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ABSTRACT

ACCULTURATION STRESS OF IMMIGRANT LATINO CHILDREN:

A NARRATIVE INVESTIGATION

By Jari Santana-Wynn

The effect of immigration on children is life-long. Latino immigrant youth represent a rapidly growing segment of the United States population. Few studies have explored the ways in which they experience the process of moving to a new country and adjusting to a new culture. This study examined the immigration and acculturation experiences of 23 immigrant Latino children in order to provide a descriptive understanding and conceptualization of the stress they face in the process of acculturation. Participants completed individual interviews or focus groups. Transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed utilizing content analysis and multiple reading analysis methodologies. The children identified pre-migration factors such as loss and multiple separations as stressful. Challenging post-migration factors included adaptation to new school system, learning a new language, coping with racism, and managing new family dynamics. Results highlight a number of general stressors faced by most participants such as concerns about the health of their parents and siblings, the well being of family members left in the country of origin, and typical conflict with peers. Stressors specific to the acculturation process centered on the acquisition of English language skills, making friends of diverse backgrounds, and worries about deportation. Participants reported using a variety of coping strategies and accessing available resources. The children's stories convey themes of ambivalence surrounding their appraisal of the events they lived through, variability in their evaluation of where their locus of control lies, a highly behavioral definition of the cultural conflict they experience, and a fluid grasp of cultural orientation. Overall, it is evident that the acculturative process faced by immigrant children is complex and stressful, characterized by unremitting conflict and intricate dynamics of coping and adaptation. Though resilient and resourceful, the stressors can exceed their coping resources. This emphasizes the importance of early identification of children experiencing acculturation stress and development of prevention programs to support and facilitate the acculturation process in order to ensure successful adjustment by fostering resilience, decreasing the number of stressors, and increasing the range of coping skills.

ACCULTURATION STRESS OF IMMIGRANT LATINO CHILDREN: A NARRATIVE INVESTIGATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family:

- To Mami and Papi, whose sacrifice made this possible, for teaching me to trust in God and instilling in me a love of learning and the value of education.
- To my children, Jared, Jalane, and Josiah, for being a constant reminder of God's love and grace, and for inspiring me to succeed.
- To my husband, Derek, for his unflagging love and support throughout my graduate career and our life together.
- To my siblings, Yadi and Yon, for being the greatest companions along this immigration and acculturation journey. I am incredibly proud of you both.
- To my grandmothers, Mamá Genara, for encouraging me to dream, and Abuela Rosa, for modeling kindness and generosity.

I also dedicate this work to my graduate advisor, dissertation chair, and role model, Karen Maitland Schilling, who shepherd me to this moment, for investing in me and challenging me. Your strength of character, assertiveness, and unobtrusive nurture inspired me to become unapologetically me.

Dedicatoria

Le dedico esta tesis a mi familia:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Immigration has played a central role in the history of the United States, its culture, social development, and economic structure. The waves of immigration that this society has faced have influenced it in distinct and unique ways due to diverse aspects of the immigrant experience. The impact of immigration encompasses not only the effect that it has on the host society, but also on the people who leave their homelands in search of a new life. The stories of immigrants, their journeys, struggles, and aspirations are markedly distinct. Despite these differences, acculturation is the core experience shared by all.

The transformation that this social phenomenon has undergone over the last century has led many to typify the different patterns by their distinguishing features. "Old immigration" was characterized by long journeys of a permanent nature by groups that were indistinguishable from the majority through race, color, or language (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Their virtual invisibility allowed them the opportunity to settle in well-established mainstream communities and reap the benefits without being considered a threat. "New immigration," on the contrary, has represented an unremitting stream of arrivals (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These new residents do not enjoy the benefit of invisibility as they are people of color whose primary language is not English, and therefore they cannot disappear into the mainstream society. Consequently, they settle into culturally homogeneous communities that are continuously culturally revitalized through the uninterrupted flow of immigrants.

Though most of these new immigrants are permanent stays, many are here temporarily with the ultimate goal of returning home. Some are target earners who enter the country with the motivation of financial success and plan to return to their homeland upon reaching that goal. Others are migrants who move between the countries and within the host country based on economic opportunities. Their communities contain within them transnationals, migrants, multiple generations, and different levels of English-language fluency, at times within the same household. This vastly different presentation has contributed to the erroneous claims that new immigrants resist assimilation.

Hispanic Immigration

The study of Hispanic immigration poses a particular dilemma to researchers as it represents the longest wave of uninterrupted immigration faced by the United States (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) asserts that approximately one in seven people in the United States is of Hispanic origin. Presently, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, comprising 15.1% of the total U.S. population (U.S Census Bureau, 2009). Of these, more than one in four are under the age of 14 and more than 34% are under the age of 18 (U.S Census Bureau, 2009). This makes Latinos more likely to be of school age than non-Hispanic whites.

The Hispanic population in 2006 had increased by 24.3% since 2000, accounting for half of the nation's population growth (U.S Census Bureau, 2009b). It is estimated that by 2050, 30% of the U.S. population will be Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). This population includes United States-born persons and foreign-born persons. The U.S. Census Bureau (2001) declared that in 2000, half of the nation's 31.1 million foreign-born[1] population was born in Latin America[2]. Currently, 11.1 % of Latino children in the United States are first generation immigrants, and of those, 62% are between the ages of 5 and 14 years old (Fry & Passel, 2009).

The immigrant population in the United States is comprised of lawful permanent residents and undocumented immigrants. The Immigration and Naturalization Service Department (INS, 2002c) defines a lawful permanent resident as any person not a citizen or national of the United States (a) who was previously living abroad or (b) who was already living in the United States. Those who were living abroad obtain immigrant visas through the U.S. Department of State (DOS) allowing them to enter the United States, whereas the latter adjust their immigrant status through the INS (INS, 2002c). Undocumented immigrants are non-citizens or nationals who enter the United States without inspection (INS, 2002b).

The Immigration and Naturalization Service Department reports that in 1999, approximately two-thirds of lawful permanent residents were new arrivals (INS, 2002c,

[1] Foreign-born persons include documented and undocumented immigrants.
[2] This includes Mexico.

p. 5). Thirty-five percent (35%) of these lawful new arrivals were Hispanic immigrants (INS, 2002a). In 1996, it was estimated that the population of undocumented immigrants in the United States was expected to be growing by about 275,000 each year (INS, 2001). Although it is not possible to reliably approximate the percent of newly arriving, undocumented immigrants who are Hispanic, since estimating the size of a hidden population is inherently difficult (INS, 2001), the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that "two-thirds of the 1.7 million foreign-born Hispanic children are unauthorized" (Fry & Passel, 2009, pg. ii).

Impact of Immigration

Recent trends in research have started to explore the experiences of Hispanic immigrants as they encounter a new culture. However, the primary focus of research has been on adults, more recently on adolescents, and relatively little research has been done on the adjustment of children (Aronowitz, 1984). Researchers and practitioners have affirmed that the effects of immigration on children can be lifelong (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Partida, 1996). Moreover, the cultural renewal aspect of this group's immigration pattern guarantees not only a sustained exposure to the culture of origin, but also a constant struggle to reformulate identity and adapt to new social norms.

The terminology most commonly used across the literature to discuss the process of adjusting to a new culture is "acculturation." Acculturation has been defined as the dynamic adaptation in the values, behaviors, roles, thinking patterns, and self-identification made by members of a minority culture as a result of contact with the dominant group (Cuellar, Arnold, Maldonado, 1995; Kopala, Esquivel, & Baptiste, 1994). The process of acculturation varies across ethnic groups, gender, generational status, and several other personal and social characteristics. It can be influenced by pre- and post-migration factors, such as: reasons for relocation, age, language, education, job skills, previous contact with the host culture, and kinship structures, among others (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987).

This process of adaptation to a new culture is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon, but rather a dynamic product of changes in three factors: cognitions, behaviors, and self-identification. Changes in cognition involve understanding new social norms and

customs. Behavioral changes consist of learning and using appropriate verbal and non-verbal skills. A shift in self-identification includes, but is not limited to, the incorporation of "new social roles and values that provide a sense of belonging" (Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987, p. 348). These changes can be difficult and often become a great source of stress to immigrants. This is referred to in the literature as acculturation stress: the psychological impact of adaptation to a new culture (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Although young adults and children also experience acculturation stress, far fewer studies have been focused specifically on them in contrast with the studies done on adult populations (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994). Nevertheless, the studies that have been carried out on young adults suggest that acculturation stress can be detrimental to their development (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). The cultural transition affects individuals differently according to their developmental stage and can disrupt their sense of mastery over the world (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). Additionally, research on past groups of immigrants indicates that the stress of acculturation is most salient in the first 3 years subsequent to immigration, thus ignoring the experiences of very young immigrant children. These studies fail to consider how a constant flow of immigrants into Hispanic immigrant communities and the transnational experience can renovate the acculturative conflict and consequent stress for all members of the subgroup, regardless of age, generational status, or acculturation level.

Social experiences of children appear to create different prospects of experiencing acculturation stress for them than for adults (Gil & Vega, 1996). The developing life of a child or adolescent poses a different schedule of challenges than those routinely confronted by their parents. Having to negotiate with different, and at times conflicting, cultural contexts at home and at school can be a great source of stress. In young immigrants, high levels of acculturation stress have been linked to psychopathology, delinquency, and interference with academic achievement, among others (Young Rivers & Morrow, 1995).

Research on the coping skills of children is extensive. However, studies investigating the strategies employed by immigrant children to cope with acculturation stress and stressors related to the immigration experience are scarce. The findings of studies on the stress-coping techniques of Latino youth suggest that differences exist in

the style of coping with stress that they prefer in contrast to their Caucasian counterparts (Kobus & Reyes, 2000). Moreover, these preferences appear to be related to cultural norms and values (Kobus & Reyes, 2000). Copeland and Hess (1995) found that Latino adolescents make use of social activities and seeking spiritual support more frequently than Anglo adolescents when faced with difficulties.

Significance of the Study

The demographic changes that have been detailed above redefine not only the ethnic/racial composition of the United States, but also the socio-cultural character of its society. This shift will unquestionably lead to challenges, as well as opportunities, for this ethnic group. The rapid growth of the American Hispanic population has been attributed to high fertility rates and immigration (Hernandez, Siles, & Rochin, 2000). The increasing numbers of Hispanic youth in the United States dictate that to ensure their success, and that of the country, they must be prepared for the opportunities that the aforementioned shift in society will bring. In order for this to occur, it is vital that they are satisfied members of society. Therefore, it is imperative for social scientists to direct their attention to studying the challenges faced by this population of young immigrants and the development of programs and policies that ensure a positive adjustment.

The obligation to promote mental health and prevent disorder is not exclusive to this group, as evidenced by the increase in prevention program initiatives witnessed by the mental health field over the past decade. Though this is not new to other health professions, the field of mental health has struggled with the mixed results of many early outcome studies. Despite these findings and the relative newness of prevention to psychology, the Surgeon General's Report exhorts the inherent value of preventing disorders from occurring rather than treating them after they develop (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Additionally, though many programs have been designed to address the mental health needs of at-risk youth in the United States, they are limited in their ability to serve the needs of recent immigrants, since the stressors, protective factors, coping strategies, and symptoms experienced by recent immigrants differ greatly from those experienced by settled and second generation immigrants.

The American Psychiatric Association recognizes the relevance of culture to mental health and has included guidelines in the DSM-IV-TR to facilitate a cultural formulation that will incorporate an individual's cultural affiliation in the context of cultural identity (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pg. 897). Additionally, it categorizes migration and the subsequent adaptation process as sufficiently stressful events to necessitate treatment under certain conditions. Its section titled "Additional Conditions That May Be a Focus of Clinical Attention" includes "Acculturation Problems" as a diagnostic category "used when the focus of clinical attention is a problem involving adjustment to a different culture" (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 741). Though this section does not discuss defining features or typical presentation, it introduces the significance of acculturation to the researchers and clinicians in the mental health field.

Purpose of This Study

A number of studies published in the past 20 years have illuminated the need for researching age differences with reference to acculturation stress and adaptive coping techniques of Hispanic immigrants using different research methodologies, including qualitative designs (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994; Smart & Smart, 1995a). The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive understanding and conceptualization of the stress experienced by immigrant Latino children in the process of acculturation. The domains of interest of this investigation are: (a) acculturation stress as experienced by immigrant Latino children, (b) the pre-migration factors and (c) post-migration factors relevant to the acculturation stress of children, and (d) the coping mechanisms that this group of immigrants utilizes to manage acculturation stress.

Overview

The literature review that follows will provide the reader with a comprehensive synopsis of recent studies exploring acculturation and acculturation stress. A description of the most significant pre- and post-migration factors and their effect on the acculturation process is also included. Additionally, theories of stress and coping strategies will be discussed. The ecological model of human development is also

presented as a structure within which to comprehend the intricately multi-systemic changes that immigrants must confront.

The qualitative methodology utilized in this investigation incorporates an ethnographic approach and emergent design. The data analysis process includes content analysis and multiple reading analysis principles. The former generates categories organized into meaningful themes, whereas the latter engenders awareness of and insight about the unique meaning of each of these stories. The data presentation will consist of an itemized list of the resulting themes and a narrative of the stories. Lastly, the conclusions about the psychological impact of the immigrant experience on Hispanic children and the implications of these findings on the development of prevention and intervention programs will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acculturation Stress

The process of acculturation has been described as a process of involuntary and idiosyncratic re-socialization, dynamic and unrelenting, occurring more rapidly for some than others (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994). Acculturation occurs over a lifespan and is experienced in stages. These stages have been identified by Smart and Smart (1995b) as: a) relief of having arrived/hope for better a future, b) questioning the decision to immigrate when faced with stressor, c) experience of stress accompanied by other psychological symptoms, and d) if acculturation stress is surpassed, reorganization takes place, and the immigrant adjusts to the losses and remakes his/her life. Some of these stages, however, may not be as applicable to children since children are not always informed about the move and parents are the ones who make the decision (Baptiste, 1993).

Acculturation stress is a function of the acculturative experience, the nature and number of the stressors encountered, and often has three aspects: life-long duration, pervasiveness and intensity (Chavez, Moran, Reid, & Lopez, 1997; Smart & Smart, 1995b). Multiple studies have linked the experience of acculturation stress to negative psychological outcomes. These negative outcomes are likely to occur when the stressors exceed the individual's coping resources or mediators (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994, Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009).

Two of the recurring themes in the literature regarding the acculturation experience of Latino immigrants have been the experience of a sense of loss and adaptation (Baptiste, 1993; Smart & Smart, 1995b). The separation from family and loss of social support in the form of family ties and close interpersonal relationships has been identified by many researchers are one of the most significant aspects of acculturation stress for this population (Baptiste, 1993; Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Morrison & James, 2009; Smart & Smart, 1995b). In children, actual separation can contribute to anticipated loss or threat of separation, which can manifest itself as separation anxiety or school phobia.

The experience of loss also occurs in the sense of having left home behind and thus begins a struggle to reestablish a sense of identity and belongingness (Baptiste, 1993; Fong, 2007; Partida, 1996). However, social networks, which contain much relevant information required for self evaluation and structure, are no longer available, which contributes to feelings of anxiety, uncertainly, and loss of control (Alston & Nieuwoudt, 1992; Smart & Smart, 1995b). Higher levels of stress and anxiety were reported in children who are recent immigrants (Alston & Nieuwoudt, 1992; Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009).

According to Sam (1995), studies have neglected children who are still undergoing socialization because the process is considered to be less stressful for them since they do not require the same level of re-socialization as adults. Nonetheless, researchers assert that the process of acculturation is plagued by strained family relationships due to clashing of values, morals, cultures, and ideals. Self-esteem suffers due to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and shame (Smart & Smart, 1995b). These feelings of guilt, being uncared for and unvalued, in turn, have been linked to gang participation when young immigrants go seeking a second family or support group (Partida, 1996). Self-esteem is one of the most important protective factors against substance use and thus the negative impact of acculturation stress on self-esteem suggests that acculturation stress can contribute to substance use (Zamboanga, Schwartz, Hernandez Jarvis, & Van Tyne, 2009).

In an investigation of the influence of acculturation upon the adjustment of single parent families, Taylor, Hurley, and Riley (1986) found that the interaction of systems moderates the impact of acculturation. They refer to Bronfenbrenner's 'Ecology of Human Development' model to explain the dynamic interaction of components within an immigrant family. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model of development places the child simultaneously in a Micro-, Exo- and Macro-system. This model holds that each of these systems exists embedded within the larger others. The Microsystem is the innermost circle and is composed of the child, parents, and others directly in contact with the child on a day-to-day basis. The Exosystem refers to settings within which the child is not directly present but others who interact with the child on a day-to-day basis are, such as parents' place of employment, parental social networks, and siblings' peers.

Finally, the outermost circle is the Macrosystem and it represents the cultural values, beliefs, and social systems of the larger society (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Taylor, Hurley, and Riley (1986) describe the Micro-system as containing the support most immediately available to the immigrant child. The Exo-system does not directly influence the child; rather, it represents the support that is available to the parent. Lastly, the Macro-system characterizes the attitudes of the surrounding environment. In addition, they refer to the Ontogenic system which embodies the immigrant child's psychological competencies for coping with stress. Their findings suggest that highly favorable circumstances in one area can be offset by unfavorable ones in another. Therefore, level of functioning is an interaction between the stressors that the immigrant child is exposed to and the systemic interactions of the family components.

Although Taylor, Hurley, and Riley (1986) did not elaborate on the specific stressors and/or characteristics that affect the lives of immigrants, other researchers have identified socio-demographic characteristics, pre-migration experiences, social context of host society, and post migration acculturative experience, among others, as contributing to high levels of stress in this population (Miranda & Matheny, 2000). The challenges associated with acculturation and high incidence of poverty have been recognized as some of the factors that place these families at risk (Weiss, Goebel, Page, Wilson, & Warda, 1999). Moreover, the process is accompanied by family conflict, decreased family cohesion, increased perceived discrimination, and difficulties adapting to a changing multicultural environment (Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Weiss et al., 1999).

Many of the factors identified above have been found to contribute to immigrant families' vulnerability to mental health problems. Some of the psychological problems that have been reported in immigrant children and adolescents are depression, aggression, internalizing problems -- such as over-control of emotions, leading to inhibition, shyness, fear of the environment, withdrawal, and anxiety -- low self esteem, psychosomatic symptoms, and identity conflict (Esquivel & Keltel, 1990; Larson & McQuiston, 2008; Pawliuk, Grizenko, Chan-Yip, Gantous, Mathew, & Nguyen, 1996; Polo & Lopez, 2009; Weiss et al., 1999). Weiss and colleagues (1999) also found that dissatisfaction with family interaction was positively correlated to behavioral and emotional problems in

immigrant children. Further, Gil, Vega, & Dimas (1994) reported that negative self-esteem has been linked to high levels of stress, lack of supportive networks, little knowledge of the new culture, and no resources to cope effectively. Researchers postulate that these stressors can also result in problems such as substance abuse, academic underachievement and/or drop-out, and delinquency (Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Bacallao, 2009; Young Rivers & Morrow, 1995).

Lastly, Smart and Smart (1995a, 1995b) have explicitly distinguished between the experiences of Latino immigrants and immigrants of other backgrounds. They suggest that there are unique needs faced by Latino immigrants that factor into their response to acculturation stress. In this immigrant group, Smart and Smart (1995a) found that acculturation stress affects: a) physical health due to disrupted social ties and b) decision making by narrowing the perceived range of options and clouding the decision-making process. In addition, they have named a variety of pre-migration and post-migration factors that color the experiences of these immigrants differently.

Pre-migration Factors

Two of the most significant pre-migration factors that are not unique to Latino immigrants are the type of migration (i.e. voluntary vs. involuntary) and reason for relocation (i.e. career/educational advancement vs. escaping persecution) (Baptiste, 1993; Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). This can strongly influence several social-psychological aspects of acculturation. Immigrants who immigrate for education or economic purposes assimilate easier than refugees who are "pushed out" and tend to resist severing ties with the home country (Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). The conditions under which a person is motivated to move (whether physical threat or economic motivations), the extent of planning, and availability of material resources to assist the move, will impact the experience (Gil & Vega, 1996). Chung, Bemak, and Wong (2000), reported that Vietnamese refugees were more likely to be poor, have less education and have been exposed to pre-migration trauma. These pre-migration factors increased their chances of experiencing emotional distress, depression, psychotic episodes, and impaired social functioning due to pre-migration trauma.

There are unique aspects of involuntary immigration within the Latino community. Smart and Smart (1995b) detail the experiences of Mexican-Americans, many of whom never immigrated; rather, they were "conquered" and became an American minority with their own culture. Further, other Latinos such as Cuban-Americans and Nicaraguans have been exposed to armed conflict that has been directly tied to American foreign policy which strongly influences their loyalties, and in turn, their experience of acculturation (Smart & Smart, 1995b). An important aspect of this matter is the sense of cultural-historical perspective that is acquired by immigrant children as they learn about their own history through the American education system and its potential impacts on the development of ethnic identity.

Separation is an issue that is not unique to Latino immigrants; however, it affects children differently than adults. Although all immigrants experience separation from family members, familiar places, and friends, some children endure this experience at multiple times throughout the immigration process. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) explain that immigrant children are separated from their loved ones in a variety of ways: a) the child stays in the country of origin with one parent, b) the child stays in the country of origin with relatives, c) the child comes to the U.S. with one parent, or d) the child comes to the U.S. to stay with relatives. Although these separations can be difficult, they are not usually experienced as abandonment. Nevertheless, these experiences bring forth changes in family interaction patterns that can be stressful to parents and children initially and also after reunification occurs and old patterns of interaction are expected to re-emerge (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Morrison & James, 2009).

Recent findings suggest that the migration experience can be mediated by preparing for the event. Sam (1995) found that parents play an important role in mediating the experience of migration and relocation. Further, the attitudes and expectations regarding acculturation have been found to influence its impact (Miranda & Matheny, 2000). One of the ways in which parents may prepare their children is by enrolling them in English Language courses. However, Partida (1996) found that although some middle class families can better prepare for the journey, which makes the

experience less traumatic, the majority of the families are poor and disempowered; therefore most forms of preparation are economically prohibitive.

Migration has differential effects on individuals at different developmental stages. Some have argued that arriving in the United States at an earlier developmental stage, when culture and language are in their formative periods, may be advantageous in the psychosocial adjustment of immigrant children (Chung, Bemak, & Wong, 2000). Further, immigration during later developmental periods, when social and cultural identities are particularly important, may be more distressful for adolescents. On the other hand, others have found that children as young as age 9 have some understanding of ethnic identity (Chavez et al., 1997). Ethnic identity and participation in the culture of origin have been associated with positive self-esteem and a decreased sense of hopelessness, les social problems, and less aggressive behaviors in immigrant Latino youth (Cavazos-Rehg & DeLucia-Waack, 2009; Smokowski, Buchanan, & Bacallao, 2009). Moreover, these children who are still developing ego and ethnic identity require much input and involvement from parents who may be unable to provide social support due to their own stressors (Sam, 1995). This lack of familial support creates a challenge for children who are learning English while adapting to a new culture and could possibly lead to more difficulties in adjustment and developing effective social networks, and thereby increased psychological distress (Cavazos-Rehg & DeLucia-Waack, 2009; Chung, Bemak, & Wong, 2000; Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein, & Nauck, 2009).

Moreover, developmental theorists suggest that although children in early developmental stages often have limited contact with the outside world, they can be indirectly affected via the impact that migration has on their families. When the relocation occurs during the industry versus inferiority stage (latency), immigrant children tend to be affected more directly (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). This can disrupt their sense of mastery over the world and create confusion, as well as complicate the adaptation process to and negotiation of different cultural settings.

Post-migration Factors

Immigration status is another salient aspect of the Latino immigrant experience (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Smart & Smart, 1995b). As presented earlier, statistics

show that a large number of undocumented immigrants arrive from Latin American countries. Illegal immigration places added stressors on immigrant families since there is fear of being reported to Immigration and Naturalization Services and then deported back to their countries of origin (Garcia & Lindgren, 2009). Children are not ignorant of this reality and therefore are also very guarded and distrustful. Further, the stress associated with fear of deportation can interfere with the family's ability to provide emotional support for children (Fong, 2007; Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997).

Additionally, immigration status indirectly contributes to acculturation in two other ways. The ability to travel back and forth between the host country and the country of origin allows for continued contact and no permanent breaking away, which can ease the transition process (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). Contact with the home country also speaks to contact with extended family and kinship structures, which can serve as support networks. These visits to the home country are more difficult when the family is not documented. Furthermore, researchers have found that acculturation stress is mediated by previous contact with the host culture (Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). Some children may have visited the United States for a short visit prior to relocating and thereby be more familiar with the host culture (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). This is also less likely in undocumented immigrants.

Many of the problems experienced by immigrant families are directly related to their immigrant status, particularly during the relocation and cultural transition (Baptiste, 1993). The issue of temporary vs. permanent migration is one that can obstruct the adjustment process by impeding the need for acculturation since there is no permanent breaking away (Smart & Smart, 1995b). Temporary migration facilitates the avoidance of cultural conflicts when other more immediate needs arise (Baptiste, 1993). Additionally, anti-immigrant policies create stigma which can contribute to poorer adjustment (Umaña-Taylor, 2009).

Discrimination is a reality for many ethnic minorities whose external racial characteristics set them apart from the general population in the United States (Sam, 1995). Children and adults alike face unfair treatment in school and work, respectively, as well as other human service organizations (Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Smart & Smart, 1995b). For immigrant children, their accents magnify their difference from their peers

and stigmatize them (Baptiste, 1993). This contributes to social isolation and relational victimization, which is a strong predictor of depressive symptoms in Mexican American elementary students (Bauman, 2008). A source of unjustifiable stress is their perception of external pressures to assimilate and "fit-in" with the mainstream culture in order to avoid discrimination and prejudice (Chavez et al., 1997). One of the ways used by immigrant families to circumvent this feeling of not fitting in is finding and moving into ethnic communities for support, to aid in finding resources such as housing and jobs, and facilitate the transition (Gil & Vega, 1996).

Language can be another source of distress. Polo and Lopez (2009) found that although immigrant, Mexican youth reported significantly higher social anxiety and loneliness than U.S-born Mexican American youth, English language proficiency was associated with fewer internalizing problems, fewer depressive symptoms, and lower loneliness scores. Moreover, whereas adults may be able to interact and work in an ethnic community where their command of the English language is not tested, children are exposed to English and tested on their language skills as soon as they begin school. Therefore, children will experience more language conflicts in the early stages of relocation than adults and these difficulties fade as they begin to gain command of the language. However, studies show that parents report more long-term language conflicts (Gil & Vega, 1996; Morrison & James, 2009). The discrepancy in the language abilities of parents and children means that many times children serve as interpreters for their parents. As such, they are often exposed to information that is usually reserved for adults. This "breach" in the family structure can parentify the child and leave the parent questioning his/her own authority over the child (Baptiste, 1993). The parents' perception of loss of authority contributes to methods of discipline that are ineffective and ultimately can lead to higher levels of family stress, behavioral problems, academic problems, poor socioemotional health, and substance abuse (Baptiste, 1993; Martinez, Jr., McClure, & Eddy, 2009).

Furthermore, there is conflicting evidence about how language acquisition affects educational achievement (Aronowitz, 1984). Some studies suggest that language difficulties do not significantly interfere with academic adjustment, whereas other research has linked language issues to interference with academic achievement

(Aronowitz, 1984; Young Rivers & Morrow, 1995). However, this might be mediated by individual variables such as appraisal of stressors. Some children may interpret the unfamiliar school and new language as threatening and thereby experience heightened anxiety in this setting (Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009). This anxiety contributes to a higher incidence of selective mutism in immigrant children, which can affect academic performance (Elizur & Perednik, 2003; Esquivel & Keltel, 1990). Academic underachievement may contribute to high rates of school dropout and behavioral problems such as acting-out and delinquency (Young Rivers & Morrow, 1995)

Behavioral disorders manifested in the school setting and lack of literacy skills have also been associated with lack of contact with the educational system (Esquivel & Keltel, 1990). Some children who come from low socio-economic groups may have never been in an educational system or may not have attended consistently (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). In addition, there may be discrepancies between the immigrant child's cultural values and those in American schools (Esquivel & Keltel, 1990). Latino children may have to adapt from a system based on cooperation to one that is competitive. In such an instance, behaviors that may have been adaptive in the native country may be seen as maladaptive in the host country (Esquivel & Keltel, 1990). Dealing with two different cultures may be a further source of stress as the child tries to adapt to a new social culture on top of a new academic culture with its own rules and regulations which may or may not agree with those that are encouraged at home (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998). There are also concerns that immigrant children may have different learning styles that can interfere with their academic achievement and also with diagnosis testing for special classes (Partida, 1996).

The functionality of the family environment can serve to ameliorate or aggravate the acculturation experience. The availability and the extent of supportive interactions with family members, which are more available in the home country for mutual aid and support, are important determinants of the immigrant child's ability to adapt effectively to the host country (Baptiste, 1993; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009). Several conditions can interfere with this process. Prior to immigration, family members may be unaware of the stressful situations that the child could face. Since many of the problems resulting from acculturation stress are not exhibited immediately after immigration, families fail to

associate them with the move (Baptiste, 1993). Children may also act out the stresses experienced by their parents during the cultural transition (Weiss et al., 1999). Further, even when parents are aware of the problems that their children are facing, they may be unprepared to deal with or help their children cope with such stresses (Baptiste, 1993).

New immigrant families make limited use of community resources that are necessary for addressing the problems that they face (Morrison & James, 2009; Weiss et al., 1999). This is often due to lack of knowledge about available resources or lack of resources in the communities that these families relocate into, leaving families to depend solely on the extended family as a support network. Gil & Vega (1996) found that lower levels of family cohesion were strongly associated with stress as well as increased parent/child acculturation conflicts. This may be due to the Latino cultural stance on reliance on family as a support system. When this system fails, individuals may feel that they have no other source of coping with the conflict and stress of the changes and loses experienced during relocation (Gil & Vega, 1996). Not surprisingly, Smokowski, Buchanan, and Bacallao (2009) found that parental involvement in U.S. systems had an inverse association with adolescents' social problems, aggression, and anxiety.

The process of acculturation often affects the entire family (Morrison & James, 2009). Families experience a period of decompensation and crisis when children's acculturation process progresses faster than that of the parents (Pawliuk et al., 1996). Pawliuk and colleagues (1996) reported that this experience could lead to psychiatric problems and social deviance. Further, parents reported more problematic psychological functioning in their children when there were differences in the acculturation style of the parent and the child. Researchers have found that the acculturation gap between parent and child and the parents' attitude toward the child's acculturation can lead to changes in familial boundaries (Baptiste, 1993; Birman, Weinstein, Yi Chan, & Beehler, 2007; Sam, 1995). In some situations, the parents may resort to a more controlling parenting style and place increased restrictions on the child or rigidly impose traditional values. According to Baptiste (1993), sometimes the insistence on upholding traditional values is done for the benefit of the extended family, which may put pressure on the parents to raise the child in the way that they were raised. Ultimately, the outcome of these

parenting styles will depend on how the child perceives the parental behaviors (Sam, 1995).

The psychological impact of immigration also tends to vary with time subsequent to immigration. Several studies have found that the first year is characterized by euphoria followed by disenchantment and a gradual return to earlier experiences (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Gil & Vega, 1996). The disenchantment is often due to some of the factors mentioned above. However, some of the stressors encountered by immigrant children are no different than those faced by their American-born counterparts. Immigrant children are also exposed to general social stressors such as making friends, conflict at home and/or school, illness, poverty, etc. (Chavez et al., 1997; Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994). When the number of stressors and their magnitude exceed the individuals coping resources, negative outcomes can occur (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994).

Children and Stress

In addition to acculturation stress, immigrant youth confront normal physical, emotional, and social life changes that can produce stress (Kobus & Reyes, 2000). Many are exposed to a series of stressful life events such as parental divorce, death in the family, physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, and others (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Kobus & Reyes, 2000). These other stressors mediate the process of acculturation, and the way in which the individual copes with them forecast future adjustment.

The term "stress" has been defined in a variety of ways, encompassing physiological reactions, emotional reactions, an external stimulus, and a "force requiring change of adaptation" (Sorensen, 1993, p. 6). One of the most overarching definitions of stress which incorporates the above mentioned factors is presented by Aldwin (1994, p. 22): "stress refers to that quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction, that, through either overarousal or underarousal, results in psychological or physiological distress." Stressors can be scheduled (i.e. marriage) or unscheduled events (i.e. unplanned pregnancy), predictable (i.e. life transition) or unpredictable (i.e. sudden death of a relative), enduring (i.e. chronic illness), or short-term (i.e. getting shots) (Sorensen, 1993).

The salience and impact of certain stressors is largely dictated by environmental and individual factors. One of these factors is developmental stage. School-age children who have entered the concrete operation stage are building on and mastering the abilities that they have so far acquired and use them in preparing for later roles as adolescents and adults (Arnold, 1990). It is through these exercises in repetition and mastering that they build their sense of confidence. For these children, school related stressors are salient because they encompass so much of their daily lives (Arnold, 1990). School stressors can be academic, social, or familial related. Academic related stressors are concerns over low grades, failing exams, not being able to complete homework assignments, fear of failure, learning disorders, and giving oral reports (Arnold, 1990). Social stressors in schools include making friends after changing school, conflict with teacher, conflict with peers, bullies, and peer pressure (Arnold, 1990). Family related stressors in schools include high expectations from parents, lack of parental interest in school achievement, embarrassment over parental characteristics (i.e. physical/mental illness, addiction, unemployment), and sibling competitiveness in school (Arnold, 1990).

Although school-related stressors are of utmost importance at this age, Brenner (1984) presents a model of stress that is ecological. This model is based on Bronfenbrenner's (as cited in Brenner, 1984) ecological model of development, which, as stated earlier, places the child simultaneously in a Micro-, Exo- and Macro-system. Brenner's (1984) model recognizes that stressors occurring in any of these systems interact with other systems. Within the Microsystem, Brenner (1984) identifies the child's constant growth and change, the way that the parents respond to the child's changes, new rules, and family conflict as sources of stress. Some stressors that occur within the Exosystem are moving to a new home and away from relatives or others with whom they are close, parental un-/employment, and schools (Brenner, 1984). Lastly, with the Macrosystem, sources of stress are prejudices held in society about the group that the child belongs to, poverty, and holding different beliefs or values than the dominant society (Brenner, 1984).

Stress research has largely been focused on the physiological outcomes of prolonged exposure to stressors. However, some studies occurring in the past two decades have looked at the link between stress and occurrence of mental disorders.

Researchers report that stress has been associated with depression, panic, eating disorders, anxiety, drug abuse, suicide, decreased productivity, and increased criminal behavior (Arnold, 1990; McNamara, 2000; Sorensen, 1993). Other symptoms of stress in children are regression, bed-wetting, nail biting, withdrawal, loss of motivation and an inability to concentrate at school, trouble getting along with peers, confusion, over-reacting, drinking, and smoking (Arnold, 1990; Larson & McQuiston, 2008; McNamara, 2000).

The effects of poverty and discrimination have also been the focus of several investigations. Poverty often is directly linked to parental unemployment. Unemployment, in turn, has been associated with maladaptive behavior, academic loss and increased reports of worries (Arnold, 1990). Discrimination has been found to interfere with identity development, which is the next developmental task of children in the concrete-operational stage (Arnold, 1990). It can also contribute to negative cognitive concepts, low self-esteem, negative affective reactions, low levels of aspiration, negative attitudes toward education, discipline problems, aggressive behavior, and mental health problems, such as suicide and alcoholism (Arnold, 1990; Larson & McQuiston, 2008, Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

Temporary separations from parents and siblings have also been studied as stressful life events. Researchers have found that when the reason for the separation is known, the child experiences minimal levels of stress, whereas uncertainty of length of separation can have severe adverse effects (Brenner, 1984). Stress also occurs when the family reunites since anxieties are triggered due to the changes that all parties involved have undergone in roles, interests, and habits. The lack of familiarity that ensues requires more flexibility than most children can comfortably exercise (Brenner, 1984). Some of the negative outcomes associated with temporary separations are manic/aggressive behaviors, withdrawal, depression, regression, and poor academic performance.

Children Stress-Coping Strategies

There are a variety of moderating factors in the stress process. Some are buffers that reduce the impact of stressors, reduce the intensity and duration of symptoms or enhance coping ability (McNamara, 2000; Sorensen, 1993). The first moderating factor

that comes into play is the process of appraisal. The process of appraisal that occurs when a stimulus is encountered largely mediates the impact that it will have on a person. When a situation or stimulus is appraised as taxing the resources and/or endangering the well-being of the individual, stress is experienced (McNamara, 2000). The perception of the event is critical in the way that the person will respond to the event (Sorensen, 1993). If the stimulus is not perceived as a stressor, then there is no need to invoke coping mechanisms. However, if it is perceived as a stressor, the meaning of the event can determine whether the person will cope or fall into crisis (Sorensen, 1993).

In the event that the stimulus is identified as a stressor, then the individual must call on coping strategies. Coping is defined as a psychological, emotional, and behavioral response aimed at reducing or removing the negative effects of stress (Aldwin, 1994; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). The coping response will be influenced by personal characteristics such as personality type, self-esteem, health, values, beliefs, and sense of control (Sorensen, 1993). Locus of control can lie either within the person or outside the person. Internal locus of control has been related to feelings of self-efficacy, whereas external locus of control has been linked to the experience of learned helplessness and belief in fatalism (McNamara, 2000). Researchers have reported that lack of personal control can act as source of stress, whereas enhanced perception of control can buffer the effects of stress (McNamara, 2000). Further, increased sense of control encourages health-promoting behaviors (McNamara, 2000). Studies have also found that people who perceive internal personal control employ more direct coping strategies when faced with stressors, whereas people who perceive an external source of control tend to employ more indirect coping strategies (McNamara, 2000).

Interpersonal resources will also influence coping strategies and outcome. The existence and availability of social support networks and sources of emotional comfort will encourage the utilization of these methods of coping and can help the individual feel less vulnerable (McNamara, 2000). Studies have found that the availability of emotional support can help buffer men's mental and physical health (McNamara, 2000). Environmental resources such as physical social activities and sources of physical comfort and needs can also serve as moderators of the effect of stressors (McNamara, 2000).

The patterns of coping that have been identified in children can be ways of avoiding or facing stress (Brenner, 1984). "Avoiding" stress responses are denial, regression, withdrawal, and impulsive acting out, because they allow the child to continue on without dealing with the stressor. "Accepting or Facing" stress responses are altruism, humor, suppression, anticipation, and sublimation. These coping strategies acknowledge the stressor (Brenner, 1984). Almost all of these coping strategies have both positive and negative aspects and are considered to be adaptive in certain situations. Brenner (1984) describes the above mentioned coping strategies as follows:

1. Denial – the child behaves as though the stressor does not exist or uses fantasy to escape reality, which helps alleviate suffering.
2. Regression – the child acts younger than his/her age and engages in behaviors that are appropriate of younger children. Their dependency may result in more physical comfort and attention, which attenuates the effects of stress.
3. Withdrawal – the child may remove him/herself from the situation either physically or mentally
4. Impulsive acting out – the child acts impulsively without considering the consequences of his/her actions. By calling attention to him/herself and getting others angry, s/he can temporarily avoid facing the stressor.
5. Altruism – the child may focus his/her attention on the needs of another person and gain satisfaction from feeling helpful.
6. Humor – by joking about his/her situation, the child can express feelings of anger and pain without feeling vulnerable.
7. Suppression – the child may set his/her feelings aside temporarily in order to gather his/her strength before allowing him/herself to experience them again.
8. Anticipation – the child may plan for the next potential stressful event so that he/she can be prepared to protect him/herself, accepting that it cannot be avoided.
9. Sublimation – the child may involve him/herself in activities that are satisfying and compensate for stressful experiences.

Ultimately, the effectiveness coping seems more contingent on repertoire size than on the specific strategies used (Sorensen, 1993). A large and diverse repertoire of coping strategies ensures the best chance for healthy adjustment (Brenner, 1984).

Coping with Acculturation Stress

The coping strategies of immigrants facing stressors related to the acculturation process are few. Nevertheless, the literature states that commitment to culturally prescribed protective values such as familism and family pride can aid in successful coping (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994). The family can provide warmth, affection, emotional support, and set clear and reasonable limits which serves as a protective factor for resilient adolescents (de la Fuentes & Vasquez, 1999). Familism has been negatively associated with disposition toward deviance and positively correlated to parental respect (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000). Gil, Vega, & Dimas (1994) assert that family pride mediates the relationship between acculturation stress and self-esteem. Further, Szapocznic (as cited in Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994, p. 53) found that strong family ties is the most important mediating factor for the potential negative effects of the acculturation process.

Maintenance of family cohesion was reported to be linked to low levels of acculturation stress (de la Fuentes & Vasquez, 1999). The presence of an extended family and strong familistic orientation has been found to facilitate the development of stronger group enhancement and altruistic motives in Mexican American children (de la Fuentes & Vasquez, 1999). Santana-Wynn and Schilling (2001) found that even when extended family members were distant, they were still considered essential members of the problem-solving unit and consulted on major decisions. In addition, in a study of immigrant college students, the small social networks encouraged, rather than discouraged, taking direct action to reduce the stress of adaptation (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). Urban, Mexican-American adolescents have also reported preference for active coping styles including seeking family and friends as sources of social support (Kobus & Reyes, 2000).

Alternatively, the experience of immigration and acculturation stress can interfere with these positive coping mechanisms. Acculturation stress has been negatively

correlated with familism and scores on parental respect (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000). The loss of identity and social support that is coupled with immigration can interfere with a person's ability to cope, and inhibits the will to develop the necessary skills and/or access the resources necessary to overcome acculturation stress (Smart & Smart, 1995b). Nevertheless, earlier generations of immigrants and those who are less acculturated have been found to have more positive attitudes toward help-seeking (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009; Santana-Wynn & Schilling, 2001). However, lack of knowledge of what adaptive coping strategies are in the U.S. culture and little familiarity with how to cope in new ways (including therapy) diminish coping ability (Baptiste, 1993).

Paradoxically, some culturally sanctioned beliefs interfere with effective coping and adaptation. The cultural value of *fatalismo* -- the belief that things are destined to be – reinforces a passive coping style (Weiss et al., 1999). The use of passive appraisal as a coping strategy has been positively correlated to children's internalizing problems. A family's use of internal coping strategies is related to diminished coping capacity and emotional and behavioral problems exhibited by the child. Further, passive appraisals contribute to limited use of community or family resources necessary for addressing problems faced by family members (Weiss et al., 1999). In another study, when Mexican-American adolescents perceived stressors to be outside of their locus of control, they reported employing copying styles that were largely ineffective (Kobus & Reyes, 2000).

Negative outcomes after the experience of acculturation stress occur when the stressors exceed the individuals coping resources and mediators (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994). The availability and utilization of coping strategies, resources and support networks can mediate the effect of acculturation stress (Chavez et al., 1997).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were 23 first-generation immigrant Latina/o children (9 girls and 14 boys) (Table 1) who have resided in the United States for less than 5 years (*Mdn* = 2 years, Table 3). Three boys were immigrants from the Dominican Republic, while the remainder of the sample was of Mexican origin. In this investigation, children ranged in ages from 8 to 13 years (*M* = 10.61, SD=1.31), with a median age at immigration of 9 years (Table 3). The sample of students included five 3rd graders (all boys), seven 4th graders (3 girls and 4 boys), six 5th graders (3 girls and 3 boys), and five 6th graders (3 girls and 2 boys) (Table 2). Five of these children attended private school prior to immigrating, and two had not received any formal education prior to arriving in the United States. Sixteen of the participants were sibling pairs.

Sixteen parents (13 mothers and 3 fathers) were interviewed. Nine of the parents interviewed were married, four were living with a partner, two were separated, and one was single. Nearly 50% of participants reported living with both parents, and 87% reported having siblings who live with them (Table 4). Although parents were not asked to report household income, it is estimated that this sample represents a low socioeconomic level since the reported parent median education level is 6th grade (3 completed 9th grade, 2 completed 12th grade, and 2 attended a 2 or 4 year higher education institution).

Setting

Participants were recruited from the only elementary school that serviced English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students in a midsized Midwestern city, centrally situated between two metropolitan areas. A classic example of "Rustbelt America" as seen in its industrial and demographic break downs, the bulk of the employed civilian population 16 years and over were distributed across the manufacturing, educational/health/social services, and retail trade industries (U.S Census Bureau, n.d.). With a median household income between $35,000 and $40,000, over ten percent of the families were below the

poverty line (U.S Census Bureau, n.d.). Predominantly Caucasian, Latinos made up a small subset of the approximately 10% minorities in this community (U.S Census Bureau, n.d.).

The confluence of population, socioeconomic, and ethnic characteristics of the city was mosaically displayed by local geography. This follows patterns of growth seen in many parts of the industrial and postindustrial American Midwest where neighborhoods reflect the movements of business, labor, and newcomers – both immigrant and domestic – over several decades. These geographies also invariably contained pockets of poverty which grew as America shifted away from heavy industry, leaving concentrations of economic and educational disparity burdening residents who further separated themselves by race. The system of neighborhood schools most clearly displayed these critical differences and realities. Considering its demographics, even this midsized Midwestern city displayed the tensions and challenges of culture, ethnicity, and class that are recognized in much of the urban landscape of contemporary America.

Procedure

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Miami University prior to commencing recruitment activities. A letter (Appendix A) was distributed to Latina/o students in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. They were asked to give the letter to their parents. The letter described the study and instructed parents to give a phone number where the researcher could contact them directly. Four parents chose not to participate.

Parents who chose to participate received an informed consent sheet and were asked to consent verbally to the participation of their children (Appendix B). Each parent answered a few general questions regarding their child's immigration to the United States (Appendix C). Each child participant received written information about the study (Appendix D), which was read to him/her by the researcher. The child retained the sheet with the study information and was asked to verbally assent to participation. As tokens of gratitude for their participation, all children received $5 coupons for a restaurant. Two $25 store gift cards were also raffled among participants.

Interview Procedure

Ten participants were chosen randomly to participate in focus-groups. The researcher conducted a one-hour semi-structured interview (Appendix E) in Spanish with each of the remaining 13 participants at the school. All interviews were audiotaped for transcription. After reading the transcripts and listening to the audiotapes, two of the interviews were identified based on how thoroughly the content addressed the domains of interest. A summary of each of these interviews is presented in chapter 5 of this manuscript.

The focus-groups' members participated in four sessions. Each group was composed of five students. Participants were assigned to groups by grade levels. One group was composed of 3rd and 4th graders, and the second group was composed of 5th and 6th graders. Each semi-structured group session concentrated on one of the domains of interest of this study. All focus-group sessions were audiotaped for content analysis.

Data Handling and Safekeeping

Given the sensitivity of some aspects of this topic, during the interview with the parents, they were informed that the issue of immigration status might come up during the interviews with the children. The principal researcher explained to them the steps that would be taken to protect the identity of all participants. All materials containing identifying information, such as contact information and audiotapes, were kept in a locked document box. The letters to parents containing their name and phone number were shredded promptly after the interviews were completed.

Materials[3]

Informed Consent (Appendix B). Undocumented immigrants fear seeking services provided by the government because they believe that their legal status in the United States will be reported to the Immigration and Naturalization Services Department (INS) and that they will be deported (Echeverry, 1997). Therefore, in order to facilitate disclosure, the consent form assured the participants that their legal status and any other information that they provided would remain confidential. Participants were also

[3] All materials were available in Spanish given the characteristics of the sample.

informed that the purpose of the study was educational and not related to immigration and naturalization government agencies. They kept the consent form and were not required to provide a signature to further protect their identity.

Parent Questionnaire (Appendix C). This questionnaire consisted of questions regarding the child's age and gender, parents' marital status, parents' and child's education level, length of time of residence in the United States, and the process of immigration. Only parents were asked to complete this questionnaire.

Child Assent (Appendix D). The child assent form contained information about the study and informed the child that s/he could choose not to answer any question that s/he did not feel comfortable answering. Also, the form explained that the child did not have to participate simply because the parent agreed and that they had the power to terminate the interview at any time without any negative consequence to him/her or the parent/s.

Child Interview (Appendix E). The children's semi-structured interview consisted of questions derived from other research on the acculturation process and acculturation stress (Comas-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Chavez et al., 1997; Gil & Vega, 1996; Gil, Vega & Dimas, 1994; Smart & Smart, 1995a, 1995b). These questions asked about demographics, pre-migration factors, the migration experience, post-migration factors, stressors directly linked to the acculturation process, general stressors, coping strategies, and support networks.

Focus Group Sessions (Appendix F). Each of the children participating in the focus groups answered a few demographic questions at the beginning of the first session. The remainder of that session was on the topic of pre-migration factors. Sessions two and three focused on the migration experience and post migration factors, respectively. The last session centered on the issue of acculturation stressors and coping strategies.

Debriefing Statement (Appendix G). Participants received a debriefing statement after they completed the study. The debriefing form explained the nature of the study and provided them with information about how to reach the researcher if they had any questions regarding the study or mental health services. The parents also received information about mental health services available in their community.

Analysis

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study because of the phenomenological nature of the constructs and events that are the focus of this project. As evident by the scarce number of publications, the immigration and acculturative experiences of Latino children has been neglected. Therefore, our knowledge about these topics is limited and incomplete. This methodology provides a fertile ground from which rich data can be harvested, generating a greater depth and breadth of information than could be gathered through the use of a quantitative methodology. In situations where the phenomenon being studied only acquires meaning by way of understanding the experiences of the individuals who encounter it, comprehensive meaning would be unattainable without this form of inquiry.

Transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed in two ways. According to Ratner (1997), a comprehensive qualitative investigation requires that multiple research principles be employed in concert. First, each transcription was coded using a content analysis method as described by Krippendorf (1989) and Weber (1985). The researcher read each response and generated initial categories. After each set of responses had been coded, the categories were reviewed and refined as necessary to ensure that they were not too broad or too specific. After the categories had been refined, they were organized into meaningful themes. The answers were translated after having being coded to ensure that connotative meaning was not lost. Audiotapes of the group sessions were coded similarly, with the distinction that these were not transcribed and thus the researcher utilized a repeated listening strategy to obtain initial categories.

Secondly, the researcher conducted a multiple readings analysis as described by Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller and Argyris (1994). This method of coding is a relational, voice-centered one, aimed at bringing to the forefront the aspects of the participants' stories that cannot be categorized, with the goal of disentangling the existing themes and thereby gaining understanding of the meaning of the participants' experiences (Waithe, 2006; Woodcock, 2005). This approach required repeated readings of each interview transcript with specific objectives for each reading. Each time the transcript was read, the researcher utilized a different lens to interpret the story. The researcher

used a different colored pencil with each reading to highlight supportive statements of the emerging themes in each story.

The object of the first reading was to understand the plot of the stories. The second reading focused on the interviewee's view of self in relationship to him/herself and others. The last four lenses were identified by the researcher based on the relevant framework of the project. For the purposes of this study, the following lenses were identified through the literature:

- Cultural conflict / Cultural orientation
- Locus of control
- Evaluation of the experience
- Response to conflict / Outcome assessment

The results are presented in the form of a discussion of the factors that became evident as the answers to the interview questions were examined through the content analysis. This is followed by a summary of the themes that emerged from the multiple readings analysis and sample excerpts that provide supporting evidence of each in the children's own words. Lastly, narratives of two participants' stories are included along with the researcher's narrative of her own immigration story.

The Researcher

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the data gathering instrument and thereby inseparable from the methodology. Moreover, the identification of themes and formulation of narratives requires the interpretation by the researcher of the participants' responses to the interview questions (Brown, et al. 1994). Therefore, the researcher is fully immersed in the process, interacting with the data and influencing the results. As the sole researcher in this study, I am cognizant that the themes which emerged and the meaning in these narratives were affected by my contextual framework. Consequently, before I present my findings, I will provide information about my own background with the intent of offering the reader a contextual reference point from which to interpret the results that follow.

In the presentation of my story, I am aware of the drastic differences between my immigration experience and that of my participants. Additionally, I recognize that the accounts I will be presenting are my version of their versions of their immigration stories and that my formulation of their narratives is influenced by my own story. However, having been an immigrant child myself affords me the rare opportunity of providing an emic account of the singular underlying experience of immigration and acculturation of Latino immigrant children.

I am an immigrant from the Dominican Republic who arrived in New York City in 1989 at the age of 12 with both of my parents and two younger siblings. We settled in the North Bronx, where I was enrolled in public school (8th grade). When I arrived, I had an extremely limited grasp of the English language, but through participation in the Bilingual and ESL programs, I acquired sufficient academic English language proficiency in four and a half years to be able to go to college. During my undergraduate years in the Midwest, I was exposed to peers whose life experiences differed fundamentally from mine, and the daily choices that they faced appeared overly simplistic in contrast to the complex ones about identity and cultural orientation that I confronted. Concurrently, my academic curriculum exposed me to models that espoused the importance of psychological processes. Yet, there was a dearth of theories which could address my experience as an immigrant. This motivated me to pursue a degree in clinical psychology with a focus on the psychosocial development of immigrant Latino children and their families.

My first clinical experiences with this population occurred in a midsized Midwestern city as a school-based mental health clinician at a public elementary school. During my two years there, I worked with students K-6th grade and their families, providing therapy and collaborating with teachers in the classrooms to create an environment that would foster successful adaptation for these children. After completing this academic requirement, I was accepted into a one-year clinical internship at a large metropolitan hospital in New York City with an established immigrant population composed primarily of 2nd and 3rd generation Latinos. Since then, I have been working in an outpatient community mental health clinic in a small rural town in Southeast Pennsylvania. The population that I currently serve is predominantly composed of 1st and

2nd generation immigrants from Mexico and Puerto Rico. This has exposed me to the clinical presentation of immigrant children and adolescents facing acculturation stressors.

CHAPTER 4

EMERGING THEMES

Narrative Summary of Open-Ended Responses

The answers of the 23 participants to open-ended questions were categorized and complete summaries of all the categories generated by each question are available in Tables 5-35. The tables include answers generated through individual interviews as well as focus groups. The narrative presentation of the responses to the open-ended questions centers on how these inform and augment our understanding of the following domains of interest as they relate to immigrant Latino children:

1) Pre-migration factors
2) Post-migration factors
3) Stress and Coping
4) Acculturation stress and Coping

Pre-Migration Factors

The children's responses to questions related to pre-migration factors, including the immigration event, re-affirmed the importance of the extended family in this process. This is evident by their most salient memories centering on family members such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins; as well as events and activities that related to family members such as living without a parent, grandparents' illnesses, and doing things with family members. A second key factor that was identified by participants was the community, particularly their school and teachers.

- "My family. My school. I remember that every day I would go out. Here I cannot do that because here there is a lot of, a lot of "security." There, well, I could go with my friends and I talked to them about things that I talk to my friends here about, but it is not the same. I helped my grandmother a lot since she had a store and I helped her. But I did like to be outside. I was hardly ever home. Otherwise, I would care for my cousin there at the house." (12 year-old-female).

Particularly relevant to the family relationships discussed by the participants was the pattern of separations and loss of attachments that they lived through as a result of piecemeal immigration practices. The children recounted being left with extended family members, typically grandparents and aunts, when parents relocated to the United States. Whereas some of these placements were unfavorable and the children faced neglect, verbal abuse and physical aggression, most were loving and supportive. The latter resulted in the children becoming greatly attached to caregivers who would eventually leave them in order to immigrate or stay behind when the children relocated.

- "[We stayed] with my grandma. [My mother] visited one time. When she went, she brought my brother and later she sent for us. [I felt bad] because he is my only brother." (11 year-old-female).
- "[We stayed] almost 3 years [with my grandmother]. But sometimes she hit my sisters a lot. It was my Aunt Adriana's fault. She's married. She was an adult already. She hit me with a cord." (9 year-old-male).
- "We felt comfortable there, it's just that we didn't have that much fun, because my great grandma she had a bad foot. […][I was sad when we left] cuz my great grandma she was gonna stay there alone. I mean she had my uncle and stuff but still, I felt sad. [At the airport, I felt] sad because I left my great grandma there. I said bye with my hands and they just, tears were coming out of their eyes and they said bye. And that's all we did. […] I've been back. Just to see my great grandmother's death." (10 year-old-male).

As it pertained to the immigration journey, children exhibited remarkable recollection about the events that they lived through and the feelings that they experienced. Some of the most commonly recalled details about the trip were about being separated from their family during the trip, immigration police and being interrogated, with feelings of sadness and fear permeating throughout.

- "We crossed and then the person who was driving parked because he thought that immigration police was following him. And then he left us there in the car and he ran away. Then we waited there. Then after an hour, he came back and left us where there were many trees. He left us there for a long time and

never came back. Then it was only me and my brother alone. But there were another two guys. We went with them and told them "Let's go back. Let's let immigration catch us so that we can eat," because we had not eaten since the day before, [and it was now] morning, because we slept there. Then they sent us back. Then we crossed again." (12-year-old male)

Post-Migration Factors

In addition to the events and experiences that the participants lived through before and during their relocation to the United States, the situations with which they were presented once they arrived also mediated their adjustment to their new life. For example, although a vast majority of the children had not returned to their home country since they relocated, nearly two thirds stated that they wanted to return, either to visit or permanently. Despite being unable to travel, some due to financial constraints and others due to their immigration status, all of the participants stated that they remain in contact via phone with relatives, predominantly grandparents, who still live in the country of origin.

- "[We talk] every so often with my two grandmothers. With my remaining grandfather, I hardly talk because there were times that I wanted to talk to him and he never wanted to talk to me. So I don't ask for him anymore. I only talk to my grandmother. We got along well, but since I didn't spend time with him. I spent time outside with my grandmother and not with him. But we did get along. But then when I called him on the phone, he didn't want to talk to us." (12-year-old female)

Another intensely important factor which impacts the acculturation process of immigrant children is racism. Even at their young age, the participants of this study demonstrated an extraordinary awareness of the negative preconceptions held by their community about immigrants from their country of origin. They identified racial slurs, negative attitudes and intolerance as being the most persistent forms of racism that they encountered.

- "They say things to us. I mean, they do not like the Mexicans speaking Spanish in front of them because they think that we're saying bad things. That's why they tell us to speak English and not Spanish. That's why once when they were saying things to us, they were saying, "Go back to Mexico," and other things. They were saying a lot of things and we got mad." (12-year-old male)

These signs of prejudice created distress in the vast majority of the children interviewed, even those who had not been the immediate victims of acts of racism.

- "Nobody has ever called me [derogatory names] but I feel bad because I am also from Mexico." (11-year-old male)

The primary setting in which these participants were exposed to the new country was the school. Therefore, this was the stage on which their attitudes would be shaped. Although their responses focused primarily on their sense of competence in successfully meeting the new academic demands, their assessment of their school experience was impacted by their social interactions with peers.

- "Well, at first when I arrived it was very difficult because there weren't as many Mexicans are there are now. Even if there had been Mexicans, not all Mexicans were like me. I mean, when I arrived, I was very serious, very afraid. A few weeks after I arrived, some American girls hit me. They hit me. And there was a *chicana*[4] that was there. She pretended to be very kind to me but she was the one who told them to hit me. That's what the American girls said." (12-year-old female)

The acquisition of the English language was another central aspect of the post-migration experience. Almost all of the participants reported that they had little or no knowledge of English when they initially arrived and two-thirds described the process of learning it as either negative or difficult due to the isolating effect of being unable to understand verbal communications.

[4] Chicana refers to a U.S. born female of Mexican parents.

- "Kind of embarrassing because people were talking to me and I didn't understand the words they said, so it was hard for me. [I felt like] a dumb person because I didn't understand anything." (10-year-old male)

Nevertheless, their answers evidenced persistence and resourcefulness in the learning process.

- "A little difficult. […] I learned to say it. And I would repeat it. And then I would hear something and when they talked to me, I would say the things I heard. And that's how I learned." (9-year-old male)

Since English language acquisition is one of the most imperative tasks faced by immigrant children, their attitudes about the value of this undertaking play a vital role in their commitment to the process. This was another instance in which these participants demonstrated a keen recognition of the multi-dimensional aspect of the consequences of learning English. On the one hand, they are able to identify long-range benefits such as increasing their social support systems and improving employment opportunities in the future.

- "I have more friends and I've been told that if I go to Mexico after having studied here, I can have a better job because I speak two languages. And I can get a high rank." (12-year-old male)

Whereas on the other hand, they recognized the increased social and academic expectations that accompany fluency, as well as verbalized a common concern about forgetting Spanish. One unexpected source of apprehension identified by participants was the belief that their choice about which language to speak at school would vanish once they could communicate effectively in English.

- "When I had learned a little, they would start speaking very fast." (9-year-old female)
- "Sometimes I forget Spanish. Sometimes I get confused with the words and I say other stuff. I once tried to tell my mom that I wanted "lechuga" and instead I forgot the word and I said "lettuce" and she said "what is that?" They say "try not to forget it."" (10-year-old male)

Stress and Coping

As with children of all backgrounds, the families of Latino immigrant children are both a source of stress and a source of support. However, for children who are recent immigrants, the family is often their only source of support. Although a large number of children did not report conflict of their own at home, many reported interpersonal conflict between family members and stressors such as substance use and financial worries.

- "I'm always fighting with my siblings. My parents get along well, except that when my father drinks they get into arguments." (12-year-old female)

Despite the presence of conflict, a majority of these families demonstrate cohesion and stability to the children by regularly engaging in joint activities inside and outside the home.

- "We watch movies since we have a big TV, we watch it in the living room. My mom likes to watch them in English so that she can learn more. Or we go outside to ride our bikes and to swim since our apartment complex has a pool." (10-year-old female)

In addition to the typical concerns about school and conflict with peers, these participants were highly preoccupied with the health and well-being of family members, and also identified sources of stress uncommon to typical children, such as fear of car accidents and the possibility that a parent would suffer a work-related accident. These last three concerns are heavily influenced by their remarkable grasp of how an immigrant identity influences the potential outcomes of unexpected events.

- "If someone hits [your car] and you do not have a license, you are the one who is going to have a problem. The immigrant. Because you do not have papers." (11-year-old female)

In addition to a heightened awareness of stressors that plague immigrants, these participants also revealed knowledge of a diverse set of coping strategies utilized to address interpersonal conflicts and cope with anxiety. Regardless of the source of stress, the children reported witnessing and utilizing active coping strategies more often than passive or avoidant coping strategies.

- "Well, my dad just buys my mom a present and tells her that he won't drink anymore. […] We just talk to each other and that's it." (12-year-old female)
- "I would tell someone. A person very close to me, like my mom or my dad. They would try to help me solve the problem." (12-year-old male)

However, irrespective of the coping strategy that they used, 72% of participants reported feeling better after implementing their strategy of choice.

In the case of interpersonal conflict with peers, the majority of children reported utilizing pro-social or neutral strategies to address the conflict, with only 25% of the responses reflecting the use of anti-social strategies, such as physical aggression. Not coincidentally, 25% also reported feeling "Nervous/Bad" after responding to the stressor.

Acculturation Stress and Coping

Although throughout the interviews, the participants' answers provided a broader and deeper range of answers than initially expected for a group of this age, their answers to questions about acculturation stress revealed advanced metacognition and self-awareness about their own acculturation process. For example, although some felt uncertain, most respondents were able to name potential positive and negative reactions from their parents once they begin to acculturate.

- "Happy. They tell me that I have to learn a lot of English." (9-year-old male)
- "I think they would treat me badly because they would say, "You are Mexican. You are not American. You don't have to behave that way. You are you, not them."" (12-year-old female)

Moreover, the major stressors that they identified since having arrived in the United States: the English Language, interpersonal challenges, and concerns about their immigration status, confirm a staggering degree of conscious engagement in the process of acculturation.

- "I did not know anyone. When I came to the school, I didn't know anyone. I felt sort of strange because sometimes I was around all these strangers." (9-year-old male)

- "The language. If I wanted or needed something, or when someone hit me, I wanted to tell the teacher and I couldn't." (12-year-old female)

Although some of these stressors are outside of their control, all participants reported actively seeking a solution to their problem.

- "I studied about English words, words in English. And some of my friends, they told me words. Not in the school but when I was at home, I was riding my bike and I went to my friends' house and they helped me." (10-year-old male)

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the stressors, their efforts weren't always effective and most felt that the difficulty remained even if only partially.

The act of relocating to a new country was not easy for these children despite the gains that they perceived and that their parents espoused as reasons for moving. And while none of the participants expressed regret about the decision to relocate, many exhibited remarkable insight about the ambivalence that they experienced.

- "On the one hand happy to get to know this. But on the other hand I feel sad about having left Mexico, my family, my friends, the school, and that's all." (10-year-old female)

This awareness of the gains attained by having moved (i.e. being reunited with family, improving their quality of life by increasing financial resources and access to educational opportunities) provides a counterbalance to the unremitting stressors that they face immediately after relocating (i.e. having left family members behind, experiencing discrimination, and higher crime rates).

- "Seeing my mom and my uncles who live here." (9-year-old male)
- "The fights. They carry knives, switchblades, guns." (9-year-old male)
- "Because I don't live in the Dominican Republic…because I have almost all, everybody. I have like the whole entire families that form my grandma, some other people who live in NY, but almost all of them live in D.R. And I miss my family." (10-year-old male)

Moreover, consistent with their general approach to coping with stressors, the vast majority of participants reported utilizing active coping strategies to manage these stressors.

Multiple Readings Analysis

A multiple readings analysis as described by Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller and Argyris (1994) of 10 transcripts of individual interviews (6 males & 4 females) was conducted. This approach requires that each transcript be read several times, each time reading through a different lens. With each reading, the stories told can take on a different or new meaning (Fowler, 1997). For the purposes of this study, the following lenses have been identified through the literature:

1) Evaluation of the experience: positive, negative, neutral
2) Locus of control: internal vs. external
3) Cultural conflict: values/beliefs, behaviors, thinking patterns, and self-identification
4) Response to conflict: avoiding, acceptance/facing
5) Outcome assessment: positive, negative, neutral
6) Cultural orientation: native culture, host culture, integration, alienation, ambivalence

<u>Evaluation of Experience</u>

The children interviewed evaluated distinct periods of their journey as positive, negative, and neutral. The positive aspects of their experiences centered around their reunification with relatives, typically parents, who had been living in the United States for years prior; the opportunities available to them after acquiring a comfortable level of English Language proficiency; the support provided in school by teachers and peers; making new friends; and access to resources.

- "I liked it because my grandmother and my mom were here." (11-year-old female)
- "[There are] a lot of good things. I get a lot of prizes. I got a diploma. I've read a lot of books. There are a lot of libraries in this country. But not in Mexico, there's not that much." (10-year-old male)
- "We know another language, so we can find a better job in Mexico." (12-year-old female)

- "I have more friends here and I have been told that if I go to Mexico after having studied here, I can find a good job because I can speak two languages. I can succeed." (12-year-old male)

The children evaluated the experiences of traveling to the United States, their initial contact with schools, academic challenges later on, leaving family in the country of origin, multiple relocations, and interpersonal conflict with peers as negative. The participants described their initial contact with American schools as challenging due to their lack of knowledge of the language. Many of these children described a feeling of helplessness as they came to realize that they could not communicate their needs or understand what was expected of them when they were in school. As they gained English Language proficiency, the challenge became academic as they faced new materials, different learning expectations, and a perceived loss of academic proficiency.

- "She was scolding [my mother] because she had messed up…and us too… We followed her but not very close and we had to cross the street by ourselves. It was a busy street with a lot of traffic at that time. We were scared." (12-year-old female)
- "I like it here but I miss my family." (10-year-old male)
- "I didn't even want to talk. I was embarrassed to speak English." (11-year-old male)
- "Then, there is a store that has a house on top, we moved there. Then we moved to S street. Then from there we moved to a house on 12th street and from there we moved to the one on H Street." (9-year-old male)

The interpersonal struggles created by the immigration process were also identified as negative experiences. Most of the students identified having been separated from family members who stayed in the country of origin as the "bad thing" about having moved to the United States. Other interpersonal challenges were conflict with peers, often of different ethnic backgrounds, and frequent loss of friends due to multiple relocations since immigration.

- "I felt strange because sometimes I was surrounded by strangers. Then I met my friends. But three of them moved." (9-year-old male)
- "[I feel] sad because it would've been better if [my dad] would've been here. Everybody together." (10-year-old male)
- "[I feel] bad. That's why once when they said things to us…they were saying "go back to Mexico" and what not. They were saying a lot of things and we got mad." (12-year-old male)

Some of the concrete aspects of immigration were identified as "different" by the participants but not given a qualifier of positive or negative. For example, when contrasting their lives in their countries of origin versus their lives in the United States, many children said that it was different but did not say if it was better or worse. Some children perceived their lives to not have changed that much and said that it was the same. Some aspects of their lives that they perceived as different but not better or worse were the schools, their relationships with peers, and their relationships with members of their family.

- "It's very different because it is bigger here. There are more cities and more places to go." (12-year-old male)
- "I was not used to this weather since in Mexico it is never so cold nor so hot, I wasn't used to it." (10-year-old female)

Although many of the children identified English Language acquisition as one of the "good things" about having moved to the United States, when discussing their use of the Spanish language versus their use of the English language, they did not express preference in either desire to speak it or value of the language to them. They described the languages as different in pronunciation and functionality. They saw equal value in both even when they keep their use of each language separate by situation.

- "[The language] is very different because of its pronunciation." (10-year-old female)
- "There are things I like to say and things that are very difficult." (11-year-old female)

Locus of Control

The themes that emerged while reading the interviews through this lens indicate that the children have well-defined aspects of their immigration experience during which they felt a sense of internal control and distinct aspects in which they felt that the situation was out of their hands. Their sense of internal locus of control centered around their desire to move to the United states, ability to acquire the English language, making new friends, level of academic success, ability to escalate and/or resolve conflict with peers, ability to resolve conflict with family members, and their ability to return to their country of origin.

- "[I feel] good. I always wanted to come here." (12-year-old male)
- "I knew [that we were coming] since before we…Since before, I already knew, but Mom did not tell my sisters." (12-year-old female)
- "I get a lot of prizes. I got a diploma. […] I passed to the 5th grade with good scores. " (10-year-old male)
- "I go to my English teacher. I pay attention and I ask my English teacher too." (12-year-old female)
- "The teacher told us to help each other. Then we became friends. We played." (9-year-old male)

The primary situation during which they sensed that the locus of control was external was their trip to the United States. All of these children felt that although they wanted to come and agreed to come, once they embarked on the trip, all of the decisions were made for them and they had no choice but to comply. They also identified the dangers in not doing exactly as told. Other situations in which they felt that they had no voice were the choice to bid farewell to and/or separate from loved ones, when they can speak Spanish outside of their home, level of social participation, and frequency of contact with their non-custodial parent. They also view their safety/well-being, conflict with adults and teachers, discrimination, and the level of success in communications when they first arrived as being outside of their sphere of influence.

- "The *coyote*[5] did not want me to walk for two and a half days because I wouldn't hold up. Then, he sent me through the border. […] It was scary because I couldn't cross. I did not see my sister or my father for two months because once we crossed, immigration caught us. They kept us and they returned us further back than Sonora. […] It was scary because the man said that if we did not arrive on time, my dad's group had to move on." (11-year-old female)
- "[The teacher] did not let us speak Spanish. So when you wanted to speak to a friend, she would not let us speak Spanish and that's how we learned." (11-year-old male)
- "My dad tells us that he will come visit but then he does not come because the woman he's with is very mean." (11-year-old female)
- "When we left, it was in the morning, in the middle of the night and I couldn't bid [my friends] farewell, nor my grandmother." (11-year-old male)
- "I get bored. I don't know what to do. [I'm not allowed to go outside] because it's too big. But sometimes my mom lets me go with my friends." (10-year-old male)
- "[A boy] used to say things to me and I would… Since he spoke English, he told the teacher and I did not know how to tell her." (11-year-old female)
- "The man who was crossing us parked because he thought that immigration police was following him. Then he left us in the car and took off running. Then we waited there. […] He left us for a long time and he did not come back." (12-year-old male)

Cultural Conflict

All of the children identified sources of cultural conflict during their interviews. These conflicts were spread across the areas that are influenced by acculturation: values/beliefs, behaviors, thinking patterns, and self-identification. The most observable conflicts were the behavioral ones: language of choice while watching TV or listening to

[5] Coyote is a term that refers to a person who assists an undocumented immigrant to enter the United States from Mexico.

music, social participation, sports in which they engage, favorite foods, and choosing friends from different ethnic groups.

- "Me and my dad speak English… [Mom] pretends to understand it. She laughs when she's not supposed to. But we watch the Mexican news." (10-year-old male)
- "Some are only out in the street and I can't do that." (12-year-old female)
- "I eat too much American food my mom says…She eats Mexican food: soup, beans, everything Mexican. [I don't like it] that much but I do like soup." (10-year-old male)
- "Some Saturdays we play soccer. Not basketball. Only soccer." (8-year-old male)

Values and beliefs in which cultural conflict is evident were security/safety, rules, consequences, religious beliefs, value of family, and the value placed on academic success.

- "I like it here. [The bad thing] was leaving my family." (11-year-old female)
- "My great grandmother, she was gonna stay there alone. I mean she had my uncle and stuff but still, I felt sad." (10-year-old male)
- "[My mom says] not to study anymore because we already study too much at school… [Teachers] tell us about things that we don't know and I want to know." (8-year-old male)
- "Detention, violations, demerits, Saturday school. Those are the ones I don't like." (9-year-old male)

Thinking patterns that were subject to cultural conflict were their understanding of the world around them. The children expressed a newfound awareness of ethnic diversity, racism, and behavioral norms in their communities. They also developed new interests which were not always supported by their home culture, such as a love of books, libraries, science, English language, and ethnic differences. An interesting conflict was also expressed by many children when discussing their increased proficiency in the English language. Many of them saw their increased knowledge of one language

(English) negatively impacting their knowledge of the other language (Spanish). Lastly, the conflict about whether to return to their home country was present for all of the children. Some lean toward visiting, some are determined to return for good after they have completed their education, whereas a smaller group is uncertain.

- "…I would learn more English, that's good, but I would lose more of my Spanish language…then when I go to my dad, they [sic] say something in Spanish and I won't understand it." (10-year-old male)
- "[Mom] says that one day we'll go back to Mexico. That's all she tells me. [I want to see] if I can get used to living there. If I can't then we'll return." (11-year-old male)

The conflict around self-identification was also evident in all of the children. Whereas some identified themselves explicitly during the interview, others implied it as they excluded themselves from other groups: "the Chicanos," "the Blacks," "the Americans." Many of these children also indicated that they identify themselves as whatever their parents have expressed to them, whether explicitly or implicitly.

- "When I came, when I went there and the English kids say that I'm Mexican, I said, "I'm not Mexican. I'm Dominican." And I told them that there's two kinds...there's three kinds of different languages in Spanish." (10-year-old male)
- "When I arrived at first it was very difficult because there weren't as many Mexicans as there are now. And even if there were Mexicans, not all the Mexicans were like me." (12-year-old female)

<u>Response to Conflict</u>

The children responded to conflicts that they faced at times by avoiding and other times by accepting and facing the conflict. Avoidant responses identified by the participants include aggression, blaming others, choosing to comply begrudgingly, denial, and helplessness.

- "I don't pay mind to it but sometimes when I get tired, I get angry. (Audible sigh). I feel like fighting but since I don't know how to fight, I don't do anything." (12-year-old female)
- "One time I was riding my bike around […] and like 20 kids were chasing me. […] I started riding my bike faster to the house and I told my mom that we couldn't do anything, so I just stayed inside." (10-year-old male)
- "There were times that I wanted something and I was alone. I couldn't tell anyone. Instead, sometimes when I was hungry, if there was nobody that I could tell, I just wouldn't eat. I would wait until I got home." (11-year-old female)
- "[We don't get along] so well. Sometimes we just fight because they say things to us." (12-year-old male)

Participants' responses that indicate acceptance and facing of conflict are seeking assistance/support, telling someone, accepting responsibility for their choices (apologizing), communicating with the person with whom they're in conflict, finding ways to distract themselves from the stressor, educating others, and choosing to ignore the stressor to deescalate conflict.

- "There are times that there are words that I don't understand. […] I study them. I ask what it is. Then I'll know it." (8-year-old male)
- "We are from different states [in Mexico]. They have different traditions from us. They speak different than us too. There are things that we say that to them it would be offensive and not to us. We tell them what it means to people from our state and they understand." (12-year-old male)
- "I miss my family. I try to remember how fun it was over there. And [it makes me feel] happy. It makes me think that I'm over there, doing the things right now when I think about that. That's what I do." (10-year-old male)
- "They called me stupid and I told the teacher. I told them that they were the stupid ones who were going to get in trouble." (8-year-old male)
- "[When we were in the raft] I wanted to get down. I told them to let me get down so I could help. The big one knew how to swim but not very much and

then she got stuck. Her shoe was stuck in the mud and I went to retrieve it." (11-year-old female)

Outcome Assessment

When the researcher probed about the children's assessment of the outcome of conflictive or stressful situations, they identified some positive outcomes, some negative outcomes, and some neutral outcomes. Positive outcomes were reported in the areas of making friends, resolving conflict with peers, finding help or support when needed, resolving conflict between family members, acquisition of the English language, and academic success.

- "I started talking to Americans and we started getting along. That's how I met [him]." (10-year-old male)
- "[I told] the teacher. He punished them. I felt better when he punished them. Because they will not be able to do anything to me." (8-year-old male)
- "When we disagree, we start fighting. But then we say sorry and we start playing." (10-year-old male)

Negative outcomes were identified in the areas of resolving conflict between family members, maintaining Spanish proficiency while acquiring English language skills, conflict with teachers and behavioral problems at school.

- "I felt fine but sometimes bad because [my classmates] would say something to the teacher and the teacher would get mad at me because she loved [male classmate] more since he had been here longer and she was used to him." (11-year-old female)
- "Sometimes I forget Spanish. Sometimes I get confused with the words and I say other stuff." (10-year-old male)
- "My father's sisters and my mother are having problems. And they make ugly faces to my brother and yell at him. That's when I talked to them. […] Since they still make ugly faces at us, I will do the same to them. I told my mom that I'm tired already." (12-year-old female)

Some students identified neutral outcomes in the areas of academic success and conflict resolution with peer.

- "[After I fought, I felt] somewhat good and somewhat bad. Good because I did not let them get over on me and bad because I did something I shouldn't have." (12-year-old male)

Cultural Orientation

The topic of cultural orientation was evident throughout the interviews in the ways in which the children expressed their interests, preferences, aspects of their lives that they value, and major concerns. Children who had a strong affiliation to the native culture expressed a desire to return to their country of origin, identified themselves as a member of that ethnic group, preferred friends who had the same or a similar ethnic background as their own, expressed a preference for ethnic foods and participating in sports popular in their countries of origin, were protective of their home culture, and expressed concerns about forgetting Spanish and worries about the relatives that they left behind.

- "[My parents] would say "you are Mexican, you are not American. You have no reason to behave that way. You are you. You are not them." (12-year-old female)
- "[I miss] my friends and my teacher. I wish I could be there." (11-year-old female)
- "What makes me feel better is that there are Mexicans with whom I can also speak Spanish because I know some people who speak only English at home and after some time they don't even know a single world in Spanish." (12-year-old female

Many of the participants explicitly communicated a strong affiliation toward the host (American) culture in their choice of English-speaking friends, enjoyment in utilizing their English language skills whenever possible, interest in engaging in social activities outside of the home and school, and newfound interests in science, school, books, libraries, and entertainment typical of the host culture (cartoons, games, & toys).

- "[My parents] think I belong more to the state and to this country because I speak more English at home like a lot of American homes." (10-year-old male)
- "I hardly remember anything from Mexico. I think I've been here a year and a half. […] I do not want to go to Mexico. " (11-year-old female)
- "The good thing is there's a Harry Potter. I love that book, those books. There's a 5th one coming out." (10-year-old male)

A few participants articulated an integration of both cultures in their use of both languages, diverse food choices, diverse groups of friends, desire to participate in both cultures and reside in both countries, and attempt to duplicate their lives in both countries with the types of friends, possession, and activities of their choices.

- "We go out to eat at a restaurant all of us. [We go to] the *taqueria* or the Chinese restaurant." (11-year-old female)
- "I only want to go [back] to visit." (8-year-old male)
- "I have friends that are Black and friends that are White." (11-year-old female)

The instances of alienation from both cultures were few in this group of children and limited to specific time periods, situations, and behaviors. For example, some children stated feeling a sense of being alone when they first arrived. This was evident by their feeling left out of activities, unable to participate due to lack of English language knowledge, and having to endure bullying as "the new kid." Additionally, situations that relied heavily on language and cultural knowledge also created a sense of isolation. Lastly, some of the children strongly reject behaviors that conflict with their family values regardless of which cultural group exhibits it such as cursing, disrespectful behavior toward adults, and roaming the streets.

- "I don't know. They just do it on purpose because that's what everybody does when a new kid comes and they don't care. They just start treating [him] bad and then at the middle of the year, they just start treating them like they're pals and stuff." (10-year-old male)

- “Nobody spoke Spanish so I would just go home.” (11-year-old female)
- “They behave like monkeys. In Mexico they don’t do that. They talk back to the teacher. If the teacher scolds them, they throw things. I have never seen that in Mexico.” (12-year-old female)

The children’s ambivalence about their cultural orientation was palpable when they discussed their desire to return to their home countries and their parents’ feelings about their participation in the host culture and adaptation of the cultural norms and behaviors.

- “[Mom] says that one day we’ll go back to Mexico. That’s all she tells me. [I want to see] if I can get used to living there. If I can’t then we’ll return.” (11-year-old male)
- “Maybe [Mom would feel] happy because we can help her talk, learn the English. She’s only good in Spanish.” (10-year-old male)

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVES

Personal Narrative: My Story of Family & Community

I left the Dominican Republic on January 2nd 1989, 6 days after my 12th birthday under the pretext of a one-week trip to New York City as a Christmas/birthday present. I was thrilled because although I had traveled to the United States before, I had never seen snow or ice skated. Both were on top of my to-do list. As I prepared for this trip, I did not consider packing any "favorites," except for the doll I had received as a birthday present, since I believed I'd be returning home in a week. Our *despedida*[6] from our relatives was unremarkable to me and I have little memory now of who was there and what was said. I had no reason to give that moment the attention that it deserved as I was focused on what was awaiting me in New York City the next day. My parents, two younger siblings, and I boarded a late evening American Airlines flight from Santo Domingo to John F. Kennedy International Airport that night and since then I have called the United States home.

My previous visit to New York City had been fun and exciting, and though the train rides had been at times unpleasant and my English language abilities did not allow me interactions beyond asking for directions or telling time, I expected that seeing snow for the first time would compensate for any of the confusing situations I remembered. When we arrived, it was 2 AM and one of the coldest days of the season according to my uncle who awaited us at the airport with heavy coats for everyone. The streets were desolate and there was no snow on the ground. The following day, we woke up to large snowflakes floating down slowly toward the busy streets five stories below. This excitement was only temporarily dampened by my confusion when my mother explained that we could not go outside until our father returned from work. Why did he have to work during our vacation?

[6] Farewell.

The reality of what was happening did not become apparent until I suffered a severe asthma attack the following day and my mother cried as she informed my father that she could not go through with it. She firmly stated that she was going back with us but he could stay. My first time walking on fresh snow was on the way to the doctor's office with my father for an asthma treatment. After my medical situation was resolved, my response to the idea of living in this new country was excitement. I was enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn new things, visit new places, and improve my limited English skills.

After two weeks of visiting the same playgrounds, leaving the neighborhood only on weekends when my father was not working, and not being able to start school (some documents needed to be translated before we could be enrolled), my enthusiasm faded. In fact, it transformed into anger and a sense of helplessness. Except for my siblings, I had nobody to play with. None of my relatives in NYC had children living here. I wanted to go back. I had only brought one doll and had not stopped to decide if it was my favorite one because I did not know it was forever. I had not given my grandmother a strong enough hug because I did not know that I would not have another opportunity 10 days later. I had not turned in my completed book report for History. I was not given fair warning.

Prior to immigration, I had traveled to the United States to visit relatives and had been exposed to the difference in language and certain behaviors. However, I had no real concept of the beliefs, norms, roles and diversity of customs. My parents had also traveled for multiple exploratory trips to assess the most fitting area for relocation, securing job opportunities, adequate living arrangements, and establishing social-support networks. During that time, my siblings and I were enrolled in English courses in our school in the Dominican Republic. The extent of what we learned was limited to vocabulary words and simple sentences. Nevertheless, it served the role of familiarizing us with the structure and sounds of the new language.

Though the events and preparation work that occurred over a period of two years prior to my family's immigration allowed me the opportunity to come in contact and experiment with aspects of the American culture that awaited me, these were insufficient to prepare me to cope with the most contrasting aspects of the culture and of the country.

On the other hand, my parents' legwork assured that basic support systems -- schools, pediatrician, home, and employment -- were in place, reducing the number and severity of stressors faced by the familial system in the early days.

The months that followed our relocation were filled with many new things. Some of these were exciting, such as the sights of a large city and classmates from all over Latin America. Others were terrifying, such as the chaos of a school with 800+ students, most of whom did not speak Spanish. Cultural conflict was present at each turn and in almost every situation, inside and outside my home. There was no safe place. Some of these "battles" I faced with determination. Others I passively avoided because of the potential crises that they could create at home.

My parents chose to immigrate to ensure that my siblings and I would have access to the best educational opportunities that we could attain. Although this decision was made without our direct input, my siblings and I understood the immense sacrifice that my parents had made to open these doors for us. We knew that we had to focus on academics and make the best of it. However, despite our desire and strong educational background, this was not an easy task. I faced frustration from the beginning when my mother was informed that because of my age, I would have to be placed in the 6th grade. My mother nearly acquiesced until she saw me crying. I would lose two academic years, which everyone insisted I could use to learn English. Instead, my mother requested that I be offered the opportunity to take a placement test.

My first week in an American junior high school was terrifying. I was placed in a class with 30 Latin American immigrant 8th graders, ranging in age from 13 years old to 15 years old. Many of the boys were disruptive, argued with the teachers, and ignored directions. The girls were wearing make-up, most had boyfriends, and one had a one-year-old son. Our academic subjects were taught in Spanish and we had two English Language courses per day. Initially, I felt that I would do well in my academic subjects, after all, I had been a straight 'A' student. My confidence faltered when, as I walked into my science class for the first time, I overheard my new teacher say in Spanish, "We can't handle the ones we have and they keep sending us more." I believed at that moment that I was alone in this process and there would be no support if I ever needed it.

Socially, the introductory period to this system was no easier. For the first time, I had to identify myself by my country. I certainly did not understand the relevance of it, until conflict arose outside of school one afternoon between the Puerto Rican students and the Dominican students. Additionally, I was the only 8th grader whose mother walked her to school and, though I tried initially to ignore this fact, it bothered me that none of my classmates would acknowledge me on the courtyard while my mother was present. After a few weeks, I tried explaining to my mother that parents in the United States do not walk 8th graders to school. To this my mother replied in Spanish, "Your feet may be in New York but your head is still in the Dominican Republic." I knew she meant that I was not American, even though I was in America, and that she wanted it to stay that way. I did not fight her on this because this normal, every day activity to my peers' mothers was a crisis to my mother. And a crisis to anyone in the home represented a family crisis, given our limited sources of social support.

Eventually, my mother felt that crossing the street and walking half a city-block with hundreds of other students was not so dangerous after all and I was allowed to walk to school by myself. I wish the joy that I experienced that day would have lasted through the end of the week. Instead, by the third or fourth day I became the target of a group of 4 or 5 African American girls. I was bullied outside the school every morning before the doors were opened. They intimidated me physically, laughed at me and screamed things that I did not understand. I had never been bullied before. Suddenly, I did not want to go to school. I could not tell my mother because then she would never allow me to walk to school by myself ever again. I could not tell my teachers. At the time, I still felt that they would not help. However, I knew I had to go to school and thus I could not let that go on forever. I found a peer, a girl who had been born in the United States to Dominican parents. She lived in my building and her mother knew my mother. One morning, I waited for her outside our building and we walked together. When the girls approached me that morning, she told them to back off in her flawless English.

Despite my parents' fears that I would begin to expect the freedom that American teenagers were awarded, they encouraged me to improve my English skills and become engaged in school related activities. This presented me with a stage in which I could study the new culture, apply my newly acquired knowledge and, with relative safety,

evaluate my success and level of mastery. Language seemed the most essential and efficient place to start. This was not entirely selfish, as I was charged with the task of interpreting for my parents when we visited the doctor's office, school, or stores. I was also responsible for assisting my siblings with their English homework. I internalized the responsibility of acquiring English and took an active role by visiting libraries and reading 1st and 2nd grade story books over the summer that followed my first 5 months in the USA. However, as school became more manageable, home life became more stressful.

As we approached the end of our first year in the United States, the reality that our visitors' visas were to expire overwhelmed my mother. She had to make a decision to leave before violating immigration laws or stay and wait indefinitely to see her parents again. Over the next few months I would witness my mother cry almost daily, with no one to whom she could turn. I became her sounding board, despite being too young to help or really understand why she worried so much about everything. My father, who had attended college and held a supervisor position for 15 years at a large company in the Dominican Republic, was working long hours, 6 days per week as a hardware store clerk to support a family of five and save money to pay an attorney to resolve our immigration status.

It was during this challenging time that we found a church. Though when we first arrived, some of our few ventures out of the neighborhood were to churches, my mother had not found one that met our spiritual needs. Instead, we had been holding "services" at home by ourselves. Having always had a place to worship while living in the Dominican Republic, this was very strange to us, but we really had no choice in the matter. Then, one day, my mother met a lady in our neighborhood who invited her to visit a small store-front Spanish-speaking Pentecostal church four city-blocks from our apartment. We were met by a small group of families from a handful of Latin American countries, including Puerto Rico, Mexico and The Dominican Republic. These people became our family, our support group. We celebrated Christmas, New Years' Eve, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and birthdays with them. The Pastor served as counselor to my mother when her stress level overwhelmed her. The church became our weekly family activity and helped us explore the world outside of our neighborhood, as it

provided us with opportunity to travel to other churches, summer camps, and youth activities, including ice skating! More importantly, I met other people who were my age and were also facing the same struggles I was facing.

On my first day of high school, I was disappointed that my best friend and I were not in the same homeroom. However, upon comparing schedules we were excited to be in 3 classes together. That joy was short lived when, upon walking into our Social Studies class, our teacher, Mr. Perez, asked to see our schedules. He informed me that I did not belong in the bilingual class because I was in English 5, which was the class for advanced learners of English as a second language. My entire schedule was changed when he spoke with my advisor, Mr. Henry, who called to inform my mother that I was being transitioned out of the bilingual program into the ESL program. Though this was a source of pride for my parents, it separated me from my friends as most of the students in these classes were Asian and European immigrants. In a school of 5,000 students, I felt alone again. I turned to Mr. Henry and he became a tremendous source of support for me through my years in high school and my mother's go-to person whenever she had concerns about anything academic.

The difficulties I encountered that first week in high school are representative of what I faced throughout the next 3 years. The very next year, I would face a new transition, this time from ESL to regular education, going from small class sizes and a set group of teachers who knew all of us, to 35+ student classes with teachers I had never met before. The chaos and level of disregard for rules made it nearly impossible for the teachers to complete a lesson. This was of no consequence to me until it was time for a test and I realized how much I did not know. The increased stressors at school that year made it more challenging to cope with the stressors at home. My paternal grandmother passed away in the Dominican Republic and we had not been able to see her since we had relocated. We were unable to attend her funeral. This intensified my mother's constant worry about her parents' declining health. I was beginning to ask for the "freedom" that my American-born peers had. This created a major source of conflict in my house between my parents and me. They became more restrictive and I became irritable and withdrawn. However, my mother gave me the perfect "out." She said that unless it was school related, I was to be home immediately after school.

The perfect strategy for getting out of my house came disguised as a challenge. My Communications teacher, Mr. Elmore, assigned us an exercise in which we would stand in front of the class, pick a paper out of a hat and speak for one minute on the word that was on that paper. The word I picked was "thief." I had never heard or read that word before. I looked at my teacher and asked, "What does that mean?" After my classmates finished laughing and my teacher explained the meaning of the word, I spoke for one minute. The following week, Mr. Elmore asked me to become a substitute for the debate team. Since this required after-school team meetings, before-school practices, and weekend visits to the library, I said, "YES!"

Over the next year, I became more involved in extracurricular activities, student government, and community volunteering. My parents were apprehensive but supportive through all of this. My mother talked with Mr. Henry and Mr. Elmore on a regular basis to ensure that I was where I said I was going to be. My father chaperoned me to different places around the city for the events that were outside of school, since my mother was reluctant to travel outside the reach of our support network. However, their supportive attitude came to a halt when I began discussing my desire to go away to college. My parents stated very clearly that although they wanted me to obtain a college degree, I was not to leave their house until I was married. I was both shocked and angry. All the other students in the honors program were going to apply to out-of-state schools. Why couldn't I go too? I couldn't go because "although my feet were in New York, my head had to be in the Dominican Republic."

I resented being trapped between the two cultures again. My head was both in New York and the Dominican Republic now. I was not asking for anything different from what other high school students were asking for. I was no different from them, but my parents were different. I wished they could understand, so I went to Mr. Elmore and Mr. Henry to explain my situation. They met with my parents and educated them about the advantages of a college outside of the city. My parents' fears of the unknown and stereotypes of American teenagers as amoral and out of control were stronger than any reason. I was angry with them for bringing me to the U.S. to open doors for me and then having them be the ones who were closing the doors because of their own fears and old traditions. I reached out to my pastor and he spoke with my mother.

In December of my senior year of high school, I was able to return to the Dominican Republic for my first visit since our move. It was a rewarding and eye-opening experience. I realized that I was different from my cousins. My expectations, wishes, and behaviors had changed. Most conflicting for my male cousins was my insistence on being treated as an equal. My aunts fretted about my dressing "too casual," my father scolded me for speaking English to my siblings and my grandmother insisted that I wear a sweater in 70 degree weather. I was accused of being "Americanized." How could that be? To my peers in NYC, I was not American enough and I spoke English with a heavy accent. I certainly felt that I did not have the privileges of American teens. I did not belong to either culture.

In August 1993, I waved at my tearful mother and concerned father as they pulled away in a taxi. I looked behind me over my shoulder to become fully aware that all other parents had left and my fellow freshman-dorm mates were fully engaged in the scheduled meet-and-greet activity. Walking toward the front yard of my dorm, I began to experience a sense of panic as I looked around and realized that I was not dressed appropriately for the event. As I scanned the crowd: students, advisors, and resident assistants were wearing jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts. I hesitated as I looked for someone, anyone, who might acknowledge that I obviously did not fit in, with my two-piece business-casual skirt outfit and dress shoes.

Nobody seemed to notice what had become so blatantly apparent to me and as I searched for my roommate in the sea of people, I became increasingly frustrated with myself for not having argued with my mother about the style of clothes I would pack for my first semester in college. I had trusted that she knew what it would be like since she had been to college and had helped my cousin prepare for college in the Dominican Republic. However, this time, her knowledge had failed me in this new country with new customs and expectations. Expectations that I would know that dress shoes would not be the most comfortable for walking the 269-acre campus for the next 4 years.

At the time I started my undergraduate studies, I considered myself comfortable in both my home culture (Dominican) and my new culture (American). I had worked hard to acquire the language and had served as interpreter for my parents for many years. The music and television programming of choice was likely something that my parents

would not understand, both because of the language and the cultural context. My close friends were a representation of the diversity easily found in a city such as New York City. My increasing comfort in negotiating these two cultures over the previous four years left me unprepared for the conflict I encountered that day. That day I chose to face the conflict and take it upon myself to acquire the necessary information to make the following four years as successful as the previous four.

Cecilia's Story of Separation and Relocation

Cecilia is an 11-year-old Mexican female who immigrated to the Midwest, United States at age 10. She was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and is the second of five children. Currently, she is in the 5th grade and lives with her mother, step-father and four siblings (two brothers and two sisters).

Cecilia's father began traveling to the United States when he was 16 years old. When Cecilia was six years old, her mother decided to emigrate from Mexico to the United States. Cecilia and her younger brother stayed with her paternal grandparents and her older sister stayed with her maternal grandparents. In describing the day when her mother left, she recalled that when the "men" who were to transport her mother to "the place where she would cross" were loading up the luggage in the back of the van, she snuck onto the van and crawled under one of the seats in an attempt to go with her mother. However, she was discovered and while climbing down, she cut her foot. Her mother put a Band-Aid on her and asked Cecilia's sister to take her inside to get her a piece of candy. Once inside, Cecilia cried as she saw her mother get inside the van. "…my mother only stuck out her hand and waved good bye," she said.

Although she understood that she could not stay with her maternal grandparents due to her grandmother's recent heart surgery, Cecilia was distressed about being separated from her sister. "[I felt] bad. I always, always, ALWAYS talk to her since we are the two oldest," she explained. She was unhappy living with her paternal grandparents.

> They had animals in the house. There were many flies in the food. It was very dirty there…They were very rude and spoke using curse words…They yelled at us and everything.

Two months after her mother left, her maternal grandfather visited her and her brother. When he was ready to leave, the children began to cry, and he decided to take them with him.

Cecilia and her siblings were reunited at that time but only for a short period. Soon her younger brother began to have difficulty coping with their mother's departure

and her grandparents became concerned. A month later they decided to send him to live with Cecilia's mother.

> He cried every day. He cried all the time for my mother and they said that since he was only three-years-old, all that sadness could kill him. And it was better if a lady took him with her to [the United States].

This made Cecilia very sad and she cried when he left. However, although she also missed her mother, she perceived her sadness as different.

> I cried too, but not like him. He would cry for half-an-hour but he would not cheer up… [I would cheer up when] my grandmother took me outside. But they also took him outside and he would not play. He would watch us play. But when Mamá was [with us] he was mischievous. He was very funny when he was little.

For the next three years, Cecilia and her older sister lived with her maternal grandparents. They were happy there until her grandparents decided to emigrate as well. The girls were not able to travel with them and thus it was decided that they would stay with their aunt. But this was also short lived:

> My uncle would become very angry and hit us with a belt. I cried and said that I would rather stay with my other grandmother. I left but it was worse.

Cecilia's second stay with her paternal grandmother was even more traumatic than the first. When asked why it was worse, she replied:

> [My father's brother] appeared to be the devil…He would grab knives and [threatened] to kill me [sic] and my grandmother.

Six months later, due to the severity of emotional abuse that Cecilia was enduring, her mother made the decision to bring her to the United States. She called and informed Cecilia that she would be joining her immediately.

> We were with my [paternal] grandmother. She told me that I would go first because that man, my uncle, he would always say things to me and not to my sister because my sister pretended to be a little girl. She would act as if she was stupid. As if when they said something, she didn't understand. And they always told her that she could go outside and I couldn't.

Her sister was to join her six months later. Despite knowing that she would be separated again from her sister, Cecilia was happy about the news. Luckily, she did not have to

leave her sister as her father disagreed with her mother's decision and both girls were able to travel at the same time.

> My father paid for my sister because he said [to my mother], "how are you going to leave one? Bring one and leave the other alone there?"

Cecilia had one week to prepare for her trip. She had few things to pack although for years her mother had been sending her nice new clothes, "she told us to put it away in a little suitcase so that we would take it with us." However, her aunts had taken those clothes and the girls were left with "old clothes" to wear and bring with them to the U.S.

The day that Cecilia and her sister immigrated, they were accompanied by their paternal grandfather's sister, two of her sons and "some girls."

> They took us to my aunt's house… Then [my aunt's sons] took us to buy sneakers… From there, they took us in a truck that had many things… They took us to the river.

They crossed the river during the day in a small boat, in what she described as a "normal" day, not too hot or too cold. Despite some unexpected situations, Cecilia was not frightened by the experience.

> [The boat] got stuck. I wanted to get off. I told them that I could help push if they let me get off. One of the big [guys] knew how to swim but not well… My sister's shoe got stuck in the mud and I had to [go get] it.

After arriving across the river, Cecilia and her traveling mates boarded a pickup truck.

> […] we left quickly because they said that the American police would come soon and send us back. The truck took us to a [rest stop where] there were bathrooms and they went inside, and I went inside, and I changed. Then we left and they put us in another car. And from there they took us to a big house.

She did not recall seeing the police. In fact, most of Cecilia's memories about the event were positive. She described the truck as "pretty" and the house as "cool" although there was a pool in which she was not allowed to swim. She also recalled that they took her to McDonald's frequently while she was staying there.

Cecilia could not recall how long they stayed in the house before she joined her mother and brother. The remainder of the trip was by car and although it was a long trip, she could not sleep. When they arrived at their destination, she was told that her

grandfather would be picking them up that same day. She eagerly waited for him outside but he never arrived. Instead, the following day her grandmother arrived to pick them up. Soon she was reunited with her mother, grandmother, and brother. She also met her three-month-old half-sister and 2-year-old half-brother.

Cecilia spoke no English when she arrived, making her first contact with the school system an unsettling one. "I did not know anyone. I did not know how to talk. I was confused," she said. I asked her what confused her, and she responded,

> I was confused because people spoke in English and [I thought], 'what are they saying?' I wanted to learn. Then I would go somewhere else and then to another place. Then I would get bored because nobody would speak to me in Spanish, so I would go home. Now I am learning more and so I stay here. And from here I can go to the [school] dance.

Acquiring English was a big challenge for Cecilia, but she found support.

> [When I didn't understand] my friend would tell me. I would tell her to tell me, and she would do it. But now, [I understand] more or less when they ask me something and I can more or less answer, even if it is a little off…

When asked how she learned it, she answered "here they teach it in school."

Cecilia now enjoys speaking in English whenever she has the opportunity even though she is not yet fluent.

> There are things that I like to say [in English], but there are things that are still difficult… [I speak it] with my brother or with his friends. Only a little. Whatever I don't know, I say it in Spanish, and what I know, I say it in English.

Although this was a good strategy to practice her budding English language skills, she did not have that flexibility in her classroom. Early on, she was encouraged to copy work from her classmates but as time progressed "my teacher told me to study and study so that I could speak with the rest of the girls," said Cecilia. According to her mother, Cecilia did just that. She participated in after school English tutoring classes at the church. "It was more difficult for [Cecilia's older sister] to learn English and she is still very quiet. Whereas Cecilia is already speaking English at home," said her mother.

School was a source of comfort for her in Mexico. She did well academically and had many friends. When asked what she missed most about Mexico, she answered,

> The school. My friends and my teacher. The teacher. We had her for three years. Her name was Gabi. We were very happy with her and we thanked the principal every year that we had her.

However, schoolwork was not easy for her in the new language. Her mother described the experience as follows:

> At first [they wanted to go back] because they would get homework and they did not know any of it. And Cecilia is the type of person that does not like to miss any of her work, not even homework. [Her sister] would say "I'm not going to do it. I don't know how." And Cecilia would write on it that she did not know. She signed it and returned it to the teacher. She would do what she could even if it was a little bit, whatever she could understand. What she didn't understand, she didn't do.

The social aspects of school were easier for Cecilia, who is an outgoing person. Making friends in her new school was "easy" she said. And that helped her cope with the lack of contact with her friends in Mexico since she had arrived the previous year.

The primary reason for the lack of contact, even via phone, with Mexico is that most of Cecilia's close family members are in the United States. Her father, mother, siblings, and maternal aunts and uncles are living nearby. The only relative that Cecilia left in Mexico, whom she reportedly misses, is her maternal uncle. Her maternal grandparents had relocated to the East Coast shortly before our interview. Nevertheless, she has cousins nearby with whom she has no contact. Cecilia's uncles married American women and had children.

> They do not seek [the children]. Since they are children of American [women]. It seems that we Mexicans are more family oriented than Americans. Since they are only American, very separate. Here we are very alone. ~ Cecilia's mother

Cecilia reports that there is conflict between family members that is not resolved.

> They stop talking for a month and then that's it. But they get together and then they get mad and then they stop talking…Like yesterday, my mom got angry with my uncle because my uncle took a bicycle that was not his and did not want to give it back. My mom got angry and went to his house. She took the tire off the bicycle and she told him not to talk to her, that he was dead to her.

When asked what she thought about that confrontation, Cecilia responded, "It's wrong. After he returns the bicycle, they should talk to each other."

Cecilia acknowledged limitations in her ability to resolve conflict independently. She often goes to her mother to tell on her sister and her mother resolves the conflict. She tried this same strategy at school.

> When they used to tell me things, I told my mother and she would come. But I've been getting used to it and now I talk back to them. But only to the Mexican [students], not the American [students]. For the American [students], I tell the teacher because if you do anything, they tell the teacher and soon I'll get suspended. Sometimes, at the beginning, I used to stay quiet because I could not tell the teacher. The children would tell her lies because I did not know English.

This was frustrating to her and at times caused her to go without things she needed.

> At times I wanted something and I was alone. I could not tell anyone. It was best not to. Sometimes I was hungry or something and since there was nobody who spoke [Spanish], in the end, I wouldn't eat. I had to wait until I got home.

Cecilia, therefore, sees learning English as her way to resolve her problems and get her way.

> [My parents would be happy] if I learned more English because they tell me that it is a good thing and that they have to learn a lot. And then [I can be] like my brother who always goes with my mother as her interpreter. She always says that's why she takes him and she buys him things. I feel bad because she says "[I can only take] someone who speaks English and you don't know. When you learn, I'll take you out."

Nevertheless, learning English was not the reason why Cecilia and her family came here. Her mother explained that her primary reason for immigrating was to provide her children with the opportunity to study in the United States. However, she has concerns that they may not be able to due to their undocumented status. She has hopes though that this issue will be resolved before her children graduate from high school.

> We'll see what happens. My father is a resident and my mother too. […] And we're waiting. Once he becomes a citizen, he can request us and my children too. Because they tell me that they want to [study]. Her sister says that she wants to be a teacher and Cecilia wants to be a doctor or something after they learned how much they could earn in each career. And then later she said [that] she wants to be an astronaut. The good thing is that they are interested in studying something.
>
> I tell them, "You must study because life is difficult if one does not study something, right? I studied only until middle school and then I married, and I had bad luck with my husband. If one does not study, there will be no jobs either."

Another benefit that Cecilia identified to living in the United States is that there is less poverty.

> It is not that I was lacking for anything in Mexico, but there were people who were beggars. They had little babies and the children were sitting [outside] without shoes. Sometimes we gave them boots because […] they did not fit us.

Her mother expressed a similar sentiment.

> Here is it not as difficult as there. [In Mexico] things are very expensive and people earn very little. If one buys a pair of shoes and an outfit, there will be nothing left for food. It's difficult and there is no help such as going to a church where they'll give you something. There is nothing like that there. And here, at least they give us for the food pantry and used clothes, whatever. That's why I don't want to go back there.

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Cecilia's story has many aspects in common with the stories of multiple other children who participated in this study. Her hopes, dreams, and those of her mother were uttered by various others. However, Cecilia stood out due to her unwillingness to surrender to the situations that were most painful and difficult. Throughout her story of immigration, she met each obstacle with determination and many times, a refusal to do what was expected of her when it meant passive acceptance of her circumstance. Her responses to stressors reveal that she felt capable of affecting her own situation.

Cecilia identified the English language with the American culture and thus her awareness of cultural conflict was reflected in her difficulty communicating and fending for herself in a setting where she could not understand the language. As she progresses through the initial acculturation stages, she embraces the English language and works diligently to improve her fluency. She sees English as a tool for a better future, both immediate and long term, as well as a way to ensure a more favorable resolution to the conflict that she faced.

Cecilia felt empowered throughout her immigration experience. Therefore, she is able to evaluate it as a positive event, the multiple losses and chaotic familial living conditions she faced at such a young age notwithstanding.

Victor's Story: I Speak Spanish at Home

This is the story of Victor, who came to the United States with his mother, father, and brother, Manuel, from Mexico three years before our interview. His parents have since had two other children. Victor is 11 years old and attends the 5th grade. He is the oldest of four boys, the youngest of whom is four months old.

Victor was eight years old when he left Mexico with his family to come to the United States. Prior to that, his father had traveled to the United States for an extended period of time and then returned home. Victor reports that he felt sad while his father was gone.

> My father came here and then he returned. He stayed here for a year and then he went back. We spoke on the phone frequently. [Still, I felt] sad because I did not know how he was or where he was. [Then] he asked us if we wanted to come here and we said yes.

Upon Victor's father's return to Mexico, the financial stressors created conflict between the parents, as Victor's mother reports.

> He had already lived here for ten (10) months and then he went back. Then there was a time when he and I fought a lot. We argued a lot. I asked him why and whether he was no longer happy with us. [He said,] "That's not it. It's that I earn very little here." I told him, "Well, you can't be there and I here." Then he said, "Well, how about if we leave?"

Victor found out that they would be moving a month prior to their departure, yet he did not get to say goodbye to friends.

> When we came it was in the morning, before dawn, and I could not say farewell to them nor to my grandmother. Only to my aunt and uncle. When we went to the airport, my uncle and my grandfather took us. We hugged. My grandfather [was sad] because he loved us very much. [I went on the plane] with my uncle's brother-in-law, my mother and father, and my brother. [Then] we arrived at the border and then we tried to cross.

Victor's family did not have a visa to enter the United States and this presented a challenge, according his mother.

> I told [my husband], how are we going to cross? [He responded], "We'll have to take the risk. There is no other choice." I agreed and then we decided to come

> here. He and I *brincamos*[7], the way that all Mexicans do, I think. […] But the children did not come that way. The children came over with [fake] papers.

Whereas his parents came across the desert, Victor walked across the Mexican border Port of Entry. Victor, however, reported that they all crossed together. Manuel[8], who was seven years old at the time of immigration, described a different story.

> We had to separate [after the plane]. My brother and I came across the border. My mother and father, I don't know. [They] left us with some people they trusted. It was not easy [to cross over]. I had to say a different name and I forgot. [I felt] embarrassed. I said my real name. Then, we returned in a few more days and I did not forget. [I was] nervous that I might forget. When we passed that day to this country, we went to Phoenix and we stayed there for a while and we woke up one day at 4 AM and we went to the airport so we can come here.

Their mother's story confirms Manuel's version of the event.

> The youngest one made a mistake with the name. They took them back. Then the lady told them "look son, you have to say that this is your name. If you make a mistake with the name, they will catch me and they will catch you." So he woke up. We were already in Phoenix and those three days that we were at the border, I was desperate. I was saying, "Oh no! My children. I want to go back. My children." My husband [said], "Do not despair. They are well."

Victor did not want to move to the United States. Nevertheless, he was curious about what it would be like.

> [I imagined] snow thrown everywhere because one of my aunts who was here told us that there was snow on the ground and that it snowed a lot. [But] it was rain season.

Manuel described it differently.

> Everything was different. There were many buildings. Everything was different. Many modern things that we did not have [in Mexico].

The initial days were difficult for Victor both at home and at school. At home he felt bored. "I only played with my brother. When we got here, I only had Manuel, my brother," he said. At school, he felt alone.

> I felt weird. When someone, like an American [student], would talk to me, I did not understand. I did not know what to say to them. I only answered yes or no.

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[7] Brincar means to jump. In this sentence, it refers to crossing over the fence at the border.

[8] Since Manuel also participated in the study, I have included a few of his quotes in order to tell a more complete story. He answered most questions in English.

> And at the stores, when we went, I did not know what the price was. I only wanted to be home because, whom could I play with? I had nobody.

For Victor this was a drastic change from what he was accustomed to in Mexico.

> I like [Mexico] very much. [I remember] my friends where I live. We played. We went to the field. We would go to the forest and climb trees. [At school] when we arrive, we always prayed The Lord's Prayer. When it was lunchtime, they would announce it over a loud speaker. And we would all go out to play and run. We had to take our own lunch and [we] could [also] buy [food] there at a convenience store.

Victor identified language as the primary stressor for him in those early days, stating that he felt "nervous."

> If someone would talk, I would turn away and I did not answer the teacher. There is a little girl who helped me very much. She translated for me.
>
> [Learning English] was difficult. There was a teacher and she helped the Mexican [students] here. The ones who had recently arrived. She would teach us to speak English and would set us up on the computers to answer questions in English. That is how we learned.
>
> And she would not let us speak Spanish. So when we wanted to talk to a friend, she would not let us speak in Spanish. And that is how we learned. [I felt] bad. I did not even want to talk. [I was] embarrassed to speak in English.
>
> Sometimes I get stuck. I do not know which is the correct word. I ask my brother or my father how to say this or that.

Despite this initial fear of the language, Victor acquired English language skills -- both verbal and written -- as he believed that it pleased his parents.

> [My parents are] happy because it is a new country and a new language. They are proud that we know both languages.

Moreover, when asked which language he preferred, he responded, "Both." However, at home he still prefers to speak Spanish, with few exceptions.

> When they say speak only English at home, I do not pay attention. I do not like to speak English in my home. [With Manuel] sometimes [I speak] Spanish and sometimes English. When we are playing Nintendo, we speak English. But if we are just playing and talking, we speak Spanish. He likes [TV] in English and I like it in Spanish. [I like] listening to music: Cumbia[9] and rap, sometimes even in English.

[9] Colombian musical style and folk dance.

Manuel interprets Victor's Spanish-only stance at home as resistance of the culture.

> I think [my parents are] proud. Yeah, that's the word. Because they think I belong more to the state and to this country because I speak more English at home like at a lot of American homes. Victor is the one who doesn't feel like he needs to be American. He likes to hang out with Mexican friends.

Although language has been a significant stressor in Victor's acculturative process, there were other aspects of the culture that were confusing to him.

> When I arrived at my class. I arrived there in the second grade. And I thought that [the lift-lid desks] were so that nobody would copy. But they were to store your things. I did not know this.

When asked about other things that were challenging for him, Victor spoke about the increased academic demands presented when he moved here.

> The exams [are difficult]. There is a lot of writing when they tell us to write… What is it called? With the long words? Paragraphs.[10] We have to write five or four. And that is what is most difficult for me. I do not know what to write. I do not have any ideas. Sometimes I do not even know what to write and I cannot come up with anything. In our *colegio*[11] in Mexico we did not have to do that. Only once I came here.

He has also encountered prejudice from American peers, although some were welcoming.

> They ask us to teach them to speak Spanish. But others tell us bad things: Wetbacks.[12] I don't know what it means, but I know that it is not good. I have never been called that but I feel bad because I'm also from Mexico.

One area of particular relevance to Victor throughout his immigration experience has been his struggle with peer interactions inside and outside of school. During the interview, he had difficulty expressing his thoughts about his friendships. He answered questions with one or two word phrases, requiring multiple prompts to elicit a full response. The account below is not verbatim, but rather my best attempt at compiling his thoughts in a meaningful manner.

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[10] Victor used the word "paragraph" in English, whereas the rest of the discussion was in Spanish.
[11] Colegio means private school. Victor attended a private Catholic school, which is typically more academically rigorous than public schools.
[12] Wetback is a derogatory term for a person who has immigrated illegally to the United States. Commonly referring to Mexicans who have crossed the border illegally, the term originated with those who entered Texas by crossing the Rio Grande, presumably by swimming or wading across and getting their backs wet in the process.

> At first it was difficult to make friends. I did not know what to ask. I did not know what to say. Now it is easy. I speak to them. I ask them things. I get along well with some of my friends but I don't have many friends. Most of my friends are Mexican. I have a few American friends but I play mostly with my Mexican friends. In my neighborhood, I only play with three brothers who live across the street. They're American.

Additionally, he reported a single incident of a physical confrontation with a classmate. He described it as follows.

> Once, I hit [another] Mexican [student]. We came back from a trip to the museum and when we came back, the teacher stayed behind and we went [to the classroom]. And there was boy and a girl. And he was following her. After we sat down, they kept playing. When it was time to go home, we lined up and he hit me with a roll of paper. He hit me on the hand and I hit him back. The next day, his mother spoke with me and asked me to leave him alone, not to touch him, and that was it.

In addition to the typical stressors faced by most immigrants, Victor, like numerous other children his age, had experienced a trauma prior to immigration. This is still a source of stress for him.

> I was hit by a car in Mexico when I was 7-years-old. I only remember that they took me to the hospital, to the emergency room and that a taxi hit me. I was [outside] my grandmother's house. There was a gentleman who feeds the cows and I wanted to go with him. I asked my mother for permission. I didn't pay attention to the street and I crossed. And it hit me. I remember that my uncle picked me up from the ground and they took me to the hospital.

Victor thinks about this daily and worries that the same could happen to his 2-year-old brother.

> I lock the doors because my little brother goes out to the street and he could get run over. Sometimes he goes to the front [of the house] or gets inside the cars, our cars. And he already knows how to move the stick shift and how to turn them on. I scold him and I hit him. I tell him not to go outside again and I lock the doors. Then he stays.

Victor loves his brother and feels remorse about hitting him. He worries about how that may affect their relationship.

> I only give him a smack on the bottom with my hand. (pause) I feel that it does not hurt him. I feel bad because I've hit him. I get sad because I feel that he will stop loving me. I have friends who are older and they remember how their older brothers hit them. That's why it worries me. [But] then I play with him.

After three years residing in the United States, Victor is still conflicted about having immigrated.

> Sometimes [I feel] happy and sometimes sad because I left my family. I mean, I am very far from them. I miss them. Every day when we came out of school, my grandmother picked us up and we would go to her house. [When I miss them] I try to watch TV or entertain myself with the Nintendo. Then I ask my mom to let me call Mexico. And we chat with my grandparents and my aunt.
>
> [We] speak every week, twice per week, for half an hour. Sometimes, with my grandmother for an hour. We speak more with my mother's mother. We hardly talk to my other grandmother. We only call when my grandfather is there. He works […] and sometimes he doesn't get to go home. That's why we only call when he is home.

He remembers his home fondly and, at times, wants to go back to Mexico.

> Where we lived there were many trees. I miss my house because they changed it. They rebuilt it because it was very old.
>
> [I want to] visit all my friends. The ones to whom I didn't get to say good-bye. And go see my family and see how Mexico has changed. They have built many roads, pavement. That is what my grandfather has told me.

However, he vacillates between wanting to visit and wanting to stay because he is unsure about whether he can become accustomed to the lifestyle.

> I tell my mother that I'm sad. She says that one day we will go to Mexico. That is all she says. [I want to go back] to see if I can get used to it. If I cannot get used to it, then we will come back.

Nevertheless, Victor believes that life in the United States is better and safer than it was in Mexico. When asked to identify some positive reasons for having immigrated, he answered as follows.

> Many things from [Mexico]. (Long Pause). Many accidents. It's that in Mexico they are very very aggressive when they drive. And there are many children who use Marijuana or ladies who are always in the street.

Victor's feelings of ambivalence are not uncommon. But Manuel feels differently.

> [I wanted to go back] but not anymore. I just wish my family was here. [Here] I get a lot of prizes. I got a diploma. I've read a lot of books. There's a lot of

> libraries in this country. But not in Mexico. There's not that much. Sometimes my mother takes me there.

However, their mother's thoughts when asked how she felt about her decision to immigrate echoed Victor's struggle.

> I feel comfortable here, very comfortable with all of this so…they offer us many things, many opportunities. But I still want to go back to Mexico. But then sometimes I think that all these things we have here, we will never have it there.

And although their initial reason for immigrating was financial, they have discovered new reasons to stay.

> Most of all, my dream now is to get ahead with [the children], most of all with Manuel, because he has… How can I say this? He has made me very proud in these last days or years because I have received very good news about his grades. […] So, then I, most of all, I want to keep going for them. So to decide that I'm going to leave… I can't. I can't for that reason.

At times the pull to return is great despite good reasons to stay.

> This month I had decided to leave with all my children because I felt desperate because of my parents, and my entire family. And my husband said, "Go. The children are on vacation. You can go at least a month and then you can come back." […] Then I thought, "what if I can never crossover again?"[13] What would happen to my sons' dreams? I, most of all, think a lot about both of them.

Victor's struggle with acculturation is evident throughout his account of his story of immigration. He feels caught between two cultures and is not sure in which he feels most comfortable. This is manifested in the multiple dichotomies that he creates in his life in order to separate the two. His response to the cultural conflict was to split the two cultures in the areas of language, friendships, and his physical space.

Victor did not reject the English language or the American culture outright, as Manuel believed. Rather, he created distinct situations when he would choose to participate. He was accepting of the teacher's request to speak in English to friends while

[13] This concern is very real, not just because of increased border security since 9/11, but also because of her first experience. She recounted the following: "I remember when immigration caught me. They threw me in a big big room. There they had all of us women. When they caught me, I was standing at the door and [they] grabbed me and threw me like an animal. Then that day, we spent it, as they say, on bread and water, except that on that day they did not give us neither bread, nor water. Until they threw us back out and then we tried again. That's when we crossed."

at school, but ignored her instructions to speak in English at home. He is able to communicate in English with his brother, yet is very specific about the situations in which he will do so. On the other hand, Victor prefers to watch TV in Spanish and listen to traditional Latin American music, even if it is not from his native land.

The contrast between Victor's discussions about his experience with peers in Mexico and his relationships here in the past three years is marked. While living in Mexico he reports having many friends both at school and in his neighborhood. He describes fun interactions with them and even a desire to go back and see them. However, after three years in the United States, he reports having few friends. Moreover, he categorizes them as either Mexican-born or American-born, preferring those who are Mexican.

Victor's use of his physical space to distinguish the two cultures is reflected in his insistence on speaking Spanish only at home and locking the doors. This attempt to separate the home environment from the outside world appears to have been reinforced by the trauma he suffered while living in Mexico. Although he is trying to protect his Mexican world, it too is dichotomized. On one hand, he recalls many wonderful moments and most of all his family. On the other hand, it is a place where he got hurt and where people engage in illegal behaviors. Interestingly, whereas Manuel found resolution in the idea that he could merge both worlds here by bringing his family, Victor believes that he has to choose one or the other.

Throughout this story, Victor's response to conflict varied from passive (i.e. looking away when someone would speak to him in English) to confrontational (i.e. hitting a student who had hit him). He also used varied coping strategies to deal with stressors. In regards to his constant worry about his younger brother's well-being, he makes a conscious choice to lock the doors. When he is missing his family in Mexico, he uses sublimation (i.e. watching TV or playing Nintendo). Yet, in the instance where he was separated from his parents to come across the border, he utilizes denial and reports twice during the interview that they all crossed together.

Despite his ambivalence about wanting to live in the United States, Victor is progressing through acculturation stages. His initial anxiety about speaking English has diminished as he has acquired fluency and he asks for help when he does not know a

word. He is able to see the value in being able to communicate in both languages as needed and is aware of the pride that his parents feel about his ability to speak English. Although not fully, he participates in the culture and the influences of the inevitable process of acculturation are notable in his comment that he listens to rap “sometimes even in English.”

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive understanding and conceptualization of the stress experienced by immigrant Latin American children in the process of acculturation. The results support the findings of previous studies that the process of immigration for Latin American children is a complex one and it impacts their lives daily (Baptiste, 1993; Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Smart & Smart, 1995b; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). The content analysis of their interviews revealed the variety of ways in which these children are confronted with challenges resulting from their immigration experience and the ways in which they cope.

Content Analysis

Pre-Migration Factors

Despite their young age at immigration, most of these children have vivid memories of their home countries, focused primarily around family, friends, and their daily routines. They described close relationships with extended family members that were disrupted at the time of immigration. Although they have been able to maintain some of these relationships by communicating via phone, it is a constant source of distress for many as they experience sadness resulting from having to be separated from their loved ones. This is consistent with the findings of Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) who reported that although not perceived as abandonment, the separations from family members is a source of stress for the children.

Many of these children wanted to come to the United States for a variety of reasons but most commonly because it meant reunification with either one or both parents from whom they had already been separated for many years. In their stories, they described multiple separations, sometimes from the same person but more frequently from different family members as they immigrated piecemeal. This strategy provided some of these children with a functional support system, physical and interpersonal, when

they arrived. However, it also created a constant cycle of loss and adaptation that permeates different areas of their lives.

The trip to the United States was described unpleasantly by almost all of these children. Their travels were plagued by fear of being caught by immigration police, anxiety about being separated from parents and having to lie about their identity, and the trauma of being caught or interrogated. Despite this, most of them would like to return to their home countries either to visit or permanently. However, they are constricted either by financial limitations (i.e. it would cost too much for the entire family to visit) or by their undocumented immigrant status which puts them at high risk each time they re-enter the United States. This is supported by research that the new patterns of immigration present a different schedule of adaptation for these children than for immigrants in previous generations (Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Post-Migration Factors

Once these children arrived in the United States, they had to adapt to new lives. All, except for two of them entered school systems almost immediately upon their arrival. The other two children initially participated in the migrant worker education program. Upon starting school, they were faced with the challenging task of acquiring a new language and described feeling "dumb," "confused," and "alone," since they could not understand what was being said to them and could not communicate their needs. This response to the event is consistent with the findings of Comas-Diaz and Grenier (1998) who reported that immigration during the latency stage can disrupt the child's sense of mastery of the world. Further, their inability to understand negatively impacted their academic performance initially. However, most of them report that they are doing well academically despite continuing to struggle with the language and tasks that require fluency, such as writing.

The social aspects of school also presented with challenges for them as they worked to make friends and identify which ethnic groups to join. Initially, they were constrained in their ability to make friends due to their limited English language skills and small number of Spanish-speaking classmates. This is particularly relevant to their adjustment as studies have shown that they are often ignored by their English-speaking

peers, which negatively impacts their self-esteem (Cavazos-Rehg & Delucia-Waack, 2009). As they gained interpersonal communication skills, they had to decide with which group(s) they felt most comfortable interacting. The children utilized classifications such as "Mexicans like me," "Mexicans who have been here longer," "Chicanos," "Whites," or "Blacks" as they discussed the social groups that they saw available to them at school. This confirms previous findings that suggested that children in this age group exhibited understanding of ethnic identity (Chavez et al., 1997)

These children exhibited an unexpectedly acute awareness of racism as they first confronted at school in the form of racial epithets from peers but were reported as occurring in the community as well. This form of victimization has been shown to contribute to symptoms of depression (Bauman, 2008). Since these children had never faced this problem before arriving in the United States, they had no experience in how to cope. Many resorted to aggression. Others reported seeking the help of adults or ignoring the verbal assaults. All of them reported feeling "bad" about being seen negatively by members of the majority culture. However, most of these children were able to perceive that not all members of the majority culture view them in a negative light and that many find positive aspects of the Latin American culture.

Since all of these children are living in a family setting, the topic of family members and their interactions was prevalent throughout their interviews. Many are living with extended family members in addition to their parents. The relationships between the adults were described as conflictive at times with occasional resolution apparent to the children. However, most children who had two parents living at home reported a positive relationship between them and activities in which the entire family participates together. They also reported good relationships with their siblings despite typical conflict between them. This has been considered a strong predictor of successful coping and adaptation (Baptiste, 1993; Garcia & Lindgren, 2009; Morrison & James, 2009).

The adaptation to their new lives has required successful participation in the above mentioned contexts for these children. In as much as this requires behavioral changes, they have had to make decisions about how much they are willing to change in order to succeed despite their ambivalence about what these changes represent and the

consequences that they will bring. For example, some have embraced utilizing their emerging English language proficiency as often as possible, whereas others will only use English when it is necessary or in specific settings. Their foods of choice, music of choice, TV programs of choice, and interpersonal behaviors are all areas in which they have negotiated changes. Some of the children feel that their parents support them in these changes and feel proud of them. Others believe that their parents would be upset with them if they changed too much. A few are uncertain about how their parents would feel. These findings are supported by findings that indicate that the family is a valuable contributor to the children's evaluation of an active engagement in the acculturation process (Morrison & James, 2009; Pawliuk et al., 1996; Sam, 1995; Smokowski, Buchanan, & Bacallao, 2009).

Stress and Coping

The children reported a variety of sources of worry, including uncommon fears about stressful events such as parents becoming ill or suffering an injury at work and someone being involved in a car accident or being hit by a car. They also worry about their siblings and relatives living in their country of origin. These stressors or worries are indicative of anxiety about their family members' physical well-being which has been neglected in previous studies but that are evidence of their higher-level cognition about the risks they and their parents face as immigrants. School related worries, consistent with findings by Arnold (1990), related to meeting academic expectations (i.e. completing homework) and being able to succeed socially (i.e. making friends). As a way to cope with these worries, the children utilized a variety of strategies including telling an adult, writing down their worry, engaging in a different activity, or going somewhere else to distract themselves from the concern. As per their subjective evaluation, the majority of the participants felt that their coping strategy helped them feel better.

They also reported stressors at school related to interpersonal conflict with peers. The majority reported verbal and/or physical confrontations with classmates. The triggers for these conflicts were focused around teasing and disagreements. Each of the children reported employing two or more strategies in an attempt to end the conflict. As

per Brenner (1984), this is a positive indicator of successful adaptation. Notably they favored pro-social and neutral conflict resolution strategies, almost always reporting that they felt better after the conflict ended.

Acculturation Stress and Coping

The most frequently identified source of acculturation stress by the children was the English language. They demonstrated a conscious engagement in their acculturative process as they discussed the distress they experienced as a result of their inability to understand it when they first arrived created a sense of helplessness since they could not communicate, the challenges faced while trying to learn it, and the decisions required to manage the role that it would play in their daily lives once they developed fluency. Language also impacted their ability to perform academically. Moreover, the difference in the school system and pedagogy added to the complexity of the academic demands. Other challenges of immigration were the nuisances of making friends with people of different cultures, being separated from their relatives, and anxiety about their immigration status. These challenges are similar to the ones presented by Garcia-Coll and Magnuson (1997) and Gil and Vega (1996).

Although many children reported that these challenges were no longer an issue, the majority stated that these are still problems, even if minor. Nevertheless, their persistence and resilience is evident at they actively continued to implement strategies, such as studying, asking for help, and accessing resources available to them, to try to address these stressors. School was the most readily available resource that most children identified, more specifically, their ESL teachers. Additionally, many also utilized their parents, when possible, as a resource. This is encouraging since Smart and Smart (1995b) reported that lack of access to resources interferes with successful coping with acculturation stress.

Despite the large number of challenges and stressors encountered, almost half of the participants stated that they felt happy about having moved to the United States and although a large number of them expressed ambivalence, none expressed regret. Some of the most rewarding aspects of having relocated for these children were the interpersonal gains such as being reunited with family members and making new friends. Many also

identified improvement in their quality of life by having access to more resources, financial, community and educational; increased number of opportunities in the present and future; and feeling safer in their community. These provide a counterbalance to the negative aspects of the relocation.

Interestingly, the challenges that they identified mirrored the rewards described above; emphasizing the perpetual dilemma in which they find themselves as they try to evaluate their situation. The difficulties that deter from their ability to fully enjoy the positives are the feelings of loss about having left family members behind and the concerns about interpersonal conflict with peers and being discriminated against. Additionally, the drastic changes in way of life and increased dangers in their communities, due to crime and presence of weapons, intensify their struggle. Furthermore, the most common strategies that they utilize to cope with the stressors of having immigrated, engaging in enjoyable activities to distract themselves and talking to someone, are the same as they reported for coping with daily stressors.

Multiple Readings Analysis

The meaning that emerged from the multiple readings analysis enhances our understanding of the immigration experience and acculturative process faced by children who immigrate to the United States from Latin American countries. Their stories emphasize themes of ambivalence surrounding their appraisal of the events they lived through, variability in their evaluation of where their locus of control lies, a highly behavioral definition of the cultural conflict they experience, and a fluid grasp of cultural orientation. Moreover a complex decision making process utilized to determine response to conflict and influenced by outcome assessment became apparent.

Evaluation of Experience

As I sought to identify the meaning in these children's evaluation of their immigration experience, it became evident that they were acutely aware of the multiple factors that influenced their parents' decision to immigrate. Many of them utilized their perceived success in those areas to evaluate their experience. Moreover, children who expressed feeling positive about their immigration experience also emphasized the

interpersonal gains that they had achieved since they left their country of origin. This supports previous research that indicates that access to interpersonal resources positively influence coping strategies and outcome (McNamara, 2000).

The aspects that were evaluated negatively, such as the trip to the United States, initial contact with schools, academic challenges later on, leaving family in their countries of origin, and multiple relocations, exemplify situations where the children's routines changed and they were exposed to novel situations requiring a speedy adaptation to its new demands. Leaving family members "back home" often meant that the dynamics of the household had to change and that the primary caregiver would be unavailable to provide support and guidance to the child during stressful moments.

The children's ambivalence about the acquisition of the English language stresses the importance of language as a part of their self-identity at their age. For them, language has power not only in facilitating communication, but more importantly, in defining group membership.

Locus of Control

The meaning that emerged from this reading emphasized the important role that locus of control plays in children's perception of their influence over the outcome of their lives. Specific aspects of the immigration process toward which they had a positive disposition such as their aspiration to one day move to the United States, interest in acquiring the English language, and wish to make new friends were repeatedly presented by the children as resulting in a positive outcome. In contrast, the situations about which they had little knowledge and minimal influence, such as the method of immigration and choice of whether to bid farewell to loved ones, were interpreted as stressful. Areas which the children perceived outside their sphere of influence, such as conflict with adults and discrimination, were discussed in negative tones resulting in emerging themes of isolation and helplessness.

Cultural Conflict

The scope of cultural conflict for these children was narrower than past research has identified for adults and adolescents (Gil & Vega, 1996; Pawliuk et al., 1996; Young

Rivers & Morrow, 1995). The sources of conflict were largely focused around behaviors, thinking patterns and self-identification, thus indicating that these are the most salient areas in which palpable stressors are faced by the children. The children interpreted their decisions about how they handled these conflicts as indicative of their receptiveness, involvement and adaptation to the host culture. They also attributed value to the support received while negotiating these conflicts and the receptiveness of the adults and peers in their lives to their resolutions of these conflicts.

The children emphasized that the way in which they interpreted the world around them, the communities in which they participated, and the social norms contributed to the way in which they responded to the cultural conflicts encountered throughout their immigration story. They utilized this knowledge and understanding to guide their choice of coping skills and evaluation of outcome. Moreover, it became apparent in their stories that their self-identification is strongly tied to their language use and therefore any change in their language of preference or fluency impacted the way in which they saw themselves in relation to their families, peers, and ethnic group. Due to their limited support systems, it is sensible that feedback from these groups, particularly parents and fellow immigrant peers, influence the way in which they resolve these conflicts.

Response to Conflict

The children's fundamental response to conflict, cultural or interpersonal, exposed the range of coping strategies that they utilize to cope with stressors. It also demonstrated flexibility in their ability and willingness to accept and face conflict under some circumstance and avoid it at other times. Most interesting was that avoidance of conflict was not always a passive or helpless acceptance of the situation. Many times conflict was avoided by being aggressive or defensive.

The meaning conveyed by these children through these interviews focused around the concept that they utilize to guide their decision about how they responded to conflict. The decision process that they described included multiple combinations of variables including choices available, their belief about whether they were capable of utilizing the available choices effectively, how their choice would be perceived by others, their

perception about how much their response would influence outcome, and the possible outcomes.

Outcome Assessment

In view of the decision making process that the children utilize when determining the best approach to a specific conflict, the way in which they assess outcome becomes increasingly more relevant to their successful adaptation since it will influence whether they face or avoid specific areas of conflict. Therefore, since they reported positive outcomes in the areas of making friends, resolving conflict with peers, finding help or support when needed, acquisition of the English language, and academic success, they might be more willing to face these types of conflicts in the future.

On the other hand, their evaluations of negative outcomes in the areas of maintaining Spanish proficiency while acquiring English language skills, avoiding conflict with teachers and dealing with behavioral problems at school will likely contribute to future avoidance of these conflicts. Two stressors that received mixed evaluations of outcomes were resolving conflict between family members and acquisition of the English language. Regarding the conflict between family members, the children's stories suggest that the source of the conflict is the new family dynamic as a result of the relocation and thus they feel inconsistently successful in their response to it. Therefore, they may rely on other variables to assist them in deciding when to face and when to avoid these types of conflicts.

Lastly, the dilemma surrounding English language acquisition is a fascinating one. Although the children value the acquisition of English language fluency, consider it to be under their locus of control and evaluate the outcome of their response to this challenge as successful, the additional consequence of it affecting their Spanish language fluency, leading to "forgetting" or decline in fluency, was evaluated as negative. Hence, some of the participants identified strategies for continuing to achieve English language fluency while avoiding a decline in Spanish language fluency.

Cultural Orientation

The theme of cultural orientation permeated through these children's immigration stories. In observing their experiences through this lens, the most noteworthy meaning that surfaced was that in their process of developing a cultural identity, most of these children were in different cultural orientation stages for different values, beliefs, and behavioral norms. The same child, who affiliated himself with the native culture in regards to preference for ethnic foods and importance of protecting the home culture, might identify his choice of friends and recreational activities as more strongly affiliated toward the host culture. Some of these children had also been able to integrate some of the aspects of both cultures such as music and language preference.

Despite the intense desire expressed by the children to successfully participate in both cultures, some of them experienced a sense of alienation during distinct time periods, situations, and in regards to specific behaviors. This sense of being alone emerged as a result of not being able to participate in the host culture due to limited knowledge about it or in the home culture due to lack of support from parents and/or siblings in new found interests. Moreover, as they look within themselves and their communities to develop a preadolescent/adolescent identity, they do not have full access to culture of origin models and strongly reject host culture models exemplified by behaviors that conflict with their family values such as cursing, disrespectful behavior toward adults, and roaming the streets.

Clinical Observations

As a clinician, working with Latino immigrant children and adolescents in various settings for the past 8 years has allowed me to become familiar with the clinical presentation of children who are experiencing acculturation stress. These children are referred for a variety of reasons at different ages and stages of acculturation. Despite differences in their pre-migration factors, family compositions, and immigration stories, there is a common and essential feature that distinguishes them from other children who are referred for treatment: a marked change in mood and/or behavior following immigration. Prior to immigration, they exhibit age-appropriate behaviors and adaptive coping strategies. Following immigration, they present with disturbance of emotions

and/or disruptive behaviors. These changes significantly disrupt their developmental schedule, thereby impairing their ability to exercise adaptive decision making skills. Also present is a sense of loss, pain, and anger that interferes with the development of age-appropriate and supportive interpersonal relationships.

Anxiety is a common response to acute and chronic stress. Therefore it is not unusual for these children to present with symptoms consistent with anxiety related disorders such as Selective Mutism, Separation Anxiety, Social Anxiety and Generalized Anxiety. They exhibit paralyzing fear about speaking in school, heightened anxiety when separating from parents and siblings, and excessive worries about the health and well-being of their parents, siblings and family members in the country of origin. This constant worry interferes with their ability to engage socially with peers, concentrate, and develop a strong sense of self. Consequentially, their low self-esteem results in symptoms of depression such as tearfulness, helplessness, hopelessness, and fearfulness.

It is noteworthy that four (4) out of the five (5) children whom I have treated for Selective Mutism have been dominant in English, both in spoken and written form. Those four (4), when given the option of communicating in Spanish or in English during sessions, unequivocally chose to communicate with me in English. However, despite being non-verbal in other settings, they chose to engage primarily with children and adults who were Spanish-speaking. Not surprisingly, as treatment progressed and they were able to begin verbalizing in school, they successfully tested out of English Language Learners' programs, separating them from fellow immigrant children. This suggests that remaining with peers that they considered similar to themselves was likely a coping strategy for these children who were experiencing heightened levels of anxiety about being integrated into the general student population.

The anxiety experienced by immigrant children contributes to behavioral changes such as restlessness, fidgeting, and poor impulse control. It also increases their irritability and frequency of anger outbursts due to decreased distress tolerance and delayed anger management skills. Their anger outbursts create strain in their relationships, particularly with authority figures, often resulting in non-compliance. Following outbursts these children typically express regret about their behavior and their non-compliance immediately following the incident, which is a form of withdrawal due to feelings of guilt

and shame. Additionally, children who experienced unexpected and involuntary immigration also exhibit rigidity about routines, foods, rules and a disproportionate emphasis on fairness.

As stated above, the immigration experience interferes with the achievement of developmental tasks. In early childhood, one of the most salient tasks is the development of adaptive social skills. The impact of immigration on the social development of children, the introduction to an unfamiliar social context, and lack of knowledge about culturally appropriate social rules results in social isolation, bullying behavior, and conflictive peer-relationships.

In the home, many of these children who immigrated at an early age become emotionally disconnected from their parents. Because they've been in contact with the American culture from a young age, they attain a higher degree of acculturation when effective communication skills are still significantly limited. Their acculturation level creates a gap between them and their parents at a time when they are still too young to verbalize the discrepant expectations of the two cultures. Therefore, they are unable to effectively communicate to their parents the stressors that they face, request their support or negotiate more considerate expectations.

Once they enter adolescence, immigrant children who have been in the country for fewer than four (4) years and are experiencing high levels of acculturation stress exhibit anxiety symptoms such as social withdrawal/isolation, irritability, tearfulness, excessive or restrictive eating patterns, and obsessions. Almost as frequently, they report compulsions, self-injurious behaviors, loneliness, low self-esteem, hopelessness, helplessness, truancy, alcohol use and feelings of resentment toward their parents. For children who immigrated longer than 4 years prior to adolescence, the acculturation stress symptoms after the transition include low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, defiant behavior, poor academic performance, truancy, lying, delinquency, alcohol and drug use, sexual promiscuity, aggressive behavior, gang related activity and feelings of guilt about their oppositional behaviors and poor choices that result in negative consequences. This is consistent with research about the emotional adjustment of immigrant children and adolescents (Fong, 2007; Larson & McQuiston, 2008; Polo & Lopez, 2009; Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Bacallao, 2009)

The adolescent stage presents with additional stressors for immigrant children who were reunited with their parents after an extended separation. They are often referred for treatment due to a blatant disregard of their parents' authority as they do not consider them a "real parent." Once in treatment, they report feeling unloved by their parents and resentful toward them either for having left them behind to suffer abuse or neglect by their caregivers or for separating them from their caregivers (often the grandmother).

These children exhibit a limited range of adaptive coping skills, lack of cognitive awareness of the cultural conflicts and the acculturation process, and significant difficulty communicating effectively with their parents. Due largely to a poor sense of self-efficacy they also fail to access supportive resources even when these are available. Additionally, a diminished internal locus of control and ineffectual outcome assessment skills interfere with their ability to successfully advocate for themselves when negotiating limits and privileges with authority figures.

The difficulties faced by these children are compounded by their parents' limited knowledge of age-appropriate expectations, limits, and consequences that take into consideration the multiple systems that their children must effectively navigate. In fact, many of these parents exhibit significant anxiety about the very systems in which their children participate on a daily basis, such as school. This is largely due to the language barrier, lack of knowledge about the social rules and their rights, and fear about their undocumented status. Moreover, parents also experience acculturation stress which can interfere with their own sense of efficacy in the role of parent since they feel ill-equipped to assist their children in successfully interacting with systems that differ culturally from the home environment. Lastly, they are not fully aware of the process of acculturation in which their children are engaged and thus they are unable to support them in resolving the cultural conflicts that they face.

Implications for Practice

The stories of these children revealed a group that is resilient, resourceful and whose schedule of challenges faced as a result of the acculturative process has been grossly underestimated. All of the children in this study expressed that they had desired

to immigrate to the United States and conveyed aspiration to succeed in the host culture. They presented various ways in which they have made efforts to participate regardless of whether they hope to return to their country of origin. This suggests an intrinsic motivation that will facilitate maximum utilization of supports provided to them.

These participants clearly communicated that family, immediate and extended, plays an important role in their acculturation process. Family members serve as support system during times of stress and also create stress for them. Therefore, the family needs to be included in any interventions designed to work with this population. Family activities that promote increased family cohesion would also benefit the children in increasing the strength of family bonds. Also, it is essential that practitioners working with this population explore the history of separation and loss of caregivers. Facilitation and encouragement of maintaining communication with close relatives left in the country of origin. The impact of reunification with parents and siblings should also be addressed during sessions.

The children's stories were filled with examples of how they evaluate their success by their level of academic achievement. Therefore, it is important that in order to enhance positive self-concept and therefore increase effective coping, clinicians who work with children undergoing acculturation collaborate with school personnel to address any academic challenges. Moreover, clinicians practicing in a school-based setting can assist these children in their adaptation process by allowing code switching and following the child's lead about the language utilized during therapy sessions.

Due to the number of stressors reported by these children, the similarity in their experiences, and research that asserts that that the stress of immigration and acculturation results in psychological problems for these children (Esquivel & Keltel, 1990; Pawliuk et al., 1996; Weiss et al., 1999), it is essential that screening tools and prevention programs be developed. Screening tools should focus on identification of number of stressors, evaluation of severity of distress caused by the stressors, and range and flexibility of coping strategies utilized. These tools should be developed to be utilized in academic settings by educators who have the most access to these children. Children identified as "at risk" could then be referred for additional support to school counselors and mental health professionals.

Effective treatment with these children must begin with a thorough assessment of the cultural composition of the family and understanding of the child in the context of his/her entire immigration journey. This includes the cultural identity of the individual, the extent of the individual's and family's participation in the culture of origin and in the host culture, the individual's language uses and preferences, and his or her Interpersonal versus Academic Language Proficiency. This is followed by individual and family interventions consisting of identification of stressors, labeling of feelings, discussion about appropriate and culturally sensitive expressions of feelings, identification and rehearsal of coping skills that can be effectively utilized in different cultural contexts, and social skills training.

Additionally, with pre-adolescents it is important to incorporate identification of culturally distinct social settings and culturally specific expectations; as well as psychoeducation about the impact of language and cultural differences on relationships. Family interventions must also include psychoeducation about the impact of immigration on all family members, the acculturative process, and acculturation stress; and negotiation of age-appropriate expectations that take into consideration the multiple systems that the child must effectively navigate. Cultural brokering and facilitating the development of effective communication skills between children and their parents is another essential aspect of the clinical intervention with this population.

Since the number of immigrant children from Latin America continues to increase faster than the number of Spanish bilingual therapists available, prevention programs have become essential in thwarting the development of mental health problems in this population. Therefore, it is crucial that social policy, clinical and education psychology researchers collaborate to develop programs that can be administered in school and community settings to facilitate adaptive coping with the stress of acculturation faced by all of these children. Successful programs must utilize an ecological model with multi-level components to reach the individual, families, and the community.

Another vital element for these prevention programs is a parent component that will empower parents, address their concerns, and assist them in coping with stressors. Moreover, encouraging discussion of the primary stressors identified by the children as well as psycho-education for parents about the challenges faced by their children and

ways in which they can support them through the inevitable process of acculturation. And lastly, bicultural skills training for the entire family while allowing that each family member has his/her own set of values and acculturation strategies (Morrison & James, 2009; Smokowski, Buchanan, & Bacallao, 2009)

Whether in group prevention or individual treatment, professionals working with this population to facilitate adaptive coping will need to attend to the primary sources of cultural conflict and assist these children in reframing their negative experiences as they pertain to the immigration and acculturation process. This will be followed by psycho-education to facilitate improved feelings of self-efficacy, increased internal locus of control, enhance outcome assessment, and enlarge the range of coping strategies available to them. Lastly, as these children progress through cultural orientation stages, the interventions will necessitate increased focus on factors that impact identity development.

Implications for Policy

The school setting emerged as the primary stage where cultural conflicts are faced and resolved in the children's stories. Therefore, increased focus needs to be placed on how school systems can help facilitate successful adaptation. It is essential that educators working with this population be informed about the challenges faced by immigrant children and receive training on how to address them. School-based mental health clinicians can facilitate psycho-educational discussion groups about acculturation, provide individual therapy to students whose acculturation stress interferes with their learning, and assist teachers to better support immigrant students in the classrooms. Additionally, the racial tensions experienced by recent immigrants need to be addressed immediately by school personnel to avoid communicating tacit approval of the behaviors that fuel the conflict. It is essential that schools work to create a more culturally receptive environment by including immigration as part of the curriculum. This includes discussions about the differences between different generation immigrants and those from different countries.

A meaningful revelation that emerged from the children's stories was the value that language holds for them in their ability to understand their environment, their place

within their schools and families, their cultural identity, their interpersonal relationships, their achievements, and their self-worth. Therefore, the way that English language instruction is handled in schools and the receptivity of school personnel to the students' utilization of both languages has considerable ramifications. Teachers and students need to have a clear understanding of the difference between Interpersonal and Academic Language Proficiencies. Decisions about academic placements and increased academic demands must be based on Academic Language Proficiency to avoid over-tasking students when they acquire Interpersonal English Language Proficiency, thereby creating anxiety and reluctance to continue to acquire language skills for fear of increasing demands. Moreover, the ability to speak Spanish at school will allow the children to negotiate complex social situations in which their limited English language fluency fails them; providing them with a larger support system, positive feedback about their ability to successfully manage novel situations and relationships, and increase their internal locus of control. These are all necessary elements for successful coping and adaptation.

The parents' role in the process of adaptation is crucial and therefore the effort to support these students needs to be a joint one. Although many school systems try to engage the parents of immigrant students, they often report minimal success. Immigrant parents are unfamiliar with the American system of education and therefore are intimidated by it. Additionally, they are unable to communicate directly with teachers and administrators, often relying on their children to interpret. These factors contribute to avoidance of school-related activities which is often misinterpreted by educators as the parents' lack of interest in the children's education. Quite to the contrary, almost all of the parents who participated in this study stated that one of their primary motivators for immigrating was to provide their children with a better education. Therefore, any effort to engage parents necessitates that the schools first create a supportive environment by providing full-time parent-school liaisons who are at minimum bilingual, but preferably also bicultural.

Strategies geared toward effecting community change should include policy changes at the state and local level that protect the well-being of immigrant children, regardless of whether they are documented or undocumented. The task of improving their quality of life begins with promoting the integration and participation of new

immigrants. These would consist of language classes for parents, school-community liaisons who are bilingual and bicultural, cultural competence programs for educators and social service providers, community activities that present the immigrant culture in a positive light, and outreach programs that demystify community-based resources. Strategies geared toward reaching the individual should include discussion of the major themes salient to this group: loss and separation, reunification, challenges of new academic demands and social dynamics, discrimination and racism, family dynamics, and available resources. Components that build self-esteem, support ethnic group participation, endorse ethnic identity, and provide instruction about the culture of origin are also critical.

Furthermore, despite the children's demonstrated resilience, the stressors of immigration can overwhelm their coping resources and contribute to mental health problems. Therefore, mental health services need to be made available and accessible to immigrant children and their parents by removing structural and economic barriers such as location and hours of clinics, high fees, and denial of medical assistance for the treatment of emergency medical conditions and life sustaining medication to undocumented individuals. Also, existing immigration laws fail to address the rights of U.S.-born children of undocumented parents in the case that parents are deported, as well as the quandary faced by undocumented students who arrived in the United States as minors, have graduated from US high schools, and want to pursue higher education. Lastly, despite their young age, children are acutely aware of their documentation status and the potential negative consequences that they and their parents can face by virtue of being undocumented. Therefore, the tone and spirit of the discussions about immigration laws and policies in the media and public forums need to reflect an attitude of respect for all who are represented in this debate.

Limitations

There are two limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding the present study. The first limitation concerns sample size. Due to my geographical location and lack of access to human resources in the form of bilingual research assistants, the number of participants that I was able to obtain for this study was small.

The second one relates to the diversity of the sample obtained. Latino immigrants' migration patterns inside the United States severely limited the number of immigrant children from countries other than Mexico available in the geographical region in which I was located. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution when being applied to Latino children from Caribbean, South and Central American countries.

Future Research

The findings of this study present a broad point of departure for future research as they highlight the wide range of challenges faced by immigrant Latino children. Since this group is growing rapidly in the United States and their mental health needs are becoming a pressing concern, this seems like a valuable field of research. Therefore, future investigations should consider utilizing larger samples of children from a wide variety of Latin American countries. Studies that are longitudinal can provide an unprecedented opportunity to assess the long-term effectiveness of coping strategies used by these children and how it impacts progression through cultural orientation stages.

Another constructive extension of this study would be the utilization of objective data such as report cards and school behavioral reports to assess the impact of stress on academic achievement, as well as effectiveness of coping strategies. What's more, the inclusion of additional variables that define the acculturative process would contribute to further the understanding of how many aspects of these children's lives and personalities are directly impacted by the process of immigration. Also, more in-depth and detailed exploration of subtle changes in values, beliefs, and roles as children progress through cultural orientation stages is vital to the field.

Lastly, studies that evaluate the effectiveness of preventive programs aimed at Latino immigrant children designed to facilitate adaptive coping with acculturation stress and successful adaptation should be strongly considered.

Conclusion

The findings of this study ascertain that the process of acculturation for these children is an intricate and stressful one, characterized by unremitting conflict and complex dynamics of coping and adaptation. This suggests a psychological impact, for the children, similar in intensity to that experienced by immigrant adolescents and adults, even if the scope of stressors encountered is narrower. Nevertheless, the outcome can be detrimental to their mental health and thus there is a pressing need for cultural sensitivity in the mental health treatment and education of immigrant children, as well as the development of ecological prevention models targeted toward addressing the stressors that most commonly interfere with their successful adjustment and productivity.

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Table 1. Participants' Gender by Interview Format

Gender	Individual Interview	Focus Group	Total
Male	9	5	14
Female	4	5	9
Total	13	10	23

Table 2. Demographics: Age, Grade Level, and Age at Immigration

Gender	Mean	SD	Median
Age	10.61	1.31	11
Grade Level	4.43	1.12	4
Age at Immigration	8.39	1.87	9

Table 3. Length of time residing in the United States

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Less than 1 year	3	13.0	13.0
1 year	2	8.7	8.7
1.5 years	5	21.7	21.7
2 years	2	8.7	8.7
2.5 years	5	21.7	21.7
3 years	3	13.0	13.0
More than 3 years	3	13.0	13.0
Total	23		

Table 4. Household Composition

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Mother & Father	11	20.4	47.8
Mother	7	13.0	30.4
Father	2	3.7	8.7
Step-Parent	6	11.1	26.1
Siblings	20	37.0	87.0
Extended Family	6	11.1	26.1
Other	2	3.7	8.7
Total	54		

Table 5. Question 1. What do you remember about (country of origin)?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Quality of Life	6	5.1	
I liked it there	2	1.7	8.7
It was warm	1	0.8	4.3
Didn't have much fun	1	0.8	4.3
Lights going out	1	0.8	4.3
Poverty	1	0.8	4.3
Community	23	1.9.5	
Teachers	4	3.4	17.4
Schools	5	4.2	21.7
Friends	14	11.9	60.9
Possessions	3	2.5	
Didn't have many toys	1	0.8	4.3
Pets	1	0.8	4.3
Clothes	1	0.8	4.3
Places	9	7.6	
Where I lived	2	1.7	8.7
Pool	2	1.7	8.7
Ranch	2	1.7	8.7

(table continues)

Table 5. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Rivers	2	1.7	8.7
Markets	1	0.8	4.3
Family	41	34.7	
Family	9	7.6	39.1
Grandparents	17	14.4	73.9
Aunts/Uncles	7	5.9	30.4
Cousins	6	5.1	26.1
Mother	1	0.8	4.3
Father	1	0.8	4.3
Activity	13	11.0	
Riding horses	2	1.7	8.7
Going outside	2	1.7	8.7
Playing	9	7.6	39.1
Culture	7	5.9	
Movies	1	0.8	4.3
Folk Stories	2	1.7	8.7
Music	1	0.8	4.3
Carnivals/Festivals	3	2.5	13.0

(table continues)

Table 5. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Events	16	13.6	
Parents separated	1	0.8	4.3
Violence	1	0.8	4.3
Fights	3	2.5	13.0
Theft	2	1.7	8.7
Ill grandparents	2	1.7	8.7
Siblings getting hit	1	0.8	4.3
Living without a parent	6	5.1	26.1
Total	118		

Table 6. Question 2. What was it like to leave?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Farewell	6	5.9	
Yes	4	4.0	17.4
No	2	2.0	8.7
Learning about the trip	11	10.9	
1 week	5	5.0	21.7
Don't know	1	1.0	4.3
2 days	2	2.0	8.7
1 day	1	1.0	4.3
2-3 weeks	1	1.0	4.3
2 months	1	1.0	4.3
Feelings	17	16.8	
Nervous	3	3.0	13.0
Sad	4	4.0	17.4
Crying	4	4.0	17.4
Scared	3	3.0	13.0
Worried	2	2.0	8.7
Happy	1	1.0	4.3
Thoughts	6	5.9	

(table continues)

Table 6. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Wanted to come	1	1.0	4.3
Didn't want to come	3	3.0	13.0
Wanted to be reunited	2	2.0	8.7
Mode of Transportation	15	14.9	
Bus	5	5.0	21.7
Taxi	1	1.0	4.3
Walk	4	4.0	17.4
Plane	5	5.0	21.7
Places	10	9.9	
River	3	3.0	13.0
Airport	2	2.0	8.7
Dessert	2	2.0	8.7
Border	3	3.0	13.0
Experiences	36	35.6	
Immigration police	6	5.9	26.1
Being caught	3	3.0	13.0
Interrogated	5	5.0	21.7
Separating during the trip	2	2.0	8.7

(table continues)

Table 6. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Different identity	4	4.0	17.4
Making mistakes	2	2.0	8.7
Someone is injured	2	2.0	8.7
Stealing	2	2.0	8.7
Eating McDonalds	4	4.0	17.4
Hotel/house	3	3.0	13.0
Packing	3	3.0	13.0
Total	101		

Table 7. Question 3. Did everyone come at the same time?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Yes	3	13.0	
Together	1	4.3	4.3
Separated	2	8.7	8.7
No	20	87.0	
No details	3	13.0	13.0
With parent	9	39.1	39.1
With relative	6	26.1	26.1
Other	2	8.7	8.7
Total	23		

Table 8. Question 4a. Have you returned to your home country to visit since you came?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
No	21	91.3	
No details	6	26.1	26.1
Want to visit	8	34.8	34.8
Want to stay	6	26.1	26.1
Don't want to go back.	1	4.3	4.3
Yes	2	8.7	8.7
Total	23		

Table 9. Question 4b. Do you talk to relatives on the phone?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Yes	23	44.2	100.0
Who	23	44.2	
Grandparents	14	26.9	60.9
Relatives	5	9.6	21.7
Parent	2	3.8	8.7
Frequency	8	15.4	
Weekly	2	3.8	8.7
More than weekly	3	5.8	13.0
Less than weekly	3	5.8	13.0
Total	52		

Table 10. Question 5a. What do American people think of (people from child's country)?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Other	10	15.2	
No answer	1	1.5	4.3
Don't know/ nothing	2	3.0	8.7
Dichotomous Answer	7	10.6	30.4
Positive	14	21.2	
We're good	3	4.5	13.0
Want to learn Spanish	4	6.1	17.4
Helpful / supportive	2	3.0	8.7
They are nice	5	7.6	21.7
Negative	42	63.6	
Racist	4	6.1	17.4
Discriminating	3	4.5	13.0
Don't like us / that we're bad / that we're strange	7	10.6	30.4
Don't know anything / don't understand	2	3.0	8.7
Say bad things	9	13.6	39.1
Teasing / bothering	3	4.5	13.0
Hitting / Fighting	4	6.1	17.4

(table continues)

Table 10. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Don't want us here / ruin their country	7	10.6	30.4
Take their jobs	3	4.5	13.0
Total	66		

Table 11. Question 5b. How do you feel about that?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Bad	5	41.7	41.7
Good	1	8.3	8.3
Nothing/Normal	4	33.3	33.3
Angry/ Want to fight	2	16.7	16.7
Total	12		

a. This question was only posed to 12 participants who were interviewed individually. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 12.

Table 12. Question 6a. What has school been like in the U.S.?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Negative	16	23.9	
Difficult	2	3.0	8.7
Hard Work	2	3.0	8.7
Didn't Know English	6	9.0	26.1
Felt bad	2	3.0	8.7
Didn't do anything	3	4.5	13.0
Didn't know anyone	1	1.5	4.3
Positive	24	35.8	
Good	12	17.9	52.2
Easier work	3	4.5	13.0
Got help	3	4.5	13.0
Like class	5	7.5	21.7
Teachers treat you well	1	1.5	4.3
Other	16	23.9	
Prizes/Diplomas	2	3.0	8.7
Good behavior/attitude	2	3.0	8.7
Knew the work/Able to do the work	3	4.5	13.0
Placed ahead	1	1.5	4.3

(table continues)

Table 12. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Placed a year behind	5	7.5	21.7
Held back	1	1.5	4.3
Hadn't been in school	2	3.0	8.7
Grades	11	16.4	
Lower	1	1.5	4.3
So-so	5	7.5	21.7
Good	5	7.5	21.7
Total	67		

Table 13. Question 6b. What were your grades like in (country of origin)?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Starting / Not in school	2	8.7	8.7
Don't Know	2	8.7	8.7
Good	8	34.8	34.8
Knew the work	2	8.7	8.7
Average	3	13.0	13.0
Bad	2	8.7	8.7
Inconsistent attendance	1	4.3	4.3
Didn't study	1	4.3	4.3
Didn't get help	1	4.3	4.3
Behavior problems	1	4.3	4.3
Total	23		

Table 14. Question 7a. Did you speak English before you came?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
No	13	52.0	56.5
A Little (a few words)	9	36.0	39.1
Classes at school	2	8.0	8.7
A dictionary	1	4.0	4.3
Total	25		

Table 15. Question 7b. What has it been like trying to learn it?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Positive	9	15.5	
Easy	8	13.8	34.8
Happy	1	1.7	4.3
Neutral	2	3.4	
Normal	1	1.7	4.3
Thought everyone spoke Spanish	1	1.7	4.3
Negative (feelings exp.)	22	37.9	
Long days	1	1.7	4.3
Embarrassed / Nervous	2	3.4	8.7
Felt alone	3	5.2	13.0
Difficulty communicating	3	5.2	13.0
Difficulty understanding	3	5.2	13.0
Didn't do work	3	5.2	13.0
Didn't talk	3	5.2	13.0
Didn't want to go to school	2	3.4	8.7
Got scolded	1	1.7	4.3
Didn't know the school	1	1.7	4.3

(table continues)

Table 15. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Difficult	17	29.3	
Difficult	10	17.2	43.5
At the beginning	3	5.2	13.0
A little	4	6.9	17.4
Strategies for learning	8	13.8	
TV for English	2	3.4	8.7
Listening to others	1	1.7	4.3
Tutor	1	1.7	4.3
Help from peer	2	3.4	8.7
School / Teacher	2	3.4	8.7
Total	58		

Table 16. Question 7c. What are some positive things about learning English?

Category	Number of Responses[a]	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
No answer/Don't know	3	18.8	13.0
Understanding people	3	18.8	13.0
Understanding schoolwork	2	12.5	8.7
Meeting people	2	12.5	8.7
TV / Music	4	25.0	17.4
Bilingual opportunities	2	12.5	8.7
Total	16		

a. Although this question was asked for all participants, only one or two participants from each focus group chose to answer and thus fewer than 23 responses were obtained.

Table 17. Question 7d. What are some negatives things about learning English?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Higher expectations	8	27.6	34.8
Negative consequences	1	3.4	4.3
Don't like speaking it at home	2	6.9	8.7
Forgetting Spanish	2	6.9	8.7
Nuances of the language	2	6.9	8.7
No choice	5	17.2	21.7
Curse words	6	20.7	26.1
People don't understand	2	6.9	8.7
Don’t know	1	3.4	4.3
Total	29		

Table 18. Question 8a. How do family members get along?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Fine / No problems	11	32.4	
No additional comment	10	29.4	43.5
Parents love each other	1	2.9	4.3
Arguments	9	26.5	
Between relatives	6	17.6	26.1
Between parents	1	2.9	4.3
Participant with family members	2	5.9	8.7
Fight / hitting	9	26.5	
Participant with siblings	9	26.5	39.1
Stressors	5	14.7	
Lies	1	2.9	4.3
Father's drinking	1	2.9	4.3
Financial worries	2	5.9	8.7
Stress	1	2.9	4.3
Total	34		

Table 19. Question 8b. How are disagreements resolved?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Active	17	38.6	
Talking about it	4	9.1	17.4
Tell parents	5	11.4	21.7
Compromise	1	2.3	4.3
Apologize	3	6.8	13.0
Get even	3	6.8	13.0
Give a present	1	2.3	4.3
Passive	8	18.2	
Let it go / wait it out	4	9.1	17.4
Spontaneously talk	4	9.1	17.4
Avoidance	8	18.2	
Leave	3	6.8	13.0
Stop talking	2	4.5	8.7
Playing / joke	3	6.8	13.0
Other	11	25.0	
Parents mediate	6	13.6	26.1
Don't know	2	4.5	8.7
Excluded from resolution process	3	6.8	13.0
Total	44		

Table 20. Question 8c. What kind of activities does the family participate in together?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Outside the home	18	78.3	
Restaurant	5	21.7	41.7
Action park	2	8.7	16.7
Shopping	4	17.4	33.3
Church	1	4.3	8.3
Park	3	13.0	25.0
Pool	1	4.3	8.3
Travel	1	4.3	8.3
Sports	1	4.3	8.3
Inside the Home	5	21.7	
Eating	1	4.3	8.3
Party	1	4.3	8.3
Watch movies	2	8.7	16.7
Playing	1	4.3	8.3
Total	23		

a. This question was only posed to 12 participants who were interviewed individually. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 12.

Table 21. Question 9. How do your parents feel/would feel about you becoming more like American children?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Don't know	8	25.0	
Unsure / Don't know	8	25.0	34.8
Negative	13	40.6	
Against it	5	15.6	21.7
Bad	1	3.1	4.3
Reprimanded	4	12.5	17.4
Bad habits	3	9.4	13.0
Positive	11	34.4	
Happy	4	12.5	17.4
Proud	2	6.3	8.7
Bilingual / Helpful	5	15.6	21.7
Total	32		

Table 22. Question 10a. What are some things that worry you?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
People	11	22.0	
Parents	6	12.0	26.1
Siblings	3	6.0	13.0
Other relatives	2	4.0	8.7
Event / Incident	25	50.0	
Kidnapped / Lost	3	6.0	13.0
Death	2	4.0	8.7
Getting hit by car	5	10.0	21.7
Car accident	4	8.0	17.4
Work accident / illness	7	14.0	30.4
Tornadoes	1	2.0	4.3
Being home alone	1	2.0	4.3
Crossing border	2	4.0	8.7
School Related	5	10.0	
Homework	2	4.0	8.7
Making friends	1	2.0	4.3
New school	1	2.0	4.3
Conflict with peers	1	2.0	4.3

(table continues)

Table 22. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Other	9	18.0	
Nothing	4	8.0	17.4
Financial problems	1	2.0	4.3
Personal / Family problems	3	6.0	13.0
Immigration / Law	1	2.0	4.3
Total	50		

Table 23. Question 10b. What do you do when you are worried?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Avoiding	9	21.4	
Think about something else	4	9.5	17.4
Go somewhere else	5	11.9	21.7
Active	25	59.5	
Tell an adult	8	19.0	34.8
Engage in different activity	7	16.7	30.4
Write it down	3	7.1	13.0
Intervene	2	4.8	8.7
Aggression	2	4.8	8.7
Confess/Pray	2	4.8	8.7
Seek physical affection	1	2.4	4.3
Other	8	19.9	
Get Nervous	8	19.9	34.8
Total	42		

Table 24. Question 10c. How do you feel after you do that?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Ambivalent	2	18.2	18.2
Good / Better	8	72.7	72.7
Bad / "Mal"	1	9.1	9.1
Total	11		

a. This question was posed to the 11 participants who indicated that they had things that worried them AND that they had tried to resolve their worry. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 11.

Table 25. Question 10d. Are there things that make you feel better?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Active	9	64.3	
Resolution	2	14.3	22.2
Talking	2	14.3	22.2
TV/Videogames	3	21.4	33.3
Playing with friends	2	14.3	22.2
Other	5	35.7	
Verbal reassurance	3	21.4	33.3
Food	1	7.1	11.1
Don't know	1	7.1	11.1
Total	14		

a. This question was posed to the participants who were interviewed individually. Only 9 chose to answer. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 9.

Table 26. Question 11a. Have you had problems with school friends?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
No	8	33.3	
No	4	16.7	17.4
Conflicts with classmates (not friends) / acculturated Latinos	4	16.7	17.4
Yes	16	83.3	
Yes	6	25.0	26.1
Fights	5	20.8	21.7
Verbal disagreements	2	8.3	8.7
Jealousy	3	12.5	13.0
Total	24		

Table 27. Question 11b. How did you try to resolve the problem?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Pro-social	6	25.0	
Talking	3	12.5	13.0
Accept responsibility	2	8.3	8.7
Compromise	1	4.2	4.3
Anti-social	6	25.0	
End Friendship/contact	4	16.7	17.4
Physical Aggression	2	8.3	8.7
Neutral	6	25.0	
Tell teacher/parent	5	20.8	21.7
Ignore it	1	4.2	4.3
Other	6	25.0	
No response	5	20.8	4.3
Don't know	1	5.6	4.3
Total	18		

Table 28. Question 11c. How did you feel after you tried that?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Good / Better	4	50.0	50.0
Nervous / Bad	2	25.0	25.0
Ambivalent	1	12.5	12.5
Don't Know	1	12.5	12.5
Total	8		

a. This question was posed only to the eight participants who indicated that they had had conflict AND had tried to resolve it. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by eight.

Table 29. Question 12a. What types of things have been the most difficult since you arrived?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
English language	24	64.9	
Not knowing it	5	13.5	21.7
Learning it	5	13.5	21.7
Speaking it	5	13.5	21.7
Understanding it	3	8.1	13.0
Reading it	2	5.4	8.7
Writing it	4	10.8	17.4
Interpersonal	5	13.5	
Making friends	2	5.4	8.7
Being away from family	2	5.4	8.7
Fights	1	2.7	4.3
Other	8	21.6	
Schoolwork	2	5.4	8.7
Immigration status	2	5.4	8.7
Being offered drugs	1	2.7	4.3
Can't go outside	1	2.7	4.3
Don't know neighborhood	1	2.7	4.3

(table continues)

Table 29. Continued

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Nothing	1	2.7	4.3
Total	37		

Table 30. Question 12b. Is it still a problem?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Yes	3	18.8	18.8
No	7	43.8	43.8
Somewhat / A Little	6	37.5	37.5
Total	16		

a. This question was asked to all participants but multiple focus group members chose not to answer. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 16, the number of participants who responded.

Table 31. Question 12c. How did you manage to solve this difficulty?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Ask for help	6	26.1	26.1
Study / Hard work	8	34.8	34.8
School	3	13.0	13.0
Practice	3	13.0	13.0
Resources	3	13.0	13.0
Total	23		

Table 32. Question 13a. How do you feel about having moved to the U.S.?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants[a]
Good / Happy	9	45.0	45.0
Ambivalent	6	30.0	30.0
Normal	2	10.0	10.0
Different	1	5.0	5.0
Scared	1	5.0	5.0
Missing Things	1	5.0	5.0
Total	20		

a. This question was asked to all participants but only 20 participants chose to respond. Percentages were obtained by dividing the number of responses in the category by 20.

Table 33. Question 13b. What are some of the good things about having moved?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Interpersonal	12	33.3	
Making new friends	6	16.7	26.1
Reunited with family	6	16.7	26.1
Quality of Life	10	27.8	
Financial Resources	4	11.1	17.4
Safer	1	2.8	4.3
More opportunities	5	13.9	21.7
Other	14	38.9	
School	5	13.9	21.7
Learning English	4	11.1	17.4
Parks	2	5.6	8.7
Snow	1	2.8	4.3
TV / Music	2	5.6	8.7
Total	36		

Table 34. Question 13c. What are some of the bad things about having moved?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Interpersonal	15	44.1	
Leaving family members behind	9	26.5	39.1
Being discriminated against	4	11.8	17.4
Fights	2	5.9	8.7
Quality of Life	8	23.5	
Crime	2	5.9	8.7
Can't go outside	4	11.8	17.4
Weapons	2	5.9	8.7
Other	11	32.4	
Weather	2	5.9	8.7
Problems in school	3	8.8	13.0
School / Language	2	5.9	8.7
Different food	2	5.9	8.7
Nothing	2	5.9	8.7
Total	34		

Table 35. Question 13d. What do you do to feel better about those things?

Category	Number of Responses	Percent	
		Responses	Participants
Active	23	74.2	
Talk to someone	7	22.6	30.4
TV/ Music/ Video games	6	19.4	26.1
Call Mexico	3	9.7	13.0
Play / Toys	3	9.7	13.0
Recall good memories	2	6.5	8.7
Control anger	1	3.2	4.3
Look for solutions	1	3.2	4.3
Avoidant	8	25.8	
Ignore it/ Forget it	5	16.1	21.7
Do nothing	2	6.5	8.7
Go to sleep	1	3.2	4.3
Total	31		

Appendix A

Letter to Parents

This is a study about children's experiences with immigration. We are interested in learning about the ways in which children experience the process of moving to a new country. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. Your child will be interviewed. S/he will be asked questions about emotional and personal problems that might have come up as a result of the relocation to the United States. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes. You will be able to see the questions that your child will be asked prior to the interview. If you do not feel comfortable with your child answering those questions, you can withdraw your consent without any consequences to either one of you. S/he will be interviewed at her school.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please return this letter to school with your name and a number where you can be reached.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Yajaira Santana-Wynn

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent / Parents

This is a study about children experiences with acculturation. We are interested in learning about the ways in which children experience the process of moving to a new country. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and your child will be interviewed. The interview will ask about emotional and personal problems that might have come up for your child as a result of the relocation to the United States. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at your child's school.

You will be able to see the questions that your child will be asked prior to the interview. If you do not feel comfortable with your child answering those questions, you can withdraw your consent without any consequences to either one of you. If you do not feel comfortable with your child answering the questions, you can withdraw your consent without any consequences to either one of you.

All information that you provide us with will be confidential. Your identity will remain confidential and you will be assigned an identification number. Only the primary researcher, Jari Santana-Wynn, will be able to link your name to your identification number. All data will be stored safely in a locked document box in the psychology clinic.

The purpose of this study is educational. Neither the researcher nor the study is in any way associated with Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). Any information that we obtain regarding your legal status or other personal information will **not** be reported to INS. Your legal status does not affect your ability to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw consent or discontinue at any time without any penalty. You may choose not to answer questions that you feel are too personal. After your child completes the interview, you will be provided with more information about the study and local resources that you may contact if you have questions or concerns about your mental health or that of your child.

If you have any questions about the study or would like to see the results of the completed study, please feel free to contact me at (513) 529-3649.

Sincerely,

Yajaira Santana-Wynn

Appendix C

Parent Questionnaire

1. Relationship to the child: Mother Father Other, specify: _____
2. Marital Status: single married divorced separated widow
3. Age of the child that will be interviewed _____
4. Gender: M F 5. Grade level _____
6. Did your child attend private or public school in your home country?
7. Number of children _____ 8. Ages of other children ___ ___ ___
9. Last grade **you** completed in school: (Circle your choice)
   a) Elementary-6
   b) 7-8
   c) 9-12
   d) 1-2 years of college
   e) 3-4 years of college
   f.) College graduate
   g) Graduate or professional school
10. In what country?
11. What was your occupation in your country?
12. What is your current occupation?
13. If Married
    a. What was your spouse's occupation in your country?
    b. What is your spouse's current occupation?
14. Where were you born?
15. Where was your child born?
16. How long have you lived in the United States?
17. How long has your child lived in the United States?
18. What can you tell me about your immigration to the United States?

Appendix D

Child Assent Form

I am interested in learning about what it is like to move to a new country. Since you moved to the United States from _____, I was hoping to be able to talk to you about what it was like for you. Your mother/father said it was ok for me to talk with you, but this does not mean that you have to. If you want to talk with me, I will be asking you questions about your move. You do not have to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that upset you. Also, if after we start talking, you decide that you do not want to talk anymore, you can tell me and we'll stop. Neither you nor your mom/dad will get in trouble if you do not want to finish.

I will not tell anyone what you tell me, unless you tell me about something that can hurt you, in which case I will tell your parents. After we finish the interview, I will answer any questions that you have about this study.

If after I leave you remember something that you want to tell me, you can tell your mother/father and s/he can call me at (513) 529-3649. I will call you back at soon as I receive the message.

Would you like to sit down and talk with me?

Appendix E

Child Interview

I. Demographics
   a. Name
   b. Age
   c. Country of birth
   d. Grade level
   e. How old were you when you moved to the U.S.?
   f. Time of residence in the U.S.
   g. Who do you live with?

II. Pre-migration factors
   1. What do you remember about (country of origin).
   2. What was it like to leave?
   3. Did everyone come at the same time?

III. Post-Migration factors
   4. a. Have you returned to your home country to visit since you came?
      b. Do you talk to relatives on the phone?
   5. a. What do American people think of (people from child's country)?
      b. How do you feel about that?
   6. a. What has school been like in the U.S.?
      b. What were your grades like in (country of origin)?
   7. a. Did you speak English before you came?
      b. What has it been like trying to learn it?
      c. What are some positive things about learning English?
      d. What are some negative things about learning English?
   8. a. How do family members get along?
      b. How are disagreements resolved?
      c. What kind of activities does the family participate in together?
   9. How do your parents feel/would feel about you becoming more like American children?

IV. General Stressors & Coping

10. a. What are some things that worry you?

    b. What do you do when you are worried?

    c. How do you feel after you do that?

    d. Are there things that make you feel better?

11. a. Have you had problems with school friends?

    b. How did you try to resolve the problem?

    c. How did you feel after you tried that?

V. Acculturation Stress & Coping

12. a. What types of things have been the most difficult since you arrived?

    b. Is it still a problem?

    c. How did you manage to solve this difficulty?

13. a. How do you feel about having moved to the U.S.?

    b. What are some of the good things about having moved?

    c. What are some of the bad things about having moved?

    d. What do you do to feel better about these things?

Appendix F

Focus Group Sessions

Session 1.

I. Demographics: Name, Age, Country of birth, Grade level, Time of residence in the U.S., Who do you live with?

II. Pre-migration factors:

- What do you remember about (country of origin).

Session 2. Migration Experience

- What was it like to leave?
- Have you returned to your home country to visit since you came?
- Did you speak English before you came? What has it been like trying to learn it? Positives and negatives?

Session 3. Post- Migration Factors

- What do American people think of (people from child's country)? How do you feel about that?
- What has school been like in the U.S.?
- How do family members get along?
- How do your parents feel/would feel about you becoming more like American children?

Session 4. Stress & Coping

- What types of things have been the most difficult since you arrived?
  - Is it still a problem?
  - How did you manage to solve this difficulty?
- How do you feel about having moved to the U.S.?
  - What are some of the good things about having moved?
  - What are some of the bad things about having moved?

    - What do you do to feel better about these things?
- Have you had problems with school friends?
    - How did you try to resolve the problem?
    - How did you feel after you tried that?

Appendix G

Participant Information

The study in which you and your child participated is about the acculturation process of children. The researcher is interested in learning about the stressors experienced by children when they move to a new country.

If you have questions or would like to receive a copy of the completed study, you may contact:

Yajaira Santana-Wynn
Benton Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
(513) 529-3649
(513) 529-2423

If the questions that you answered in the study raised any questions or concern about your child, you may contact the researcher. If you prefer to discuss these concerns with a professional in your community, below is a list of resources available. You may call or visit these facilities:

Butler Behavioral Health Services
Harbor House
401 N 2nd Street
Hamilton, OH 45011-1601
(513) 896-5436

Catholic Social Services
140 N 5th Street
Hamilton, OH 45011-3532
(513) 863-6129

Miami University Psychology Clinic
18 Benton Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
(513) 529-2423

Thank you for your participation!