

*MI VIEJA TIERRA, MI NUEVO PAÍS:*  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEALIZATION AND  
DEVALUATION AND DEGREE OF ACCULTURATION IN LATINA MOTHERS'  
DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND THE U.S.

by

Malena Vinocur

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date	Chair of Examining Committee Denise Hien, Ph.D.
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Date	Executive Officer Maureen O'Connor, Ph.D.
------	--

Steven Tuber, Ph.D.

Diana Puñales, Ph.D.

Elliot Jurist, Ph.D.

Glen Milstein, Ph.D.

Supervisory Committee

## Abstract

Mi Vieja Tierra, Mi Nuevo País:

An Exploration of the Relationship between Idealization and Devaluation and Degree of Acculturation in Latina Mothers' Descriptions of their Country of Origin and the U.S.

By

Malena Vinocur

Advisor: Professor Denise Hien, Ph.D.

The literature on the acculturation of the immigrant provides evidence that the acculturative process can be taxing on the individual, creating stress and potential mental illness. Latino immigrants are a quickly growing and understudied minority group in the United States. The goal of this study was to discern and illuminate the complex psychological texture of how home country and country of residence are compared and described by a group of immigrant Latina women in the process of acculturation and formation of an immigrant identity. The study also aimed to explore whether those participants who were less acculturated would be more likely to idealize and devalue, or what is otherwise known as splitting, in their narratives. This study builds on the CUNY-IRB approved study “Family Support from Immigration to Work” that looked at the challenges and coping skills in the transition from immigration to work.

Participants were first-generation Latina mothers whose toddlers were attending the Columbia University Head Start and Early Head Start Program. Data in this study included an extensive interview that probed for positive and negative associations to their home country and country of residence, as well as a demographic and acculturation questionnaires. Data analysis was guided

by the principles of grounded theory which gives precedence to the participants' narrative and the meaning of their experience. The data highlighted the struggles and victories encountered in the process of immigration and the intricacies of acculturation as it relates to the Latina immigrant's changing relationship to both countries. Those who were less acculturated were found to engage in more splitting in their descriptions. In addition, four main themes emerged that helped describe the qualities of each acculturation group: (a) location of home, (b) reasons for leaving the COO, (c) the wish to return to the COO, and (d) expectations before immigrating. The findings of this research contribute to a greater understanding of Latina women's experience of immigration and acculturation, thus filling a gap in providing culturally-appropriate clinical interventions for this minority group.

“The immigrants are the desperate ones, people who have tired of waiting so long, and that without hope, they flee. Years go by. Some do well, others, not so much. But all of them remain, good or bad, whether they confess it or not, with their roots exposed. Those of us who go to the dentist know how much exposed roots can hurt.”

-Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan writer



*Dedicated to my parents, Judit and Cesar:*  
You uprooted three little children and a home,  
left behind an unstable country, but also your families and your culture;  
gave up what you knew and worked so hard for us – to give us every opportunity.  
Thank you for expanding my roots.

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## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER I: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER II: Review of Literature.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Latino versus Hispanic.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Latino/Hispanic immigration trends.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Immigrant Latinos and mental illness .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acculturation.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Acculturative stress .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Integrative identity and mental health .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Discrimination and other challenges faced towards integration.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Acculturation of parents and the effect on children.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Psychodynamic theories on immigrant identity integration and splitting .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Summary of the literature review .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Hypothesis .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>CHAPTER III: Methods.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Methodology: The Family Support From Immigration to Work Project (FSIW).....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>FSIW Participants .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>FSIW Interview Procedures .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>FSIW Acculturation Scale .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Methodology for Mi Vieja Tierra, Mi Nuevo Pais (MVT/MNP).....</b>	<b>48</b>
MVT/MNP Sample.....	48
<b>MVT/MNP Materials/Instruments .....</b>	<b>49</b>
Demographic Questionnaire .....	49
MVT/MNT Immigration, Family, Work and Affect Regulation Interview .....	49
MVT/MNT Analysis .....	49
Idealization/Devaluation and Range of Experience. ....	51
<b>CHAPTER IV: Results.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Demographics.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>High Acculturation Group.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Bicultural Group.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Low Acculturation Group.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Themes Across Acculturation Groups.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>The Meaning of Home .....</b>	<b>58</b>
Home is where the family is. ....	58
Location of home: in the U.S., in the COO, or in both.....	62
Thoughts about home bring feelings of frustration. ....	64
Images of COO as more free. ....	65
Life in the U.S. is easier.....	67
Isolation and difficulty.....	67
<b>When Life in the U.S. Reminds of Country of Origin.....</b>	<b>68</b>
Activities, people, and family left behind.....	69
Differences in foods.....	72
Differences in environment. ....	73

Getting accustomed to a new community.....	75
Feeling unsafe in the U.S. reminds of freedom and safety in COO. ....	76
Owning things in the U.S.....	77
Limitations of language.....	77
Conscious effort to not think of COO as a coping skill.....	77
The holidays.....	78
<b>A Moment When They Wished to go Home.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Not now, but in the past.....	81
One foot here, one foot there.....	82
Strong urge to return - one foot in, one foot out.....	83
In times of need of family closeness.....	83
When life gets hard in the U.S.....	87
When feeling closed-in.....	87
Coping strategies.....	88
<b>Immigration Histories.....</b>	<b>88</b>
Decision to immigrate was made gradually.....	89
Decision to immigrate was spontaneous.....	89
Unwanted immigration – brought by parents.....	90
Decision was made motivated by opportunity and freedom in the U.S.....	91
Immigration was difficult.....	92
What made immigration easier.....	94
Unrealistic and broken expectations –the reality versus the fantasy of the U.S.....	95
Descriptions of the arrival.....	97
<b>Five Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO.....</b>	<b>98</b>
Leaving as negative.....	98
Leaving as positive.....	101
Balancing both positive and negative.....	103
<b>Five Adjectives that Describe Life in the U.S.....</b>	<b>103</b>
Life in U.S. as positive.....	103
Life in U.S. as negative.....	106
<b>Case Examples.....</b>	<b>108</b>
Norma – High Acculturation.....	109
Carmen – Bicultural, Tending Low.....	114
Maria – Low Acculturation.....	118
<b>CHAPTER V: Discussion.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Location of Home.....</b>	<b>122</b>
The family.....	122
COO, COR, or both.....	124
<b>Reasons for Leaving.....</b>	<b>126</b>
Anger and conflictive feelings affecting healthy mourning of the COO.....	127
<b>The Wish to Return to the COO.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Expectations before Immigration.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Clinical Implications.....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Policy Implications.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Limitations of the Study.....</b>	<b>141</b>

<b>Future Research.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Concluding Statement .....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Families and Work Interview: Version 3 .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Tables 1-3. Demographics for Acculturation Groups.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Tables 4-28. Individual Codes from the Interview .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>167</b>

## List of Figures

- Figure 1.* This figure illustrates the relationship between acculturation levels on the meaning of home.....59
- Figure 2.* This figure illustrates the frequency of themes across each acculturation group for the question of when U.S. reminds of COO.....69
- Figure 3.* This figure shows the temporal relationship and themes related to the wish to go home in the acculturation groups.....80
- Figure 4.* This figure shows the participants' responses in narrating their immigration stories.....88

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

According to the 2010 US Census, the Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, and accounted for more than half of the total U.S. population increase of 27.3 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Latinos are the largest and fastest growing group of immigrants in the US, yet continue to be an under-studied minority group. Research in the area of Latino immigration and identity is imperative. Hence, this study looks at the factors contributing to acculturation in the immigration narratives of low-income urban Latina mothers, with a special focus on the psychological phenomenon of idealization and devaluation. The study is designed to examine how the degree to which these women idealize or devalue their countries of origin versus their country of residence is related to level of acculturation. Specifically, the goal is to understand whether the tendency towards idealization and devaluation of home country and/or country of residence is associated with difficulties in adaptation to the country of residence, and with difficulties towards the formation of a hybrid acculturative identity. The capacity to develop a hybrid, bicultural identity, one that integrates emotional and social connections to the “new” and “old” world, has been found to be associated to mental health (Berry, 1997, 1988; Torres, 2009).

In her paper on the resistances of immigrants towards learning the language in the new country of residence, Mirsky (1991) writes that a common trend in immigration is that the new country and the old country become the targets of intense, conflicting emotions. These get expressed in a split-off manner, in which either new country or old country can be experienced as “all good” or “all bad.” In fact, Mirsky argues that in order for immigration to occur, the “regressive pull towards dependency” must be denied and the splitting mechanism must be

applied (p. 620). Mirsky points out that the unresolved anger and love created in the immigration process must be worked through and integrated before whole representations of both countries are consolidated.

Acculturation and the reconstruction of identity is a complex process, and consistent with Mirsky's description, the splitting mechanisms in the immigrant, and the hopeful eventual integration of these splits is the focus of this study. Through a careful qualitative analysis of the immigration narratives, the present study also examines how these processes are further complicated by the particular conditions of the migration; for instance in forced migrations, as is the case with children or some married women, or in spontaneous, but ambivalent migrations.

The degree to which immigrants have opportunities for "emotional refueling" through visiting the home country also affects the process of identity formation and adjustment to immigration (Akhtar, 1995), and is especially an issue to consider for undocumented, low-income women who cannot leave the country of residence, or for poor women who cannot pull together the funds for a ticket home. Many of these women not only leave their families behind, but also their native country born-children, some of whom they may not see again for many years, if at all.

The present study used interview and questionnaire data collected as part of a CUNY-IRB approved study that looked at the challenges and coping skills of Latina mothers in the transition from immigration to work. Participants were low-income first generation Latina mothers whose toddlers were attending the Columbia University Head Start and Early Head Start Program. The interviews were videotaped, and capture the women narrating their immigration stories in Spanish, as well as experiences in the new land. The study, then, builds on the need to understand in more depth, the way Latina women experience their country of origin and

residence, as well as their experience of immigration. Through this, the component of integrated immigrant identity and the splitting phenomenon is also honed in on by looking at those comparisons of countries that get to the point of all or nothing extremity, all good or all bad, suggesting the notion of splitting.

This review of the literature is organized in the following manner: it first explores the question of terminology, Latino versus Hispanic; then moves into a review of the literature in the area of Latino immigration trends, Latinos and mental illness trends, the meaning of acculturation and related concepts, the notion of acculturative stress in Latinos, research on integrative identity and mental health, discrimination and other barriers in acculturation for Latinos, the impact of parental acculturative stress on the second generation, and finally, psychodynamic theories on immigration and identity formation.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Latino versus Hispanic**

The question of whether to call the people of Latin America Latino/a versus Hispanic is a complex, layered debate. Hispanic is a term used to refer to Spanish-speaking immigrants from Latin America; however, even though Latino comes from Latin and Latin America is a term coined by the “conquistadores,” politically minded groups prefer the term Latino as they feel it authenticates their pre-Hispanic, native identity (Falicov, 1998). Falicov (p. 34) describes Hispanic is a term supported by politically conservative groups that may see their Spanish European roots as superior to the indigenous groups of Latin America. She adds that Latino is also geographically accurate, since it refers to the people of Latin America rather than those from Spain, which excludes people of native-born Indian ancestry; on the other hand, Latino may not describe individuals with European, Asian, or African ancestry. To make this debate more intricate, Latino is a term that has gender, whereas Hispanic follows English, non-gendered rules of grammar. Ultimately, however, it seems that it is the Spanish language that ties all the countries of Latin America together; it is the “unifying characteristic” in second and third generation immigrants (Falicov, 1998). Shorris (1992) relates an anecdote about a time when he asked a Mexican grandmother what she called her generic cultural group. When she answered, “I belong to the ‘Mejicanos,’” he insisted, “Are you Hispano, Latino, Latin, Spanish, Spanish-Speaking...” The grandmother, however, maintained that she belonged to the “Mejicanos” group (Falicov, p. 34, 1998). This anecdote reminds us that Latinos are a hugely heterogeneous group of immigrants, with varied cultural and class backgrounds, varied degrees of Spanish heritage and the race and culture privileges this heritage often provides, as well as varied immigration

experiences and documentation situations, making it difficult to generalize, clump together, and even theorize on their experience in an all-encompassing way. This presents an enormous challenge for the generalizability of research to all Hispanics/Latinos as a people. Keeping this in mind, for the purpose of this study, in order to minimize the tendency to over-homogenize, I will use more specific terms where appropriate, such as Mexicans or Dominicans. I will also be using Latino and Hispanic interchangeably, because the literature to be reviewed uses both of these terms.

### **Latino/Hispanic immigration trends**

Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, or four times the nation's 9.7 percent growth rate. In fact, Latinos are considered the fastest growing minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A current statistical portrait of Hispanics in the United States by the Pew Hispanic Center (2010), shows that as of 2008, this group comprises 15.4 percent of the total US population, making it the second largest cultural group after the “White, non-Hispanic” group, and larger than both Black and Asian groups. Out of this group, 48.3 percent are women. Of the total New York state population, 16.6 percent of individuals are Hispanic. The Census projects that by 2050, Latinos will grow to represent a quarter of the U.S. population. Also, to add to these numbers, as of 2008, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated there were 11.9 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, indicating that unauthorized immigrants make up four percent of the U.S. population. The vast majority of undocumented immigrants, seventy-six percent or three quarters, come from Latin American countries. To be more precise, as of March of 2009, 9.6 million of all unauthorized immigrants came from Latin America, with Mexico being the birth country of the majority of unauthorized immigrants – fifty-nine percent. Other significant regional sources of unauthorized

immigrants include Asia (eleven percent), Central America (eleven percent), South America (seven percent), the Caribbean (four percent), and the Middle East (less than two percent) (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). With the growing numbers of Latinos in the US, both documented and undocumented, research that aids in better understanding the processes of identity and acculturation in order to better serve this population becomes imperative.

### **Immigrant Latinos and mental illness**

Recent epidemiological data reported by Alegria, Mulvaney-Day, et al. (2007) suggests that the lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders is 28.14 percent among Latino men and 30.23 percent for Latina women. Statistics show that low-income, young women are at high risk for depression, and that minority women are overrepresented in this group (Nadeem, Lange, & Miranda, 2009). Approximately one in three Latinos have a lifetime history of mental disorder, and lifetime prevalence of mental disorder increases incrementally with additional time spent in the United States (Vega, Sribney, Aguilar-Gaxiola, & Kolody, 2004). Controlling for age, Vega et al. (2004) found in their sample that 9.2 percent of Latinos who had been in the U.S. less than thirteen years experienced an episode of mental illness in 2004, whereas, 18.4 percent of Latinos in the U.S. longer than thirteen years, and 27.4 percent of U.S. born Latinos had a history of mental disorder in 2004. It was found that after roughly age thirty in males and females, the risk of onset appears to increase as they age into their late thirties and into their forties, in contrast to the U.S. born and early childhood arrival immigrants, whose risk continues to decline at these ages (Vega et al., 2004). Also in this study, Latina women were found to have higher rates of mood and anxiety disorders, while Latino men had higher rates of substance abuse-related disorders and non-substance use related psychiatric disorders. These findings seem to suggest that factors associated with living in and assimilating to the U.S. are associated with an increase

in mental disorders, especially depression (Torres, 2009). Unfortunately, despite the high prevalence of depression, and other mental illnesses in Latinos, little is known about the relation between stress, coping, and depressive symptoms in this population (Romero & Roberts, 2003).

Hiott et al. (2006) report collective evidence that although prevalence of mental illness among recent immigrants is similar to prevalence in their respective countries of origin, the prevalence increases with younger age of entry and with longer residence in the U.S., after controlling for age. In an attempt to document the relationship between age of arrival, time in the U.S., and cohort effects on the risk of onset of psychiatric disorders, Alegria, Sribney, Woo, and Guarnaccia (2007) used a nationally representative sample of two thousand five hundred and fifty-four Latinos in the United States. Their findings indicate that Latino immigrants have lower risks of onset for some psychiatric disorders in their country of origin. However, once in the U.S., Latino immigrants appear to experience similar risks of onset as U.S.-born Latinos of the same age. It appears that the longer Latino immigrants remain in their country of origin, the less cumulative risk of onset they experience, resulting in lower lifetime rates of disorders. The researchers conclude that their findings could potentially be due to variation in cultural and social norms and expectations across geographical contexts, and differences in family structure and gender roles.

Hiott et al. (2006) also point out that mental health among Latinos needs to be viewed in a biopsychosocial perspective. This is to say that, in addition to mental health issues, many Latinos face social hardships that can contribute to mental health difficulties. Job demands, economic hardships, and securing employment can all be included as factors that contribute to mental illness for Latinos (Hiott et al., 2006). In their vast review of research and literature, other factors identified are: (1) employment in disproportionately physically demanding jobs and

industry where there is potential for injury, (2) low earnings, (3) and frequent sending of earnings to relatives back home (Hiott et al., 2006).

However, all of the above is complicated by disparities in access to mental health services, as well as a tendency from Latino immigrants to seek services from the public health clinic system or their general practitioner, where services are often inadequate (Simon, 2002) rather than proper mental health care (Vega, Kolody, Aguilar-Gaxiola, & Catalano, 2004). Evidence posed by Cabassa, Zayas, & Hansen (2006) also suggests that immigrant Latinos in need of mental health services underuse these services, compared to non-Latino Whites, and they are less likely to receive guideline concordant care. These trends in care seeking and accessibility place Latino immigrants at greater risk than U.S. born Latinos for having their mental health needs not addressed (Vega & Lopez, 2001). Many variables could be creating this underutilization of proper mental health care; among these, lack of health insurance, dearth of bilingual providers, and lack of culturally appropriate mental health services (Vega & Lopez, 2001). Also, stigma and somatization may impede the likelihood of perceiving the need for mental health help (Nadeem, et al., 2009).

In the case of Latina women, treatment of maternal depression has been linked to improvement in child outcomes, therefore efforts to understand the underutilization of mental health services becomes doubly important, as it impacts child health (Nadeem, et al., 2009). Nadeem et al. (2009) looked at a sample of one thousand five hundred and seventy-seven low-income women who met the criteria for depression, of which eight hundred and two were immigrant Latinas, and five hundred and ninety-eight were U.S.-born Latinas. They concluded that the extent to which depressed young women perceive that they need help with a mental health issue appears to be one of the most important factors in them receiving the appropriate

care (Nadeem et al., 2009). Women who reported stigma concerns about seeking treatment were less likely to say they perceived a need for care; stigma appeared to mask identification of need for care. However, somatization increased the odds that depressed women perceived a need for help, which was a finding that contrasted the notion that those who somatize are less likely to assume their problems have an underlying emotional cause. The women also experienced multiple somatic complaints, which signifies greater general distress, and serves as another indication that they need help with their problems (Nadeem et al., 2009).

In their research on gender differences in anxiety and depression among immigrant Latinos, Hiott et al. (2006) conducted a study on one hundred and fifty immigrants from Mexico residing in North Carolina – eighty-two men and sixty-eight women. Their goal was to determine elements of social history that could aid primary care providers in identifying symptoms of depression and anxiety for this population. They found that social marginalization in men and stress from separation from family, in the case of women, was linked with elevated anxiety and depression symptoms. This study not only emphasized the importance of the family, or familiar, network for Latinas, but the researchers also pose that individuals who are isolated from family or have weak social networks as a result of immigration may need different treatment options.

Additionally, many Hispanic women leave children behind in their home countries, planning to one day be reunited with them. Unfortunately, they may remain separated for more than ten years. These moms often take solace in that they are supporting their children financially, and that someone trustworthy may be caring for their child or children. However, Latinas who are separated from their children in the immigration process are more likely to

experience depression than women who have their children with them, or do not have children at all (Paris, 2008).

### **Acculturation**

Immigration brings about a myriad of multifaceted challenges and ruptures, as well as new beginnings. Falicov (1998) uses the “root” metaphor for immigration and adaptation, and she expresses that when a plant is pulled from the earth, some soil always remains attached to its roots (p.51). Part of this soil that remains contributes to a successful re-planting. Falicov uses this metaphor to say that although immigrants lack the depth of the native soil, the soil that has carried over is embodied in the type of household that gets created – in the language, food, friendships, and children that are raised. She identifies three types of “uprooting”: *physical* – smells, sights, and sounds of people and environment, *social* – human network of friends and family, and *cultural* – personal stories and views of reality of home country such as social class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (p.52-55).

One of the challenges immigrants face is the process of adaptation and reconciliation of cultural differences between the country of origin and the new country of residence (Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001). This reconciliation is known as the process of acculturation, and it is conceptualized broadly as the cultural changes and adaptations in the individual as a result of interaction and contact with the majority, host culture (Berry, 1997). Awad (2010) contends that early research conceptualized acculturation as a unidimensional concept or a linear process in which immigrants acculturate to the dominant society. More recently, researchers have shifted to understanding acculturation as involving a bidirectional or multidimensional approach. Berry (1997) was first to theorize and research the idea that a person’s relationship toward the heritage culture and the mainstream culture can vary independently. In this bilinear conceptualization,

change occurs at two levels – within the culture of origin and within the host culture (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003).

Hence, as Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) contend, orientations towards heritage and U.S. values and practices are considered separate dimensions in the bidirectional model. This concept has been well supported by recent acculturation research, and current measures used in research consist of parallel items that examine aspect of acculturation to the heritage and mainstream cultures separately (Dere, Ryder, & Kirmayer, 2010). Bidimensional measurement allows the researcher to estimate the comparative association between heritage and mainstream orientations (Dere et al., 2010).

Acculturation, then, is a complex developmental process in which individuals are constantly changing as a result of social interaction with the host culture, while at the same time retaining aspects of their culture of origin (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). This process does not occur in a vacuum, but rather within the social demands and constraints of the new culture. Immigrants and their children may struggle to retain their cultural identity, language, and values while attempting to function, learn a new language, and develop a new and integrated sense of self in the foreign, host country (Zea et al., 2003). Acculturation can also be seen as an experience of extending one's horizon – for example, one's cultural competency, worldviews, and adaptability to a different cultural context (Yoon, Lee, Goh, 2008).

Berry (1997) defined different levels of acculturation that can be manifested in two fundamental ways – immersion or adoption of the dominant culture, and retention or immersion in the ethnic society. Dominant society immersion refers to the extent to which the immigrant adopts or adheres to the values, behaviors, and beliefs of the host culture, while ethnic immersion refers to how much individuals hold on to or adopt values, beliefs, and behaviors that are thought

to be a part of their own ethnic heritage. Berry specified that these two fundamental possibilities can result in four positions: (1) Assimilation, in which there is less immersion in the ethnic society and full immersion in the dominant society, (2) Integration, in which an individual is fully immersed in both ethnic and dominant society, (3) Separation, in which there is complete immersion into the ethnic society and retraction from the dominant society, and (4) Marginalization, in which there is a lack of immersion in both dominant and ethnic societies (Berry, 1997).

Miville and Constantine (2006) have found that acculturation can lead to conflicting pressures to acculturate for some immigrants. For example, some Hispanic women feel pressure to adopt U.S. behaviors and norms in non-domestic contexts, such as work, while at the same time feeling pressure from friends and family to maintain values and behaviors that are in line with their own culture (Negy, Hammons, Reig-Ferrer, & Carper, 2010). Researchers have found that the pressure to acculturate has been found to be a predictor for stress among Hispanic college students (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008).

Other important definitions include the concept of *ethnic identity*. This complex concept refers to a subjective experience of heritage culture retention (Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Jarvis, 2007). Also, it can be looked at as the extent to which individuals have explored what their ethnicity means to them, how interested, knowledgeable, and committed they are about their group, as well as the extent to which they view their ethnic group positively (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Racial identity is a term that is often used synonymously with ethnic identity, however, they are different. According to Helms and Tallyrand (1997), *racial identity* is for a group characterized by a particular skin tone, while ethnic identity is a group that holds specific heritage and set of values, beliefs, and customs. The term *cultural identity* refers to the totality

of one's cultural self-definition, including acculturation, ethnic identity, and other concepts such as collectivism and individualism (Schwartz et al., 2007).

### **Acculturative stress**

The familiar term "culture shock" coined by Oberg in 1960 was later renamed acculturative stress by Berry (1970, 1987) in an effort to link it to psychological models of stress as a response to the environment (Berry, 1997, p.298). Thus, it refers to the stress that stems directly from the process of acculturation (Hovey, 2000). For Hispanic immigrants, this can result, for instance, from struggles with communication in English, from perceived value or cultural incongruities between their cultural U.S. context and their native culture, and from concerns over their foreign status (Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer, 2009).

Lack of fluency in the host language can be shameful, frustrating, and even terrifying for new immigrants; a trip to the emergency room with a sick child or partner, or even a subway ride can turn into an exhausting nightmare (Perez Foster, 2001). The backdrop of loss of family, community, and physical environment upon which these new experiences occur for immigrants must also be considered. Research shows that loss of familiar social networks is especially hard on families and women, who often find themselves isolated, forced to fend on their own with the multiple stresses and demands of the unfamiliar environment (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995). Research cited by Perez Foster (2001) indicates that those who migrate as a family fare better than those who migrate alone; however families are faced with the difficult task of redefinitions of gender roles, and with the quickness by which children conform to their new community, one with often extremely dystonic ethnic traditions.

Perez Foster (2001) and Falicov (1998) both assert that elderly people who relocate with younger families often do more poorly than their younger relatives, as they feel overwhelmed by

the task of acculturation, as well as isolated. Immigrant women also encounter a “dual-edged phenomenon” as they are more willing than their male counterparts to accept lower paying and menial jobs, and suddenly become wage-earners, “introduced to new configurations of traditional gender roles,” which has been described earlier in this paper as a typical challenge of acculturation (Perez Foster, p. 154, 2001). Those women with male partners are often confronted by dejected and unemployed men who feel threatened by these suddenly empowered women – this dynamic has been associated with an increase in domestic violence and substance abuse (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Straussner, 2000).

Although it is clear that there is a link between the migratory process and major adjustment stressors (Perez Foster, 2001), the literature presents discrepant results when looking at the relationship between acculturative stress and levels of acculturation. Reviews of the research by Desjarlais et al. (1995) and Loue (1998) clearly show a link between depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and generally higher prevalence of psychiatric disorders with multiple immigrant populations both in and outside of the U.S. However, other findings provide equivocal results regarding the relation between acculturation and depression, showing an inconsistent negative or positive relationship (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991).

A study by Hovey from 1996 found that levels of acculturation and acculturative stress were unrelated (Hovey, 2000). Hovey argues that it is inaccurate to suppose that less acculturation is equivalent to more acculturative stress, since too many variables affect this relationship. He concludes that acculturative stress varies from person to person, and his research does indicate that there is a direct relationship between acculturative stress and depression and suicidal ideation. In their review of the literature, Smart and Smart (1995) found that early

assumptions and studies assumed that acculturation would be stressful for all individuals and that certain levels of acculturation may indicate higher levels of distress (Romero & Roberts, 2003). More recently, it is assumed that cultural influences are much more complex than suggested by the early unidimensional linear models of acculturation (Berry, 1997).

At heightened levels of acculturative stress, Hovey (2000) identifies a list of cultural and psychological factors that could result in low levels of depression and suicidal ideation in Latino immigrants: social support in the new community; socioeconomic status (including work status and income changes); premigration variables, such as self-esteem or cognitive abilities; knowledge of the new language and culture, control and choice in the decision to migrate, expectations of the future (hopeful versus non-hopeful); religiosity; and the level of acceptance of cultural diversity (assimilationist versus multicultural) within the larger society (p.137). Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer (2009) add ethnic identity and self-efficacy in their literature review. Hovey (2000) explains that an individual with high levels of social support and positive expectations for the future can be expected to experience less depression than an individual without these kinds of supports.

Hovey's study from 2000 used a sample of one hundred and fourteen immigrants of Mexican descent, seventy-six females and thirty-eight males, and found that acculturative stress was correlated with depression and suicidal ideation in this group. Using a self-administered battery of questionnaires, he measured family functioning, family intactness, expectations for the future, social support, religiosity, education and income, and control and choice in the decision to migrate. He describes the major finding of his study was that immigration puts individuals "at risk" (p. 144). The study revealed that women had higher levels of depression than men, which was consistent with the literature on depression for Mexican Americans. Although the findings

may not be related to specific cultural factors, Hovey outlines several hypotheses that have been given to account for the gender differences in depression.

Vega et al. (1991) observed that women might report more depression due to it being more socially acceptable for women to have these symptoms. Other researchers have posed that depression could be due to the earlier mentioned enculturation pressures – the stress of traditional Latina values conflicting with U.S. society. Discrimination in the workplace could also be a factor, although this is not gender specific. Another interesting hypothesis comes from Lara-Cantu and Navarro-Arias (1986) who found that, as women acculturate, they endorse norms that advocate warmth and expressiveness in men. However, these acculturating women may marry men who hold traditional Latino norms that entail men being dominating rather than supportive. Women could experience this gender difference in men's expressiveness and warmth as a deficit in marital support (Hovey, 2000).

Hovey found that positive expectations for the future significantly predicted lower levels of depression and suicidal ideation. The relationships between expectations and depression and between expectations and suicidal ideation fit with other research findings that reveal connections between hopelessness and suicidal thoughts and behaviors (Hovey, 2000).

Other studies in recent years described in Negy et al.'s (2009) literature review have added to the above findings by discovering that acculturative stress was correlated with psychological symptoms and behavioral problems such as anxiety, alcohol abuse, and eating disorders as well. Hovey (2000) makes an interesting point in his discussion as he urges clinicians to assess and treat individuals within a cultural context. He suggests that the initial evaluation carefully explores the stress relating to acculturation, family and social support, past and present coping strategies, level of SES, cognitive attributes, but above all, he remarks that an

individual entering the treatment setting will not state that he or she is experiencing “acculturation problems” or “problems caused by migration” (p. 148).

In order to fill a gap in acculturative stress research, Negy et al. (2009) conducted a retrospective study that focused on premigration expectations and the shock of reality, or the experience of frustration and despair in the host country. They used Burgoon’s 1978 “violated expectation theory” (EVT) and its relationship to acculturative stress in a sample of one hundred and twelve Hispanic immigrants living in the greater central Florida region, sixty-five female and forty-seven male. The immigrants in this study had to be of Hispanic ancestry, over eighteen, and have to have migrated within the previous five-year period. This study was based on the theory that immigrants have unrealistic or high expectations about life in the U.S. based on little first-hand knowledge or experience – usually from various forms of media in which the information is distorted, or from even from accurate media representations that create favorable impressions (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004). Also, relatives who have already migrated may have painted a rosy picture of life in the U.S. to those who are still in their country of origin.

Hence, prospective immigrants envision that life in the U.S. will be simple, and they will encounter little to no difficulty adjusting, finding better work, and a better home. In fact, Kandel and Massey (2002) consider that the desire to relocate to the U.S. could be cultivated by the pervasiveness of migration from one’s country of origin. However, many of these prospective immigrants are migrating due to the experience of incredible hardships in their home countries – political unrest, persecution, extreme poverty. America offers economic, educational, and political opportunities and freedoms, and yet most immigrants will face a mix of positive and negative experiences in their host country.

Burgoon's EVT posits that when people's expectations are unmet or violated, the result often is a negative psychological reaction. The opposite can also happen, an EVT could account for positive psychological reactions when experiences exceed expectations. The researchers found that Hispanics who found that life in the U.S. did not live up to their premigration expectations had higher levels of acculturative stress due to pressures to change or acculturate. They also found that those with low or relatively realistic expectations experienced the U.S. as better than they had imagined before migrating, and therefore experienced less acculturative stress. Ultimately, they concluded from their findings that immigrants with unusually unrealistic or optimistic expectations about life in the U.S. may predispose themselves for undue stress.

In the first published study of its type, Negy et al. (2010) looked at the relationship between acculturative stress and marital distress in Latina women. Using a sample of ninety-five self-identified Hispanic immigrant women from the greater Central Florida region, they hypothesized that increases in acculturative stress would be related to higher levels of marital distress among these women. The results supported the hypothesis – stress stemming from real or perceived pressures to acculturate significantly correlated with distress in their relationships. A follow-up analysis of the data revealed also that social support partially mediated the relation between acculturative stress and marital distress. It must be noted that in this study, the direction of causality is not known, as women in unsupportive, unsatisfying environments could have a harder time acculturating, while, it is also possible that difficulty acculturating can lead to marital problems.

Negy et al. (2010) used the “transactional theory of stress” to explain these results, a theory that suggests that stress from one source or context tends to influence and possibly increase stress felt in other contexts (p. 15). Clinically, the researchers suggest that acculturation

and acculturative stress be brought to the forefront of the therapist-patient dialogue. They also suggest that clinicians provide psychoeducational information on stress, coping, and cognitions to Hispanic patients that are experiencing acculturative and marital distress. For example, patients should know about the research on the positive outcomes for people who maintain a bicultural identity, as well as they should be aware of how certain behaviors may be more adaptive than others, and that flexible coping strategies have been linked to improved mental health (Berry, 2006). Lastly, they also recommend challenging Hispanic patients' unrealistic expectations about life in the U.S., since the research indicates that actual experience violates these expectations, and may lead to psychological stress (Negy et al., 2010).

Perez Foster (2001) considers another layer of the complex acculturative stress phenomenon, and that is, when immigration is trauma. In her review of the literature, she identifies four migration stages in which there is significant potential for traumatogenic experiences that could lead to severe psychological distress. These are: (1) premigration trauma, or events that occur prior to migrating, which may also even be the reason for migrating, (2) traumatic events that are experienced in transit, for instance, rape by one of the coyotes<sup>1</sup>, being witness to a crime, or being locked up in a trunk for days, (3) continuing traumatogenic experiences during the process of asylum-seeking and relocation, (4) substandard living conditions in the host country due to unemployment, inadequate supports, or minority persecution.

Many studies show the compounding stress of acculturative tasks on people who have been traumatized prior to migration (Loue, 1998). Also, Perez Foster's (2001) review of research shows that, as can be expected, those who are alone in the new country and separated from family, isolated and without supports, are even more at risk to suffer the psychological sequelae

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<sup>1</sup> Illegal travel brokers

of trauma. For Latinas who are mothers, they may be even more vulnerable to isolation, being that they may often not be able to join the workforce (Paris, 2008). Depression, anxiety, and PTSD may limit the mother's ability to soothe a child when he is flooded by his own pain and sadness; also, the child may witness his mom as unable to function in her new environment (Ibid, 2008).

Based on Perez-Foster's (2001) conceptualization of immigration and trauma, Paris (2008) conducted a qualitative study of fourteen Central American immigrants participating in a home visiting program for children at risk of maltreatment. These women were interviewed about their experiences coming to the U.S., the conditions they were living in after arriving, as well as their perceptions of the intervention. Paris found that all the women were propelled by poverty to leave their home countries, leaving close family, as well as often children behind. These women tell stories of traumatic journeys into the U.S., such as traveling through the desert for days, as well as the emotional suffering of leaving their children behind. They also speak of the isolation, sadness, and depression that ensued, and the strengths they used in order to survive and adapt to their new lives. In their narrative, these mothers also expressed concern about fragmented families in Central America and the U.S., indicating the continuous struggle for many of these women. Also, many of them faced the challenge of wanting to provide for the children left behind, at the same time as they were concerned about their well-being and distraught about being separated from them. This heavy burden they endure puts them at a higher risk for depression (Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Berlin, 2005).

### **Integrative identity and mental health**

Although the research is limited in this area, the studies that have been conducted suggest that the integration model of acculturation works best for Hispanics. An early study by Berry and

Kim (1988) found that acculturation attitudes that favor positive relationships to other groups, as well as maintenance of one's own culture – integrative attitudes, are related to better adjustment. In another study by Rogler, Cortes, and Malgady (1991) it was found that integration strategy promotes mental health by allowing the retention of supportive traditional cultural elements while at the same time acquiring important features of the larger society. Romero and Roberts (2003) mention a study from 1990-1991 by Oetting and Beauvais (1990-1991) that found that biculturalism might be the healthiest outcome based on models of acculturation that allow for adherence to more than one culture. Other study findings support the integration strategy.

LaFramboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) found that Hispanics who have achieved a bicultural orientation have lower rates of psychopathology. LaFramboise et al. (1993) have stipulated that individuals who maintain competence in both American and Latino cultures are better prepared to deal with environmental stressors by having a broader range of personal resources. Successful adaptation may enhance self-esteem and a sense of intercultural competence (Berry, 2006). These bicultural models of acculturation seem to hold promise in the ability to address the complexity of the relation between culture and mental health (Romero & Roberts, 2003).

A study by Torres and Rollock (2007) looked at intercultural competence and its effects on a Mexican American immigrant sample. Competence is defined by Ogbu (1981) as a set of functional skills that facilitate the performance of societal roles, or culturally-specific activities. *Intercultural competence* as a construct refers to the repertoire of skills that involve the capacity to successfully interact with the Latino and U.S. cultures (Torres, 2009). Torres and Rollock (2007) found that intercultural competence moderated the relationship between acculturation and depression among a sample of primarily Mexican immigrants. Low intercultural competence,

regardless of acculturation level, was associated with psychological distress. The researchers found that while competence provides information on the individual's ability to manage life circumstances, intercultural competence takes into account the ability to navigate between different cultures. Hence, the skills that affect cultural interactions are likely to be a valuable resource that affects psychological function among Latinos (Torres, 2009).

### **Discrimination and other challenges faced towards integration**

Immigrants, many of whom are cultural, linguistic, and racial minorities, may have a difficult time being included into the superordinate American identity due to numerous visible differences (Park-Taylor, Ng, Ventura, Kang, Morris, Gilbert, Srivastava, & Androsiglio, 2008). Because of this, in discussing immigrant's definition of American identity, demographic variables that give evidence to visible ethnic/racial differences are essential; they may affect the inclusion into the fabric of national identity (Devos & Banaji, 2005).

Tsai, Mortensen, Wong, and Hess (2002) conduct research on the concept of American identity with groups of Asian Americans and European Americans. They have outlined a set of reasons why it is essential to study American identity as a construct: (1) Examining the extent to which different ethnic groups perceive themselves to fit with the American identity could highlight essential processes that have a direct impact on acculturation, for example, on acculturation strategy, (2) there may be negative psychological consequences for those individuals who experience lack of fit with or an exclusion from the national identity, (3) a sense of belonging and fit with the American identity may be related to the development of other social identities such as racial/ethnic identity.

A review of the current research on what is considered to be an American, yielded the major conclusion that for White, Black, and Hispanic Americans, "To Be American is to be

White” (Devos & Banaji, 2005, p. 463). Park-Taylor et al. (2008) conclude from these studies that this mentality may help to explain some of the mechanisms that perpetuate covert forms of racism, ethnocentrism, and other types of prejudice based on racial/ethnic differences. In their study, Park-Taylor et al. (2008) collected interview data from twelve second-generation immigrants of Hispanic, White, Caribbean, and Asian/Pacific Islander descent. One of the interesting results was the physical characteristics described for what makes a “true American.” Seven of the participants responded: “White skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes” (p. 131). One of the Hispanic males, a graduate student, described his level of educational attainment as part of his identity. However, he stated:

According to American standards, I’ve been privileged with regard to education and now I’m working towards one of the most prestigious degrees that can be awarded in the U.S. but I can’t help but second guess myself and still feel like a second class citizen, that I’m not smart enough, and like I don’t really belong (p. 135).

This quote from one of the participants highlights the importance of understanding the extent to which ethnic Americans feel excluded in the American identity, as it could be related to acculturation, identity, formation, and belongingness. It has been established that strong ethnic identity has been associated with positive psychosocial and educational outcomes (Martinez & Dukes, 1997).

Research findings, stated also earlier in this paper, suggest that Latinos may experience mental health issues with extended time in the U.S. as a result of being a member of a devalued and discriminated group (Torres, 2009). Racism has been identified as correlated with depressive symptoms in the Hispanic group as well as in other ethnic groups (Romero & Roberts, 2003), since the simple perception of oneself as the target of ethnic/racial prejudice or discrimination is

a potentially stressful life event (Eccleston & Major, 2006). Minorities experience subtle and indirect manifestations that have differential threats to their mental health, particularly in the area of self esteem, and are even more damaging than overt prejudicial acts (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998).

Torres (2009) conducted a research study that aimed to elucidate the factors that contribute to Latino/a mental health by examining the role of attributions to discrimination and competence. Using a sample of ninety-three Latino adults, twenty-nine men and sixty-four women in a Midwestern city, he confirmed the existing research in this area with the finding that negative psychological effects was associated with discrimination-related stressors. Torres (2009) also found that everyday discrimination was associated with the stunted development and difficulties in the implementation of culturally appropriate competencies. That is, attributions to discrimination in ambiguously negative situations were associated with less competence, which was in turn related to more depressive symptoms.

Latino immigrants face another layer of discrimination when it comes to their foreign status, to local and federal government-imposed immigration laws (Rodriguez & DeWolfe, 1990), and to the general immigration attitudes from American residents regarding immigration. In fact, immigration is currently one of the most divisive current issues in U.S. politics (Zarate & Shaw, 2010). In a recent survey reported by Kohut, Suro, Keeter Escobar, & Doherty (2006) fifty-two percent of those polled agreed with the statement, “Immigrants today are a burden because they take jobs [and] housing” compared to thirty-eight percent in the year 2000. Forty-one percent agreed with the statement, “Immigrants today strengthen the United States with their hard work and talent” compared to fifty percent in 2000. Sadly, these divisive, changing attitudes are paired with a growing number of immigrants. Also, sentiments have gotten increasingly

harsh against immigrants due to them being used as scapegoats in the antiterrorist efforts in the U.S. (Ramos-Sanchez, 2009).

Another challenge faced by some Latino groups is undocumented status. Few studies have addressed the mental health of undocumented Latinos, who are often referred to in the literature as the “invisible” group (Ramos-Sanchez, 2009; Bell, Kwesiga, & Berry, 2010). In one of these studies by Perez and Fortuna (2005) it was found that undocumented Latinos were more likely to have a diagnosis of anxiety, adjustment, alcohol abuse, and other psychological issues compared to documented immigrant Latinos and U.S.-born Latinos. Some of the psychosocial stressors experienced by this group include occupational problems, barriers to health care, and legal difficulties.

Although research on the emotional experience of these immigrants is scant, Ramos-Sanchez has outlined some of the key domains that lead to psychological distress and acculturative distress in this group. This includes: (1) intrafamilial conflict, (2) fear of discovery, (3) limited access to services due to undocumented status, and (4) political policy and public sentiment toward undocumented immigrants. A 1999 large-scale study that looked at the wages of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., Rivera-Batiz found evidence of lower wages for similarly skilled undocumented immigrants. The hourly wages of documented male and female workers were forty-two and forty-one percent higher than the wages of undocumented men and women, respectively (Bell, Kwesiga, & Berry, 2010). Studies such as this one suggest that the undocumented have fewer options and are perceived, and may often be, more desperate. This led Bell et al. (2009) to question the stereotype of the hard-working immigrant by posturing, is it, “The immigrant work ethic, or a cloak for exploitation?” Thus, undocumented immigrants face

yet another layer of complexity in the process of acculturation, due to their sad and unfortunate place at what is arguably the bottom of the economic and social chain.

An interesting small study by Menard-Warwick (2007) looked at language socialization by employing the social psychology concept of social positioning in an English as a Second Language classroom (ESL) in California. Not only is language a huge part of the acculturation process, but successful second language learning necessarily involves taking on new identities (Menard-Warwick, 2007). Davies (2001) has focused on gender as a constraining factor in classroom discourse, and a recent study by Gordon (2004) describes Lao women in Philadelphia “negotiating domestic events” such as interacting with school personnel or selling used cars (p. 446, cited in Menard-Warwick, 2007), which requires more complex English than is typical in most workplaces. Gordon found that women’s increasing competence in the language led to family tensions, which undoubtedly presents an extra challenge for women in the process of integration into the host culture.

Social positioning is defined as, “An event of identification, in which a recognizable category of identity gets explicitly or implicitly applied to an individual” (p. 166, Menard-Warwick, 2007). Menard-Warwick (2007) looked at moments when the teacher *positioned* her students within particular gender and employment roles, and followed the experience of three students in a classroom. In this particular classroom, because the program primarily served Latina immigrant women, the teacher focused the unit on goals and needs of the homemaker who may wish to transition into full-time employment. In one of the example findings, the author breaks down a conversation between the teacher and one of the students, illustrating a moment-by-moment account of the nuanced and swift process of social positioning. One of the students “Fabiana,” who came from an upper-middle class background and had enjoyed a career in

business, is asked by the teacher to tell her two skills that she has. Due to Fabiana's language difficulties, she finds it difficult to express her business skills, and the reader sees how the teacher's questions both exercises her power as teacher and reinforces Fabiana's identity as student, as well as dims the capability of Fabiana's skills.

Through the back and forth of trying to understand each other, Fabiana and the teacher come to the agreement that she can be positioned within the classroom discourse as someone with skills and experience. However, Fabiana's more ambitious attempt to position herself as a "businesswoman" gets lost in the teacher's non-comprehension (p. 277). On the other hand, recent literature on immigrant women and language learning shows that learners exercise considerable agency in the classroom (Norton, 2000). Davies and Harre (1990) also found that these female language learners attempted and often succeeded to negotiate themselves out of the discourses imposed on them, and many of them did not let go of their pre-existing ideas of themselves. Nevertheless, this study shows that bias can exist in the most nuanced of ways, making the process of acculturation, identity formation, and language learning a complex and rocky process.

### **Acculturation of parents and the effect on children**

As we have seen, growing up in the U.S. can often be a difficult and confusing process for immigrant and for the children of immigrants, who are frequently caught between the pressures to assimilate into American culture, and the pressures to preserve their own cultures of origin or that of their parents (Zhou & Bankston, 1994). Intrafamily variance in acculturation introduces conflicts between traditional values of parents and the new values embraced by their children (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003). Buki et al.'s (2003) review of the research shows

that parents caught in this circumstance perceive their role as incredibly stressful. In the words of Szapocznik et al. (1997) who study acculturation conflicts in the Latino population:

In the case of immigrants, the adolescent's normal striving for independence combines with the powerful acculturation to American cultural value of individualism...The combination may produce an exacerbated and intensified intrafamilial conflict in which parents and adolescents feel alienated from each other (p. 169 cited in Buki et al., p. 128, 2003).

The research shows that both parental acculturation and the child's own unique personal experiences and interactions with others will affect the child's experience growing up in the new country, and could result in mental health and behavioral issues in the child or adolescent (Le & Stockdale, 2008). Pawliuk, Grizenko, Chan-Yip, Gantous, Mathew, and Nguyen (1996) found that children who experienced a larger acculturation gap with their parents were less competent in certain areas of social and emotional development. Also, a comprehensive review of the research by Le and Stockdale (2008) shows that there is a positive relationship between acculturation and delinquency in second-generation youth. The researchers speculate that it is the changes in values, beliefs, and attitudes that may lead to greater intercultural or intergenerational conflict between immigrant parents and their children.

The term *acculturative dissonance* coined by Rumbaut and Portes (2001) reflects the conflict that occurs when parents and youth's cultural systems clash as a result of acculturation differences. It is thought that acculturative dissonance may lead youth to seek support elsewhere, resulting in maladaptive behaviors, such as violence and delinquency; as the parents' ability to control or monitor their child's behavior decreases, the peers become more salient. Another theory is that second generation youth may have greater difficulties than first generation

immigrants in identifying with both their home country and the culture of their immigration parents. This could result in greater identity diffusion and confusion as they try to consolidate their identity, and as a result, their friends may have more of a hand in shaping their attitudes and behaviors (Le & Stockdale, 2008).

In addition, generally, the rate of acculturation for children and youth occurs more rapidly than for the parents (Falicov, 1998), which may result in family conflict, and in the worst of cases, also become a risk factor for delinquency (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). Research by Reuschenberg and Buriel (1989) shows that acculturated youth have a tendency to become more involved in outside systems, such as peer groups or group activities, and the presence of acculturative dissonance may propel youth to seek these external supports even more. Wall, Power, and Arbona (1993) suggested that Latino youth who were more acculturated were more likely to affiliate with peers rather than adults, and were also more willing to defy authority and tolerate delinquent activities. A different study from 1999 by Samaniego and Gonzales found that the relationship between delinquency and acculturation among Mexican Americans was mediated by parental monitoring, peer relations, and family conflict.

A later study by Gonzales, Deardorff, Formoso, Barr and Barrera (2006), looked at one hundred and seventy five families of Mexican origin, honing in on the linguistic acculturation of mothers and adolescents with a wide array of family mediators and adolescent mental health outcomes. They found that family linguistic acculturation, used as a marker for total acculturation, was positively related to increased family and interparental conflict, although not related to maternal parenting practices. It was also found that family conflict mediated the link between acculturation and depression as well as conduct problems in adolescents, and the researchers determined that more acculturated Mexican youth are at increased risk for problem

behaviors. All of the above make a strong case for the importance of a bicultural acculturation for parents.

### **Psychodynamic theories on immigrant identity integration and splitting**

In a parallel process to the immigrant identity development, the concept of identity itself has been shaped and reshaped by psychologists since 1919 when Tausk initially generated the term (Akhtar, 1999). In the 1950's, Erickson was first to resurrect the term after it lay relatively dormant for many years, although Akhtar mentions Freud used the term "only once in the technical sense" (p. 47, 1999). Erickson's (1959) term of ego identity was used to denote, "both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 12 cited in Akhtar, p. 48, 1999). Erickson also specified that identity could have many connotations and could refer at one time to, "a *conscious sense of individual identity*; at another to an unconscious striving for *a continuity of personal character*; at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of *ego synthesis*; and finally, as a maintenance of an inner *solidarity* with [the] group's ideals and identity" (Erikson, 1959).

Broadly, in his review of the theory, Akhtar (1999) identifies that identity emanates within the earliest interplay of the infant's temperament with the maternal attitude. It then, "gains structure from primitive projections, refines itself through later selective identifications, acquires filiation and generational continuity in passage through the Oedipus complex, and arrives at its more or less final shape through synthesis of contradictory identifications and greater individuation during adolescence, though this too remains subject to further refinements through adulthood, midlife, and even old age" (p. 73-74, 1999). Hence, identity is seen as a life-long process. Akhtar adds that an organized identity contains consistent attitudes, subjective self-sameness, gender clarity, authenticity, temporality, a realistic body image, and ethnicity.

Akhtar's seminal 1995 psychoanalytic paper on immigration and identity delves into the complexities of identity re-formation in the context of the profound loss of a familiar environment, and the overwhelming experience of inhabiting a new terrain. Akhtar expands on the concepts of idealization and devaluation in regards to the formation of identity (1995, 1999). According to Akhtar, culture shock and the loss of home country results in a challenge for the stability of the immigrant that echoes the psychic flux of Blos's (1967) "second individuation of adolescence" (p. 1051). Psychic turmoil is the first step towards identity reformation in the immigrant, a process that Akhtar terms the "third individuation." Although there are similarities to the childhood and adolescent process, in this individuation, the backdrop is the adult ego, which is better organized, and which has the post-adolescent superego in place.

Akhtar (1995) contends that the psychological effects of immigration on identity are contingent on many factors, and he outlines nine of these dynamics: (1) whether the immigration is temporary or permanent, (2) degree of choice in leaving, (3) possibility of revisiting the home country for the purpose of "emotional refueling," (4) the age when the immigration takes place in which children may be less vulnerable to the trauma of a changing environment than more rigid adults, (5) reasons for leaving one's country, (6) the extent to which the individual had developed his or her intrapsychic capacity for separateness before the migration, (7) the emotions encountered from the part of the host country upon receiving the immigrant; how receptive the culture is to new migrations, (8) the magnitude of cultural differences between the two cultures, and (9) the extent to which the immigrant's original vocation or role in country of origin can be resumed in the new country.

This last point will affect the assimilation/acculturation process in that the maintenance of the individual's professional identity assures what Lichtenstein (1963) calls "inner continuity in

change” (cited in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1056). However, the 1988 Canadian task force reported that a downturn in socioeconomic status is unfortunately the norm for most immigrants across the social and educational spectrum (Perez Foster, 2001). For instance, one may see a doctor from Guatemala driving a taxi, an engineer from Colombia may be working as a janitor, and a teacher from Peru may be handing out flyers on a street corner.

In terms of degree of choice, those who must exile always encounter a forced migration. Falicov (1998) and Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) point out that children are always forced, since they do not decide when to leave and do not have the ability to return when they want. Grinberg and Grinberg also point out that the process of integration is often most painful for those who experience a forced migration. They write (1984):

There is more bitterness; hate directed against his own country is greater and, absurd as it may appear, this is projected onto the receiving country, which is sometimes regarded as the cause of the immigrant's problems, while he idealizes his home country with unending nostalgia (p. 33).

Akhtar likens the core migratory process to Mahler et al.’s (1975) separation – individuation concept, and he identifies four interlinked journeys that involve “drives and affects, space, time, and social affiliation,” or a sort of “psychic travel” (1995, p. 1057). These are: (1) from love or hate to ambivalence, (2) from near or far to optimal distance, (3) from “yesterday” or “tomorrow” to “today,” and (4) from mine or yours to ours. In the first of these psychic journeys, idealized “all good” object and self images have to be integrated with “all bad” object and self images. In the process of synthesis or integration, object and self representations become “more realistic” (Kernberg, 1975, p. 27 cited in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1057). Taxed by the drastic changes in the external environment, the immigrant is vulnerable to splitting self and object

representations along aggressive and libidinal lines, in the same manner as a rapprochement toddler or a regressed adolescent do. After the initial “disorienting anxieties” upon migrating (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984), and before the immigrant has a more adaptive ego in place, regression occurs.

Splitting colors the immigrant’s feelings about her two lands and her two self-representations, and splitting predominates; the home country is idealized and host country is devalued. This can change and be the reverse from one day to the next, where the host country is idealized and the home country devalued. Akhtar (1995) adds here that such contradictory attitudes not only appear phenomenologically akin to the splitting in the rapprochement subphase, but it also contains the “projective repudiation of developmentally higher levels of conflict as well” (p. 1058). Oftentimes, the two countries unconsciously symbolize early parental figures – one country becomes the mother, and the other the father, “thus setting up a fertile ground for oedipal fantasy and enactment on the immigrant’s part” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1058).

Splitting also affects the immigrant’s self-representation, and being Mexican, for instance, can become libidized, and can become a source of dignity. The new self-representation of being American seems shameful, and is devalued and put down. Oftentimes, hatred against the new or old country is a defense against guilt (Akhtar, 1999). Guilt could come from many sources for the immigrant, such as separation guilt, guilt at success in the new country, or “survivor’s guilt” (Ibid, p. 83). Ideally and gradually, a synthesis of these two extreme representations sets in. Akhtar’s informal marker for the achievement of this new hyphenated identity is a “mixed” guest list for dinner at the immigrant’s household (p. 1059).

In the immigrant's "from near or far to optimal distance" psychic journey, Akhtar uses Mahler's conceptualization of optimal distance, the process by which an infant eventually individuates. In Mahler's symbiotic phase, there is no space between mother and child, but gradually, a space begins to emerge, created by mother's comings and goings that decrease the child's dependence on her. The space permits the child to look "beyond the symbiotic orbit" and eventually grow and individuate (Mahler et al., 1966, p. 155 cited in Akhtar, p. 1060, 1995). During the practicing subphase, the infant is able to move away from mother with greater ease, but eventually returns to the mother or the "home base." In the rapprochement phase, no distance from mom appears satisfactory, however, if mom is able to remain emotionally available despite the infant's oscillations, the capacity for optimal distance is nurtured and expands (Akhtar, 1995). The immigrant experiences a similar dynamic. Being too far from home country might be a distance that can be relished for some time, however, anxiety tends to set in, as if having exceeded the "symbiotic orbit surfaces" (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1061). The immigrant might try to recreate his home country by seeking a similar climate, and also a fantasy of return home emerges. Akhtar writes that the wish is like, "the rapprochement subphase child's regressive search for symbiosis, is, however, not free of ambivalence" (p. 1061). Interestingly, the return always seems to be postponed by many rationalized ideas. For instance, saving money or earning a diploma seem to get in the way. The immigrant, however, travels home bringing gifts to those left behind, and bringing gifts from the land back home. The distance is bridged by other such "transitional objects" (Winnicott, 1953); for example, international phone calls or listening to native music.

Internally, also, the immigrant struggles with fluctuating extremes of distance from his native self-representation and the emerging self-representation as resident of the host country.

Akhtar contends that a failure to negotiate distance between these self-representations may result in two problem outcomes of identity: ethnocentric withdrawal and counterphobic assimilation (p. 1062, 1995). In the first, one clings to an idealized view of one's culture, associating only with people from the same culture, only eating foods from the home country, and giving artifacts from home a shrine-like quality. In the second, the individual completely renounces the home culture. Akhtar uses Deutsch's (1942) "as if" concept and Jacobson's (1964) "magic identification" to elucidate the quickness by which immigrants may absorb the adopted culture (p. 1062, 1995).

Akhtar here identifies two other compromise formations that emanate from a splitting of self and object world. They are: pragmatic assimilation masking nonassimilation, a concept similar to Winnicott's (1960) "true" and "false" self, and temporally alternating phases of distance and closeness from one or the other culture. This last one could be an individual that has both native and assimilated phases in a "life lived in pieces" (Pfeiffer, 1974 cited in Akhtar, p. 1062, 1995). Akhtar expresses that the "too close" or "too far" dilemma begins to mend if the culture and the home life provide the "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1960) for containment of aggression and libidinal sustenance (Akhtar, p. 1063, 1995). The restoration can be observed with, "(1) increased comfort with one's ethnic/national origins in the workplace, along with greater use of one's new self-representation at home. This results in an enhanced "continuity of personal character" (Erikson, 1959, p. 102), a hallmark of solid identity; (2) the establishment of a predictable and reality governed rhythm of refueling through international phone calls and visits; and (3) in the case of those who become parents in the adopted country, deeper acceptance of their offspring's mixed but predominantly local loyalties" (Akhtar, p. 1063, 1995).

One of the last two positions of the immigrant's identity journey according to Akhtar (1995) is "from yesterday or tomorrow to today," and it deals with the elements of mourning

associated with separation-individuation. With a progressive deidealization of the lost objects, meaningful life in the present becomes a possibility for the immigrant. This does not mean the immigrant must renounce the objects of the past, but merely their hypercathexis. A connection to the past is necessary and healthy, however, “Past and future do not replace today. They enrich it” (Akhtar, p. 1065, 1995). The psychic voyage “from yours or mine to ours,” has to do with the immigrant’s experience of a “mine” and “yours” split upon arriving in the new culture. The resolution of this split results in “ours” – until then, however, language, games, customs, foods, and values are seen as “mine” or “yours.” Akhtar (1995, p. 1065) maintains that the move towards “we-ness” is accomplished by filling in of Winnicott’s (1953) “transitional area” by the local culture. The immigrant enjoys games, literature, and movies of the new country, and the shift begins.

One of the most important moves to “we-ness” is the acquisition of the new language, which can be seen as the journey from, “speaking only one’s “mother tongue,” through an introject-like use (Kernberg, 1976) of a new language, to true bilingualism, is as difficult as it is salutary” (Akhtar, 1995). Often, the immigrant hangs on to the mother tongue as an idealized object, feeling that it is the only one that can express things well. When the newly acquired language begins to penetrate dreams, humor, and talking in one’s sleep, a deep mending has occurred with increased dominance of the acquired language. Akhtar considers the possibility that adopting a new language might represent the acquisition of a developed identity for the first time, also, he considers the possibility that different self-representations might remain under the influence of different languages and express different aspirations and conflicts.

Mirsky (1991) explores the language question further, in particular, she views the conflict of difficulties mastering the new language that, “may stem from unresolved intrapsychic

conflicts which surface in immigration and are further burdened by interpersonal and socio-cultural conflicts in the immigrant family” (p. 618). She brings up an early paper by Stengel (1963) that claimed people have a natural resistance to learning a new language. The new language is irrationally perceived as “poor, primitive, and false” while the language of origin is the best, the only one capable of expressing “life and truth” adequately. Mirsky takes us back to the original mother-child dyad, in which language learning originally takes place. She asserts that language itself “bears witness to its origins” with the idiom “Mother Tongue” existing in many languages, while the father is associated with, “Fatherland” (p. 618, 1991). First language learning occurs in interaction with a loved and trusted object, and as Anzieu suggests, (1976) the mother’s voice provides a “sonorous wrapping” that surrounds the child from the beginning of life, just as skin, and keeps his inside intact (cited in Mirsky, 1991). Mirsky also cites Buxbaum (1949) who writes about the defensive function of language. The mother tongue is related to more, “primitive impulses and wishes and a new language offers an opportunity to build a new defensive system against past infantile life” (p. 619).

According to Mirsky (1991), loss of the mother tongue for the immigrant is tied to a profound sense of loss of self-identity and of internal objects. Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) suggest that when the immigrant loses his language, he is unable to understand the secret language of the environment. This situation parallels what a child experiences in the first years of life, Oedipal and pre-Oedipal, before language is fully acquired – the child may feel excluded from the intimacy of the parents because she does not understand what the grown ups are saying. Learning a new language, then, involves the internalization of new object and self-representations, and reactivates the internal process of separation. In this way, and similar to a child’s experience, language paves the way to self-identity formation.

Mirsky (1991) points out that it is common in immigration for the country of residence and the country of origin to become objects of intense ambivalent emotions – becoming “all good” or “all bad.” The mother tongue, however, is rarely the object of ambivalence for an immigrant, but rather, the opposite occurs, in which most adult immigrants meet the new language with “nonambivalent resistance,” and hang on faithfully to their mother tongue (p. 620). She also mentions that children typically learn the language faster than adults because they are more willing to “play,” as they are in the process of identity formation and “more receptive to imitation and identification” (p. 620). They take risks, and do not fear making mistakes. Often, however, Mirsky maintains that conflict may arise when children feel ashamed by their parent’s lack of new language retention, or when they get upset when their parents speak the native language in public. Another source of conflict is parents’ feeling ashamed and surpassed by their children’s quick acquisition.

Ultimately, however, when mediated by the parent, a second language can offer rich, new intellectual and social stimulation, as well as a new field for practicing autonomy. When the parent is conflicted and resistant to the language, loyal to his or her mother tongue or other personality factors, the child faces the conflict of being loyal to her mother versus his drive to experiment and explore her environment. Mirsky adds that this conflict will be manifested in the child as a flight into the new language on one extreme, or as difficulties in the acquisition of the new language on the other extreme.

Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) see the anxieties and defensive mechanisms as a set of symptoms that they term the “psychopathology of immigration.” This may include, “separation anxiety, superego anxieties over loyalties and values, persecutory anxieties when confronted with the new and unknown, depressive anxieties which give rise to mourning for objects left

behind and for the lost parts of the self, and confusional anxieties because of failure to discriminate between the old and the new” (p. 13-14). Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) view immigration anxieties as being accompanied by inevitable regression. This regression can often render the immigrant helpless, and inhibits him or her from making effective use of available resources. Very strong affects may also be “blocked, isolated, and repressed with a numbing effect” (p. 19).

Surviving it with an elated or manic reaction could also counteract the pain of separating. Here, sorrow is denied, and the immigrant may feel triumphant over those left behind. He or she may perceive those left behind as incompetent or exposed to perils and hardships. Grinberg and Grinberg explain that when strong guilt feelings about the ones left behind arise, defenses such as reversal of affect, denial, and isolation may arise as well. One of the tasks of the immigrant is to work through the experience of the immigration gradually, eventually integrating the split and denied aspects and feelings, and in this way growing enough to be able to suffer his pain. However, if the conflictual aspects of the internal object links prevail, it can result in a deeper regression, with increased tendency for primitive mechanisms and defenses, “more extreme dissociations, more marked denials when confronted with unpleasant situations, compensating idealizations of certain partial aspects, frequent and massive use of projective identifications, etc.” (p. 22).

Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) emphasize that in this regression to primitive levels of the psyche and of communication, emotions may find expression in primal elements such as food – this symbolizing the earliest link to the mother or the breast. The immigrant may develop an aversion to the host country’s dishes, and turn to her country of origin’s dishes instead. Food may also be used to alleviate anxiety, recreating an “idealized breast,” “generous and

inexhaustible, with which he attempts to fill the emptiness left by the various losses suffered in the transplanting” (p. 23).

Ultimately, Grinberg and Grinberg state that the process of integration to the environment depends the subject’s mental integrity – on the capacity for tolerance of change and loss, the capacity for waiting, and the capacity for being alone. They express that while some react to the new conditions with manic over-adaptation, others cling to their own customs and language, often forming groups that function like “true ghettos” (p. 26). They believe, then, that for the immigrant to become truly integrated into the host environment, part of her individuality must be at least momentarily surrendered. In fact, the greater the difference between home country and country of residence, the greater the renunciation that must be endured. This surrender will in turn produce internal conflicts, as it conflicts with the individual’s motivation to assure his own distinctness from others; the tendency for preservation of identity.

Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) ask, “But, what is the tolerable limit beyond which the individual's identity may suffer irreparable harm?” (p. 27). They answer this question in a manner that echoes Akhtar’s thinking by expressing that consolidation of the sense of identity depends primarily on, “internalization of object relations which have been assimilated by the ego through the functioning of authentic introjective identifications, and not by the use of manic projective identifications which would give rise to pseudoidentifications and to a false self” (p. 27). Eventually, if the immigrant is able to productively mourn the home country, and to tolerate dissociated or denied affects, he will be able to recover the pleasure of thinking and desiring, and the capacity for planning for the future. The interaction between internal and external world becomes more fluid, and elements of the new culture can begin to be allowed in. The past is no longer a “lost paradise” in which the person constantly wishes to return. At this time, mourning

has been worked through and integration can be facilitated. Grinberg and Grinberg emphasize that, “All of this promotes an enrichment of the ego and the consolidation of a more evolved sense of identity” (p. 36).

Falicov also writes about this concept from a family systems perspective, and considers its effects on Latino families. She calls it “polarization” of emotional reactions, and deems it a common clinical presentation in the Hispanic population (p. 56-58, 1998). In her view, immigrants come to the U.S. with certain expectations or pre-conceived notions of what this country will be like. After the initial culture shock, notions are either disproven or validated. Being that disillusionment is commonplace, depression sets in, and an idealization of the old culture tends to occur. In this case, familiar objects that connect the individual to his or her past may be sought after, such as foods, music, or the native language.

Falicov explains that the opposite reaction can also occur, and the old country could be completely rejected and defamed, seen as inferior, inefficient, and flawed. She goes on to describe that these reactions may be divided between family members, especially husband and wife, who assume conflicting views about the new country. Often, the split reactions are temporary and reactive, but they may also become rigid and chronic, enduring far beyond the early adaptation phase. Falicov (1998), similarly to Akhtar (1995, 1999) and Grinberg & Grinberg (1984), explains that this is the result of a truncated mourning process that gets in the way of integrating emotional identifications with the new and the old cultures. She adds that when polarization is occurring, parts of the self appear to be dissociated, denied, or projected onto another person.

Clinically, Falicov (1998) conveys that these polarizations deserve special attention for relational therapists, since they could potentially involve the person’s denial or suppressed

internal processes played out on other family members. She writes that the distress experienced due to uprooting may incline members of the family to take sides, either idealizing or devaluing the native and the host countries, or supporting decisions to stay or return home. In the therapy room, these problems could appear as “runaway escalations” between members of a couple, or could be seen alongside other symptoms, such as behavioral problems in a child, or depression in one of the partners (p. 57).

### **Summary of the literature review**

Latinos/Hispanics, both documented and undocumented are the fastest growing group of immigrants, and already the largest minority group in the U.S. today. Statistics show there is a high prevalence of mental illness in this population, especially for poor Latina women, in which the incidence of depression is exceptionally high. It has been shown that depression is highest for women who leave their children in their home country as a result of immigration. Sadly, there are disparities in access to appropriate mental healthcare for Latinos, especially Latinas who also have a difficult time perceiving when there is a need, due to stigma or other factors. Furthermore, many studies show that with this group, mental illness worsens with increased time spent in the U.S. This makes a case for a better understanding of acculturation, and the stresses that immigrants face when making a new life in this country, as well as in the process of identity reformation. Understanding this population, however, entails a biopsychosocial perspective, due to special considerations many Latinos face, such as lower incomes or documentation status.

Acculturation is a concept that deals with the changes an immigrant experiences upon moving to a new culture. It is now understood as a bidimensional construct, in which change happens within the host culture and within the culture of origin for the individual. There are many different outcomes as a result of acculturation, ranging from the extremes of either

complete immersion in the host culture, or complete avoidance of the host culture. Acculturative stress deals with the hardships and psychological repercussions of immigration on the individual. The literature on acculturation shows that it has a domino effect within the individual and throughout his external environment, family being the most important of these external factors affected. We have seen that when there is marital stress due to acculturation, the second generation is also affected. Also, children who grow up with parents who are disconnected from their cultural experience due to parental difficulties in acculturating tend to resort to delinquency and issues with mental health.

Discrimination, overt or covert, as well as documentation status, are extremely powerful obstacles that many Latinos face on the road to integration. However, the literature supports the notion that an integrative identity that incorporates both new and old identities is the healthiest form of acculturation. Yet it has still to be determined what this process looks like for Latinos, and how it works. Psychodynamic theorists have determined that there is a regressive split, or a polarization, that occurs within the immigrant upon moving to a new land. In this split, either the home country or the country of residence can be loved or hated, idealized or devalued. In some cases, this split may persist for too long, this then becomes pathological, and the individual suffers psychologically as a result. In the best of possibilities, the split is eventually resolved and the individual is able to find herself in a comfortable ambivalence of feelings towards both cultures.

This psychodynamic concept is in the literature, however, it has not been looked at empirically. As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study will be to look at idealization and devaluation in this under-researched immigrant group. Although empirical research is slowly growing in the understanding of Latinos and acculturation, there is still a large gap in the

research pertaining to the intricacies of identity reformation of the immigration, and especially in the Latino immigrant. I will be looking at the correlation between the concept of splitting, acculturation, and mental health issues, and in this way help fill the gap in the literature. Also, I hope that this study will aid clinicians in understanding the underlying causes of acculturative stress and depression. Because the patient will not often say, “I am suffering from acculturative stress,” learning to listen to such phenomena as idealization or devaluation in a narrative can potentially shape the questions a clinician asks in order to better serve this population.

### **Hypothesis**

This research study was designed to explore possible relationships between quality and degree of acculturation, and variables hypothesized to affect acculturation – namely, idealization/devaluation, affective and relational qualities of a woman’s immigration narrative, and certain facts of the immigrant’s life, such as how long she has been in the country. Furthermore, it was expected that the psychological phenomenon of “splitting” would be negatively associated with degree of acculturation. The sample size was small and the methods centered on in-depth analysis of language and affect in videotaped narratives of the immigrants’ experience, honing in on a specific set of concepts (idealization and devaluation and positive and negative associations) rather than hypothesis testing based on quantitative coding system with established reliability assumed generalizable to the population of immigrant Latina women. Above all, the study aimed to discern and illuminate the complex psychological texture of how home country and country of residence are compared and described by this group of immigrant women. Through in-depth qualitative analysis of their stories, the methods provided a biographical analysis of each woman that tracks her journey, and at the same time revealed the variables associated with being “psychologically stuck” between two places called “home.”

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### **Methodology: The Family Support From Immigration to Work Project (FSIW)**

This study was derived from the CUNY-IRB approved study “Family Support from Immigration to Work” (FSIW) that looked at the challenges and coping skills in the transition from immigration to work. No new measures were administered for this study, and no new participants were recruited. Participants for this study were selected from participants of the “Family Support for Immigration to Work” project.

#### **FSIW Participants**

Participants were first-generation Latina mothers whose toddlers were attending the Columbia University Head Start and Early Head Start Program (CUHS/EHS). Women who participated in the study had a mean age of 31.5 years (range 21-45, SD=6.16), 56 % were Dominican, 23 % were Mexican, 13% were Ecuadorian, 3% were Cuban and 3% were Peruvian. Approximately 16.6 % of the sample had no high school education, 16.6% had some high school education, 43.3% were high school graduates, 16 % reported some college and 10% were college graduates (Marrero, 2005). To meet the Head Start financial requirements for participation, families’ incomes had to fall at or below the poverty line, (i.e. an individual earns less than \$9,000 annually and a family of four has an annual income of less than \$18,000) (Marrero, 2005).

#### **FSIW Sample Selection**

In an attempt to include families of different levels of acculturation and functioning, families for the original study were selected using a two-stage process (a mixed selection

procedure involving stratified sampling and random sampling within stratifications). In the first step, each eligible CUHS/EHS family who had been in the program for a minimum of three months was given a global rating of overall level of adjustment to life in the United States, on a scale from 1 (Extremely Difficult Adjustment) to 6 (Excellent Adjustment). The primary purpose of this stratified sampling was to increase the likelihood that families across a range of needs and adjustment levels were sampled. The ratings considered adjustment in terms of employment, social/community connectedness, mastery of pragmatic resources (for instance, shopping and use of medical facilities), family interactions and stability, psychological and emotional adjustment of family members, and mastery of English. The ratings were made independently by the Director of CUHS/EHS, the Adult Development Coordinator, and the Program Coordinator, all of whom had the most extensive knowledge of the families. The three raters met to discuss their ratings of each family, came to consensus and assigned each family the consensus score. The families were divided into three adjustment groups: High (rating 5-6), Medium (rating 3-4), and Low (1-2) adjustment. Families within each group were then randomly selected to be participants in the study using a random numbers table.

In order to inform all potential participants about the study, the research project coordinator presented it to all the mothers during a parent group session at CUHS/EHS. That way, when women were randomly selected and contacted, they already had been informed about the study, had had a chance to think about it, and could better decide whether they wanted to participate – a more respectful recruiting procedure than if they were called without having heard anything about the study beforehand. Mothers who were randomly selected and those who were interested in participating then met individually with the project coordinator, were given more detailed information about the study, and if still interested signed the Informed

Consent to Participate. Within two weeks after this initial contact these mothers were scheduled for the first interview session. Those families that declined to participate were replaced by the next randomly-selected family. In all 61 women were approached to participate in the study, 34 agreed to participate and 31 completed the entire study.

### **FSIW Interview Procedures**

The interview session was videotaped and conducted only with the mother while the child was in a separate room playing with an assistant. The interview began with the interviewer describing the purpose and sequence of the research activities. Interviewers reminded participants that their answers would be kept confidential, that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to, and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. They were informed that their answers would have no impact on their receiving any services or public benefits, but that at the end of the interview they would be eligible to participate in an elective family support group. Participants were paid thirty dollars at the end of the first interview for their time. During a second meeting, mothers were asked to complete a packet of questionnaires for which they received twenty-five dollars after completion.

### **FSIW Acculturation Scale**

This scale is a modified version of the Acculturation Scale designed by Cortes, Rogler and Malgady (1994) and was modified by an Adelphi University doctoral student, Teresa Leite, especially for the population of CUHS/EHS. This is a paper-and-pencil, self-administered questionnaire consisting of 30 items answered on a five-point Likert scale with 1= not at all to 5=all the time, which asks participants questions regarding the host country and their country of origin. It inquires about language preference and use, group membership and affiliation, and daily activities. For example, a typical question states, "On a regular week, how often do you

eat Latino food?” The first fifteen questions measure the degree of retention of origin and questions 16-30 measure degree of Americanization. Each questionnaire is then scored on two dimensions: degree of retention of culture of origin and degree of Americanization. The individual scores are compared to the median of sample scores for our sample on both dimensions, which is in this case a score of 65 for degree of retention of origin and 44 for degree of Americanization. On degree of retention, a raw score that is higher than 65 indicates high retention of origin culture and a score lower than 65 indicates low retention. On degree of Americanization, a higher score than 44 indicates high Americanization while a score lower than 44 indicates low Americanization. The scores on both dimensions are looked at together and compared to the median to indicate high and low acculturation to COR, as well as biculturalism. A participant is categorized as High Acculturation if she has a high score (above 44) on degree of Americanization and a low score (below 65) on degree of retention of origin. Likewise, a participant is scored as Low Acculturation if she scores below 44 on the dimension of Americanization but high on retention. A participant is scored as Bicultural if she has high scores on both dimensions.

While the author of this original scale did not provide reliability or validity statistics for this measure, it does provide a rubric based on common definitions of acculturation, which will be useful in organizing the data for the proposed methodology, as follows.

### **Methodology for Mi Vieja Tierra, Mi Nuevo Pais (MVT/MNP)**

#### ***MVT/MNP Sample***

All 31 FSIW participant video recordings were coded. For this, video recordings of the 31 FSIW participants were reviewed by the study’s researcher and a Spanish-speaking Master’s student research assistant.

## **MVT/MNP Materials/Instruments**

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

This questionnaire asked for demographic information about the participants. It included items on age, family income, amount of time living in the U.S., marital status, number of children in household, educational level attained, job history, current employment status, and family income. This questionnaire was adapted from the homelessness study for the Family Support from Immigration to Work study.

### ***MVT/MNT Immigration, Family, Work and Affect Regulation Interview***

The open-ended interview protocol was adapted from an earlier study on homeless families (Fraenkel, 1997) and was used by Marrero for her dissertation (Marrero, 2005), in with consultation Dr. Arietta Slade, an expert in attachment theory (1997, 2001). The first portion of this interview (Appendix A) contained the translated questions regarding the family's experience of immigration and the impact this process has had on the family. The first several questions attempted to tap the sense of homeland loss evoked by the immigration process.

### ***MVT/MNT Analysis***

The narratives of the 31 participants who completed the study were analyzed particularly to identify positive and negative ways in which women describe their countries of origin and their countries of residence and how they compared and contrasted these places. Five questions from the interview that pull for emotional narrative reactions and comparisons of both countries were examined (see Appendix A, questions A-E.) In this analysis, the first task entailed gathering a textured and rich picture of the subject's immigration story, looking for answers to questions such as: How did she come to this country? Was it a forced immigration? Did she leave children and other family in her country of origin? The facts to be identified and used in

this part of the study are, for instance: How long has this woman been in the country? Does she have children left back in her home country? What kind of immigration experience did she have? Did she come voluntarily or involuntarily? Does she have citizenship? Does she work? What is her relationship status? In pairing the tendency for a range in description in each question, the aimed to try to understand where this woman was in her acculturation process, and hence each participant's immigration story was described richly and in depth.

The study's researcher and a Master's student research assistant (RA) watched the video narratives and coded the five questions conjointly. The coders received 8 hours of training in qualitative coding by a qualitative research expert (Dr. Peter Fraenkel). In the first step of coding, coders identified and coded each participant's affectively positive and negative statements about her country of origin and country of residence. These first-order or "substantive" codes summarized the interview material in briefer linguistic form, using the conventions of grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2000). The unit of coding was a phrase within a sentence or up to a sentence in length that communicated one thought or feeling (operationalized as a "thought unit" – see Marrero, 2005). When there was disagreement about whether a statement is affectively positive or negative, the coders discussed the segment and together made a decision (see Gelso, Hill, Mohr, Rochlen, & Zack, 1999, for description of this qualitative procedure for resolving coding disputes).

As this study utilized a qualitative coding approach that emerged out of the narratives, rather than an established, pre-set quantitative coding system, which did not exist for these variables, agreement between coders was established through "social consensus" (e. g., discussion and agreement -- see discussion of this method in Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Charmaz, 2000), rather than through calculating inter-rater reliability coefficients of each coder's

independent coding of the interviews. These first-order codes were then clustered into higher-order codes to provide a more concise description of how Latina immigrant women view their countries of origin (COO) and country of residence (COR) positively and negatively. Codes were recorded and clustered using AtlasTi software.

To best illustrate the themes in the study, as well as to bring to light certain participants who were not as represented in the sample, for instance, were the only one from a particular country or the only one in that acculturation group from that country, the researcher picked three participants, one from each group. These three participants' video narratives were transcribed and translated by the researcher, and written up as case studies at the end of the results section. Through the codes, the transcripts, the raw video data (i.e. Question D in Appendix A, as well as other parts of the interview), and the Demographics Questionnaire, a full picture of the participant's immigration story was outlined.

Hence, the Acculturation scale score was paired with the participant's narrative, as well as with the "facts" about her immigration and background. The latter are noted on the demographics information gathered and the interview itself (facts such as length of stay in US, family members left behind, citizenship status, socio-economic standing, and marital status, among others). Those with Low Acculturation scores were predicted to have a higher tendency for splitting and decreased reflective capacity in their responses to each question and overall. Those with High Acculturation scores are predicted to be able to conjure up a more "balanced" and less polarized perception of each country. A split in the other direction, in which country of residence was idealized and country of origin is devalued could also be found.

***Idealization/Devaluation and Range of Experience.***

Splitting was understood as those instances when the immigrant woman was not able to express a balanced perspective about both countries that include both good and bad aspects or feelings. When a woman describes one country as “holding” mostly all the “bad” characteristics or feelings while the other holds all the “good” characteristics or feelings, it was assumed that she was engaging in splitting. Other characteristics guided the identification of the theme of idealization and devaluation are described in more detail below.

For instance, a woman who recalled only positive memories from her COO and put down almost all aspects of the COR might have said, “Everything in the Dominican Republic was so great – it was so safe there. We were poor but were so free; everything was easier. Here in the U.S. things are too hard, it is unsafe, depressing, cold, and dark.” In the tendency towards idealization/devaluation in a participant, that is, in a participant who was clearly engaging in a splitting mechanism, it was expected to find the following in the narrative: perseveration on homeland, polarizing descriptions, overall nostalgic, sad, or tearful affect, themes of loss and wishes to return to the homeland, themes of intense isolation, overall sense of emptiness, description of immigration experience in the present that indicates an emotional conflict that was unresolved, mainly negative adjectives used, a characterization of “home” that was based in home country only.

In the process of analyzing the video narrative, through the transcription and the coding process, special attention was given to non-verbal communications and the inability to verbalize further on a negative or positive descriptor. For example, in the part of the interview when the participant was prompted to give adjectives that describe her life in the U.S., the woman might give four adjectives that were all negative and one that is positive. In places where the participant

was not able to elaborate on the positive adjective, or expressed a non-verbal contradictory response, all of this influenced the tendency towards id/dev.

In conclusion, as previously mentioned, each interview was analyzed and described in terms of affect, elaboration, use of adjectives, imagery, and detail. Each question was looked at in great detail for each participant to understand the range and depth of description and/or idealization and devaluation tendency that each question elicited. Also, each question itself was carefully examined to identify which activated the psychologically nuanced complex answers as well as more simplistic answers, so as to understand whether the questions themselves triggered more or less psychologically healthy responses (more or less disorganized, reflective, or dissociated responses, for example). This process of analysis further identified which women have engaged in greater or less id/dev. Understanding the moment when each woman conjured up a range of experience versus giving a more constrictive answer offered a detailed picture of the way that specific kinds of recollections move a participant to appear more and less psychologically healthy.

From this layered look at the qualitative data, we were able to understand whether a lower level of acculturation was also correlated with more splitting, what are the factors in the immigrant's narrative and story that may be linked to a tendency for splitting, as well as which questions make the participants more disorganized and less reflective, and therefore less psychologically healthy from the psychoanalytic standpoint (refer to the Theories section of literature review found earlier in this proposal). This rich qualitative analysis gathered can be used to attain a multi-layered and profound discussion regarding the immigrant experience and the re-formation of identity of this sample of Latina women.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Coding of the thirty-one interviews in the sample and a thorough transcript analysis from the video narratives of nine participants, three in each acculturation category, yielded a series of findings that will be reviewed in this section. The interview probed for positive and negative qualities of home country and country of residence in order to get a thorough sense of the quality of the participant's relationship to both countries. This section will first present a summary of the overall data including all 31 subjects from each of the acculturation groups – high acculturation, bicultural, and low acculturation. The acculturation group summary of main themes is preceded by demographics for each group.

Following this analysis of main themes, three of the nine participants chosen through the use of purposive sampling – one from each acculturation category, are analyzed in detail as case summaries. This will serve the purpose of further exploring the main themes as well as this study's specific question about the role of idealization and devaluation in the narratives as it relates to acculturation.

#### **Demographics**

The demographics below include age, country of origin (COO), immigration status, years in the U.S., marital status, educational background, religious background, and whether the participant is practicing her religion. This information is separated by acculturation level – high, low, or bicultural. The information reported on demographics is the total information that was gathered for this sample at the time of the study. There is no information on other aspects of the participants' background, such as race or immigration status (i.e. green card holder or undocumented), aside from whether they are U.S. Citizens or not. Three demographic

components characterized all participants, due to how the sample was selected - all 31 subjects reported that their mother language was Spanish, all identified as Hispanic or Latina, and all of them were mothers to least one young child attending the Head Start program, where the research took place.

### **High Acculturation Group**

Of the thirty-one participants who completed the study, nine scored in the high acculturation range (see Table 1). Six women were from the Dominican Republic (D.R.), two from Ecuador, and one from Cuba. Of these, four were U.S. citizens, while five had alternate, though unknown, statuses. Seven were married, one was single, and one was “living together” with her partner. Of the nine, five were high school graduates or had passed their GED, two had completed some college, and one was a college graduate.

In terms of how many years they had been in the United States, there was a wide range: one participant left the D.R. at 22 and had been in the U.S. for 3 years; another participant from the D.R. was 29 years old and had been in the U.S. since she was 3 months old; a 35-year-old participant immigrated from Cuba at 26 and had been in the U.S. for four years; one of the participants from Ecuador was 30 years old when she left her country and had been in the U.S. for 2 years; another woman from Ecuador came to the U.S. at age 2.5 and had been here for 33.5 years; the last four were all from the D.R. – one left the D.R. at age 7 and had been in the U.S. for 20 years, another left at age 26 and had been in the U.S. for 8 years, another left the D.R. at 18 years old and had been in the U.S. for 9.10 years, and the last left the D.R. at age 12 and had been in the U.S. for 8 years.

Information was also gathered about their religious backgrounds: five were Catholic, one Seventh Day Adventist, one Christian, and three reported no religion. Of these, five were

practicing their religions, three were not practicing, and one participant's religious activities are unknown.

### **Bicultural Group**

Of the 31 women who completed the study, 12 participants scored in the bicultural group. Of these, five were bicultural tending towards high acculturation, two scored in the middle of the bicultural spectrum, and five were bicultural tending towards low acculturation (see Table 2). In the corresponding demographics table, the participants are organized from high to low in descending order – the first five “tend to high” biculturation, the next two are bicultural, and the last five “tend to low” biculturation. Ten out of the 12 women in this group were from the D.R., while two were from Mexico. Of these, five were U.S. citizens, six were not, and one had an unknown immigration status. Four were “living together” with their partners, four were married, two were single, and two were separated.

In terms of educational background, three were high school graduates or had completed their GED., three had completed some high school, two had completed some college, three had not completed any high school, and one was a college graduate. Their religions were seven Catholic, two Jehovah's Witnesses, one Mormon, one Evangelist, and one reported no religious affiliation. Of these, six were practicing, three were not, and for three of them, their religious practices were unknown.

In terms of how long they had each been in the U.S., in the bicultural “tending to high” group, a 36 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 15 years, a 27 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 11 years, a 33 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 16 years, a 31 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 8 years, and a 39 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 5 years. In the bicultural

“middle” group, a 35 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 17 years, and a 21 year-old participant from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 8 years. In the bicultural “tending to low” acculturation group, a 28 year-old woman from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for two and a half years, a 35 year-old participant from the D.R. had been in the U.S. for 9 years, a 23 year-old from Mexico had been in the U.S. for 5 years, a 30 year-old woman from Mexico had been in the U.S. for 12 years, and a 45 year-old Dominican woman had been in the U.S. for 17 years.

### **Low Acculturation Group**

Of the 31 women in the overall sample, ten scored into the Low Acculturation group (see Table 3). Five women were from Mexico, two from Ecuador, two from the D.R., and one from Peru. Interestingly for this group, none of the participants were U.S. citizens. Four of the women in this group were living together with their partners, three were married, two single, and one separated. In terms of educational background, four were H.S. graduates or had gotten their GED's, three had not attended H.S., two had some H.S. education, and one had some college education. In terms of religious background, seven stated that they were Catholic, while three participants did not express a religion. Two said they were practicing, two stated they were not, and the practices of six of them were unknown.

In terms of how many years they had been in the U.S., the report was varied and is as follows: a woman from Mexico had left to come to the U.S. at age 24 and had been in the country for 9 years, one from Peru had left at age 41 and had been in the U.S. for 4 years, a Mexican woman left at age 25 and had been in the U.S. for 3 years, another one from Mexico left at age 19 and had been in the U.S. for 11 years, a woman from the D.R. had left at age 27 and been in the U.S. for 13 years, a participant from Ecuador had left at 24 and been in the U.S. for 14 years, a Mexican woman left at age 16 and been in the U.S. for 7 years, an Ecuadorian

participant left at age 22 and been in the U.S. for 3 years, another woman from the D.R. left at 24 and had been in the U.S. for 3 years, and lastly, a participant from Mexico left her COO at age 16 and been in the U.S. for 12 years.

### **Themes Across Acculturation Groups**

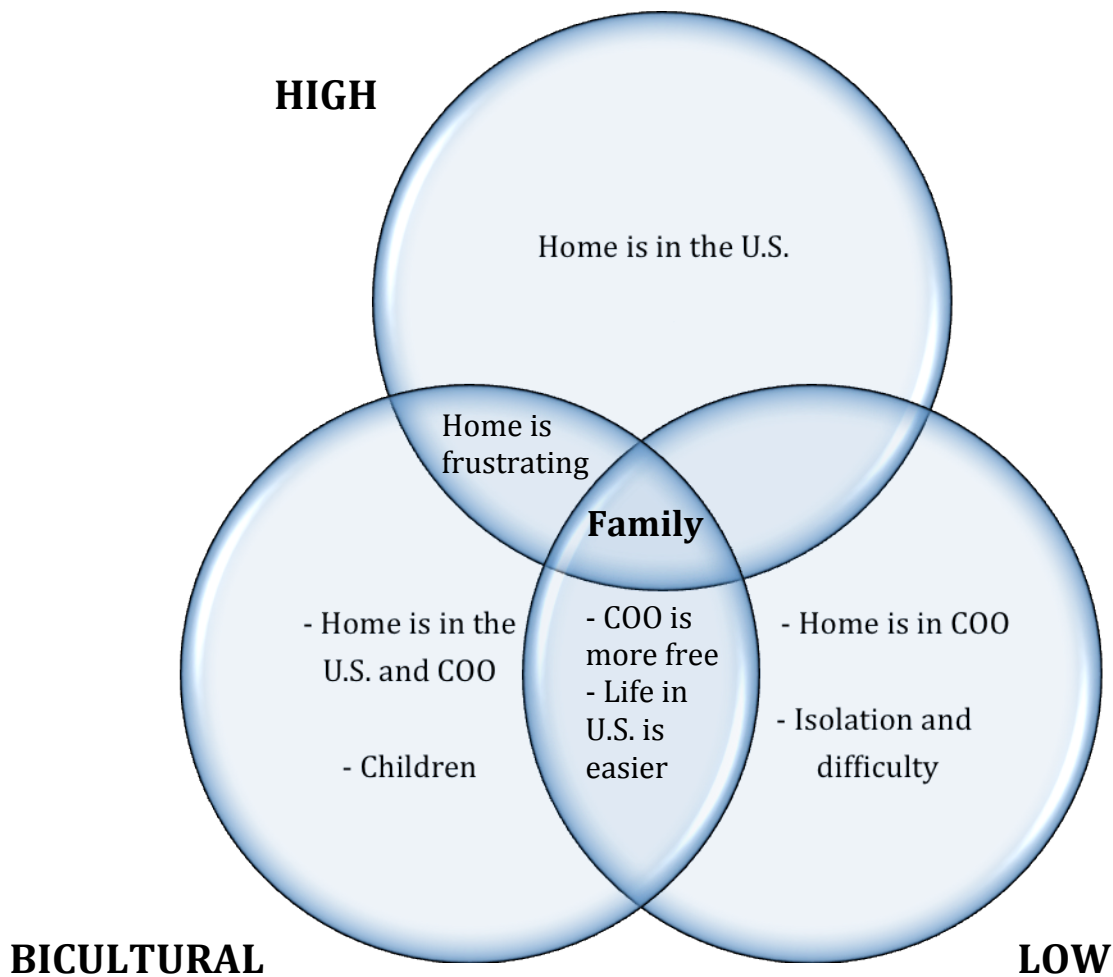
This section of the results outlines the participants' responses to the five interview questions explored in this study. Each of their individual answers was examined individually and the titles were then sorted into higher order themes, presented below. Transcripts of the interviews were also used to supplement this section with quotes, so as to do justice to the richness and meaning of the participants' answers. As indicated, some of the themes are true for all acculturation levels, while others are only present in one or two levels.

### **The Meaning of Home**

In the interview, participants were first asked to express what comes to mind when they think of home. The interviewer probed for sights, sounds, scents, and positive and negative thoughts and feelings. This domain includes the varying themes that participants expressed across acculturation levels (see Figure 1 below).

#### ***Home is where the family is.***

The theme of "family" was present in all three acculturation groups. All nine of the women in the high acculturation group said, "my family" (see Table 4). Six of the women mentioned their children at home in particular, while five pointed to their physical "house," and four mentioned their "significant other." Two of the women in the high acculturation group talked about the development of their children and the importance of their education as meanings of home.



*Figure 1.* This figure illustrates the relationship between acculturation levels on the meaning of home.

A feeling of togetherness in family and children appeared in all of the nine participants in the high acculturation group. For example, one woman said that home to her was, “All of us sharing and playing [interviewer: who is everyone?] My oldest daughter who is now 5, my little daughter, and me.” Another participant in this group expressed:

My daughter, my husband and I, we are part of a home, of a family [Interviewer: positive or negative things come to mind?] Yes, always positive, regardless of how difficult it has

been for us to adapt to living here, we are a happy family – with my husband, we understand each other well, and we always share everything. We talk together, that is, there is a lot of communication, so two people can understand one another.

Also in the high acculturation group, one participant brought up that thoughts of home might bring conflicting positive and negative feelings, as she said:

Home? Family for me and that is home, for me that's it [Interviewer: positive or negative things come to mind?] Well, the home is positive and negative [smiles knowingly at interviewer] No, well, more positive than anything. When one goes home, it's more positive than not [Interviewer: when you think about negative things, what comes to mind?] I don't know...how someone used to be in the family, how they changed, an accident, something tragic, a divorce...things like that.

Similar to those in the high acculturation group, nine of the ten participants in the low acculturation group made a mention of their families or to components that make up “family” (see Table 5). Seven of the women mentioned their children, for five of these, the development of their children and their education came to mind, while one woman mentioned that “home means helping children with their homework,” another said “that my children have good health,” and a third participant imagined her children playing. Three women spoke about their significant others, another three mentioned their physical house, and one woman spoke about the maintenance of the home, such as doing chores and making sure the home is running properly. In the words of a participant from the low acculturation group:

[I think of] My husband, my daughter, the two of them come to mind. My husband and my daughter [Interviewer: what in particular?] Everything, the way that they are, everything, everything about them comes to my mind [Interviewer: I see that you laugh,

so positive thoughts?] Yes, more positive than negative because I think of my daughter when she laughs, when she does her little things, and my husband the same, so everything.

A few of the participants in this group talked about the mood or certain values they would ideally like in their image of home. Two talked about the importance of having the complete family in unity, another two brought up feelings of tenderness and unity when they thought of their families, two stressed the importance of being able to provide basic needs for the family, one mentioned maintaining a peaceful atmosphere for children to grow up in, while a different participant talked about the importance of not having financial stressors. Within this theme, two women spoke about their concerns about finding and maintaining a job. Two other participants talked even more generally about their ideals of “home,” such as indicating that home provides a “sense of emotional security,” as well as it can mean “stability,” and be an “organization of unity.”

Due to their families being now established in the U.S., two of the participants in the low acculturation group mentioned that for them, home is here, in the U.S. One of them expressed, “My home is here because I established it. In Santo Domingo I was raised in different homes, with a woman, and then the daughters. I was never stable. So when I think of home I think of my house here.” The other participant, from Ecuador, expressed, “My home is created here with my kids and husband.”

Despite the fact that all participants in the study were parents, the participants in the bicultural group were more likely to characterize “family” as being represented by “children.” Of the women in the bicultural group, nine shared that their children came to mind when thinking of home (see Table 6). For six of them, the development of their children and their children’s

education was highlighted, while one woman brought up that home “means helping children with their homework.” Seven women in this group more generally mentioned their families, and this was represented in different ways. Three of them mentioned their significant other (husband, partner, or boyfriend), three mentioned their physical house, and three mentioned family chores, such as cleaning the house and making sure everything is well in the house. Two women spoke about the importance of maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in the home where the children can grow, and two pointed to the importance of not having financial stress. Other answers that came up once in individual participants within this theme of family were, “having family unity,” “family brings feelings of tenderness and unity,” “important to provide basic needs of the family,” stressing the importance of communicating and expressing love and care,” stressing the importance of everyone coming together and being morally and emotionally healthy, and thinking of previous generations’ models of family as examples to be followed.

***Location of home: in the U.S., in the COO, or in both.***

Within this theme, there were differences across acculturation groups in the way that women described which country they associated with home. The women in the high acculturation group were more likely to state that their home was in the U.S., while those in the low acculturation group generally defined their home as being in their COO. For instance, in the low acculturation group, three of the participants preferred their COO as a place to begin their discussion of this question. One of them, from Mexico, smiled as she reminisced about her COO and talked about feeling that she would like to be back in her COO. She said, “My home here or in my country? [Interviewer: you can start where you’d like]. Well, then, in my country [laughs] I would like to be able to be in Mexico, in my home, it brings me sadness and nostalgia to think about my home...because I would like to be there.” For the same three participants, thinking of

home in COO provoked nostalgia, because the participants wanted to either be home or to be with their families left behind.

For the bicultural group, there was an interesting split between the participants that chose their COO as a “home,” and those who chose COR as “home.” For example, three of the women in this group began talking about their COO when approached with the question. Another three described feeling that they would like to be back in their COO, or at least be able to establish a similar stability in their COO as they have in the U.S., but for now they traveled back and forth between the two countries. Interestingly, three of the women who answered in this way belonged to the bicultural “tending high” group and one belonged to the bicultural “tending low” group.

Five of the participants in the bicultural group stated that for them, “Home is here [in the U.S.]” For one of them, a bicultural participant “tending high,” “home [was] here” because this is where her daughter is. In her words, “I think of my daughter because I dedicate a lot of time to her, I play with her, I read her books, I take her out to the park, I think of positive things related to her – that she grows up to have a future, a career, that she can do better.” Another participant in the “tending high” group shared that even though “home is here,” she is “always comparing with what I had in [my COO].” However, a different participant in the middle range bicultural group answered that “home is here,” and that she does not like to go to her COO. For two of the bicultural participants, however, “home” was in both. One woman who scored in the middle of the bicultural range, answered, “Home is in both, in both, in both places....here and there.”

In the high acculturation group, three of the women said that for them “home is here,” in the U.S. Two of these women had spent most of their lives in the U.S. – one 36 year-old woman had been in the U.S. 33.5 years, and a 29 year-old woman had spent most of her life in the U.S., having migrated when she was a few months old. The third woman, a 31 year-old participant

from the D.R. who had been in the U.S. for 13 years also indicated that home was “here” in the U.S. However, she said that more than country of residence, family unity, means, and peace were primary in her definition of home:

Home, well, that we have stability, that we have unity, peace, tranquility, that we have the means that we need, like for instance a house to live in, food to eat, everything we need to provide for the children, clothes, especially in the different seasons, boots for winter, shoes for summer, that we can provide them with the basics [Interviewer: home for you then is here or in Santo Domingo?] Here...but yes, that the family is together, above all.

Two of the women in the high acculturation group talked about liking their country of origin: however, they said that they would not like to live there. One of the two participants, the woman mentioned above, explained that this feeling came from the fact that she no longer had any relatives or friends left in her country of origin.

***Thoughts about home bring feelings of frustration.***

This was a theme that was found in the high acculturation and bicultural group, however, it was not a theme in the low acculturation group. Two of the participants in the high acculturation group expressed feelings of frustration when thinking about the meaning of home. For both of them, this feeling was tied to the sentiment that life in the U.S. is “very hard.” The reasons for this included “missing family back home,” “my husband does not want me to work outside the home,” “lack of trust for childcare of children,” and “have not been able to find a job in the U.S.” One participant explained:

I am not working currently, but I am applying to be able to get a job, and I have been learning English. I took care of my daughter full time, when she started attending the

Head Start, that's when I began to study, because before that I didn't trust leaving her with anyone else...it's actually still something I have not been able to surpass [leaving her with anyone] even though I live with my mother-in-law...no, I can't...I can't get used to the idea that someone else could take care of her...

In the bicultural group, for two of the participants, thoughts of home also brought on feelings of frustration. One of the reasons provided was that the participant missed her family in her COO. The other participant felt frustrated by the constraints of winter and not being able to let her children out to play. Also, for one of them, this frustration came from not being able to find a job in the U.S. A participant in the "tending high" bicultural group, stated:

When I think of my home, I start to think sometimes that I would like to be able to get a better job...because I started university but I had to drop out because my daughter got sick...and so it's hard sometimes, one doesn't have someone to watch the kids, so those thoughts come to mind...that if you don't make something of yourself by going to university or having a career, you don't get a good job here...those are the things that come to my mind.

***Images of COO as more free.***

This was a theme that emerged in the bicultural and low acculturation group, however, it was not present in the high acculturation group. Three of the participants in the bicultural group described "home" in descriptive nature terms, talking about their memories of trees or grass, and for two of them, these images made their COO feel more free due to feeling that they had nature and more space. One woman in the middle range bicultural group described the following:

[The two homes, in COO and COR] are different, like there I lived in a house, so I had freedom, that is, of being able to go out to the patio in the front of the house to play...and

I would climb trees. But here, my kids can't do that. I have them, like, locked up and me also, I am always in the home, like all the time...and with the weather, when it's winter, it's like difficult or hard for one to go out, especially when one has small children. There [in my COO] it was different...there, you share with your neighbors, all the same people, one treats them like family, that is very good, because everyone knows everyone else – everyone shares, everyone knows who you are, I mean, in the area where you live. They treat you like family, and also your kids, for example...at meal-time, everyone sits around the table for breakfast, then we all have lunch together, and dinner altogether...here it's hard to do that. [Interviewer: why is it hard?] Its hard because of schedules, everyone has a different schedule...a work schedule, or the kids are in school, and the parents are at work, basically you see that with schedules, that everyone has their own. There [in my COO] schedules and times are different. There is time to sit at the table to have breakfast with your family, then for lunch they give people two or one hour of lunchtime, so a person leaves work, goes homes, has lunch with their family, shares [the moment], and then he goes back to work. And it's the same with dinner, at dinnertime, everyone comes and shares around the table. People sit down. [Interviewer: so, trees, images of the D.R. comes to mind, and what about here?] Here? It's like being locked up at home...like a prison. *Ay*, yes, that depresses me a lot.

Two of the participants in the low acculturation group referred to life in the U.S. as being “different” in a negative manner and associated to availability of physical space, when thinking of associations to “home.” Three of the women remembered the COO as free because of having nature and more space. Two of these participants described home in the U.S. as equivalent to a prison and as “cramped” due to having less physical space, and the third talked about U.S. being

limited in the outdoor activities available to children. One of the participants from Mexico, described further in the case example below said that she could not think of anything negative when thinking of her COO.

***Life in the U.S. is easier.***

This was another theme that only emerged in the bicultural and low acculturation group. For two of the bicultural women, the meaning of home elicited the response that “life in the U.S. is easier.” One of the reasons given by one of the women was that there are more economic opportunities in the U.S. For the other participant, it felt easier compared to her COO. She said:

Well, life there is very difficult because there are people [in my COO] that struggle to be able to accomplish things because it is too difficult for them due to the financial situation there. There are many people who don't have the resources to, for example, pay for their college education, so it is very hard there, you get no help, you have to pay for your own studies.

Similarly, two of the participants in the low acculturation group described life in the U.S. as easier, and one of them referred to the increased financial opportunities offered. Another two women talked about feeling optimistic about succeeding in the U.S.

***Isolation and difficulty.***

This particular theme emerged only in the low acculturation group. Four of the participants in this group talked about feeling “isolated” in the U.S., while two talked about life in the U.S. being generally more “difficult.” One of these two women, expressed that the feeling of life being difficult made it difficult for her to decide to stay. She expressed, “I am not too sure whether I want to stay or go yet...if it was up to me, I don't care either way, I would go back

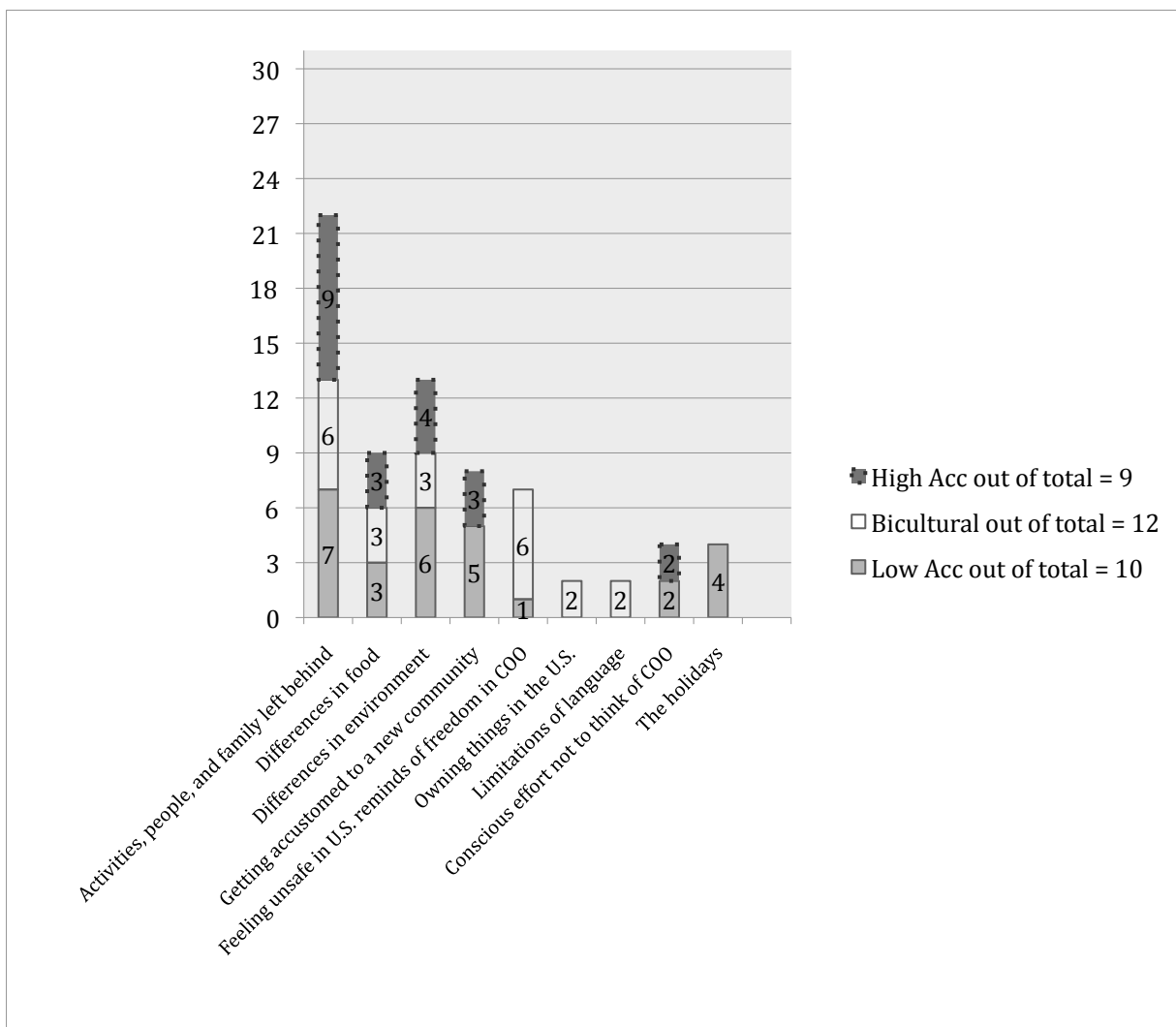
home. Maybe I would stay so my son receives more studies and then just take him back, if it's possible. For me, I don't care to stay, but my son might do better here."

This sentiment was also felt by a participant from Peru who felt conflicted about whether to go back to her COO or stay in the U.S. Similarly, she felt that the opportunities offered for her son were better than in her COO, although she felt mixed about whether there would be more work for her in Peru or in the U.S. Another participant said that life in the U.S. had not been as easy as she expected, in particular because she felt "isolated due to not having any family or friends." This sentiment was echoed by another participant who said that she did not feel supported by her relatives living in the U.S. Along the same line, speaking about having a difficult time in the U.S. another participant expressed that life in COO is centered around family while life in the U.S. is centered around routine. Another participant also felt life in the U.S. was difficult due to feeling that people in the U.S. were more "individualistic."

Another three women expressed that the U.S. was particularly difficult for them due to not being able to communicate in English, and one of them went as far as to say that she felt "useless" because of not knowing the language. She commented, "Not knowing English is like you are nothing."

### **When Life in the U.S. Reminds of Country of Origin**

Following an exploration of the meaning of home, the participants were asked what reminded them of their homeland when they thought of their life in the U.S. The interviewer was encouraged to probe for things the participants did, as well as sounds, scents, foods, thoughts, and feelings. Their responses are discussed in themes outlined in the section below (see Figure 2 below).



*Figure 2.* This figure illustrates the frequency of themes across each acculturation group for the question of when U.S. reminds of COO.

### ***Activities, people, and family left behind.***

This theme was encountered across all acculturation groups. Three of the women in the high acculturation group mentioned that “the things left behind” reminded them of their country of origin (see Table 7). Two of them talked about feeling that moments when they needed support in raising their family in the U.S. provoked nostalgia for the family left behind, and two of them thought of their COO when sharing time or socializing with their friends and neighbors in the U.S. For another two, the jobs that were left behind as well as the studies that had to be

stopped also made them think of their COO. One woman from the high acculturation group said the following:

In my country, the people, especially family members and close friends, because they know that I am a mother, these are the people that one needs the most in these key moments, for example, if one of my daughters gets sick, I have a family member there who can watch her. Here, people don't relate to one another as much, due to time factors, you don't really get to know people well – one doesn't have the time to make strong relationships, aside from the neighbors, who are the closest, but because of this that trust doesn't exist, because of the [dangerous] things that can happen and so one gets afraid that something could happen to one's little girl...and also university [reminds me of COO]...although now I am going to wait until the girls are in school to start [Interviewer: so you were in university in your COO?] Yes, for two years, there [Interviewer: so the possibility of studying brings back memories of your COO?] Yes [Interviewer: and what other things bring you memories of your COO or that you notice yourself missing?] The only thing that I really, really miss is my mom who is still there [in the D.R.] but if God is willing, I will be able to get her documents and bring her here...I miss my family, my places that I used to visit, friends, but one adapts, I have adapted.

When they thought of their lives in the U.S., three of the women in the high acculturation group mentioned that thinking of their families in their COO reminded them of their COO. Two of them mentioned their parents in particular, while another two talked about missing big family reunions. One participant from Ecuador said:

Primarily, I think of my parents...because material things...that's not everything [in life]...[I think of how it is] to have the support of my parents. I imagine that if I had my

parents here I could leave my daughter with my mom, or maybe I would even have another kid, because I would know that she can help me. [Interviewer: and what else brings you memories from your COO? Celebrations? Parties?] I have never really been very dedicated to parties, I always dedicated myself to studying and then I got married and then I came here [to the U.S.] so I never had time to celebrate parties, so I can't really miss that. But I do miss my family and family parties, family reunions, with my aunts and uncles and cousins, and with the friends that I studied with. But friends are not there for life in the way parents are, right? I have good friends, and I keep in touch with them still, but it's not like [the same relationship] as with my parents.

Six of the women in the bicultural group also brought up their families as reminders of COO (see Table 8). In particular, one participant mentioned her parents, two mentioned their mothers, while another participant brought up missing big family reunions. Two participants mentioned that their families here provoked nostalgia for the family that was left behind. Another two participants mentioned that they talked on the phone regularly with their families that live in the U.S. in order to maintain contact. For another two, doing activities with their families in the U.S., for instance on Sundays, reminded them of their COO. More generally for three of the participants, socializing with others, such as friends and neighbors made them think of their COO.

Another two participants in the bicultural group brought up the friends that were left behind. One of them gave a big smile when the question was posed and answered, "Well, so many things [remind me of my COO], like for example, I miss my friendships from my classroom. It's difficult to make new friends here because people here have another life, it's not the same as the life one has, there [in my COO] it's different."

Similar to the high acculturation and bicultural groups, seven of the women in the low acculturation group brought up their families when asked to recall what things in the U.S. remind them of their COO (see Table 9). Two of them mentioned their parents left behind in particular, one mentioned her grandparents, and three mentioned missing “big family reunions” in the COO, as well as cooking meals with the family. For one woman from the D.R., the family she had in the U.S. provoked nostalgia for the family that was left behind.

One participant mentioned that she especially thought of her family when she felt that her child was lonely, as she said, “When my son feels lonely, I think that if we were back [in Mexico] the whole family would be there.” Similarly, another participant thought about her family due to not having anyone to help with childcare. A different participant from Mexico thought of her family because, “I feel lonely because the father of my children left us, so it makes me think of my family [in my COO].”

Other reminders of family, for three participants in the low acculturation group, came from calling home in COO regularly, while for a fourth woman, she was reminded of family when providing financial assistance to her family in her COO.

### ***Differences in foods.***

The theme of food was encountered across all three acculturation levels. Three of the participants in the high acculturation group talked about cooking certain foods that reminded them of home. Three participants in the bicultural group mentioned “food” or “food I cook” as reminders of COO. For one participant in the “tending high” bicultural group, the foods, such as fruits in her COO were not like those in COR. She shared:

Mango [reminds me of my COO], I love mango and in my home there [in the D.R.] we have mango trees, and I just can’t find mangoes here that taste like the mangoes there. I

like the mangoes there more than the ones here. Oh, so many things, fruits, the foods that I used to eat there, I don't eat them sometimes, sometimes I eat other foods living here, because life is faster here, and I don't have time to make the food like one makes it there [in the D.R.]...but one begins to adapt [to life in the U.S.].

In the low acculturation group, for three participants, food was a reminder of their COO, especially when they cooked meals from their COO. However, one participant in this group said that she did not miss much of the foods from her COO because she had access to Dominican goods and a Dominican neighborhood here in the U.S.

***Differences in environment.***

This was another theme that came up in different ways across all three groups, with some differences in how the participants talked about the differences in COO or COR. For instance, there were slight differences across groups whether this was done by comparing the two or by insinuating that one was better than the other.

Three of the participants in the high acculturation group spoke about the cold weather in New York as reminders of their COO. One participant in this group spoke about feeling closed-in upon first moving to the U.S. However, showing a more adapted and resolved relationship to the U.S., she made it clear to the interviewer that her feelings about the confines of the environment were in the past. She expressed:

[Not having my parents] here, holds me back in many different aspects, but when I think about the material [the material does not matter]...I had green areas, gardens [in my COO], here I am in a small apartment...but really, the phase of thinking about those things, I have already passed it. When I first arrived to this country, I suffered thinking about those things. I felt very *encerrada* [trapped, closed-in] and I felt that the apartment

was not big. But there are so many parks here, if one lives in a building, there are many parks [to go to]...so that phase, I have passed it, so [the answer to the question is] my parents.

In the bicultural group, two participants mentioned the beach as reminders of their COO. Interestingly, in the bicultural group, the answers were provided as comparisons between COO and COR. Also, in most of their replies, when the participant finds superiority in COO, a process of “doing and undoing” is apparent, where the participant then needs to talk about something positive in the U.S., as is seen below, or talks about adaptation, as seen above. One participant in the bicultural group said the following:

The places there [remind me of my COO], I like them so much. For example, I really like the beach there, and here it is difficult to go to the beach and also I don't like going to the beach here so much. I find that the beaches here don't look anything like the beaches there [in the D.R.]...but I still feel ok about it because in part I feel that one comes here to succeed, to look for a better life than the life one has in one's country...so I find that is important.

One participant in the bicultural group shared that the cold weather in the U.S. reminds her of the warm weather in her COO. Another participant expressed that the limited access to nature and the outdoors reminds her of life in her COO.

The environment, such as outdoor spaces and the weather, came up with a number of participants in the low acculturation group, generally in the sense that the participants were comparing both places and finding their COO to be superior. One participant expressed that she missed “everything” in her COO because the two countries, “are completely different.” For three participants, the cold weather in the U.S. reminded them of the warm weather in their COO. In

hinting at the extreme weather of the U.S., a participant from Ecuador expressed, “I think you could say that you can’t go anywhere here [in the U.S.], with my daughter, because she catches a cold or she gets allergies...on the other hand, in Ecuador, the climate is more tempered...it’s cold or warm but it’s all the same...yes, because of the climate here, my daughter can’t go outside.”

Two participants brought up that the limited access to nature and the outdoors reminded them of life in their COO. One of these two women mentioned that here in the U.S., “you feel like you live inside a matchbox.”

***Getting accustomed to a new community.***

Comparisons of community in COO and COR as reminders of COO were present in different ways in the high and the low acculturation groups. Two participants in the high acculturation group mentioned that the ethnicity of their neighborhoods brought back memories of their COO. Talking about the difference in customs, another woman in this acculturation group explained, “People share more, in community, everyone knows everyone else and the neighbors are all like from the same family, inside each other’s houses always, they share.”

Similarly, two participants from the low acculturation group mentioned their “ethnic neighborhoods” as reminders of their COO. Referring more to other aspects of the environment, such as community life and pace of life, rather than physical spaces, participants in the low acculturation group shared other interesting aspects that were reminders of COO. One participant from the D.R. said that she missed the interaction between church and community that she encountered in her COO. A different participant made a generalization about people in the U.S. versus the D.R., expressing a feeling that people in her COO are more altruistic and will offer to

help without expecting any benefit in return. Lastly, another participant said that the stability and tranquility of her COO were reminders of her COO.

***Feeling unsafe in the U.S. reminds of freedom and safety in COO.***

This theme came up only in the bicultural and the low acculturation groups. Five of the women in the bicultural group shared that feeling unsafe due to violence in their neighborhoods remind them of the safety and freedom they felt in their COO (see Table 12). One of the participants explained that this was due to people sharing with neighbors in a more trusting way in her COO. She explained:

[Life here reminds me of my COO] like I was saying, the freedom, the friends, sharing with my friends, with my neighbors, sitting in the front of my house. [Interviewer: so the fact that you live in an apartment now reminds you of Santo Domingo?] Exactly, yes, it reminds me because of how different the two are, you see? It's like emotional, the difference...because here you are like locked up and with fear to go out...thinking like what if they someone steals from you, or if they kill you, if they hold you at gunpoint and rob you. There, you are not thinking any of that, none of that. I mean, where I live [in my COO], you are not thinking about [the place being dangerous]...you go out of your home, you share with your family, with your friends, with your neighbors. It's calm, right? You don't fear anything.

A different participant in the bicultural group shared more generally that she thought of the stability and tranquility of her COO as a reminder of her COO. She expressed, "The tranquility that one feels going out in the street there [in my COO] is not the same as is felt here...yes, so above all I think of the tranquility. I come from a town, a town very far from the city."

Within this theme, one woman in the low acculturation group talked about feeling unsafe in the U.S. due to violence in her neighborhood, which in turn reminded her of the safety and freedom she felt in her COO. This same participant also said that the cultural diversity in the U.S. intimidated her because she did not trust people's intentions.

***Owning things in the U.S.***

This theme came up in the bicultural group only. Two women in this group felt that owning things in the U.S. reminded them of the poverty they endured in their COO. One of these two women expressed that basic needs such as water and good food that are more readily available in the U.S. are a privilege in their COO.

***Limitations of language.***

This was also a theme that came up in the bicultural group within this question. Two of the participants expressed that the limitation of not being able to communicate in their own mother tongue were reminders of their COO. A third participant, talked about missing the comfort of speaking in Spanish with everyone around her.

***Conscious effort to not think of COO as a coping skill.***

This was a theme that was found in the low and the high acculturation groups, but not in the bicultural group. Two of the women in the high acculturation group mentioned making a conscious effort to not remember sad memories. The participant from Cuba initially could not conjure up an answer to the things in the U.S. that remind her of home. With some persuasion from the interviewer, the participant opened up about a conscious effort to not think about things that might make her sad, such as longing for her COO. She said the following:

I don't know [how to answer this] because everything is different, it's like starting from zero, no? And umm, [things that bring back] memories [of my COO]? [Shakes head] One

remembers everything, but nothing in particular really brings back any memory, I don't know, there is nothing from my life now that is reminiscent of my life from before, everything is totally different, to bring back a memory I have to stop and think and push myself to remember...there is nothing exact. [Interviewer: are there any moments when you think about a particular occasion...or...] Yes, there are moments, especially when one is alone, but really, I have been out [of my COO] for so long that I don't know, it's not the same as it was in the beginning. [Interviewer: and how long have you been out?] It's been 7 years, for me that's plenty...I don't know. [Interviewer: and for instance, are there certain celebrations that remind you of your country, when you meet up with your family, or something that make you feel nostalgic?] [Begins to shake her head "no" and continues to shake it until her answer is complete] I don't know, I guess that, when one talks to people on the phone [who are in COO] it's when one remembers because one is speaking with them...but most of the other time, I try so that I remove the things from my mind that bring me sadness, so that [these things] don't affect me.

This theme also came up in the low acculturation group. Two of the women indicated using two different strategies in order to feel better when making comparisons between COO and COR. One of them reminded herself of the reason that motivated her to come to the U.S. – the search for a better life. The other participant said that she found herself sometimes making a conscious effort not to remember life in her COO as a way to adapt to life in the U.S.

### ***The holidays.***

The theme of holidays only came up in the low acculturation group. Four participants in this group mentioned holidays celebrated such as Christmas or Independence Day as reminders of their COO. One participant from the D.R., felt that holidays involved more community

gatherings in her COO than in the U.S. A participant from Mexico felt the holidays were equal in both countries, as she shared:

[What reminds me of Mexico] for example are the holidays, above all, it's what reminds me [of my COO] the most. When they celebrate Christmas or New Year's here, because they are the only holidays that all countries share, because the holiday in May, we don't celebrate that [in Mexico], but we do celebrate Christmas and New Year's [Interviewer: how did you celebrate it?] The same, for us it's the same, we celebrate it exactly the same, with gifts.

### **A Moment When They Wished to go Home**

The next question in the interview asked the participants to recall a time when they wished to go home. They were encouraged to talk about what was going on at that moment in their lives. Although all participants could recount a time when they wanted to go home, differences in themes were found and are detailed in the following section (see Figure 3 below).

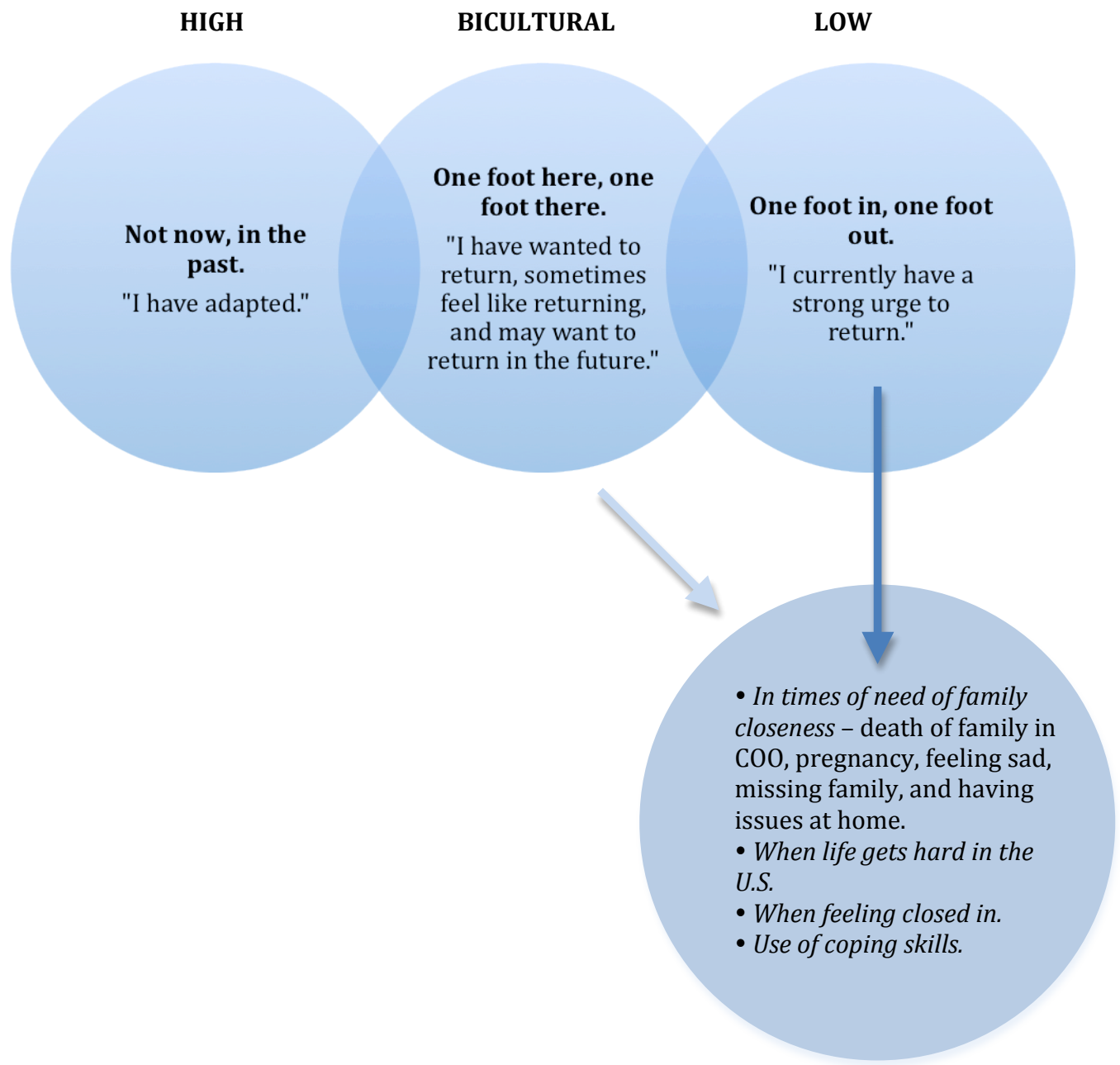


Figure 3. This figure shows the temporal relationship and themes related to the wish to go home in the acculturation groups.

*Not now, but in the past.*

In the high acculturation group, the participants could recall moments when they wished to return home to their COO, but all nine talked about having this feeling in the beginning of their time in the U.S. or some other time in the past (see Table 10). This feeling was talked about as a phase they had surpassed in order to adapt. For three of the participants that answered “yes” to experiencing a moment when they wished to go home, the reasons for feeling this way were varied. One had this feeling when she was pregnant, another when she was having problems with her husband, and another due to “all the stressors” of living in the U.S. A fourth participant said she had wished to go home, “upon first arrival to the U.S. due to feeling intimidated by the city’s physical structure.” Other answers from this group, in thinking about this feeling of wanting to go home in the past included, “when feeling sad,” “when I had a conflict with my mother here in the U.S.,” “due to lack of privacy and physical space,” and “due to not having achieved goals of studying and working in the U.S.” Two women also mentioned wishing to go home when they missed their parents and family left behind.

Three participants initially answered “No” to this question, but then, as the other participants in this group, mentioned moments in the past or in an earlier phase when they had this feeling. For instance, a woman from Ecuador said, “No, when I first got married and came [to the U.S.] I missed a lot and I went [to my COO] and came back, but now, I don’t miss it anymore, I don’t want to go back now, I have adapted, I don’t want to go back to my country. If I go, it’s just to visit.” When the participant from Cuba was asked this question, she quickly answered “No,” and elaborated:

Never. In the beginning when I first left, I had doubts because I had just left, so I had doubts, but then as time went on, I started to think and say that I will never return, and

even if [Cuba] changes I will never return, since life is completely different [in the U.S.] but in a certain sense, I like it better here...it's different customs and more or less I have adapted quite a lot...and also my daughter was born here. I don't want to take her from the place where she was born or from the place where she will grow up.

A participant from the Dominican Republic talked about missing her family and friends in the D.R., as well as her “places” back in her COO. However, when asked if there was a moment when she wished to return, she answered, “To go back and live there? No, no. I think I have adapted quite well here.”

***One foot here, one foot there.***

Eleven of the twelve women in the bicultural acculturation group could describe a moment when they wanted to return home to their COO (see Table 11). These moments tended to describe either a time when they had a particular need, such as pregnancy, when relatives or family members in their COO were not well or had died, a moment of culture shock, or during holidays. In general for all eleven participants, the feeling to go back to their COO had been felt in the past but could also be felt in the present or possibly also in the future. When asked this question, one participant shared her story of first coming to high school in America when she was 19 years old after attending an all-girls Catholic school in the D.R. She explained, “I went to a Catholic school in the D.R., where I wore an uniform and the teachers were really strict. Here, kids were wild. I didn't like that and wished to go home.” The shock made this participant so upset she described dropping out of her high school after her Junior year and getting her GED. instead.

Another participant in the “tending high” bicultural group, expressed she felt she had, “one foot here and one foot there.” Two participants shared that they wished to go back to their

COO to live later on in the future, when their daughters reached professional degrees and had stable economic positions. Another participant talked about her wish to return, but her difficulty to do so due to not being able to support her family if she moved back to her COO. She attributed this to the “inadequate financial situation and lack of opportunity” in her COO.

The one participant in the bicultural group who felt she had no desire to return to her COO due to feeling that there were “limited benefits and economic opportunities in my COO,” was the 23 year-old participant from Mexico. This woman was a single mother who stated clearly that she felt she was not welcome in Mexico due to having a child out of wedlock. This participant will be discussed more at length in the case examples and in the discussion.

***Strong urge to return - one foot in, one foot out.***

Nine out of the ten participants in the low acculturation group could describe a moment when they wished to go home (see Table 12). In comparison to the other two acculturation groups, these moments were more recent or actively happening in their lives during the time of interview. For instance, one participant from the D.R. described having this feeling “all the time,” however, she said could hold back on moving due to realizing that she would not be able to support her family in her COO if she returned. This participant stated that she planned on returning to her COO to live in the future.

The one participant who said she had no desire to return home, an immigrant from Mexico, explained that she felt there were limited opportunities and benefits in her COO, as well as her children were used to a “better quality of life in the U.S.”

***In times of need of family closeness.***

This emerged as a theme in the bicultural and low acculturation group. Two of the women in the bicultural group felt like going home talked about having this feeling when they

were pregnant. One of these two women explained, “When I first came to NY, I got pregnant right away and it was very hard to be here without my family even though I had my husband here with me. I am very close to my family. We are many brothers and sisters.”

Another two women in the bicultural group talked about wanting to go home during the Christmas holiday. As she talked about this moment, one of these two participants broke down in tears and asked for the camera to be turned off after she said the following, “During Christmas, we had the tradition of playing *El Angelito* (Secret Santa) between all the family members, and now we can’t because we are not together.”

Two other participants in this group talked about wanting to go home when missing parents or family left behind. One of these two women, from the D.R., expressed while in tears, “At the beginning it was bad because I had to leave my children back [in the D.R.] for a year. I never thought I was going to be able to do that but I did.”

One participant from the D.R. in the “tending high” category expressed that she felt like going home when feeling generally “sad.” In talking about these sad moments, she shared that she compared her COO and her COR in a manner that made her feel like life is better in her COO, for instance, where weather, schedules, and general quality of life are concerned. She expressed:

Yes, sometimes I get melancholic and you know, the routine is not easy, everyday the same thing. You get up, go to work come home from work, lay down to sleep, and then get up the next day and do it all over again. And so I think, I don’t know, the day feels longer there [in my COO], here you go to work and the day is gone, so it makes me miss [my COO]. And sometimes I have that feeling that life is lives in another way there, so I think, maybe I should just go back. These moments hit me like when the temperature

here is really cold...and there it's warm, and I like the warmth...so I think, wow, I would like to be back in Santo Domingo, so I get these urges to go back. [Interviewer: so what makes you stay?] My daughter, she was born here, she is adapted to life here, she needs to stay here. [Interviewer: so what happens in those moments when you want to go back?] Well, sometimes one gets those moments of sadness, one feels sad. I have been living here for five years and I don't really know anyone living here, so sometimes I feel lonely. So one wants people with whom to share with...because here people live like all locked up, so one does not find anyone. Well, sometimes at work one can meet people but it's not the same, so sometimes this is what gives me the urge to go back [to my COO].

Another participant from the D.R. in the middle of the bicultural range, broke down in tears during the interview when answering this question. Her moment of wanting to return centered around the death of her father, where it appeared that the participant harbored feelings of guilt and remorse for not being able to be in the D.R. to take care of him in his last days. This was an especially difficult moment for this participant during the interview, as it appeared to be an area full of unresolved and conflictive feelings. She narrated the story of what happened in a monologue that went on for about fifteen minutes, and it appeared the interviewers let her go on because the participant was possibly attaining some therapeutic gain from the interaction. In a short excerpt from this moment, the participant shares:

It hurt me so much to see my dad so sick, and me here [in the U.S.] and because I couldn't in that moment stay with him [since I had to be with my son in the U.S.], I felt guilty, and it hurts me every time I talk about this...I feel so bad [Interviewer: you are not guilty]. I know but for example, there [in the D.R.] one is accustomed to taking care of

the *viejitos* [tender way of saying the elderly, “the little old people”]...one takes care of them, attends to them, is with them, no like here, here it’s different [makes a face of disgust towards “how it is here.”] Here they throw the *viejitos* in a home and that’s it. Not there, one enjoys the *viejitos* – tending to them, giving them their little foods, bathing them, being with them, and they hug you and give you cuddles but...that hurt me so much, I felt really bad about it, because in that moment, I felt guilty because I wanted to be with him, and in that moment I couldn’t...and when I finally made the decision to go, it was too late and he had died [Participant goes on to talk about her closeness with her father and how she was her father’s favorite, as the youngest of nine children].

In the low acculturation group, four participants also shared that they felt like going home to their COO when family in their COO was sick or had died. A woman from Mexico described:

A time when I wanted to leave? Well, look, two things happened to me at the same time, that my mom has diabetes and my sister just found out she has a tumor and they are going to operate in March...I am in between two things, my son [who needs speech therapy] and now my family there. I already told them I will help them financially from here to there....and help them like that because I can’t be with them. Many people tell me, just leave your parents [like forget about them] but maybe these people haven’t lived with their parents and shared in the way that I have...because I grew up since I was little with my parents...I was always the one they asked for stuff from, and when I started to work, everything I made, I gave to them.

Another participant in the low acculturation group felt a strong urge to return home to her COO during Christmas, describing it as a “desperate desire” to return home. She expressed also missing the frequency of large family reunions in her COO. Two participants referred more

generally to having this feeling when missing family and parents left behind. Another woman talked about having the feeling to return when wishing that her kids would grow up seeing their grandparents and other relatives.

***When life gets hard in the U.S.***

This theme emerged in the low acculturation group. One woman from talked about having the urge to go home when she had problems with her husband, while another talked more generally about having the feeling when she felt “sad.” A different participant from talked about having this feeling when she felt that people did not understand her because of not knowing English. A woman from Ecuador said she had just had the feeling “last week,” when she had to take her daughter to the emergency room and she found the doctors to be cold and unhelpful. In her words:

We were in the ER from 10 in the morning to 9 at night, and when we went into the ER they treated us with such bad manners, and one has to wait so long. [Interviewer: what had happened?] I gave my daughter fish and I think one of the bones got stuck in her throat, so she wasn't eating...and I got this deep nostalgia, and I said, ‘that’s it, I want to go back to my country,’ and so my husband said, ‘no,’ and I said, ‘yes, yes I want to go to my country.’ But then when she was better, I was ok. You know, it’s different there [in my COO]. There people have their own pediatrician, and if the doctor says he’ll see you at 4, he will see you at 4. And they are able to go to your home, if needed...but not here, because I called her pediatrician and he said he needed to leave the office...

***When feeling closed-in.***

Again, this was a theme present only in the low acculturation group. Three of the participants mentioned different parts of the environment when asked to describe moments they

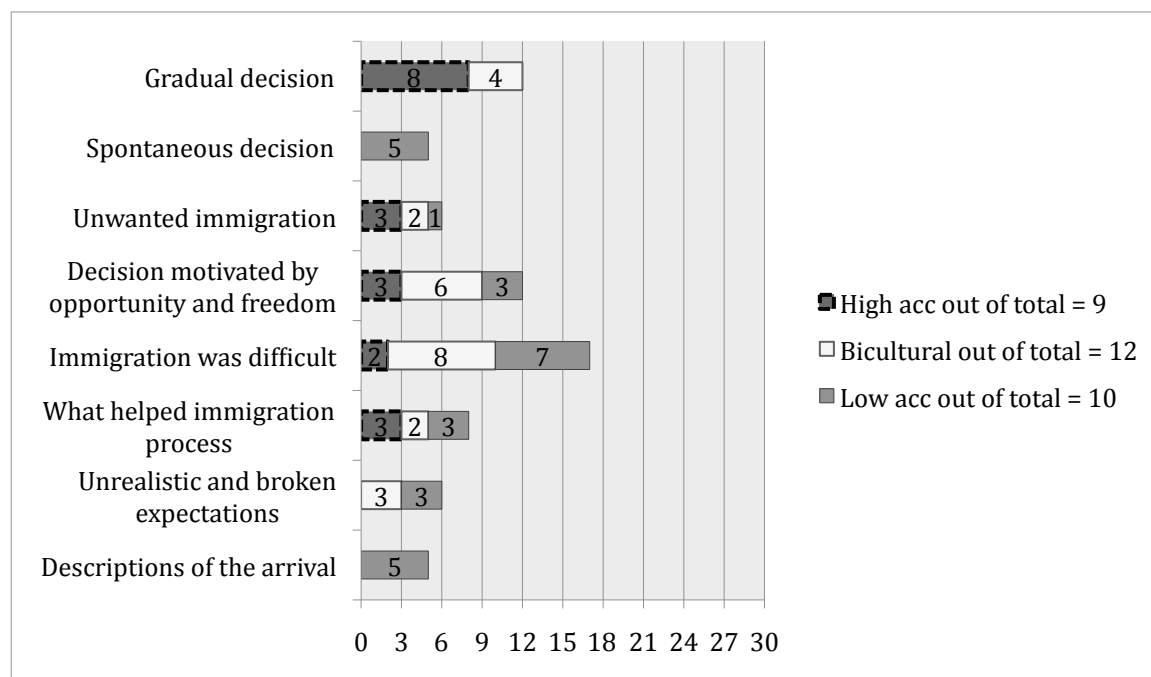
wished to return to their COO. One participant mentioned that she had the urge to go home when she felt “closed-in,” while another described this feeling emerged due to “lack of privacy and physical space.”

### *Coping strategies*

In the low acculturation group, three women, all from Mexico, described two coping strategies used when feeling the urge to return home. Two of them spent time thinking of the better future that the U.S. could offer their children when they felt like leaving. The third talked about calling “home,” her family in her COO, when she felt like wanting to return.

### **Immigration Histories**

In the next portion of the interview, the participants were asked to recount their immigration story. Although there was overlap in themes between acculturation groups, certain nuanced and interesting differences were apparent between the groups. The themes that characterize each acculturation level are presented in this domain (see Figure 4 below).



*Figure 4.* This figure shows the participants’ responses in narrating their immigration stories.

***Decision to immigrate was made gradually.***

The gradual decision to immigrate was a theme in the high acculturation and bicultural groups, however, not in the low acculturation group. In the high acculturation group, the majority of the participants, eight out of the nine, had made the decision to immigrate gradually (see Table 13).

For four of the women in the bicultural group, the decision to come was also planned gradually (see Table 14). A woman from Mexico explained that, “My parents had died so I slowly saved money to come to NY.” Another woman from the D.R. explained that she was living in the D.R., and then, “My husband came here so I came with him, but I returned soon after because I didn’t like it. But when I got home, I found out I was pregnant with twins, so I had them [in the D.R.] and fifteen days later, I came [to the U.S.]”

***Decision to immigrate was spontaneous.***

This was a theme that was present in the low acculturation group, while not in the other two groups (Table 15). Two of the participants reported that the decision to come to the U.S. was made spontaneously, while at least three others described stories that illustrated a decision made spontaneously. A participant described:

We moved here in December of 2000, when my daughter was 3 months old, because she was born there [in Ecuador]. Thank God we came with visas and we came seated, comfortable, and calm [participant smiles]. And [the decision] happened in a moment, from one second to the next. One day my husband came in and told me that he had fixed his papers, and that we have to show up [to immigration in Ecuador]. I had no idea [he had been planning to get the papers]. So we showed up [to immigration] , and they gave us the papers, and we came [to the U.S.] It was so quick, in less than a month everything

had been set up...and the process...what can I tell you? It was my husband who always wanted to come and I always said 'no.' And so I was the last one to find out [of his plans], so we showed up [to immigration], and so we left [to come here]...it was from one day to the next.

***Unwanted immigration – brought by parents.***

This theme was represented in all groups, although more so in the high acculturation and bicultural groups. Three of the women in the high acculturation group mentioned that they were brought to the U.S. by their parents. One participant explained that the decision to move was gradual, but made by her parents:

When I came to the U.S. I was doing excellently at the university [in Santo Domingo], and I lived with my mother and father. They decided they wanted to retire in the U.S., to make a new life for themselves, but they wanted to make the trip in different phases, not come altogether. So they sent me over first, and I asked why and they told me that in order to be able to do this [move], so that I could look for an apartment and make the move little by little. So it really wasn't my own decision but a decision of obedience to my elders [Interviewer: how long ago was this?] 10 years ago...I was like 15 or 16, something like that.

In the bicultural group, two of the women were brought to the U.S. by their parents. One woman from the D.R. expressed, "My mother came first and she did the paper work and then I was raised by my grandparents until I was 17. Then my mother brought me to New York, but I did not want to come because I had my life in the D.R. and I had a newborn daughter." The other participant, also from the D.R., expressed, "I was brought here, I was not asked, I was 11 and my mom got a visa and I came with her, I have gone back two times since."

In the low acculturation group, one participant, from Mexico described that her parents came to the U.S. first and later sent for her sister and her.

***Decision was made motivated by opportunity and freedom in the U.S.***

This theme was present across all groups. In the high acculturation group, one participant in this group said that she imagined everything in the U.S. would be easier. Another woman mentioned that she was motivated to come to the U.S. due to opportunities while another woman was motivated by a wish that her children be born in the U.S. so that they may be eligible for benefits.

Four of the participants in the bicultural category were motivated to immigrate to the U.S. due to the opportunities the country could provide them. One of them, talked about the possibility to find better work opportunities, while another participant mentioned that even though she felt school education was better in her COO, the D.R., there were more economic opportunities in the U.S. A woman from the D.R. described, “My husband got his legal papers first, and I got a visa so I came with him to visit and the we decided to stay because there were better opportunities here.” The 23-year old participant from Mexico expressed her decision to come to the U.S. was partly based on viewing the U.S. as “The Promised Land, where money can get us anywhere and anything we want.” Although she realized later that this was, “totally false.”

Two of the women in the bicultural group had specific personal motivations that drew them to the U.S. One woman from the D.R. was motivated to reunite with her children who had come to the U.S. first., since they were now established financially. A woman from Mexico was motivated to escape family conflict in her COO, while at the same time benefit from a more liberally-thinking environment. She said, “I came because of the rejection that single mothers not

living with their partners receive in Mexico. People reject you, they become distant. My dad was already in this country [the U.S.] and he told me to come when my mother rejected me. I had a good life in Mexico, my dad would send money, and then I got pregnant so I had to cross the border.”

In the low acculturation group, three participants described being motivated by the opportunities they would find in the U.S. as part of their immigration stories. For one of them, a woman from Ecuador, the desire to have a better house and better health care, among other things, motivated her to come. A participant from Mexico explained, “I moved here when I was in high school because my parents could not afford to pay for my school, so I decided to move here to look for better future. I came with my aunt. It was 7 years ago.” The third participant said that she felt motivated to help her family back in Mexico, as well as motivated to find better work opportunities.

***Immigration was difficult.***

In each group, there was at least one participant who spoke about immigration as a difficult experience, however, this was a theme that emerged most commonly in the low acculturation and bicultural groups.

Seven of the women in the low acculturation group described their immigration as being “difficult,” and the reasons were varied. One woman from Mexico talked about not knowing English, and how this made it difficult for her to be able to get a job. A participant from the D.R. shared that she went from having “lots of friends” in her COO to being “completely isolated” in the U.S. This same participant also had a hard time leaving her college education in her COO half-way through. A different participant from the D.R. described that she had to separate from

her husband for the first few years of her immigration, and that immigrating also made her feel like she was “in limbo.” She said the following:

[My husband] moved here just a month after we married because his business did not work in the D.R. I had a hard time when he moved, I felt frustrated because I got married to be together as a family. We were separated for 4 years. Then I had our first child and I got the legal residence, but not my son. it was difficult. I felt like I was in limbo for a while because I kept traveling back and forward. I had my son in DR an my husband here.

One participant from Mexico talked about the difficulty of fearing deportation. A different participant from Mexico felt her immigration was difficult because she, “put [her] own life at risk.” She also talked about being stopped by INS, now USCIS, on one occasion. In her words:

Immigration caught me once, and they made me head back. [Interviewer: you were in the middle of the journey?] Yes, we were about to cross [the border], through Mexicali...and at that point one regrets [the decision to immigrate this way], but we were closer to there than our home, where I am from, it is very far [from the border]. We are from Oaxaca, but I grew up in Morelos, close to Mexico City...and so they caught us, at 6 or 7 in the morning, they asked us questions and then sent us back at around 2 in the afternoon. And then we tried it again, but this time it was more calm, I made it all the way to Los Angeles, and from Los Angeles, I came to New York.

Eight of the women in the bicultural group described immigration as a “difficult experience,” and they presented different reasons for this difficulty. The reasons were varied and are as follows: because of sending the child to the U.S. first, due to not having financial

resources, because of not knowing English, due to having to separate from husband in the first years, feeling like she put her own life at risk, because of mother coming to the U.S. first, because cousin brought her under false pretenses, due to difficulty separating from relatives in COO, and due to fear of deportation. For one of the participants from the D.R., she felt that she had arrived in a different world, which was hard for her. She also talked about feeling fearful of speaking Spanish and not being understood. Another woman described that for her, the change in weather was a big and difficult shift.

In the high acculturation group, only two women talked about their immigration experience as being a difficult experience. They cited lack of financial resources, mother leaving first to come to the U.S., and “separation was hard for relatives left behind as well” as the reasons for this difficulty. One participant said that, “although it was difficult, it was worth it because of good opportunities in the U.S.”

***What made immigration easier.***

This theme was present across all three groups. Three of the participants in the low acculturation group chose to reminisce about different components that made their immigration experience easier. Two of the women, one from the D.R. and one from Ecuador, reported that finding a job made the transition easier for them. The same woman from the D.R. also added that having a child made the transition less difficult. A participant from Mexico talked about social services giving her opportunities that helped have an easier time, as well as having the support of other relatives and friends.

Two women in the bicultural group felt that the transition was made easier thanks to the support of relatives and friends. Another participant expressed that even though it was difficult at

first, it was worth it due to the good opportunities she encountered in the U.S. A third woman said that finding a job made the transition easier for her.

In the high acculturation group, three women spoke about what made immigration easier for them. One participant mentioned that the transition was made easier with “support of other relatives and friends,” while another mentioned the opportunities in the U.S. A third participant said that having legal papers made her immigration experience easier.

***Unrealistic and broken expectations –the reality versus the fantasy of the U.S.***

This interesting theme emerged in the bicultural and low acculturation group. In the bicultural group, three of the women imagined that everything in the U.S. would be “easy.” One said she believed the U.S. to be “The Promised Land,” another believed that money would just “appear” or “grow on trees,” although she realized soon that this was not the case, and a third participant expressed that the reality of America was different than her fantasy of the U.S. One of these three women also imagined the U.S. to be beautiful, full of “beautiful trees, plants, and flowers,” although she then realized this was not the case. Another talked about imagining that “life here was more tranquil, but life here is running around all the time.” One of these participants is in the middle range of the bicultural group. She expressed:

My sister got married [in the U.S.] and they gave her papers, so she asked for my mom, and then my mom came and started asking for us, the kids, one by one. We were nine, so she started three at a time. When my mom would come visit, she always came in December, with bags full of new clothes and one would get so emotional, like, ‘Wow, wow, wow! New clothes!’ So one would always get really happy and think, ‘I’m going to New York,’ because you’d see people coming with so many things, and they came looking so white. My mom would all white, because in the D.R. one gets really tan, so

my mom would come looking all white, and you'd think, 'Wow, that white woman! That American Woman!' It's what everyone would think, and everyone would think, 'That's it, I'm going to New York,' so then I would also think I want to go to New York, you see? Because I wanted to learn the language...or what I mean is...when you are there [in your COO] you think, I want to go for this and for that...and then when you get here, and it's different, you see, because it's harder, it more difficult [Interviewer: than how it is painted]...exactly, than how everyone paints it.

In the low acculturation group, a participant from Mexico described that for her, coming to the U.S. had been a childhood dream. She said, "Since I was a kid I wanted to move to the U.S., but I could not because I did not have the money. Then I came crossing the border." For this participant and two others, the reality of life in the U.S. felt short of what their image and expectations were before coming. Two of the three, one Mexican and one Peruvian, imagined the U.S. would be "beautiful," and full of beautiful trees, plants, and flowers. Instead, the participant from Peru said she was shocked by the fast pace of life, subways, people walking in a rush. She described that life in the U.S. made her feel "suffocated."

Another two, both from Mexico, imagined that everything in the U.S. "would be so easy." One of the Mexican women said she imagined she would find good and sincere friendships as she had had in her COO, as well as she imagined that finding a job would be easy. The other Mexican immigrant expressed:

I imagined a pretty country where everything was easy. [Interviewer: with a lot of money and all that?] Yes, of course, that's what attracts us to here. [Interviewer: and how was the image compared to what you found?] Totally different, in my image everything was

easy, but it is not easy, you have to really go through some hard times here...like for instance, you have to learn a little English in case you need to go out alone.

Although this theme was not present in the high acculturation group, the “illusion” of NY was talked about by one of the women in an interesting and different manner than was presented in the previous two groups. In talking about feeling ambivalent feelings upon migrating to NY, she spoke about balancing in her mind the “illusion of New York” versus “the fear of the unknown.”

### *Descriptions of the arrival.*

This theme was only present in the low acculturation group. Five of the women chose to describe their impressions of their arrival to the U.S. when they narrated their immigration stories. Two participants, one from Mexico and one from Peru, described that they felt like they arrived in a different world. The participant from Mexico felt afraid of the this new world, and stayed indoors for six months due to being afraid of “immigration police.” This same woman reported that it felt like a different world because she did not know anyone in the U.S. These same two participants said they were fearful of speaking Spanish and not being understood. The Mexican woman expressed, “I didn’t know anyone...I didn’t know if anyone spoke any Spanish, or if they only spoke English, I was really timid when I arrived.”

The participant from Peru talked about being amazed by the diversity in cultures and races in the U.S., or as she put it, “It was my first experience of seeing people of all different colors all together.” A third participant, from the D.R., expressed that the weather was a “big transition” for her.

A participant from Mexico expressed that she felt she had to change her “way of being” once in the U.S. In her words, “I wanted to be the way I was in my country, but here [in the

U.S.] you can't because you can't trust people, friends are not honest, and you need to have your own privacy.”

A fifth participant, from Mexico, shared that an unplanned pregnancy interrupted her plans of working in the U.S. She said, “I came here to bring something better for my parents [in my COO] but unfortunately, I didn't think things thought and I got pregnant right away, and then I couldn't do anything, I couldn't work.”

### **Five Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

In the next segment of the interview, the participants were asked to come up with five adjectives that described what it was like to leave their COO. Once the five were collected, the interviewer probed for reasons behind each adjective. The themes are separated into “negative” and “positive” for each acculturation group and are outlined below.

#### ***Leaving as negative.***

Across all groups, the most common adjectives used were “sad,” “painful,” “difficult,” and “nostalgic.” In the high acculturation group, five of the participants mentioned they felt “sad” when leaving their homeland (see Table 16). Two of the women said they felt sad because of having to “leave their life behind.” Other reasons for feeling sad included, “leaving family behind,” and because of having spent childhood in their COO. One woman in this group exhibited a noticeable affect change after saying she felt “sad.” This participant lowered her gaze and looked pensive for some time before continuing to answer. Three of the women in this group used “difficult” as their answer, while two used “hard” as their answer. For example, one participant expressed:

Let me tell you, the life of the immigrant is hard...my dad had already told me this because he is an immigrant, the life of the immigrant is hard...and it was really hard

those three first months. I cried every night, I had anxiety attacks, I had tachycardia because it was a difficult process that I knew I had to face. So yeah, I believe it was really hard...finding work was hard...six months looking for work.

Two of the women in the high acculturation group used the word “painful” to describe the process of leaving. For one of them, it felt painful because she had to leave her college studies half-way through, while the other mentioned being separated from her main caregiver as eliciting painful feelings. A participant from the Dominican Republic said:

Nostalgic, painful, because I didn’t want to come due to my studies...to being accustomed [to life there]...because of my mom, I knew that I wouldn’t get to see her too often...and also because of the language. I had a feeling that I would come here and stay here...like I could feel in my mind and in my heart that it would be a long time that I would stay in the U.S. and it was hard...it was a sacrifice.

Also in the high acculturation group, two women used the adjective “nervous” due to not knowing what to expect when moving to the U.S., and two described the move as “drastic.” Other negative adjectives and phrases that appeared only once within this group, mentioned by different women included, “scary, due to leaving family behind,” “fearful, of the instability of the future,” “lonely,” “emotional,” “insecure,” “terrible,” “depressing,” “nostalgia,” and “felt like a sacrifice.”

In the bicultural group, nine women out of twelve in this group used the adjective “sad” to describe their experience of leaving (see Table 17). Three of them expressed that they felt “sad” due to leaving family behind, and one felt sad because her parents passed away before she immigrated. In the words of one of these participants, from the D.R., “How it was to leave [my COO]? Well, it was very sad, very painful. I left my aunt in D.R., she was the woman who raised

me because my mom was [in the U.S.], I call her *mami*. She began to cry the day before I left. It was so sad.”

Five women in the bicultural group used the word “painful” to describe the experience of leaving, while another five chose the word “difficult” and three used the word “hard.” “Painful” was used due to reasons such as having to separate from children, being separated from main caregivers, and not knowing what life would be like in the new country. The word “difficult” was used to describe the dangers of crossing the border, leaving an established job in COO, the weather differences, due to having made a “fast decision” to move, being separated from children for a while, and due to not knowing English or knowing any people in the U.S.

Two participants used the word “nostalgia,” such as that felt because of missing family left behind. Another two chose “lonely,” and two other participants used the word “frustrating.” For one of these two women, she felt especially frustrated due to feeling “completely dependent” on her husband. Other adjectives and phrases used only once by different participants that carry a negative connotation are as follows: “bad,” “devastating,” “traumatic,” “drastic,” “I felt like I was kidnapped from my home in my COO,” and “everything was negative about leaving my COO.”

Eight of the ten participants in the low acculturation group used the word “sad” to describe leaving their COO (see Table 18). Two of them said they were sad because they “had to leave [their] lives behind,” and another two felt this way because of leaving their families. Other reasons for feeling sad included not being able to travel to COO, food and eating habits are different in the U.S., spent childhood in COO, and difficulty finding honest friends.

Two participants in the low acculturation group shared that they felt “nostalgia,” and one of the two said this feeling came from missing her family left behind. Two more participants felt

“lonely,” while another two felt a feeling of “longing.” The following descriptors were used once by different participants: “scary,” “fearful, of being caught by INS,” “painful, because I was separated from my main caregiver,” “difficult,” “hard, because it felt like I had to start life all over again,” “emotional,” “nervous,” “bad,” “inconsolable,” and “angry, because I was leaving behind school and my friends.”

*Leaving as positive.*

In the high acculturation group, two participants mentioned “happiness” as a feeling about immigrating, and for both it was the case that they were happy to reunite with their significant others, as well as for one of them, with parents and family (see Table 19). One of these women said “happiness” because of the curiosity she felt about life in the U.S. Other positive adjectives mentioned by once by different participants in the high acculturation group were, “illusion,” “optimistic, due to feeling hopeful that there will be progress in the U.S.,” and “good,” because the participant felt she learned to appreciate the importance of spending time with her family, as well as learning to appreciate her own COO values. One woman mentioned that she felt her immigration to be “exciting,” since she was going to experience something new. A different participant said she did not think about the decision to move too much, stating, “I’m telling you, I did not think about it...for me, in my mind, I kept telling myself that I would return...I didn’t think about it, I didn’t think about it in that moment.” For another woman the move felt “important,” while a different woman said that moving was not difficult for her, since her husband found work right away.

Overall, significantly less participants in the bicultural group could balance positive adjectives into their descriptions of leaving their COO (see Table 20). Two women used the word “illusion.” One woman said they felt this way about being reunited with her mother, while

the other participant said she thought she would be able to “achieve anything [she] wanted” in the U.S., as well as she thought she would achieve a higher socio-economic status. Two women used the word, “optimistic” and attributed this feeling to the hopes that they would be able to progress in the U.S. Two participants felt “happy” due to coming to a country with better opportunities, and also for one of them, the happiness of being able to now help her relatives in her COO. Two other participants expressed feeling “excited” about the experience of something new. One participant felt “proud” due to being able to come to the U.S. with a legal immigration status. Two other positive adjectives that were used once each by women in this group were “pleasurable” and “hope, of stability of the future.”

In the low acculturation group, four women used the word “happiness” to describe leaving their COO (see Table 21). Two women said they felt this way because they were going to reunite with their significant others, while another participant felt happy because she would reunite with her family and parents. Another four women felt “optimistic,” and one of them said she was optimistic about the “hopes of being able to progress in the U.S.” Two other women used the descriptor “pleasurable,” and one said it was related to the possibility of progress in the U.S. Three women felt “hope” upon immigrating, and this feeling was also mainly tied to the opportunities they could achieve in the U.S.

Also in the low acculturation group, the following words and phrases were used once each by different participants: “exciting, because I was interested in getting to know the U.S.,” “illusion, of reuniting with family and to establish solid growth in the U.S.,” “search for a better life for my family,” “moving here single and without kids made immigration easier,” “humble, because I never imagined living in the U.S. as an immigrant,” and “grateful to God for the opportunity to come to U.S. along with my immediate family.”

***Balancing both positive and negative.***

This theme only appeared in the bicultural group. Although these phrases and adjectives were used only once each by the women in this acculturation group, it appears significant to mention them (see Table 22). One women expressed that it was “too difficult to put [the experience] into words,” while another participant balanced that it was “on the one hand happy, and on the other hand, sad.” One participant expressed that the move was a “big thing,” because it was a huge change in environment, due to not being able to communicate with doctors well, and because she missed what she left behind.

**Five Adjectives that Describe Life in the U.S.**

In the last interview question looked at in this study, the participants were asked to provide the interviewer with five adjectives that described their new life in the U.S. The interviewer then asked for the reason and meaning behind each adjective, which are separated into positive and negative below.

***Life in U.S. as positive.***

Five of the participants in the high acculturation group used the adjective “good” to describe their life in the U.S. Four of them said it was “good” due to increased financial opportunities, while two mentioned that being reunited with family was good, one mentioned that her child has a better education in the U.S., and one said that she got closer to God in the U.S. by becoming more involved with her church community (Table 23). Three participants used “happiness” to describe their life, two of them mentioning that she was happy to have her children with her, while one was happy with what she accomplished in the U.S., and one talked about the goals that she had in order to succeed in the future. Three women used the adjective

“hope,” indicating that they felt the U.S. is a place where their goals and dreams can come true.

To illustrate, one participant from Ecuador expressed to the interviewer:

[Life here is] very good for now, little by little we are acquiring all of the things that we proposed to ourselves, little by little. [My husband] got his [first] job, then [more recently] a job within his field, then I found the place where my daughter could study [Head Start] so that I could study English, and now I am looking for work. I am not an expert in English but I think of getting a job so that I can continue to practice my English...because I want to find work and get my [architecture] license. So far, everything that we have wanted to get [in this country] we have been given it, so we are a happy family.

Other positive adjectives mentioned once by different participants to describe life in the U.S. for the high acculturation group included, “desire to work,” “desire to give love for family,” “life is more comfortable in contrast to COO,” due to goods being cheaper and in abundance in the U.S., “optimistic,” “fortunate,” “blessed,” “fulfilled, due to having my family with me and because of my relationship with God,” “active in church activities,” and “trying to adapt to life in the U.S.” but feeling like the process of adapting to life in the U.S. has been “easy.”

In the bicultural group, five women in this group described their life in the U.S. as “good” (see Table 24). The reasons for their “good” lives were: more financial opportunities in the U.S., more opportunities to study, child has better education, being reunited with family, having my immediate family here, and feeling adapted to life in the U.S. The word “happiness” was expressed by four participants in the bicultural group, while a fifth participants said that she is “now a little happier.” The word “happy” was used to describe a feeling of what had been accomplished in the U.S. and also having family here with husband and kids. In the words of a

participant from the D.R., “Happy, my life is happy because I have my husband and my little girl, aside from also the happiness of sharing. I share a lot [of moments] with them, we go out...” Three participants chose the word “optimistic,” with one woman pointing to the fact that she is “trying to get educated in the U.S.” and that there are generally more educational opportunities in the U.S. than in her COO, the D.R.

Also in the bicultural group, other phrases, words, and adjectives that were used only once each with a positive connotation included: “life is more comfortable in contrast to COO,” “relieved,” “free,” “satisfied,” “great,” “tranquil,” “stable,” “feel that I have overcome fear of not being understood by others, such as doctors,” “respectful and friendly,” and “would like to continue studies and find a job.”

In the low acculturation group, six of the women described their life in the U.S. by using the word “happiness” (see Table 25). Two of them pointed to the fact that they had been reunited with their husband and children. Three women said “tranquil,” and one of them explained that she felt this way because her husband had a stable job. Two participants felt “excitement,” and one felt this way because she was able to have her first child here. Another two used the phrase, “life in the U.S. is easier,” due to it being easier to find employment than in their COO and also due to more support in the U.S. for children in health and education. Another two also said that, “Life is more comfortable in the U.S. in contrast to COO,” and one of them explained this was the case due to good being cheaper and in more abundance here.”

Also in the low acculturation group, two different participants also used the adjective “good.” This was used because of more financial opportunities in the U.S., better educational opportunities for children, being reunited with family, and because of having immediate family close-by.

Lastly, in the low acculturation group, the following descriptive words and phrases were used once by different participants: “great,” “desire to work,” “motivated to reach self-fulfillment,” “optimistic,” “safe,” “stable,” “acceptable,” “grateful for the opportunities found in this country,” “fearless,” “disciplined,” “making an effort to allow cultural values here to affect mine,” and “adapted, to the weather.”

***Life in U.S. as negative.***

Life in the U.S. conjured up more positive feelings than negative for the high acculturation group, and more negative adjectives were used only once by different participants (see Table 26). These adjectives included “sadness,” because of the economic situation of her family left behind, “frightening,” “anxious and a desire to start working,” “need for a tranquil peace of mind,” due to pace in the U.S. being too fast, “difficult,” “empty,” because life in the U.S. is devoted to working, “depressing,” “impotent,” “nostalgia,” “frustrating,” “lonely,” and “bad.”

In the bicultural group, four participants used the word “difficult” to describe their lives in the U.S. (see Table 27). One woman from the D.R. explained, “Currently, it’s difficult because I see myself with my little daughter, you see, there are three kids that I have, and I have the boy who is 11 years old, the two little ones are home all the time so it’s difficult for me sometimes, like I want to go out alone and walk, and share with my friends, see people, and sometimes I can’t do it, you see?”

Also in the bicultural group, three of the women used the word “sadness” to describe their current U.S. life. Reasons for sadness included feeling enclosed in the apartment, sadness when compared childhood in COO where the participant had more and freer space, because of what was left behind, and not knowing English. This last point made one of the participants from

the D.R. begin to cry, as she talked about feeling impotent due to not being able to communicate in English. A different participant from the D.R. expressed, “I feel sad because of feeling locked up...being locked up in an apartment. I compared my childhood to that of my children, it’s like my own childhood was happier, seeing them locked up depresses me a lot.”

Two bicultural participants used the word “stressful,” one of them indicating that the lack of support of childcare was particularly stressful. One woman from the D.R. explained, “Stressful because I am everything in the house, I have to do everything – attend to the children, take care of them, cook for them, wash up, and they all say, ‘*Mami, mami,*’ all the time, and so who can I call ‘*mami*’? What I mean to say is, I do everything around the house.” Another two women said they felt “lonely,” one of them expressing that work schedules make it difficult to spend more time with her husband, and the other saying that she did not have many friends. Two others said they felt “nostalgia,” one of them, the same participant as just described above, felt nostalgia related to always comparing life in the U.S. and life in her COO, the D.R. She said:

Nostalgia because I am always thinking about Santo Domingo, yes, like I am always comparing and, *ay!* I look at my kids, my 11 year-old is very active, like I used to be, really naughty, so he always wants to go out and do this and that, and I always have to tell him no. And at that age all they want to do is enjoy, so he’ll say things like, ‘*Ay, you don’t love me! You don’t let me go out!*’ *Ay,* there are these fights between him and I, and so sometimes I have to take him places...get the girls ready and take him for a walk, but sometimes it’s hard because then he’ll start screaming...he wants to enjoy what he wants to enjoy, but I also have to take care of the other two girls.

Two bicultural women also described feeling “impotent,” and the reasons each of them felt this way were described as: wishing to work outside of the home, lack of trust of people in

the U.S., and people in the U.S. being generally more individualistic than in COO. The word “depressing” was also used by two subjects, while the following words and phrases with negative connotations were mentioned once each by participants in the bicultural group: “doable life but not fulfilled,” “limited, due to not being able to do everything I wish to do in the U.S.,” “more responsibilities here,” “unstable because of change in schedule and routines and because migration stress has affected my marriage,” “mistrustful,” “insecure at times,” and “incapable of doing certain things.”

Lastly, in the low acculturation group, four participants used the word “sadness” to describe their lives in the U.S. (see Table 28). One of them felt sadness because “one is not in one’s [COO]” and another participant mentioned the economic situation of the family left behind. One participant expressed feeling mixed, “sometimes happy, sometimes sad.” Two participants felt that life in the U.S. was “frightening,” because “one does not know what could happen if you get sick and don’t have help,” as well as because of a feeling of being alone in the U.S. Another two women described feeling “nostalgia,” and attributed this feeling to always comparing life in the U.S. and life in their COO.

The following adjectives and phrases were used once by different participants in the low acculturation group: “worried about a stable future for my kids,” “need for tranquility of mind,” “stressful,” “agitated and fast,” “depressing, when there’s problems at home,” “restless,” “incomplete,” “would be happier if my whole family was here,” “ambivalent about staying in the U.S. sometimes,” “bad, because I’m not studying or have a job and because I feel bad that my husband doesn’t have his relatives here,” “I am here but my mind and my heart are always there,” and “difficult to get used to the fast rhythm of life here.”

### **Case Examples**

The following case examples represent a summary of the themes that emerged within each acculturation group, as well as they provide a textured, closer look into the tendency for idealization and devaluation in the participants. The three women in each acculturation category presented below were selected based on being the most verbose of their group, as well as on their different reasons for leaving their COO, educational backgrounds, and immigration experiences. These examples will be used to further explore the way that level of acculturation, immigration background, and experience all ultimately relate to the tendency for splitting or idealizing and devaluing COO or COR in their narratives, as well as help to highlight other key differences between each of the acculturation groups.

#### **Norma – High Acculturation**

Norma<sup>2</sup> was a 35 year-old woman from Cuba living in an apartment in Harlem with her young daughter, born in the U.S., and her husband, also an immigrant from Cuba. Norma had finished college in Cuba, reported not being associated with a particular religion, as well as she did not have a religious practice.

When asked about what came to her mind when she thought of “home,” Norma responded that only her, “family and that’s it.” When the interviewer pressed for positive and negative associations to “home,” Norma balanced that home is both positive and negative, but then retreated with a smile, saying that she felt home was more positive than not. Her negative associations to home included thinking the way someone in the family may have changed, an accident, or something tragic, such as a divorce.

In response to the question of things that reminded her of her home country, Norma looked up at the interviewer, slightly exasperated, and answered, “I don’t know because

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<sup>2</sup> In each case, the name of the participant has been created by the writer in order to preserve confidentiality.

everything is different, it's like starting from zero, no?" She felt that she remembered everything and nothing in particular at once, and that in moments when she was alone, she could think about her COO. She said that it was not like it was "in the beginning," when she might think of her COO and long for it all the time. To get an answer to this question, the interviewer pressed her on three occasions, asking if holidays reminded her of her COO, certain situations, family or foods, however, Norma referenced that she felt different now than in the beginning and that she had been out of her country for what for her felt like a long time, seven years. Finally, after being pressed by the interviewer for the third time, she answered that she thought of home when she talked to her family in Cuba on the phone. However, she asserted that she mainly tried not to think about things such as these, things that make her sad. She shook her head "no" as she provided her answer, as if she had been asked to think about something she was working hard not to ponder on.

Also when asked if she had ever thought of returning to Cuba, she quickly answered, "No," as she shook her head to emphasize her point. She once again mentioned a time "in the beginning" when she had doubts about this new country, having recently immigrated, but she emphasized that she had now "adapted quite a lot" to life in the U.S., as well as she felt she did not want her daughter to have to live in a place that was different from where she was born.

Norma's immigration story was different than the other participants in that she did not immigrate straight to the U.S. from Cuba. In her words, her decision to immigrate to the U.S. entailed the following trajectory:

It was pretty difficult [living in Cuba] and when I was young, with the situation in Cuba, I wanted my parents to leave the country. My parents would not decide either way, and things were getting worse and worse each day. Well, then I got married, no, first I

finished my studies, then I got married, and I could not see a future for me, and not for raising a child either. I tried to put up with [Cuba] for quite a while but then in 1996 we decided to leave...for me it was not hard because my father is Italian so we could get citizenship there. So we lived [in Italy] for three years and a half. But I think in general, for all Cubans it's really quite hard [to be able to leave Cuba].

After living in Italy for three and a half years, she came to the U.S. on a European Union "visa-free" status for three months. She expressed that her husband was more keen than she was to come to the U.S., but that she chose to support him in this decision since, "if it was good for him, it was good for me too." Overall, she had been out of Cuba for seven years at the time of interview, and in the U.S. for four and a half years.

When asked to provide five adjectives that described her experience of leaving her COO, Norma primarily chose the word "hard," and explained that she had anxiety, tachycardia, and crying spells in the beginning. She expressed that although they had some family in Italy, they were of different, "mixed" culture, and she found them difficult to relate. She narrated that immigrating to the U.S. was a more positive experience due to the kinds of benefits and opportunities provided for immigrants in the U.S. Norma came the U.S. while pregnant, and she said she was provided with "everything" she needed, which she did not feel had been the case in Italy. Other adjectives included, "something quick, that I did not think about," as she added:

I had made up my mind that I wanted to [immigrate] a long time ago, that I could not stand [Cuba]. My husband was already being persecuted politically, and he was threatened to be put in jail – to rot in jail, if he did not leave the country. We were scared because the jails in Cuba are not easy. I thought that I would leave with or without him,

even if my marriage had to end, I would have left. But we said, let's go, and if we do well, let's stay.

Looking slightly sad, she talked about the difficulty in leaving her parents, but said she had been encouraged by them to follow the path she needed to follow as a grown woman. She reconciled with this sad feeling by adding that she felt she could actually help them more by being in the U.S. than in Cuba. Lastly, she talked about the anxiety she felt on her way to Europe, during the longest flight of her life until that point, an eight hour flight. She said, "I was sweating, everyone was cold, but I was hot...I did not know what was waiting for me on the other side...it was so difficult, I was anxious...I was going to be greeted by people I had never seen before, it was so difficult, pretty difficult."

In thinking of five adjectives that described her life in the U.S., Norma was not able to narrow her experience into specific adjectives, but initially talked about the difficulty of learning English. She expressed, "I don't know why it's so difficult for me, because I would say that I am pretty adapted [to the U.S.], I think so, I mean, I am trying to absorb American culture each day, because I am going to live here, I am not going to live in Cuba and I don't want to continue to think that I am still in Cuba." She spoke about arriving to the U.S. pregnant, with "high hormones," and suddenly finding herself in the middle of Manhattan, on Broadway, meeting strangers once again, confronting her second immigration. She added:

The language was the most difficult part for me, not being able to understand other people when I went out, that depressed me so much, so I decided, this really can't be, language can't be a *barrera* (barrier, obstacle) for me, and little by little I am trying to surpass that *barrera*...It's not a *barrera*, it's a *muralla* (wall). But if you don't learn the language, it doesn't matter whether you were a scientist or a brilliant person in your

country, you are stupid here, you are worthless without knowing the language here...you can't find work, you are not worth anything.

Although Norma talked about feeling that her life now is better than in Cuba and than in Italy, she expressed again that communication is the most important thing – the feeling that others understand you, and that you understand others – that being able to be fluent is fundamental. She talked about her neighborhood being mainly Spanish-speaking, so that she had to push herself to watch English-speaking television, as well as to go out with English-speaking friends on weekends, and reading in English, in order to continue practicing. Norma felt it would have been easier for her to learn Italian than English, but that overall she had “surpassed” a lot by continuing to practice English.

The interviewer asked Norma whether her husband and her had an idea of what the U.S. would be like – if they knew what to expect or what they had imagined about life in the U.S. Norma expressed that she understood before coming that they would have to “fight” to learn the language, but that they always had a sense that they would be better off in the U.S. than Cuba or Italy, and Norma asserted that this had been true for them. Furthermore, she had this to say, “I imagined it would be difficult. Above all, in the beginning it was going to be difficult – the adaptation, the nostalgia, all the different barriers that were there...all the changes that were implicated.” The interviewer pressed by wondering if they had fantasies or dreams of what life in the U.S. would be like. Norma talked about watching American movies where places with green grass and beautiful sceneries were represented, which made America seem like a dream to her. However, she explained that she knew that New York would not be like this, but rather parts of America, such as Los Angeles. She tells the interviewer, “I loved those films, and I always

thought I'd like to live that way, I still have that idea – to leave New York, because I don't see myself living in a building my whole life.”

### **Carmen – Bicultural, Tending Low**

Carmen was a 23 year old Mexican immigrant who had been in the U.S. for five years at the time of interview. A practicing Catholic, Carmen was not a U.S. citizen, had some high school education, and lived together with her partner and 5 year-old son in a Harlem apartment.

When asked by the interviewer what came to her mind when she thought of “home,” Carmen replied:

That everything is well – that is the first thing that comes to mind. [Interviewer: and what does home mean, then?] Well, it depends, for me a home means that the family is united, morally and psychologically well, you know, because sometimes there can be problems with money, etc., and all other problems...if everything was better, I would call it a home, the family united.” The interviewer then asked whom she considered as forming part of her family, and Carmen said, “Well, it can be my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, but my family is my father and my brothers, my son, and my husband, and now my brother-in-law and my nephew – we are the ones living here [in the U.S.] all together...and from there, well, in the case that we don't live with my grandparents, who live in Mexico, and my sister, all of whom live in Mexico.

When the interviewer asked Carmen what in her life in the U.S. brought her memories of her COO, she talked about the tranquility she felt in Mexico. In her words, “The tranquility of not thinking about paying rent, that I don't have to pay a bill here and there, well, one works over there, but there is a tranquility that one feels there...going out in the streets, it's not the same as here, above all there is tranquility. I come from a town, a town far away from the city.” Carmen

went on to say that thinking of anything beautiful reminded her of Mexico, where she felt everything was beautiful. But after making this statement, she clarified that there were also things that one did not want to remember, however, she said that she chose to think about the nice things that happened back in her COO, and of living with positivity. The interviewer wondered if Carmen had feelings of wanting to return home, to which she answered:

The truth is that no, maybe because of the inst...[about to say “instability” but stops herself] because of the life that one carries there, one part of it is ignorance. In the case that I am a single mother. I got pregnant in my country and people there are a bit more ignorant to what it means to be a single mother, and single mothers are a bit rejected and life there for single mothers is different...if I had stayed in Mexico with my child it would have been very different – the rejection of my family, the rejection of people, and the help that one does not receive there.

Carmen then talked about all the benefits her son received in the U.S. due to being born here, and said, “Above all health insurance. Here, if my son gets sick, I can get him help. There, if he’s very sick and we have no money to treat him, they won’t treat him...and the frustration of having a sick child and not be able to do something...that is the reason why I wouldn’t like to return to my country.”

The interviewer followed up with wondering if Carmen had ever had the feeling of wanting to return to her country. Carmen replied that she had always said that she will go back, but only for a few vacation days, not to live there. She reinforced the feeling that her son has more opportunities in the U.S., and if he had the “luck” of being born in this country, “I will not take him to live in Mexico...for what?” The interviewer pressed Carmen and asked her what had been going on with her when she had the feeling of going back to her COO. Carmen replied, “To

go back to live to *that* country...to the country or my home town...I have not had that feeling yet...the great desire to go back...no...when my son is the right age, maybe I will take him to meet my family, but to stay there, no, no...I have not arrived at that point in life.”

When asked about her immigration story, Carmen said she came five years ago but had originally wanted to come many years before, to what she imagined was, “the promised land...the land that we picture in our imagination, where money takes us everywhere,” clarifying that now she realized, “is totally false.” Carmen then spoke about the rejection she received in Mexico when she found out she would be a single mother, especially from her own mother. Carmen said she had a “good life” in Mexico until she became pregnant. Since her father was already in the U.S., he invited her to join him. Carmen was six months pregnant and took a flight to Sonora, the closest city to her town, then traveled through Nogales to cross the border to the U.S. She told herself that if immigration caught her, she would just return home. In her words, “I was six months pregnant, I walked a lot, [Interviewer: very risky], risky, yes, but one has that confidence. I walked a lot through the desert...I was with three girls from my town and I met other people as well...” Carmen then begins to narrate what she was thinking while walking, as if she was thinking it at the time of interview. In her narration, “here” and “there,” COO or the U.S., are confused, making it sometimes hard to discern which country she is referring to. She said:

A good life but maybe something better to live there...because there you go to work with the baby strapped to your back...and without the support of my mom and the rejection of my family, my son sometimes even having to go without shoes...but I am doing well, I have opportunities...and walking and walking and I better just keep on walking...I went in through Texas, then went to Los Angeles, and then took a plane to here [Interviewer:

you have so much courage] You could say courage...or how we say it – *no tener de otra*, not having another option.

When asked to mention five adjectives of what it was like to leave her COO, Carmen does not describe any feelings associated with leaving her COO, and going straight to her story of crossing the border and of arrival in the U.S. Immediately after the question was asked, Carmen replied that she did not regret leaving her country, and continued:

Maybe I'm not doing as well as many people would like...but I feel better here  
 [Interviewer: so it was a relief?] yes, you could say that, [Interviewer: but many people feel that it is a sacrifice, or frustrating...] I guess you could say that it was difficult, for example, to walk and to think about the dangers I could have faced and had to face...and being pregnant.

Carmen then told a story from crossing the border, where people had to suddenly hide, one on top of the other, "I was almost underneath 30 people but luckily I found another way." Carmen continued by indicating that arriving in the U.S. was a little frustrating and difficult for her, primarily due to the language, not knowing how to use the subways – and having to get information for everything. She expressed:

I was six months pregnant and I had to go to the clinic and my dad was the only one helping me...he said, I'll take you once and then you have to do it alone. I had lots of appointments and missed the train so many times...and that's how I learned...I didn't know anyone and had to force myself to learn. That's how I learned.

Carmen was then asked to use five adjectives to describe her life in the U.S. She talked about feeling good and having at the time of interview, the opportunity to study English and take computer classes, even though she was not working. She said also, "I feel good because I feel

that my son has education, and me too, and I feel that I will have a better job...I feel more calm and relaxed...not so...overburdened by what will people think in a small town...I am in a free country and people won't be pointing at me."

### **Maria – Low Acculturation**

Maria was a 26 year-old non-U.S.-citizen immigrant from Mexico. She had been in the U.S. for nine years at the time of interview, and was living together with her partner and one child in Harlem. Maria was a non-practicing Catholic with some high school education.

When asked what came to her mind when she thought of "home," Maria wondered whether she should talk about the one "here" or her home in her country. The interviewer told her to begin wherever she wanted, and Maria said, with a smile, "Well, then, in my country [laughs and smiles as she begins to reminisce] Mexico is my home. I would like to be able to be in Mexico...in my home...it makes me feel nostalgic and sad to think of home...because I would like to be there." Maria also described images that came to her mind, and said, "The green trees, the sun, there is so much sun." The interviewer wondered if anything negative came to her mind about home, and Maria said, "No, [Interviewer: so everything is positive?] Yes, everything." The interviewer wondered how she considered her home in the U.S. Maria described that everything in the U.S. is "totally different" because, "there, it is free, big fields, that is, one has more freedom, and here it's like living like prisoners, in only one room, without fields or anything. Here, one is locked up." The interviewer asked Maria to compare the two countries and she replied that the two are too different, "There it's more free, but here we are seeing that we have more financial opportunities because there is no work there [in Mexico]...free but with more poverty." The interviewer wondered if Maria could see anything negative about life in the U.S., and she replied, "No, there is basically nothing negative...the main difference is that one can

communicate better [in Mexico]...here, if one needs something and doesn't speak English, you can't communicate."

When thinking of what reminds her of Mexico, Maria mentioned that above all, the holiday festivities, since New Year's and Christmas are the same in both countries. She also mentions food, stating that she always cooks Mexican food. In terms of times when she wished to return to her COO, Maria loudly and quickly stated, "Yes. There are moments when I remember other times...like when they tell me my family is sick, I want to run and go there...and the only thing I do is talk on the phone, listen to the voice. And then I feel better."

When asked about her immigration journey, Maria said:

I came illegally. When I came, it was easier than now, there was less monitoring [in the border]. When I arrived, I didn't leave the house for six months. I felt like I had arrived in a different world. I didn't know anybody, I didn't know if anyone spoke Spanish...they only spoke English. I was very shy."

The interviewer wondered what Maria had imagined the U.S. would be like before coming, to which she answered,

I imagined a beautiful country where everything is easy...with lots of money. When I compare this to how it is now, it is totally different...one has this image like everything is going to be easy, but it is not easy. It is hard here. [Interviewer: for example?] You have to understand a bit of English in order to go out alone.

The interviewer wondered if there were any positive qualities to living in the U.S. Maria talked about there being more opportunities in the U.S., although she felt she had not been able to take advantage of them yet. She said, "You have to get a job, but the jobs don't pay a lot and you have to pay rent. One comes with the idea that you can build your own house and all that..."

When asked for five adjectives to describe leaving Mexico, Maria said it was sad and then began to smile, indicating that she could not think of anything else. The interviewer helped her by asking for positive or negative words, and then Maria added, “It was sad but at the same time a pleasure because one thinks that one will succeed and get ahead in the U.S...that’s all I remember.”

In describing her life in the U.S. with five adjectives, Maria said, “Also, there are sad moments...moments of happiness...and nothing else. Sadness sometimes because one is not in one’s own country and happiness because not everything is all bad here...there are some good things that give you happiness...and I don’t know what else.”

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Findings

This section explores the findings in the present study, which set out to be a rich and in-depth exploration of Latina immigrants' descriptions of their country of origin and country of residence as it relates to acculturation level. The study also placed a special focus on the tendency for idealization and devaluation in the narrative of the women. Based on psychoanalytic concepts on the identity reformation of the immigrant (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984; Mirsky, 1991; Akhtar, 1995, 1999), it was posited that lower levels of acculturation would be associated with increased idealization and devaluation, or splitting, in the narrative of the participants of this study. An integrated immigrant identity that is able to hold the "good" and "bad" of both the COO and country of residence (COR) is associated with higher levels of mental health in immigrant populations ((Berry, 1997, 1988; Torres, 2009).

This study built on the CUNY-IRB approved study "Family Support from Immigration to Work" that looked at the challenges and coping skills in the transition from immigration to work. Data in this study included an extensive video-taped interview in Spanish that probed for positive and negative associations to the participants' home country and country of residence, as well as demographic and acculturation questionnaires. To explore the women's complex relationship between COO, COR, and acculturation, the video narratives of the 31 participants were translated and coded, and major themes were extrapolated for each acculturation group. Through the use of purposive sampling, this researcher also transcribed and translated nine interviews, three from each acculturation category, in order to further explore the study's

question of splitting in the narrative. Three of these translated transcripts were included in the results as case summaries.

While it was found in this study that lower levels of acculturation were associated with increased splitting in their descriptions of COO and/or COR, it was also found that splitting may serve an adaptive purpose for the immigrant in the early stages of acculturation, which is consistent with current research (Walsh and Shulman, 2012). Across the three acculturation groups, the findings converged around four main themes, which substantiate the psychoanalytic literature on the identity reformation of the immigrant, and further our understanding of idealization and devaluation in the Latino immigrant narrative. The main themes discussed below are location of home, reasons for leaving the COO, the wish to return to the COO, and expectations before immigrating. The clinical and policy implications, limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research are also addressed.

### **Location of Home**

In the interview, the question that pulled for the women's definition of "home" brought out particular differences and similarities among the acculturation groups. Family was generally the first definition provided by all groups, while there were slight differences between groups on where their families were located, in COO or COR or both. Another interesting finding was the placement of home at either the COO or the COR, depending on acculturation level. Within this, it was especially interesting to note the polarizing comparisons between COO and COR elicited for the lower acculturated. Although these findings were expected based on the literature on immigrants (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984; Mirsky, 1991; Akhtar, 1995, 1999), this study was the first of its kind to provide qualitative proof for these phenomenon.

#### ***The family.***

As previously mentioned, an important and significant finding across all three groups was the similar placement of “home” in their “family.” Family could be defined as those left behind in the COO or those in the U.S., and this tended to alternate depending on the level of acculturation. For those in the low acculturation group, there was a higher tendency to refer to their families back home in the COO, while those of higher acculturation mainly referred to their families in the U.S., the new families they had formed. This finding is new but not surprising when the traditional values of Latinos are taken into consideration.

A characteristic of Latino culture that is seen as distinct from, for instance, the dominant culture of the United States, is that Latinos define themselves by family membership. Interdependence is valued over individual independence and autonomy (Triandis, 1994 in Cofresi, 2002), and family is the most important social unit for Latinos (Falicov, 1998). This is a concept that is known as *familismo* (Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006), and is defined by the placement of the family’s needs over one’s own needs. The strong family ties inherent in *familismo* have been shown to have a protective quality for immigrant family members, as well as with increased psychological and educational strength and decreased aggression and depression in children of Latino families (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huessman, 1996).

This typical trait in Latino culture appears to be sustained, and what is more, amplified by immigration. Regardless of acculturation group, the findings show that most of the women in this study were motivated by the desire to give their children better educational and financial opportunities. Although all of them had a difficult, even depressing and anxiety-provoking transition from their COO to the U.S., the simple thought that it had all been “worth it” in order to provide for their children, was one of the biggest reported coping thoughts and an important source of strength through acculturation groups. This finding is consistent with current research,

which shows that promoting family interaction is relevant for child social competence and well-being, as well as it being of great importance for immigrant Latino families (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012).

***COO, COR, or both.***

When “home” was not placed in the family in the COO or the COR, its placement was found to be distinct across acculturation levels, as well as to bring up split descriptions in less acculturated participants. For the low acculturation group, home was mostly placed in the COO, and most participants chose to begin talking about their COO in polarizing ways when asked to describe their meaning of home. This was consistent with the participants in the study being within Akhtar’s (1999) concept of the first track of immigrant identity reformation – “from love or hate to ambivalence.” In this psychic position, the immigrant needs to synthesize “all-good” and “all-bad” representations of the COO and the COR, which involve alternate idealizations and devaluations, until the representations can be brought together to form whole objects.

As can be especially observed in the low acculturation case study of Maria, and for the low acculturation group in general, the description of home tended to bring up a sense of polarity, where the COO was idealized – sunny, warm, and full of beauty, while the COR felt like a prison, closed-in, and even dangerous. For this group, it appeared that the original reasons for leaving their COO could not even be accessed or recalled in that moment of the interview when home was described. The description of the COO could be so flowery and “all good” as to make one wonder why the COO was left at all in the first place.

It can be argued that there may be a reality-based component to the comparison between COO and COR – coming from a small town in Mexico where green grass and sun are abundant can sharply contrast with the vast concrete and high buildings of New York City. However, the

data showed that the ability to focus beyond the feeling of being “closed-in” was correlated with increased adaptability and a higher level of acculturation. The participants in the high acculturation group had come to terms with smaller spaces and the cold New York weather, finding parks to play in, or getting accustomed to the snow. For instance, this quote from a high acculturation participant from Ecuador is revisited from the results section:

I had green areas, gardens [in my COO], here I am in a small apartment...but really, the phase of thinking about those things, I have already passed it. When I first arrived to this country, I suffered thinking about those things. I felt very *encerrada* [trapped, closed-in] and I felt that the apartment was not big. But there are so many parks here, if one lives in a building, there are many parks [to go to]...so that phase, I have passed it.

The bicultural group was split in their responses, finding their “home” in both the COR and COO, or in one or the other. The mixed nature of this group may indicate a “working through” of the feelings of loss of the homeland and re-attachment to the new land (Akhtar, 1995). It should be noted also that the majority of the women in the bicultural group were from the Dominican Republic and appeared to have a more fluid ability to travel back and forth between the two countries – either due to their immigration situation (i.e. having citizenship) or due to this culture’s particular relationship with the U.S., where there is a more permeable relationship between the two countries (Gramuck & Pessar, 1991). As Akhtar points out (1995, p. 1053), “those who can easily and frequently visit their countries of origin suffer less than those who are barred from such ‘emotional refueling.’”

Along these lines, it should be noted that no participant in the low acculturation group had U.S. citizenship. Although the sample of this study is small, it is an interesting finding and brings up the question of the possible effects of possessing citizenship on the acculturation of

Latinos. This study indicates that citizenship may affect the sense of belonging, a phenomenon which is not currently looked at in the research. Although the mourning and adaptation involved in the acculturation process takes time for all immigrants, those with citizenship may have a stronger sense of belonging, as well as a capacity for work and benefits that are not available to the undocumented.

Interestingly, the high acculturation group tended to place their “home” in the COR. For two of these women, the placement of “home” in the COR appeared to have to do with length of time living in the U.S. – one of them had immigrated at three months of age. However, length of time living in the U.S. was not generally or necessarily associated with acculturation level in the sample in this study. As the case examples show, Maria from the low group had been in the U.S. for 9 years, while Norma from the high group had been out of Cuba for 7 years, with two of those years spent in Italy. Carmen had only been in the U.S. for 5 years, and was already showing strong signs of acculturation. For some, the urge to acculturate was stronger than others, which leads into the next main theme that was found.

### **Reasons for Leaving**

The findings show that a large part of the sample – over one third – across all immigration groups, had left their countries for search of opportunity and greater freedoms. This is consistent with research on Latinos, which shows that the search for economic opportunities is the main reason for leaving their COO (Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas, & Spitznagel, 2007).

Interestingly, gradual decision making tended to be associated with the high acculturation and bicultural groups, whereas spontaneous decisions to immigrate were associated with the low acculturation group. This was a new finding that has not been explored in previous studies.

In the high acculturation group, the tendency was for women to have many months, sometimes even years, of planning to move to the U.S. Many of them traveled back and forth between COO and COR until finally settling down in the U.S. In the bicultural group, one of the women from the D.R., as was the case with a few of the participants in this group, had a parent who lived in N.Y. and came to visit her in the D.R. every year, bringing goods and gifts from the new country. Her concepts and decision to immigrate were made gradually. In the low acculturation group, immigration had been either sprung on them, like one participant from Ecuador who was surprised with the news by her husband, or they had decided to immigrate suddenly due to economic issues. Akhtar (1995, p. 1053) writes that the time available to prepare oneself to leave is essential in considering the adaptation outcome, since “a sudden departure precludes anticipatory mourning and might complicate subsequent adaptation.”

However, the lack of choice in immigrating, such as in unwanted immigration (i.e. brought by parents), was not necessarily related to acculturation level. Equally in all groups, the women had experienced immigrations that were decided for them, and this did not appear to have an effect on their motivation to acculturate (i.e. less motivation if it was an unwanted immigration) or on how acculturated they ultimately were. Based on the literature one might expect that unwanted migrations would lead to lower levels of acculturation, yet, at least for the sample in this study, this was not found to be the case. In this study, however, motivation to acculturate was associated with acculturation level, but new research shows that this may not always be healthy acculturation (Walsh & Shulman, 2012), which leads to the section below.

***Anger and conflictive feelings affecting healthy mourning of the COO.***

The present study shows that the experience of mourning the COO, a part of the acculturation process (Akhtar, 1995), may be affected by conflictive or angry feelings towards

the homeland. Although this may in what appears as high levels of acculturation and a motivation in the individual to acculturate swiftly in the individual, new research argues that this may be superficial acculturation that has not been resolved to its totality, and may cause later psychopathology in the immigrant, if not properly processed (Walsh & Shulman, 2012).

The case examples of Norma and Carmen are especially interesting in that they represent two women from the sample who have left their countries due to perceived community rejection, family conflict, or political exile. For Norma, her conflictive relationship to Cuba, where her husband had been persecuted and threatened, appeared to propel her into wanting to attach to the U.S. For Carmen, the rejection she felt from her mother and the people in her community as a single mother made her strongly desire the freedom of thought and support as a single mother she received in the U.S. We see in both of these women an eager drive to put away or put behind their love and attachment to their COR.

Although this may appear on face-value as a healthy reaction, potentially indicating more adaptability, current research also shows that their histories place them at risk for what may be “integration” or “resolution” that is “superficial resolution” – one that covers up “inverted splits and a lack of nostalgia or precocious resolution” (Walsh & Shulman, 2012). The thinking here is that those who try to resolve the splits quickly might be more concerned with warding off affects and protecting themselves from experiencing loss. This finding is also akin to Akhtar’s (1999) concept of “counterphobic assimilation,” where the immigrant completely renounces the COO culture. This appeared to be more the case with Norma, who had left Cuba. In her narrative, when asked if she ever had the feeling of wishing to return to her COO, she quickly answered “no,” and had to be repeatedly pressed by the interviewer for an answer. Her difficulty in

expressing nostalgia or mourning for her COO may indicate that she has psychically fled from these feelings, which may be the case with those who have left in exile.

In her paper on the development of her own immigrant identity as a Cuban, Shapiro (1996) writes about her parents' anger at the country and their decision to not go back to visit after moving to the U.S. Shapiro (1996), who was eight years old when she immigrated, explains that her parents' unresolved relationship to Cuba complicated her ability to form a hybrid identity, which she feels did not fully form until she visited Cuba as an adult. For the Cuban immigrant, although her urge to acculturate may result in certain progress in the COR, such as motivating herself to learn English and to "fit in," it may also mask similar unresolved feelings as those felt by Shapiro's parents (Ibid, 1996).

In the case of the bicultural case summary, Carmen, although her disappointment and feeling of personal rejection could be detected in her narrative, she was more willing to make some amends with Mexico, and less defensive about answering. Alternatively, then, Carmen's drive to attach could be understood as a healthy mourning. Akhtar (1995) posits that if a "good-enough holding environment" can be found in the new country, this may provide the immigrant the ideal platform for mourning the COO, so that psychological advance is feasible. This is an area that requires further research and will be discussed later in this section.

### **The Wish to Return to the COO**

The present study showed an interesting psychological progression through the groups related to when the feeling of wanting to return to the COO arises. This was an important finding that helps substantiate the phenomenon of splitting in the formation of identity as is theorized in the psychoanalytic literature (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984; Akhtar, 1995, 1999; Mirsky, 1991). The low acculturation group appeared to be faced with this feeling "currently," at the moment of

interview, while it was more resolved and an occurrence of the past for the more acculturated women.

In a sense, when a difficult moment arose for the low acculturation group, it became more evident that the roots into the new country had not been replanted, and what grew was a tendency wish to flee to the “mother land,” and to imagine that things would be better in the COO. The COO was then idealized as the ultimate holding environment, a “paradise” of sorts where nothing could go wrong, while the COR became hostile and “all bad.” This would indicate that the women in the low acculturation group are in the first psychic phase in the journey towards integration of an immigrant identity, mentioned earlier in this section, “from love or hate to ambivalence” (Akhtar, 1995).

As seen previously in the literature review, Akhtar (1995) writes about this process as related to Mahler’s (1975) rapprochement subphase of the toddler and Blos (1967) and Kramer’s (1980) concept of the “transiently regressed adolescent.” Regression, and in this case splitting, becomes the predominant way that the immigrant can deal with the drastic change in the external environment, as well as with what Grinberg and Grinberg (1989, cited in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1057) call the initial “disorienting anxieties.” Akhtar writes that even though there is splitting, other developmentally higher level conflicts may be seen as well. He quotes Falk from 1974 (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1058), who writes that one country, usually the COO, becomes the representation of the mother, while the other represents the father. In the case of what was found with the lower acculturated women in this study, it seems that in the moment of stress, anxiety, or loss, the instinct is to flee and return to “mother,” which has been idealized. As is the case with the rapprochement phase of the infant, this process appears to have an adaptive quality. With enough

of these experiences or “practice” for the immigrant, she is able to then move to higher levels of integration.

One of the participants in the low acculturation group, from Ecuador, recounted a memory from just a few days before the interview, when she had to take her daughter to the E.R. From her narrative, it is clear that this was an especially difficult time for her – she felt especially far away from her family, and even more of a “stranger in a strange land.” She also imagined and asserted that the same situation would have had an easier and faster resolution in her home country. As Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) point out, the immigrant must have a series of hard experiences in the COR, like the woman from Ecuador, that allow her to productively mourn the home country. With time and with many of these experiences, however frustrating, the COO and the past ceases to be a “lost paradise” were the immigrant constantly wishes to return. At this time, mourning has been worked through and integration can be facilitated.

A more “worked through” example of this can be seen in the case example of the bicultural participant, Carmen. Due to her pregnancy and having few supports in the U.S., she described having to ride the subways and go to the hospital on her own upon first arriving. She expressed that even though this was frustrating for her, this helped her be able to know her way around and feel more grounded in the new country.

In the case of the high acculturation group, the feeling of wanting to return home when something was difficult or did not go their way was something “of the past.” In fact, for at least three of the participants in this group, the question prompted them to include the phrase, “I have adapted,” in their answer. This interesting finding indicated that “the urge to return” comprises a part of an earlier point in the developmental course of identity synthesis for the immigrant. In line with Akhtar’s (1995) use of the language of early development to describe this

developmental progress, these immigrants are closer to being or have individuated. In Akhtar's words (1995), these immigrants are closer to arriving at the "third individuation." In the later phases of acculturation, Akhtar (1995, p. 1065) writes that:

"With progressive deidealization of lost objects, however, meaningful living in the present becomes possible. This does not imply a total renunciation of past objects, only of their hypercathexis. Indeed, continued updating and an ongoing psychic dialogue with the past are not only inevitable but necessary for healthy psychic functioning. However, in such instance, past and future do not replace today. They enrich it."

Hence, in those with higher levels of acculturation did not have the experience of wishing to go back home, and appear to be in a more processed and integrated psychic space, where comfort can be found in the new land as well. As Akhtar (1995) originally theorized occurs with increased acculturation, to take this point further, these same participants also appeared to be more future-oriented, which was also a finding particular to this study. The more acculturated participants talked about their motivation to learn English, and more generally appeared to "take in" the American culture. This finding, which was unexpected in this study, has important clinical implications, since it shows that with a stronger sense of adaptation, the immigrant Latina's capacity for future orientation, planning, and hope increases in the COR.

### **Expectations before Immigration**

One essential difference between the high and the low acculturation group was the kind of expectations they each held in mind before leaving for the U.S. For those in the high acculturation group, they described a strong sense of what New York would be like, as well as narrated a realistic pre-immigration understanding of the challenges to expect as an immigrant.

Many of them said they knew it would be hard, and that factors such as learning a new language or seeing difficult economic times would be burdens to face.

The phenomenon found in this study is in line with one other research study that has looked at the concept of “violated expectations” as leading to increased acculturative stress in U.S. Hispanic immigrants (Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer, 2009). The present study also contributes to this body of knowledge, however, this is an area where more research and policy work is necessary, as is discussed further below. Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer’s (2009) study showed that those who perceived life in the U.S. to be less satisfying than what they had expected experienced more acculturative stress, while those who thought of their lives as more satisfying than they imagined had less acculturative stress.

In the bicultural and low acculturation groups, there was a different and significant trend. For these participants, they held a pre-immigration perception of the U.S. that was hyper-idealized and unrealistic. Many of them described a “promised land” where money was easily obtained. For one Dominican woman from the bicultural group described in the results section, this fantasy was created early on by her mother, who would come once a year so “white” from being in New York with a suit-case full of gifts. From the age of nine, this participant remembers thinking, “Wow, I’m going to New York.” It was clear that her mother never explained the hardships that she might face upon arrival. Like this woman, who reported dropping out of high school due to “culture shock,” and like many others similar to her in this study, the acculturative stress upon arrival appeared to be significantly greater than if they had known what to expect.

Negy, Schwartz, and Reig-Ferrer (2009) are careful not to overstate the role of “violated expectations,” indicating that reason for immigration, social support, education, income, and other variables such as “self-efficacy, personal attributes, and intercultural competence” may

also affect the level of acculturative stress experienced (p. 262). It is important also to point out that the women in the present study were low-income and mostly had low educational backgrounds. Negy, Schwartz, and Reig-Ferrer (2009) also write about the role of education in preparing individual's for life's challenges, and in particular the changes in one's life. They report that, "education moderately correlates with income, and both have been found to correlate significantly with Hispanics' acculturation toward the U.S. culture" (p. 262).

### **Idealization and Devaluation or "Hybrid Identity" as a Construct**

Although psychoanalytic theory on immigrant identity such as described above by Akhtar (1995,1999), Mirsky (1991), and Grinberg & Grinberg (1984) outlines an important psychological process that can be experienced by some immigrants, the theory fails to fully encompass the phenomena outlined in this study. One of the assumptions in Akhtar's (1995,1999) theory is that the reformation of identity in the immigrant will be a sort of "third individuation." This assumes that the individual has had two earlier individuations – in early life and in adolescence, that were in a sense "successful," as would be defined by object-relations theory (Kernberg, 1976) – resulting in ultimate psychological health. Splitting in the immigrant, in this case, is seen as a psychological regression that then gets resolved as the immigrant's identity is solidified.

One of the challenges with this theory, as seen through this sample, is that the tendency for idealization and devaluation could be related to previous psychopathology, but above all, alternative psychological development and also low educational level. As Negy, Schwartz, and Reig-Ferrer (2009) explicate, one's expectations before immigrating are also connected to educational background. It can be added that expectations are also related to access to information and resources, such as the Internet, which many Latino immigrants lack due to

poverty. Hence, as is the case with the immigrants from this sample, the idealized image they had of the U.S. before immigrating could be related to less psychological health, lack of information and resources, as well as low educational background – which is not accounted for in Akhtar’s theory (1995,1999). In a sense, some of these participants may never resolve the psychological “split” because they do not have the capacity to do so, and for them, and potentially for them, splitting is not a regression but rather it is their world-view, their psychological organization. This does not mean that these immigrants will not acculturate or that they do not negotiate between the two countries – on the contrary, it appears that the negotiation occurs on a different level for these women than potentially for other immigrants. It occurs at the level of the family.

Therefore, even though immigrants may not all follow a “split followed by psychological integration” model, this does not mean they will not acculturate, or become assimilated, as Berry’s theory indicates (1997, 2006). The data points at something that is central to these women: the family. Family for them meant “home,” family was what drove them, but also what made them wish to return home when the family in the COO was not well, either sick or dying. Added to this is the fact that all of the women left situations of deep financial struggle – a level of poverty that is not usually seen or experienced in the U.S.

The hope for a better life drove the majority of these participants to immigrate, but above all, the hope for better opportunities for their families, whether it was their families back in the COO, the families in the U.S., or the families they hoped to build in the new country. Hence, a binary construct of acculturation – high versus low – falls short of measuring the true experience of immigration for these women. As seen in the literature review, Berry (1997) outlines four positions for the immigrant: Assimilation – low retention of ethnic culture and fuller immersion

into the new country, Integration – full immersion into both dominant and ethnic cultures, Separation – complete immersion in the ethnic society and retraction from the dominant culture, and Marginalization – lack of immersion in both. Although the women in this study could fall into the first three categories, the data in this study point to something more powerful that is occurring for these women, beyond this categorization. The centrality of family for them supersedes even the relationship to the COO or the COR. Family and hope for the family are the clear mediating factors for these immigrants.

This sample also challenges the concept of “biculturalism” or the attainment of a hybrid identity as an ideal (Akhtar, 1995, 1999; Mirsky, 1991). Most of these women across all three acculturation groups, lived in communities in New York where they found products from their own country, as well as where they did not have to learn English to get by. Some of these participants may fall into the bicultural group or the low acculturation group, however, may be in Berry’s (1997) “separation” category of assimilation, and yet not be experiencing acculturative stress. Again, this may be related to the participant’s feeling of success as defined by their family – success of providing for the family, keeping in touch with family, or a continued feeling of centeredness and support through the family, where the feeling of “home” resides.

It should be noted, however, that those who made the decision gradually tended to cope better with acculturative stress overall. Naturally, better preparation for what is to come led to less stress. This better preparation may indicate a higher level of psychological health for those immigrants, although this information is not in the data, as well as it could also indicate a higher level of desperation in leaving a dire situation back home, as was the case with those participants from Mexico who came from extreme poverty.

### **Clinical Implications**

The findings in this study bring up a variety of clinical implications when working with Latina immigrants. Firstly, the importance of working with Latino immigrants in Spanish needs to be highlighted. For many of the participants seen in this study, acquiring English may not be a simple process due to low education level, lack of time, and lack of financial resources (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012). Many of the participants reported being motivated to learn English, as well as many had been in the U.S. for many years, yet they had not found it possible to learn English. Furthermore, as was the case with the women in this study, Latino immigrants in New York often surround themselves with other Spanish-speakers, and live in communities where they do not have to speak English to get around. As was reported, many of the women in this study watched television in Spanish, having their Dominican or Mexican T.V. shows readily available.

The outlets for practicing English are not often available to them, yet as new immigrants facing potential acculturative stress, and as a result, mental illness, it is essential that they have access to mental health resources in their own language. In this study, higher levels of acculturation were also associated with increased future-orientation, including the motivation to learn English, make plans in the U.S., and as a result become a more integrated part of the culture. This seems to indicate a cycle where, if provided appropriate clinical services in their own language to work through acculturation issues, the tendency might be for the immigrant to be motivated to learn English, as well as to engage in other aspects of acculturation to the COR.

Akhtar (1995) explores the acquisition of the language of the COR at length as a marker of “we-ness,” in the last stage towards an integrative identity. He writes (p.1067), “the journey from speaking only one’s “mother tongue” (...) to true bilingualism is as difficult as it is salutary.” He explains that early in the identity reformation, the “mother tongue” becomes

idealized as the only place one that can express things well. Although the level of English for the women in the present study was unknown, which was a limitation in this study, it is important that immigrants are encouraged in their ventures to acquire the language of the COR, just as it is important to provide them the opportunity to speak in whatever language comforts them.

Even once bilingualism has been achieved, however, Perez Foster (2001) stresses the importance of the immigrant having the option of speaking in Spanish in therapy. She writes (p.164), “Anxiety or pervasive discomfort can accompany the bilingual patient’s clinical presentation in a second language, especially when these patients are markedly more proficient in their native idiom.” She also points to a 1976 study (Segalowitz, cited in Perez Foster, 2001, p. 164) where individuals speaking their “nondominant language” tend to perceive themselves as less intelligent and less self-confident.

As Akhtar points out (1995), working through towards a hybrid immigrant identity and mourning the loss of the COO takes time, and it takes even longer with those who did not chose to immigrate, those whose decision was made quickly to come, or those who cannot go back for emotional refueling. But for this “working through” to take place, the immigrant needs to have a space to talk about her immigration story, as well as to be able to reminisce about the homeland. Hence, clinicians should be encouraged to ask about the immigration story, while paying attention to idealization and devaluation in the narrative. Understanding where the immigrant is in her acculturation process can help the clinician create an appropriate therapeutic holding environment that can further help the patient work through this regressive split.

As was seen in the present study and the research on “violated expectations” (Negy, Schwartz, and Reig-Ferrer, 2009) clinicians should also listen for and be encouraged to ask about the immigrant’s expectations and imagination of the COR before leaving their COO. This is an

area where the clinician might find unprocessed loss from broken fantasies, and surely an area that will require appropriate working through. As Hovey (2000) points out, “An individual entering treatment will seldom state that he or she has “acculturation problems” or “psychological problems caused by migration,” and this is less so the case with low-income, low education immigrants.

Hence, being attuned to the immigration narrative is essential, as well as knowing to ask about it. In regards to working with Latinos in particular, an understanding of the heterogeneity of cultures and an openness to hearing about the immigrant’s particular culture is also essential. As Falicov (1998) points out, “(...) there is no list of “dos” and “don’ts” when working with Latinos or any other group. There is only one do and one don’t – do ask and don’t assume.”

Taking this point further, Walsh and Shulman (2012) also suggest the importance of allowing space for feeling and experiencing the mourning process. Keeping in mind the potential for “superficial adaptation,” they suggest that clinicians become aware of those who appear to be adapting swiftly, since they may be in greater long-term psychological danger, whereas those who appear to be finding the initial immigration period hard may be those whose real adaptation is smoother and deeper in the long term.

Lastly, another area of clinical implication is that this study continues to emphasize the importance of family for the Latino immigrant. Since it is known that family cohesion is a protective factor for immigrant Latinos (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012), clinicians should strive to create interventions, possibly through family group therapy, that help process immigration, promote positive parenting, and increase family cohesion.

### **Policy Implications**

In this study and in previous research, it has been shown that “violated expectations” or unrealistic expectations are associated with acculturative stress (Negy, Shwartz, & Reig-Ferrer, 2009). This is certainly an area where educational action could be undertaken at the community level in Latin America. The perception for many immigrants is that the difficulty in immigrating lies, at most, in crossing the border. Although this is certainly a difficult, if not often traumatic way of immigrating that could result in rape, death, or a criminal record, the difficulty of immigration is generally greatest upon arrival. As we have seen in the present study, which is corroborated by the research presented in the literature review (Rodriguez & DeWolfe, 1990; Perez Foster, 2001; Ramos-Sanchez, 2009; Bell, Kwesiga, & Berry, 2010), immigrants face a myriad of issues ranging from discrimination, learning a new language, having to change professions, joblessness, or not having documents to work legally in the U.S., much too often forcing them to work in grim conditions (Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas, Spitznagel, 2007).

However, the immigrant manages to maintain the perception back home that “everything is great” in the U.S. Although she may be making less than minimum wage, if anything at all, she may send dollars to those back home, suitcases full of gifts, and narrate an idealized version of the experience in every phone call. The immigrant feels pressured to maintain a “brave” face after cutting ties with the COO, as seen with the immigrants in this study, and as well as reportedly their parents and relatives before them. They convince themselves that they must keep up appearances and continue to maintain the “all good” façade.

Mixed messages also occur in the media, as the U.S. is also often painted, and paints itself, abroad as “the greatest nation on earth,” further convincing potential immigrants that “everything is good and best over the border.” It would appear then that a sort of collective illusion-building occurs, which is fostered by the immigrant, by those left behind, and by the

messages in the media. Part of the work of community leaders should be to communicate to people back home in Latin America a whole, realistic, and textured impression of what immigration is really like and the hardships that must be faced, in this way giving potential immigrants a more accurate understanding of what the journey entails. This can hopefully help to avoid some of the issues associated with acculturative stress in the immigrant.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Before exploring areas for future research, the limitations of the current study must be explored. Through the video narratives of the immigrant women, the study provided a rich and in-depth exploration of the participants' comparisons between COO and COR. Coding and full transcripts of the data, as well as demographic and acculturation information, set the stage for the exploration of psychoanalytic theory not previously examined in research. However, the sample used was small, and therefore the results are not generalizable to the larger population. Along these lines, it should also be stated that the results pertain only to the group that was looked at – urban, low-income Latina immigrants. Although this is an under-researched minority group that warrants further understanding, the data may not reflect conclusions that can be made generally about other Latino groups, or even more generally to other immigrants to the U.S. Considering also the heterogeneity of Latinos (Falicov, 1998), this study does not give justice to the differences ingrained in each Latin culture. Instead, it blends 31 women from all different nationalities into one group of “Latinas,” which may ignore or gloss over certain nuances that pertain to each particular country and culture of the participant.

Although the data was rich and provided a colorful picture of each immigrant woman, the use of archival data presented certain limitations. Because this researcher did not conduct the interviews myself, it was not possible to change questions and follow-up questions or the manner

in which questions were asked. Demographic information collected was limited, especially in essential areas such as participant documentation and race. Although it was asked whether the participant was a U.S. citizen, if the participant answered, “no,” one could not discern whether the participant was undocumented or if she had an alternate form of documentation. Also, the English level or proficiency of each participant was unknown, since the research was conducted in Spanish, therefore interesting conclusions about the role of language in the identity formation process could not be properly assessed.

Also, information about the women’s pre-immigration character organization and current or past potential pathology was not available, and may have an influence on the participant’s tendency for splitting. This researcher also found that the interview questions were sometimes difficult for the participants to answer due to their education level. Some of the women with little formal education appeared not to know, for example, the meaning of the word “adjective,” hence it was difficult to know sometimes whether they had low reflective capacity or if their answers were affected by low education level. Finally, although useful in categorizing the participants, the design of the acculturation scale may not be ideal. According to this scale, acculturation was measured on increased “Americanization.” For the purpose of this study, in order to better understand the formation of a hybrid identity, an acculturation scale that measured both retention of own culture and Americanization would have been more useful.

### **Future Research**

The present study contributed to the limited but growing literature on immigrant Latinos by providing a vivid picture of the women’s comparisons between COO and COR. It provided a qualitative research picture for theories that had been based on clinical work but not yet

substantiated by research. Through this study, a few areas for future research were identified, both pertaining to Latino immigrants and more generally to immigrants in the U.S.

One particular area relates to the study's finding of the placement of "home" in "family." This theme brings up the question of whether that can also be found to be true for all immigrants, regardless of cultural background. Once the roots to the COO are suddenly cut or exposed through immigration, it may be a trend for all immigrants that "home" now lies in people rather than it being circumscribed to a country. Since family cohesion has been found to have protective factors for immigrants (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012; Guarnaccia, Mulvaney-Day, Lin, Torres, & Alegría, 2008), this is an interesting area for future research.

In this study, all of the women in the low acculturation group did not have citizenship in the U.S., however, the sample size was too small to make generalizations as to the meaning of this finding. Future research on Latinos should continue to focus on the acculturation of the undocumented immigrant, since this is a population that is growing steadily in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010) and an often "voiceless" group facing increased discrimination and other challenges of acculturation (Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas, Spitznagel, 2007). For its policy and clinical implications, it is important to explore the effects of documentation on the acculturation process, acculturative stress, and associated mental illness, which may help influence immigration law in the U.S.

As the cases of Norma and Carmen bring up, also important and an area that warrants continued exploration is the concept of healthy versus unhealthy mourning of the COO, or what Akhtar (1995) refers to as "counterphobic resolve" and "ethnocentric withdrawal." Current research (Walsh & Shulman, 2012) suggests that superficial resolve may lead to higher incidences of psychopathology, however, this area needs to be further looked at. This is an

especially interesting area of study for people in exile due to political, religious, or other kinds of persecution. For example, it would be interesting to see through a longitudinal study whether Norma, the Cuban immigrant, retained her own culture through time, or if there was a complete rejection of it, as well as how this correlated with psychological symptoms in Norma.

Also important would be to further explore the question of time in acculturation, that is, whether there is a healthy mourning period that can be measured in years. With this idea, Walsh and Shulman (2012) also suggest the exploration of the age of the immigrant related to the length of the mourning process. Similarly, there is only one research study that has looked at the concept of pre-immigration expectations in the immigrant as related to increased acculturative stress (Negy, Schwartz, & Reig-Ferrer, 2009). As mentioned, the present study also showed that this was an important element in the acculturation process of the participants.

Connected to this is the factor and also needing further research is whether the decision to immigrate was made gradually or spontaneously, and how this impacts the acculturation process. Negy, Schwartz, and Reig-Ferrer (2009) add that the concept of “violated expectations” should be further looked at to discern whether, “alcohol or substance abuse among Hispanic immigrants is linked to a recognition that, in various ways, their lives in the United States are not commensurate with their premigration expectations.” Lastly and more positively, it would also be interesting to know whether immigrants whose expectations were exceeded at arrival in the COR were able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them (Ibid, 2009).

### **Concluding Statement**

The richness of the data presented in this study make it an important contribution to the literature on the identity reformation and acculturation process of immigrant Latinos. This dissertation project set out to provide a colorful picture of the way that immigrant Latinas in

different acculturation levels compare and contrast their country of origin and country of residence, while also focusing on the tendency for idealizing and devaluing in their narratives. This study showed that lower levels of acculturation were associated with increased splitting, as was theorized. It also brought up interesting themes across acculturation groups that can help us better understand the stages of acculturation in the journey of the immigrant towards processing the loss of the homeland and achieving an integrated cultural identity. It must be re-stated that research on Latino immigrants and the acculturation process is imperative and needs to continue growing. Several areas for future research in this area were also identified through this study, particularly around the effects of acculturation on undocumented Latino immigrants, the expectations before immigrating and how the decision to immigrate is made, and more generally on the indicators associated with healthy psychological adaptation to the COR.

Working with this data, I was immensely impressed and inspired by the courage and strength of the participants – the difficult immigration experiences suffered crossing the border and otherwise, and the challenges these Latinas faced in acculturating, particularly as low-income mothers adapting to a fast-paced, English-speaking, urban environment. This study emphasizes the importance of providing language-appropriate mental health services for Latino immigrants, as they process the difficult transition from their mother-land to the U.S. For clinicians, it also highlights the markers of the acculturation level that can be found in the immigration narrative, while it stresses the importance of providing space for the immigration story to be told and processed.

## Appendix A

### Families and Work Interview: Version 3

**Note to Interviewer: Instructions to you are bolded. All other sentences are questions to ask interview participants.**

A) Before we begin discussing work, I'd like us to talk a little about home. When you think of home, what comes to mind?

**\*Probe for positive and negative associations, thoughts, and feelings.**

**\*Ask interviewee to tell about a time that truly captures the images that come to mind when thinking about home (ask for two vignettes). Probe for thoughts, feelings, sights, sounds and smell.**

**\*Remember to probe for negative associations if only positive are given and vice versa. For example, we have talked about pleasant things that come to mind regarding home, can you think of anything that is not so positive?**

**\*If interviewee begins by discussing home in the U.S., ask about home in the country of origin. For example, now I'd like for you to think about home in your country of origin. Vice versa, if interviewee begins with the country of origin.**

B) When you think of your life here in the United States, what are the things that remind you of your homeland?

**\*Probe for things they do**

**\*Probe for things they see, hear, smell, eat**

**\*Probe for thoughts and feelings**

C) What else in your life here reminds you of home in your country? What do you do when you're really missing home? (**Probe for thoughts, feelings, etc...**). Can you think of a time you wanted to go back home? What was going on in your life at the time?

D) **If you have not yet heard about the immigration experience ask:**

I'd like for you to tell me the story of your immigration. (**Probe for positive and negative aspects and for thoughts and feelings**)

E) List 5 adjectives that tell me what it was like to leave your country of origin. (**Probe for reason behind each adjective**)

List 5 adjectives that tell me about your new life in the U.S. (**Probe reason behind each adjective**)

## Appendix B

**Table 1. High Acculturation Demographics**

<i>Age</i>	<i>COO</i>	<i>U.S. Citizen?</i>	<i>Years in U.S.</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Practicing Religion?</i>
25	D.R.	No	3	Married	Some H.S.	None	No
29	D.R.	Yes	Almost 29	Married	Some H.S.	None	No
35	Cuba	No	4	Married	College grad	None	No
32	Ecuador	No	2	Married	Some college	Catholic	Yes
36	Ecuador	Yes	33 1/2	Married	Some college	7 <sup>th</sup> Advent.	Yes
28	D.R.	Yes	20	Single	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	Yes
36	D.R.	No	8	Living together	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	Unknown (UK)
27	D.R.	No	Almost 10	Married	H.S. grad/GED	Christian	Yes
31	D.R.	Yes	13	Married	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	Yes

**Table 2. Bicultural Group Demographics**

<i>Age</i>	<i>COO</i>	<i>U.S. Citizen?</i>	<i>Years in U.S.</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Practicing Religion?</i>
36	D.R.	yes	15	Living together	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	No
27	D.R.	Yes	11	Married	Some college	Catholic	Yes
33	D.R.	Yes	16	Single	H.S. grad/GED	Mormon	No
31	D.R.	No	8	Living together	Some H.S.	Catholic	Yes
39	D.R.	UK	5	Married	No H.S.	Jehovah's Witness	Yes
35	D.R.	Yes	17	Separated	Some college	Evangelist	Yes
21	D.R.	Yes	8	Married	No H.S.	Jehovah's Witness	Yes
28	D.R.	No	2 and a half	Single	Some H.S.	Catholic	UK
35	D.R.	No	9	Married	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	UK
23	Mexico	No	5	Living together	Some H.S.	Catholic	Yes

30	Mexico	No	12	Living together	No H.S.	Catholic	UK
45	D.R.	No	17	Separated	College grad	None	No

**Table 3. Low Acculturation Demographics**

<i>Age</i>	<i>COO</i>	<i>U.S. Citizen?</i>	<i>Years in U.S.</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Practicing Religion?</i>
26	Mexico	No	9	Living together	Some H.S.	Catholic	No
45	Peru	No	4	Married	Some H.S.	Catholic	Yes
28	Mexico	No	3	Single	No H.S.	Catholic	Yes
31	Mexico	No	11	Single	No H.S.	UK	UK
38	D.R.	No	13	Separated	H.S. Grad/GED	Catholic	UK
38	Ecuador	No	14	Living together	No H.S.	Catholic	UK
23	Mexico	No	7	Living together	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	UK
25	Ecuador	No	3	Married	Some College	UK	UK
27	D.R.	No	3	Married	H.S. grad/GED	Catholic	No
27	Mexico	No	12	Living together	H.S. grad/GED	UK	UK

**Table 4. High Acculturation Group Meaning of Home**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Thinking of home makes me feel tired but satisfied	1
Home is here	3
Decision to move to the US was good because of less racism in US	1
Home there does not feel like home anymore	1
Consider both US and COO as home	1
Nothing negative comes to mind when thinking of home in COO	1
Life in US is easier	1
In US there are more economic opportunities	1
Feels grateful and thankful to God for her home	1
My family	9
My children	6
Development of children and education	2
My significant other (husband, partner, boyfriend etc.)	4
My house	5

Family chores, cleaning the house, making sure everything is ok in the house	1
Image of the whole family playing together comes to mind	1
Have a complete family in unity	1
Family makes her feel of tenderness & unity	1
Stresses importance of being able to provide their basic needs	1
It is important to maintain peaceful atmosphere in the home for the children to grow	1
Stress importance of communicating and expressing love and care	1
Stress important that everyone is together and morally and emotionally healthy	1
Feelings of frustration	2
Frustration because life here is very hard	2
Frustration because I miss my family	1
Because she has not been able to find a job	1
Because husband does not want her to work outside home	1
Frustration because of lack of trust for childcare for children	1
It took a long time to settle at a place could call "home" in US	1
Likes COO but not to live because no relatives or friends left behind	2
Thinking of home reminds her of her divorce and death of relatives	1

**Table 5. Low Acculturation Group Meaning of Home**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Participant begins by asking which home, here or there?	3
Prefers COO as a place to begin discussion	3
Feeling like would like to be back at COO	1
Participant smiles when begins talking about home in COO	1
Begin by talking of value of home in general	2
Home provides a sense of emotional security	1
Home means stability	2
Home is like an organization of unity	1
Feeling optimistic about succeeding in life	1
Home is here	2
Home is where parents and children are	1
Not being there evokes sadness	2
Thinking of home in COO provokes nostalgia	3
Subject would like to be home	1
Would like to be with family left behind	1
Describe "picture" of home in nature terms (I.e. trees, grass, ...)	1
Description of home in COO includes reference to the sun and light	1

Description of home in COO remembering gatherings and "get together" w/ extended family	1
Nothing negative comes to mind when thinking of home in COO	1
Life in US has not been as easy as expected	1
Feeling isolated not having family or friends	1
Home in US is different	2
Home in COO is remembered as free because you have nature and more space	3
Home in US feels like being in a prison	2
You have less physical space in U.S.	1
Home in US feels cramped	1
Limited outdoor activities for children in U.S.	1
Life in US is easier	2
In US there are more economic opportunities	1
In US feels isolated	3
In US difficult to communicate with others because of language	3
Feeling useless because not knowing language	1
People here become individualistic	1
Having children early on after migration substitutes isolation	1
Home life in US more difficult	2
Idealizes going back to COO to retire	1
My family	8
My children	7
Development of children and education	5
Home means helping children with their homework	1
Concern children have good health	1
Imagines her children playing	1
My significant other (husband, partner, boyfriend etc.)	3
My house	3
Family chores, cleaning the house, making sure everything is ok in the house	1
Have a complete family in unity	2
Family makes her feel of tenderness & unity	2
Stresses importance of being able to provide their basic needs	2
It is important to maintain peaceful atmosphere in the home for the children to grow	1
Important not to have financial stressors	1
Concern about finding and maintaining a job	2
Concern for children's difficulties with English at school	1
Life in COO is centered around family while here is a routine	1
Feeling lack of support in relatives who lived in US	1
Lack of work in COR prompts thoughts of returning to COO: but family member says more opportunities in COR	1
Feeling conflicted between staying in COR or returning to COO	1

Unsure where more work opportunities	1
Reason to stay in COR is for better opportunities for children's development	1
Feelings of optimism about succeeding in US	2
Desire to work outside of home but has no childcare	1

**Table 6. Bicultural Group Meaning of Home**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Prefers COO as a place to begin discussion	3
Feeling like would like to be back at COO	3
Ideally would like to reach similar stability in COO but for now travels back and forward	3
Begin by talking of value of home in general	2
Home is here	5
Home is here because her children are here	1
Always compares with the home she had in COO	1
Does not like to go to COO	1
Consider both US and COO as home	3
Home is where parents and children are	2
Feeling need to sacrifice weather in COO for better opportunities in US	1
Thinking of home in COO provokes nostalgia	1
Describe "picture" of home in nature terms (I.e. trees, grass, ...)	3
Description of home in COO includes reference to the sun & light	1
Nothing negative comes to mind when thinking of home in COO	1
Home in COO is remembered as free because you have nature and more space	2
Wish home here had similar tranquility as in COO	1
Home in US feels like being in a prison because you have less physical space	1
Home in US feels cramped	1
You trust people/neighbors less to let your children go outside	1
Family routines (lunch time, dinnertime...) and work schedules are different in both countries	1
In COO you have more time to have lunch and dinner together as a family	1
Life in US is easier	1
In US there are more economic opportunities	2
In US difficult to communicate with others b/c of language	1
Wish to go back to retire in COO to reunite with relatives and have a new house	1
My family	7

My children	9
Development of children and education	6
Home means helping children with their homework	1
My significant other (husband, partner, boyfriend etc.)	3
My house	3
Family chores, cleaning the house, making sure everything is ok in the house	3
Have a complete family in unity	1
Family makes her feel of tenderness and unity	1
Stresses importance of being able to provide their basic needs	1
It is important to maintain peaceful atmosphere in the home for the children to grow	2
Stress importance of communicating and expressing love and care	1
Stress important that everyone is together and morally and emotionally healthy	1
Important not to have financial stressors	2
Describe family conflicts about generational gaps	1
Thinks of family of generations before her as a model to follow	1
Thinks that a strong family is the basis of a strong society	1
Feelings of frustration:	2
Frustration b/c I miss my family	1
Frustration b/c feels constraints by winter and not being able to let children go out	1
Frustration because not been able to find a job	2
Stresses importance of getting educated as a vehicle for success in US	1
Feelings of detachment	1
No relatives left behind	1

**Table 7. High Acculturation Group When Life in the U.S. Reminds of Country of Origin**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Home there does not feel like home anymore	1
Does not miss much because has access to Dominican goods and neighborhood here	1
Things left behind	3
Family here provokes nostalgia for family left behind	2
Nostalgia for shared time with my friends and neighbors	2
Nostalgia for job left behind	1
Nostalgia for studies stopped	1
In COO you share more with neighbors in a trustful way	1
Miss the quality and quantity of leisure time in COO:	1
Life here is reduced to work only	3

My Family	2
My parents	2
Miss big family reunions	1
The friends that I left behind	1
The lack of time here gets on the way of establishing close relationships with neighbor	1
Miss trusting relationships and bonds had in COO	2
Cold weather here reminds her of warm weather in COO	3
Food	1
Vegetables and fruits from the COO	1
Make a conscious effort not remember sad memories	2
The inability to have family to help with childcare	1
You have to work really hard in both countries but in America	1
you see more economic benefits at the end	2
Doing activities with family here (i.e. on Sundays)	1
Socializing with others	1

**Table 8. Bicultural Group When Life in the U.S. Reminds of Country of Origin**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Things left behind	2
Family here provokes nostalgia for family left behind	2
Shared time with my friends and neighbors	1
The school where she went as a child	1
Feeling unsafe in US b/c of violence in neighborhood reminds of safety and freedom felt in COO	3
In COO you share more with neighbors in a trustful way	1
Miss the quality and quantity of leisure time in COO	1
My Family	3
My parents	3
Miss big family reunions	1
The friends that I left behind	2
The beaches in the COO	2
Cold weather here reminds her of warm weather in COO	1
The limited access to nature and the outdoors her reminds of life in COO	1
Misses the sense of freedom and safety in COO	1
In COO worry less about violence and crime on the streets	1
When child is lonely triggers thoughts of greater family involvement in COO	1
Food	2
Vegetables and fruits from the COO	1

Limitation of not being able to communicate in own mother language	2
Owning things here reminds of poverty home	2
Basic needs here are privilege in COO (i.e. water, good food)	1
Difference in cost of living based on low salaries in COO	1
Stability & tranquility of COO	1
Idealizes COO	1
Misses the comfort of speaking in Spanish with everyone around	1
The inability to have family to help with childcare	1
Education is more advanced in COO	2
The food I cook	2
Doing activities with family here (I.e. on Sundays)	2
Socializing with others	3
Calling home in COO regularly	1
Friends, going out to have fun	1
Talks on phone with relatives that live here to maintain contact	2
Talks often with relatives in COO	1
Consciously chooses not to think of home in COO	1
Ethnic neighborhood	1
Mother	2
Tries to think positively about her life here	1
Look at pictures and videos of my friends and events in my life in COO	1
Imagines her life back in COO and compares to life here	1
Photographs from COO reminds her of life there	1

**Table 9. Low Acculturation Group When Life in the U.S. Reminds of Country of Origin**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Holidays: Christmas, Independence Day, New Year's, etc.	4
Holidays involve more community gatherings in COO vs. here in U.S.	1
Celebrate holidays same way in both countries	1
Does not miss much because has access to Dominican goods and neighborhood here	1
Things left behind	1
Family here provokes nostalgia for family left behind	1
Miss the interaction between church and community in COO	1
Feeling unsafe in US because of violence in neighborhood reminds of safety and freedom felt in COO	1
The cultural diversity here intimidates here b/c does not trust people intentions	1
The loneliness about father of children who left her makes her think of family in COO	1

My Family	6
My parents	2
My grandparents	1
Miss big family reunions	3
Cooking meal with family	1
Cold weather here reminds her of warm weather in COO	3
Here you feel like you live inside a matchbox	1
The limited access to nature and the outdoors her reminds of life in COO	2
When child is lonely triggers thoughts of greater family involvement in COO	1
Food	3
The limitations to work in US	1
Feeling that people in COO are more altruistic: offer help w/out expecting a benefit	1
Stability and tranquility of COO	1
Misses "Everything," because two countries are completely different	1
Make a conscious effort not remember life in COO as a way to adapt to life here	1
The inability to have family to help with childcare	1
Thinks of the reason that motivated her to move to US: search for better life	1
Talks on phone with relatives that live here to maintain contact	2
Providing financial assistance to family left behind	1
Warm weather	2
Ethnic neighborhood	1

**Table 10. High Acculturation Responses to a Moment When They Wished to go Home**

<i>Individual Codes</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Yes	3
When she was pregnant	1
When she had problems with her husband	1
Because of all the stressors	1
When there was a lack of money	1
Upon first arrival to US b/c feelings intimidated by city physical structure	1
When missing parents and family left behind	2
When feeling sad	1
When had relational conflict with her mother here	1
Because of lack on privacy and physical space	1
When thinking of not having achieved her goals to work and study here.	1

Only goes back to visit because family is here	1
No desire to return home in COO	1
Not anymore because feeling adapted to life in US	4

**Table 11. Bicultural Group Responses to a Moment When They Wished to go Home**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Yes	5
When someone in family in COO is sick or died	1
When wanting to visit parents tomb	1
When I was pregnant	2
When couldn't find a job	1
During Christmas	2
When missing parents and family left behind	2
Participants begins to cry as she remembers this time in her life	1
The cold weather in U.S.	1
When feeling sad	1
During first day of school	1
Experienced cultural shock when saw disorganization and lack of formal discipline	1
Because wanted to continue college in COO	1
When I get tired of the routine and rhythm of life here	1
Only goes back to visit because family is here	1
Feels has "one foot here and one foot there"	1
No desire to return home in COO	1
Limited benefits and economic opportunities in COO	1
Plan to return to COO to live in the future	2
When daughters here get professional degrees and reach a stable economic position	1
Feeling adapted to life in US	1
Wish to return but wouldn't be able to support family in COO	1
Inadequate financial situation and lack opportunities in COO	1
Wished to return back to reunite with kids left back but fear of being separated from family here stopped her	1

**Table 12. Low Acculturation Responses to a Moment When They Wished to go Home**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Yes	5
When someone in family in COO is sick or died	4
When took child to ER here and felt that doctors treated her cold/distant	1
When I have problems with my husband	1
Upon first arrival to US b/c feelings intimidated by city physical structure	1
During Christmas	1
Desperate desire to return home during the Holidays	1
Because miss frequency of large family reunions in COO	1
When thinks of the difference in the quantity and quality of family time in COO	1
When missing parents and family left behind	2
When feeling sad	1
When feeling enclosed in	1
When feeling misunderstood because of language	1
Because of lack of privacy and physical space	1
When wishing that kids would grow seeing their grandparents and other relatives	1
When wishing to go back to COO, thinks of the better future of the children in the US	2
Plan to return to COO interrupted by child's developmental needs	1
No desire to return home in COO	1
Limited benefits and economic opportunities in COO	1
Children are used to better quality of life here	1
Would probably return home if felt discriminated at workplace	1
Plan to return to COO to live in the future	1
All the time	1
Wish to return but wouldn't be able to support family in COO	1
Because inadequate financial situation and lack opportunities in COO	1
Call home when feels like wanting to return	1
Notes that people who argue that life in COO is economically tenable nevertheless return to the US	1
Lack of basic utilities ( water supply, power, etc.) in COO	1
Easier to get a job in US and better salary	1

**Table 13. High Acculturation Immigration Histories**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
------------------------	------------------------

Motivated by Opportunities	1
Motivated by wish for children to be born in US to obtain benefits for them	1
Decision to come was spontaneous	1
Decision to come was planned gradually	4
Never imagined she would live in the US	1
Brought here by parents	3
It was difficult experience	2
Difficult without financial resources	1
Difficult because mother came first	1
Separation was hard for relatives left behind as well	1
Although it was difficult at first, it was worth it b/c of good opportunities	1
Easier with support of other relatives and friends	1
Having legal papers made the immigration easier	1

**Table 14. Bicultural Group Immigration Histories**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Motivated by wish to be reunited with kids who came first	1
Motivated by opportunities in U.S.	4
Motivated to find better work opportunities	1
Thinks that school education is better in COO but here there are more economic opportunities	1
Motivated to escape from family conflict in COO	1
Decision to come was planned gradually	4
Brought here by parents	2
It was difficult experience	4
Because send child first to US	1
Difficult because without financial resources	1
Difficult because of not knowing English	1
Had to separate from husband for the first years	1
Feeling like you put own life at risk	1
Difficult because Mother came 1st	2
Separation was hard for relatives left behind as well	1
Fearful of deportation	2
Although it was difficult at first, it was worth it because of good opportunities	1
When arrived to US felt like it was different world	1
The change in weather was a big transition	1
Fearful of speaking Spanish and not being understood	1
Imagined US to be beautiful	1
Imagined to have beautiful trees, plans and flowers	1

Imagined everything in US would be easy	4
Believed U.S. to be Promised Land	1
Believed money would just appear but it was not true	1
Reality completely different from fantasy of US	1
Finding a job made the transition easier	1
Easier with support of other relatives and friends	2

**Table 15. Low Acculturation Immigration Histories**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Motivated by opportunities in the U.S.	2
Desire to have a house, better health care, etc	1
Motivated to help parents left at home	1
Motivated to find better work opportunities	2
Decision to come was spontaneous	4
Decision to come was planned gradually	1
Brought here by parents	1
It was difficult experience	2
Went from having lots of friends in COO to isolation in US	1
Left college half way through	1
Difficult because of not knowing English	1
Not knowing English makes it hard to get a job	1
Had to separate from husband for the first years	1
Felt like in "limbo"	1
Feeling like you put own life at risk	1
At the beginning was hard b/c feeling uncertain about the jobs would get	1
Separation was hard for relatives left behind as well	1
Fearful of deportation	1
INS (USCIS) stopped me once	1
When arrived to US felt like it was different world	2
Felt different because of not knowing anyone in US	1
The change in weather was a big transition	1
Fearful of speaking Spanish and not being understood	2
Was amazed by diversity of cultures and races	1
Coming to the U.S. was a childhood dream	1
Imagined US to be beautiful	2
Imagined to have beautiful trees, plants, and flowers	1
Imagined everything in US would be easy	2
Imagined that she would find good and sincere friendships as	1

in COO	
Imagined that finding a job would be easier	1
Reality completely different from fantasy of US	3
Finding a job made the transition easier	2
Having a child made the transition easier	1
Times makes it easier as you get social services	1
Easier with support of other relatives and friends	1
Feeling that one has to change way of being once in the US	1

**Table 16. High Acculturation Negative Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sad	5
Scary	1
Fearful	1
Depressing	1
Painful	2
Difficult	3
Hard	2
Nostalgia	1
Emotional	1
Drastic	2
Lonely	1
Nervous	2
Insecure	1
Terrible	1
Felt like a sacrifice	1

**Table 17. Bicultural Group Negative Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sad	9
Painful	5
Difficult	5
Felt like "kidnapped" from home in COO	1
Frustrating once got to COR	2
Hard	3
Nostalgia	2
Drastic	1
Lonely	2
Bad	1
Devastating	1

Traumatic	1
Everything was negative about leaving COO	1

**Table 18. Low Acculturation Group Negative Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sad	8
Longing	2
Scary	1
Fearful	1
Painful	1
Difficult	1
Hard	1
Nostalgia	2
Emotional	2
Lonely	1
Nervous	1
Idealistic of easy life in the US	1
Bad	1
Inconsolable	1
Angry	1

**Table 19. High Acculturation Positive Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Optimistic	1
Happiness	2
Good	1
Exciting	1
Illusion	1
Did not think about the decision too much	1
Moving was not as hard because husband found job right away	1
Important	1

**Table 20. Bicultural Group Positive Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Pleasurable	1
Optimistic	2
Hope	1
Happiness	2

Exciting	1
Illusion	2
Proud	1
Does not regret having left COO	1

**Table 21. Low Acculturation Group Positive Adjectives that Describe Leaving COO**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Having legal papers made it easier b/c could travel back to COO	1
Pleasurable	2
Optimistic	4
Humble because never imagined living in US as an immigrant	1
Grateful to God for the opportunity to come to US along with immediate family	1
Hope	3
Happiness	4
Exciting	1
Illusion	1
Search for better life for my family	1
Moving here single and without kids made the immigration easier	1

**Table 22. Bicultural Group Adjectives that Balance Both Positive and Negative**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Difficult to put into words	1
On one hand happy on the other sad	2
It was a big thing	1

**Table 23. High Acculturation Positive Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Happiness	3
Hope	3
Desire to work	1
Desire to give love for family	1
Life is more comfortable in contrast to COO	1
Good	5
Optimistic	1
Trying to adapt to life here	1
Feel it has been easy to adapt to life here	1
Fortunate	1

Blessed	1
Active b/c has gotten involve in church activities	1
Fulfilled	1

**Table 24. Bicultural Group Positive Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Happiness	4
Now "a little happier"	1
Life is more comfortable in contrast to COO	1
Great	1
Good	5
Optimistic	3
Satisfied	1
Relieved	1
Free	1
Tranquil	1
Stable	2
Grateful for the opportunities found in this country	1
Feels have overcome fear of not being understood by other (i.e. doctors)	1
Respectful and friendly	1
Would like to continue studies and find a job	1

**Table 25. Low Acculturation Group Positive Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sometimes happy, sometimes sad	1
Happiness	6
Excitement	2
Desire to work	1
Life here is easier	2
Life is more comfortable in contrast to COO	2
Great	1
Good	2
Motivated to reach self-fulfillment	1
Optimistic	1
Tranquil	3
Safe	1
Stable	1
Acceptable	1
Grateful for the opportunities found in this country	1
Disciplined	1

Fearless	1
Makes an effort to allow cultural values here affect hers	1
Comfortable now but in the past felt angry because felt rushed by time demands of COR	1
Adapted (to weather)	1

**Table 26. High Acculturation Negative Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sadness	1
Frightening	1
Anxious and a desire to start working	1
Need for tranquility of mind	1
Difficult	2
Empty	1
Depressing	1
Impotent	1
Nostalgia	1
frustrating	1
Lonely	1
Bad	1

**Table 27. Bicultural Group Negative Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Sadness	3
Doable life but not fulfilled	1
Limited	1
Need for tranquility of mind	1
Difficult	4
Stressful	2
More responsibilities here	1
Depressing	2
Impotent	2
Unstable	1
Mistrustful	1
Nostalgia	2
Lonely	2
Insecure sometimes	1
Incapable of doing certain things	1

**Table 28. Low Acculturation Group Negative Adjective Descriptions of Life in the U.S.**

<i>Individual Code</i>	<i>Times Mentioned</i>
Subject appears sad	2
Sadness	4
Worried about the stable future for her kids	1
Frightening	2
Need for tranquility of mind	1
Stressful	1
Agitated/fast	1
Depressing	1
Restless sometimes	1
Incomplete	1
Nostalgia	2
Always comparing life here and life in COO	1
Would be happier if my whole family would be here	1
Ambivalent about staying here sometimes	1
"I am here but my mind and heart are always there"	1
Bad	1
Difficult to get used to the fast rhythm of life here	1

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