2), 351-367.

doi:10.1525/ae.1974.1.2.02a00090

Reina, A.S., Lohman, J., and Maldonado M.M. 'He Said They'd Deport

Me': Factors Influencing Domestic Violence Help-Seeking Practices Among Latina

Immigrants." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 29.4 (2014;2013;): 593-615.

Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived

experience. *Psychologist, 18*(1), 20-23.

Rios-Ellis, B. (2005). Critical disparities in Latino mental health: Transforming research

into action.

Romero Incháustegui, T., Lopez Barajas, D., & Echarri, C. (n.d.). Femicide in Mexico.

Characteristics, trends and new expressions in the states: 1985-2010. (pp. 1-207, Rep.). Entity of the United Nations Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

Rouse, Roger. 'Questions of Identity: Personhood and Collectivity in Transnational Migration to the United States', *Critique of Anthropology,* vol. 15/no. 4, (1995), pp. 351-380.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1991). *The agony of exile: A study of the migration and adaptation of Indochinese refugee adults and children*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rumbaut, R.G. (2002). Severed or sustained attachments? Language, identity, and imagined communities in the post-immigrant generation. In P. Levitt & M.C. Waters (Eds.). The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation (pp. 43_95). NewYork, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Sabina, C., Cuevas, C. A., & Schally, J. L. (2015). The Influence of Ethnic Group Variation on Victimization and Help Seeking Among Latino Women. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *21*(1), 19-30.

Saenz, Rogelio, Maria Cristina Morales, and Maria Isabel Ayala. (2004). United States Immigration to the Melting Pots of the Americas. Pp. 211-232 in *Migration and Immigration: A Global View*,Westport, CT:Greenwood Press.

Saldívar, Ramón. (2012). Imagining Cultures: The Transnational Imaginary in Postrace America.
Journal of Transnational American Studies, 4(2). acgcc_jtas_15762. Retrieved from: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8hd6s1jq

Sanchez, D., Flannigan, A., Guevara, C., Arango, S., & Hamilton, E. (2017). Links among familial gender ideology, media portrayal of women, dating, and sexual

behaviors in african american, and mexican american adolescent young women:

A qualitative study. *Sex Roles,* doi:10.1007/s11199-017-0739-x

Sanchez, P. (2007). Cultural authenticity and transnational Latina youth: Constructing a

metanarrative across borders. *Linguistics and Education,* 18(3-4), 258-282.

Sánchez, P., Márquez, R., & Romo, H. (2008). Coming of age across borders: Family,

gender, and place in the lives of second-generation transnational mexicanas.

Transformations of la familia on the US-México border, 185-208.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the

concept of acculturation: implications for theory and research. *American

Psychologist*, 65(4), 237.

Schwartz, S. J., Montgomery, M. J., & Briones, E. (2006). The role of identity in

acculturation among immigrant people: Theoretical propositions, empirical

questions, and applied recommendations. *Human development*, *49*(1), 1-30.

Shattell, M. M., Villalba, J., Stokes, N., Hamilton, D., Foster, J., Petrini, R. H., &

Faulkner, C. (2009). Depression in Latinas residing in emerging Latino immigrant

communities in the United States. *Hispanic Health Care International*, *7*(4), 190-202.

Smith, J. A., Larkin, M. H., & Flowers, P. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological

analysis: Theory, method, and research.* London; Los Angeles: SAGE.

Smith, J. A. (Ed.). (2015). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research

methods*. Sage.

Soto, L. (2012). On becoming Mexican in Napa: Mexican immigrant girls negotiating

challenges to transnational identities. *Social Identities*, *18*(1), 19 37.

Spector, R. (1996). Health and illness in Hispanic American communities. In R. Spector

(Ed.), *Cultural diversity in health and illness* (4th Ed., pp. 279–297). Stanford,

    CT: Appleton and Lange.

Staff, N. I. (2013). The Math of Immigration Detention. Policy Papers. Retrieved from

    http://immigrationforum.org/blog/themathofimmigrationdetention/

Suárez-Orozco, C., Birman, D., Casas, M., Nakamura, N., Tummala-Narra, P., & Zarate,

    M. (2011). Crossroads the psychology of immigration in a new country. Retrieved

    fromhttp://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/report.aspx?_ga=1.9780022.203434357.145

    4289030

Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Páez, M. (2008). *Latinos: Remaking America*. Univ of

    California Press.

Suarez-Morales, L., & Lopez, B. (2009). The impact of acculturative stress and daily

    hassles on pre-adolescent psychological adjustment: examining anxiety symptoms.

    The Journal of Primary Prevention, 30(3-4), 335-349. doi: 10.1007/s10935-009-

    0175-y.

Szapocznik, J., & Kurtines, W. M. (1993). Family psychology and cultural diversity:

    Opportunities for theory, research, and application. *American Psychologist,* 48(4),

    400. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.48.4.400.

Szapocznik, J., & Kurtines, W. M. (1980). Acculturation, biculturalism and adjustment

    among Cuban Americans. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models,

    and some new findings* (pp. 139-159). Boulder, CO: Westview.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In

    S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7–

    24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Taningco, Teresa V. (2007). "Revisiting the Latino Health Paradox." TRPI Well Point

  Foundation Health Policy Fello.

Thing, J. (2010). Gay Mexicanand immigrants: Intersecting identities among gay men in

  Los Angelas. Social Identites, 16, 809-831.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Arminio, J. (2011; 2013). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative*

  research in higher education Taylor and Francis.

Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Yazedjian, A., & Bámaca-Gómez, M. (2004). Developing the ethnic

  identity scale using Eriksonian and social identity perspectives. *Identity: An International*

  Journal of Theory and Research, *4*(1), 9-38.

UNWomen; Small Arms Survey. (2012). *Small Arms Survey 2012: Moving Targets*.

  Cambridge University Press.

United States Department of Homeland Security (2012) Report, Yearbook of

  Immigration Statistics: 2011. Retrieved from

  http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigrationstatistics/yearbook/2011/o

  is_yb_2011.pdf.

Valdivieso-Mora, E., Peet, C. L., Garnier-Villarreal, M., Salazar-Villanea, M., & Johnson, D. K.

  (2016). A systematic review of the relationship between familism and mental health

  outcomes in latino population. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7* doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01632

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action

  sensitive pedagogy. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

Vasquez, M. (1998). Latinos and violence: Mental health implications and strategies for

  clinicians. Cultural Diversity and Mental Health, 4, 319–334.

Vazquez, E. Y. G., Flippen, C. A., & Parrado, E. A. (2017). Feeling depressed in a

foreign country: Mental Health status of Mexican Migrants in Durham, NC. *Anais*, 1-22.

Villarruel, A. M. (1998). Cultural influences on the sexual attitudes, beliefs, and norms of young Latina adolescents. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *3*(2), 69-79.

Viruell-Fuentes, E. A., Miranda, P. Y., & Abdulrahim, S. (2012). More than culture: Structural racism, intersectionality theory, and immigrant health. *Social Science & Medicine, 75*(12), 2099-2106. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.12.037

Ward, C. (2008). Thinking outside the berry boxes: New perspectives on identity, acculturation and intercultural relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 32*(2), 105-114. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.11.002

Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52(2), 167-177.

Wheeler, A. N. (2016). Providing access to counseling for those with limited English proficiency. *Counseling Today*, 12.

Williams, L.S., Alvarez, S.D., & Andrade Hauck, K.S. (2002). My name is not Marı´a': Young Latinas seeking home in the heartland. Social Problems, 49(4), 563_584.

Williams, R. C. & Arrigo, A. (2006). Philosophy, crime and theoretical criminology. In Arrigo, A. & Williams, R. C. (Eds.), Philosophy, crime and criminology (pp.1-40). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Wright, E. M., & Benson, M. L. (2010). Immigration and intimate partner violence: Exploring the immigrant paradox. *Social Problems, 57*(3), 480-503.

Woodward, K., & Open University. (2004). *Questioning identity: Gender, class, ethnicity* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Zimbardo, P. G., & Gerrig, R. J. (1996). *Psychology and life* (14th ed.). New York:

HarperCollins College Publishers.

Zong, J., & Batalova, J. (2015, September 2). Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved May

03, 2016, from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-immigrants-

united-statesCentral American Immigrants in the United States.