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Erika Hajati
An Exploration of the Dual
Liminal Space: the Cultural and
Developmental Process of South
American Latino Adolescents
Post Immigration

ABSTRACT

This qualitative, retrospective study aimed to explore the ways in which South American Latino Adolescents navigated through a dual liminal space (e.i developmental and cultural) post immigration. In other words, this study explored the intersection of the experience of being an adolescent and an immigrant in the United States. The research question for this exploratory study was: How do South American Latino adolescents move through the cultural and developmental liminal spaces post immigration?

The sample for this study included 12 South American Latino immigrants who came to the United States during their adolescence, and have been in the country for over four years. Open-ended Interviews were conducted in order to gather data in the form of stories from the participants. Data was analyzed by looking for recurrent themes in participants' narratives.

The findings of this study showed that a variety of socio-economic factors (e.i acquisition of household responsibilities and financial responsibilities) changed participants' perceived developmental life stage from adolescents to young adults. In addition, these socio-economic changes post immigration also impacted family dynamics including gender-related roles and ways of relating between members. Cultural negotiations were also recurrent in participants' narratives as a form to described daily interactions with the broader society. The experiences being an adolescent in a foreign country were marked by the sense of uncertainty, trapped between and betwixt or liminality confirming previous literature on this topic (Turner, 1976).

AN EXPLORATION OF THE DUAL LIMINAL SPACE: THE CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL
PROCESS OF SOUTH AMERICAN LATINO ADOLESCENTS POST IMMIGRATION

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2010

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The immigration experience challenges one's sense of mastery of the environment and anticipates a change in one's world views, as well as a psychological adaptation (Slonim-Nevo, Sharaga, Mirsky, Petrovsky, Borodenko, 2006; Walsh, Shulman, Maurer, 2008). Immigration is a transitional experience, also called liminality, in which one is *in-between* the old and new culture, past and present experiences, and feelings of confusion, ambivalence and uncertainty are intermittent. In this frame, adolescent immigrants experience a dual transition: the developmental transitional experience of adolescence and the transitional experience of immigration. Both adolescence and migration are characterized by challenging one's habitual attitudes, behaviors and ways of thinking in an unfixated and unreliable condition. Adolescents experience how "the familiar taken-for-granted feeling of belonging shifts, and for the first time in life one encounters, at an existential level, what it means to be alone" (Frankel, 2009, p. 75). The adolescents' experience relates to the immigrants' experience; post immigration, one's sense of belonging to one's country of origin and sense of self are no longer certain, and feelings of solitude and social isolation are recurrent.

The literature on immigration has described two types of flow in the history of the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The first flow is referred to as the old immigration in which immigrants came from Europe. The second one is the new

immigration- today's immigration- in which immigrants have come from developing nations of the third world- especially from Asia and Latin America. Never before has the United States received immigrants from such diverse cultural, economical and social backgrounds: "underneath its apparent uniformity, contemporary immigration features a bewildering variety of origins, return patterns, and modes of adaptation to American society" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, p. 13). As of 2007, the foreign-born population represents 12.6% of the overall population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2007). Latino immigrants represent 54.4% of the overall foreign-born population and Latino immigrants between 15 to 24 years old represent 14% of the Latino foreign-born population (United States Census Bureau, 2007). Research on immigration has focused on intergenerational conflicts within immigrant families, patterns of concentration of immigrants in the new country and the process of adjustment (assimilation/acculturation) to the new country mainly of adults. Little research has been done on the experiences of immigrants, especially adolescent immigrants and the issues they may bring to therapy (Deaux, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). This study aims to explore the challenges that Latino adolescents experience post immigration as they move through a dual transition, or liminal space.

The transitional condition of both adolescence and immigration was the focus of this study. I refer to this condition as the *liminal space*. Briefly, *liminality*, as described by Victor Turner (1986), is characterized by an uncertain state in which one's identity and experiences are ambiguous and trapped betwixt and between the past and the anticipated future. In this frame, liminality is a shared attribute of the experience of both adolescence and immigration that captures the complexity of regaining one's sense of mastery of the

environment and one's sense of self in a foreign land, as one is neither a child nor an adult.

Even though liminal spaces are defined as transitions that have an end, the experience of leaving behind one's country of origin is an ongoing process of renegotiating one's identity and sense of self that affects one's perceived role in the world and new country. In the same way, adolescence is not a process with a clear-cut limit of age of initiation and end, and its tasks have a lifelong impact in one's well-being. Adolescence and immigration, therefore, are experiences that create ambiguity and uncertainty, and the challenges that this population brings to therapy are not largely documented.

The research question for this qualitative, exploratory study was: How do South American Latino/a adolescents move through the cultural and developmental liminal spaces post immigration? Moreover, this study aimed to explore the intersection of the experience of being an adolescent with the experience of being an immigrant in the US. A total of 12 Latinos who came to the United States during their adolescence (between 12 to 20 years old) were interviewed. Participants ages ranged from 18 and 30 years old. Even though Latinos as an ethnic group are by no means homogeneous, I assume that Latinos from Spanish-speaking countries in South America tend to share similar experiences as they also share aspects of their culture and countries' history. Participants were recruited from non-profit organizations especially for Latinos. Semi-structured interviews were conducted asking open-ended questions and follow-up questions in order to obtain more elaborate and detailed responses. Data obtained from these interviews was coded and analyzed for themes based on recurring descriptions, language and quotes.

Each participant's responses were compared with the larger sample to seek confirming and disconfirming evidence of themes.

The findings of this study extend the limited research and literature on the experiences of South American Latinos adolescents post immigration and the particular circumstances that this population brings to therapy. The knowledge gained in this study aims to inform clinicians of the complexities that are attached to being a Latino/a adolescent in a foreign land or territory navigating through a dual cultural and developmental liminal space. With this in mind, this study aims to offer clinicians tools to make culturally informed decisions when working with this population in educational, clinical and community-based settings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of South American Latino/a adolescents post immigration as they move through cultural and developmental liminal spaces. In this chapter previous literature will be reviewed in the following areas: 1) liminality, 2) historical and psychological approaches to adolescence through social and cultural lens 3) immigration: re-thinking theories of assimilation and acculturation, 4) South American immigration to the US.

Liminality

Liminality was first introduced by Arnold van Gennep (1908 as cited by Turner, 1986) to describe a phase of the rites de passage. *Rites de passages* are rituals that cultures perform in order to denote a transition from one state to another such as the transition from childhood to adulthood in which adolescence is the liminal phase. According to van Gennep (1908 as cited by Turner, 1986), all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation, liminal/margin/threshold and re-aggregation or reincorporation. The *separation* phase is characterized by symbolic behavior that expresses the detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure. The *liminal* phase consists of a set of experiences that lead the liminar or passenger (one who experiences the rites of passage) in an ambiguous state which has few or none attributes of the past or coming state. The final phase, *reaggregation*,

represents the state in which one has moved from one state to another and the rites of passage have been completed.

Liminality, as later described by Victor Turner (1986), is characterized by an uncertain state in which one's identity and experiences are ambiguous and trapped betwixt and between the past and the anticipated future. According to Victor Turner (1975), when one moves through liminal spaces, "the state of the ritual subject- the passenger or liminar- becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification"(p. 232). Thus, liminality is a state in which ordinary life conditions are altered and one moves through a symbolic domain that has few or none of the characteristics of one's past or coming state (Turner, 1975). In adolescence, for instance, one is neither a child nor an adult, one is transitioning and struggling to situate oneself in the world: "there is a search for meaning beyond the self in the cosmological contemplation of where one fits into the universe" (Frankel, 2009, p. 123). Those who experience liminality or move through liminal spaces experience the state of *outsiderhood*, as well as the betwixt-and-between state. The outsiderhood state refers to "the condition of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, or being situationally or temporarily set apart, or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behaviors of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system" (Turner, 1975, p.233). Turner (1975) referred to immigrants as *marginals* who are simultaneously members of two or more groups in which social meanings and cultural norms are distinct from- and often opposed- to one another. Marginals like liminars- or those who move through liminal spaces- are outsiders and betwixt-and-between but unlike liminars, marginals "have no cultural assurance of a final

stable resolution of their ambiguity" (Turner, 1975, p. 233). Latino adolescents post immigration are both liminars and marginals whose experience as they move through complex liminal spaces has not been largely documented.

Historical and Psychological Approaches to Adolescence Through Social and Cultural Lens

There is evidence in many cultures and societies around the world of the psychobiological process that takes place during adolescence (Esman, 1990; Frankel, 2009; Schlegel, 2000). However, despite the fact that there is a tacit agreement among psychologists, social workers, anthropologists, sociologists and medical practitioners that biological aspects of adolescence are somewhat “universal”, particular tasks of adolescence and the struggles and challenges that adolescence brings are culturally and historically determined (Esman, 1990; Schlegel 2000). Unfortunately, regardless of the importance of the social context to understand developmental processes including adolescence, little research has been done to explore how the experience of being an adolescent is permeated by social and cultural structures. In this study, the purpose is to explore how the interception of two experiences (e.i being an adolescent and being an immigrant) in the US affects one’s sense of self. This section presents a review of multidisciplinary literature on adolescence as a complex, dynamic and cultural and socially framed experience.

Conceptual History of Adolescence

Adolescence is a relatively new concept in Western psychology and psychoanalysis that was first introduced in the eighteenth century in Europe and in the nineteenth century in The United States. Since it was first introduced, the concept of adolescence has gone through many changes. Thus, the approaches in therapy and the conception of what it means to be an adolescent have also changed over time. Nowadays, adolescents share many characteristics in different cultures that make it easier to identify them despite their ethnicity (Esman, 1990). Adolescence as a developmental process, therefore, has spread somewhat globally and its duration as a developmental stage has been expanded (Frankel, 1998). According to Esman (1990), “never before in history have young people, at least in the industrialized world been so blatantly present in their modes of dress, their hairstyles, their musical tastes” (p. 3).

Tracing the history of the concept of adolescence opens up the question of when did our present conception of adolescence emerge? According to the French cultural historian Philippe Aries (as cited by Esman, 1990), adolescence in Western Europe was combined with childhood until the eighteenth century. Only with the industrial revolution “the requirement for more extended formal education led to the defining and institutionalization of a period between childhood and adulthood” (Esman, 1990, p. 9). Kaplan (as cited by Esman, 1990) designated Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the “inventor” of adolescence based on Rousseau’s proposal of a system of education exclusively for fifteen to twenty-years-old. During the eighteenth century in the United States, after the fourteenth birthday, an adolescent was an economic asset to the family, especially in large families. Only after the nineteenth century due to increasing urbanization and

industrialization, school attendance became mandatory and specific institutions were designed for the youth such as high schools, YMCAs and church youth groups (Esman, 1990). In this frame, middle age children and young adolescents began to be perceived not as economic assets but as a drain on the family resources as they no longer worked but attended school. As a consequence, adolescents became an age range in which one was seen more as problematic than as resource and contributor to the family and to the society.

Sociological and Phenomenological Approach to Adolescence

The subjective experience of life stages including adolescence is marked by the social and cultural context in which one is embedded. The construction of one's identity as an adolescence is affected by the larger social structure. Therefore, what it means to be an adolescent or an adult has been associated with certain tasks or roles as well as with individual or psychological changes. From a phenomenological lens, there is the assumption that the worldview respondents present is their subjective reality (Macmillan, 2007). This subjective reality reflects in part how the larger social structure is affecting one's experience of the world. Post immigration one's subjective reality as an adolescent, and one's experience of the world, changes as the larger social structure also changes.

What it means to be an adolescent, taking into account cultural and social structures that shape that experience, has been connected to the performance of certain roles. Roles are social constructions or social expectations that are internalized and performed as natural as one is being socialized in certain culture or society (Macmillan, 2007). Every life stage has been socially constructed as the performance of certain roles.

Therefore, with the inclusion of adolescence as a different life stage certain roles were attributed to the experience of being an adolescent in contrast to the experience of being an adult or a child. Stryker (as cited by Macmillan, 2007) proposed that commitment to particular roles impacts one's identity that ultimately affects one's roles performance. In this frame, one's immersion in networks of social relations either facilitates or frustrates access to a given role. As Macmillan (2007) explained:

In a life course context, these roles do not merely exist but instead appear to individuals in the form of a socially prescribed script that indicates, not just what expectations come with a given role but also when entry into a role can or should occur (p. 15).

According to Macmillan (2007), those scripts are cultural products that change as social and institutional circumstances also fluctuate. The timing of roles is also a social product that is crucial to understand one's identity and perceived sense of self in relation to when is appropriated to enter and exit certain roles. To illustrate how roles marked life stages Macmillan (2007) explained: "the social lives of children are further constrained by laws and expectations that children, up to a certain age, will be full-time students and will not participate in the labor force" (p. 16). When such roles including being a full-time student are challenged as social, cultural and economic structures change, one's subjective experience of the life stage in which one is socially embedded also change. In this sense, adulthood has being associated with roles including moving out of school, having a full time employment, marriage, parenthood and independent living. Therefore, social roles are key markers of adolescence and adulthood that define one's perceived status in the life course.

From this approach, adolescence, as well as other life stages, take a new dimension, as they are viewed not as an exclusively psychological, biological and

universal phenomenon but as a social, cultural and historical one. Indeed, the tasks of adolescence that psychology has presumed are universal and independent from social structures are challenged, and issues of cultural and social differences in the experience of life stages are addressed by this broader look at the developmental stages. Along the same lines, “how individuals themselves perceived and interpret the social world around them and their place in it is important because it can influence their behavior and subsequent well-being” (Andrew, Eggerling-Boeck, Sanderfur, Smith, 2007, p. 227).

Research on Adolescence from a Sociological and Phenomenological Perspective

Adolescence is not a clear-cut stage in once life. When one is an adolescent characteristics of both childhood and adulthood come together. For this reason, adolescent, as a liminal experience is an unstable and sometimes unpredictable experience. From a sociological and phenomenological perspective, the beginning and end of adolescence is not clear or set by biological markers. Indeed, those biological markers are being increasingly questioned when trying to understand one’s experience of being an adolescent or adult. I present two researches that describe the blurry line that divides both adolescence and adulthood.

Janel Benson and Frank Furstenberg (2007) explored at what point do young people begin to take an adult standpoint and view themselves accordingly. In this frame, the authors explored how much entering adult roles signifies becoming an adult for young people. They concluded that young people who assumed adult roles and acquired more financial responsibilities were more likely than others to perceive themselves as adults. Such roles included establishing an independent household, living with or married

to a partner and having a child. These adult roles were accompanied by characteristics that the authors described as individual traits such as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. However, what it seems to be an individual decision or an individual trait, such as accepting responsibility for one's self, for some young people it may be the only option, as socio-economic circumstances demanded.

Benson and Furstenberg (2007) suggested that entry to a developmental transition is not strictly timetable. Therefore, exploring the subjective experience highlights how roles and socio-economic conditions affects one's perceived developmental stage in life. The authors also stressed that the acquisition and construction of a subjective adolescence and adult identity are not the same for all youth and tend to vary by social position; "working-class families do not have the financial safety net or support to experiment with different types of jobs or attend college, especially for an extended amount of time" (Benson and Furstenberg, 2007, p.203). Furthermore, the authors stated that young people tend to move in and out of adult and adolescence roles, reassessing their own perceived developmental status and identity.

Megan Andrew, Jennifer Eggerling-Boeck, Gary Sandefur and Buffy Smith (2007) explored if internal and individualistic changes (e.i being mature and independent) had a greater impact on one's perceived developmental stage in life than one's performance of a role that is socially associated to a certain developmental stage such as becoming a parent and one's perception of being an adult. Authors concluded that is not either or, but instead, both individualistic changes and traditional markers, including living independently and becoming a parent, affects one's perceived developmental stage.

Authors suggested that “the individual is self-reflective and identifies her or himself based on meanings derived from her or his roles or positions in a structured society” (Andrew, Eggerling-Boeck, Sandefur and Smith, 2007, p.248). Therefore, one’s perceived identity, either an adolescent or an adult identity, is tight to the roles that one performs in society.

No research was found on the experience of adolescents post immigration from a sociological and phenomenological perspective. However, based on the theoretical principles that guide this perspective, as one experiences changes in socio-economic and cultural conditions, one’s experience of the world and perceived identity will also change. For this study is crucial to determine cultural and social markers particular to South American Adolescents post immigration that shape the experience of being an adolescent and adult. The exploration of the subjective experience of adolescence post immigration may also contribute to expand the underlying theoretical guidelines presented above as immigrants experience the transformation of their social and cultural world.

Psychoanalytical Theories on Adolescence

In 1905, Sigmund Freud published *Three Essays On The Theory Of Sexuality* in which he described adolescence as a developmental period in which one’s early childhood development is being played out in a repetitive manner as a recapitulation (Frankel, 2009). Freud (as cited by Frankel, 2009) wrote that during adolescence there is a maturation of sexual instincts and the direction of this development is determined by early sexuality during childhood. During adolescence *erotism* is brought to the service of reproduction and a psychological transformation takes place allowing the individual to

find an appropriate sexual object to fulfill the genital maturity that one has acquired. Sigmund Freud assumed that adolescents strived for a heterosexual love relationship as the normal psychological process and ultimate goal in adolescence. Thus, Sigmund Freud's theory of adolescence introduces the notion of *recapitulation* as a universal developmental process in which one acquires a heterosexual identity.

Ernest Jones (as cited by Frankel, 2009) described adolescence as a transitional period of life in which regression and individual recapitulation takes place. Jones stated that during infancy (first five years of life), one experiences overwhelming emotional experiences and that these same feelings return during adolescence. Jones differentiates infancy from adolescence by stating that the central task of infancy is to gain control over acts of excretion while during adolescence the main task is the acquirement of self-control. Jones agreed with Freud that the stages of development in adolescence are determined by early development during infancy.

In 1956, Erik Erikson described adolescence as the time of life that promotes the sense of personal identity (Mishne, 2001). According to the Eriksonian model in the stage of adolescence a stable identity "requires an integration of formative experiences that give the child the sense that he is a person with a history, a stability, and a continuity that is recognizable by others" (Brandell, 2004, p. 48). Erikson (1950) referred to adolescence as a period in which one is being challenged by rapid bodily and psychological changes that in many cases lead to a role confusion; the adolescent has to juggle the way in which she/he appears to be in the eyes of others as well as the adolescent's internal perception of self and identity. In this view, adolescents have to regain the sense of stability and continuity as they "discover" their final identity. Peer relationships and the first love

relationships during adolescence are an attempt to find one's identity by projecting one's ego image onto another in order to reflect and clarify one's identity. The intolerance presented in adolescence as excluding everyone who is different is a way to defend one's self from an identity confusion. Erikson (1950) assumed that an adolescents' mind goes through a process of moratorium in which one searches for the social values that guide identity: "the adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the *moratorium*, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult" (Erikson, 1950, p. 263).

In 1966, Anna Freud contradicted the notion of adolescence as the beginning of sexual life, character formation and capacity to love that academic psychology formulated at the time (Frankel, 2009). According to Anna Freud (as cited by Frankel, 2009), the beginning of sexual life, character formation and capacity to love begins in the first years of life. However, Anna Freud described adolescence as a *recapitulation* period along the same lines of her father, Sigmund Freud, and Ernest Jones.

Anna Freud (as cited by Frankel, 2009) stated that adolescence is the first recapitulation process in one's life. Recapitulation processes are characterized by a strong id that confronts a relatively weak ego. The ego's capacity for transformation is the major difference between recapitulation periods in one's life. The ego's maturity is reflected on different defense mechanism, the direction, content, knowledge and capabilities that the ego has acquired and is able to manage in different periods of one's life. According to Anna Freud, nothing new happens during adolescence; the id's wishes and fantasies have an unchanging nature throughout one's life. Compared to infancy, the adolescent ego is

stronger and more mature in terms of adapting to change and is better prepared to respond to the powerful instinctual forces (id).

Peter Blos (as cited by Frankel, 2009) described adolescence as the second individuation process following Margaret Mahler's theory of separation-individuation process. According to Blos (as cited by Frankel, 2009), the adolescent challenges family dependencies and infantile objects in order to become an individuated adult member of society. Adolescents crave for the comforts of drive gratification but fear re-involvement in early object relations. According to Blos (as cited by Frankel, 2009), the regression experienced during adolescence is a re-experiencing of traumatic states from early childhood and infancy. In this manner, regression allows adolescents to gain developmental progress as one's ego has the capacity for self-observance and is able to bear upon the latent early trauma. In light of Anna Freud, Blos (as cited by Frankel, 2009) assured that the adolescent ego has more resources, especially adaptive and restorative capacities. For Blos, the regression during adolescence is not a defensive mechanism but an essential function that the psyche needs to move through in order to accomplish the ultimate developmental task of adolescence - the individuation process. When regression fails to serve as a developmental process, the ego does not achieve maturation or individuation.

Laufer and Laufer (as cited by Frankel, 2009) described adolescence as a progressive phenomenon that is required for adult normality. In this frame, the essential task of adolescence is to give infantile sexual life its final, normal shape (Frankel, 2009). Laufer and Laufer (as cited by Frankel 2009) assumed, like Freud, that during adolescence the final sexual organization takes place including the physical maturation of

the genitals. Laufer and Laufer, as well as Sigmund Freud assumed that normal sexual identity was irreversible and heterosexual rejecting changes in one's sexual identity and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, transsexual and questioning) sexual identities (Frankel, 2009). According to Laufer and Laufer (as cited by Frankel, 2009), adolescents must find a balance between one's sexual wishes and what is socially allowed. This balance defines one's sexual identity after adolescence.

From a multidisciplinary perspective on adolescence there are some important aspects to keep in mind when analyzing psychoanalytic theories on adolescence. First, as Sigmund Freud, Ernest Jones, Ana Freud and Peter Blos stressed, adolescence is viewed as a recapitulation and a regression. This means that what happens during adolescence is not disjoint from one's early developmental experience. In fact, what one experiences during childhood will determine one's experience and process of adolescence. In this frame, to understand one's process of adolescence means to look at one's childhood. In this sense, adolescence is seen as a predictable and linear process that follows certain stages based on one's childhood. Indeed, one's destiny is determined by one's early relationships and experiences.

Second, according to Erickson (1950) during adolescence one searches for a final identity. Erickson assumes that identity is fixed and stable and only constructed during one's adolescence. Along the same lines, Sigmund Freud, Ana Freud, Ernest Jones, Peter Bloss and Laufer and Laufer, assumed that sexual identity is also fixed, stable and heterosexual. Therefore, a theory that assumes that identity is stable and fixed rejects the idea of identity as a contradictory, unstable and variable life-long process.

Third, none of the psychoanalytic authors mentioned above considered culture and

social contexts as key elements that guide the experiences of being an adolescent. Moreover, psychoanalytic authors assumed the experience of being an adolescence to be universal based on the idea that adolescence is a psychological and biological condition. For instance, Ernest Jones assumes that the control over the act of excretion is purely a psychological and biological necessity but lacks to acknowledged the social and cultural elements that surrounds and give sense and meaning to the control of such act. The act of excretion is biological but the specific control over the act is in great part social and cultural. Along the same lines, Jones stated that during adolescence the developmental task is to gain self-control. Such self-control is not present in all societies, and if it is present it may acquire a different meaning and so it may be manifested by different social and cultural behaviors and values. Another example is Erikson's idea of *moratorium* in which one has a time during adolescence to explore and choose one's final identity. Moratorium only occurs if certain social and cultural conditions allow oneself to do such search, therefore, is not a universal experience of being an adolescence.

What it is interesting about questioning and challenging "universal" developmental processes is to unfold how most of those processes are actually a reflection of social expectations and cultural constructions of what one should experience at certain life stage in a certain society. Developmental processes view as entirely biological and psychological ones are experienced as internal and individual processes, therefore, diluting the social and cultural frames that gave meaning to those processes.

In the following section, a review of the literature on theories of acculturation and assimilation is presented.

Immigration: Re-thinking Theories of Acculturation and Assimilation

Assimilation theory was first introduced by Robert Park (1937) and the Chicago School of Sociology as an explanatory framework of the process that immigrants go through post immigration. Park suggested four stages, or a *race relations cycle*, that immigrants follow through until they are completely assimilated. The first stage referred to the *initial contact* that immigrants have with the host society. The second stage has to do with the *competition* that immigrants face once they are in the host country. The third stage speaks to the process of *accommodation* in which the immigrant becomes familiar to the new country but not completely fused with the host society. The fourth stage refers to the state in which the immigrant finally is fused with or *assimilates* into the host society.

Park's assimilation theory assumed a "straight line transformation that suggested continuous upward movement by immigrant groups to the host norms" (Deaux, 2006, p.30). The assimilation theory assumed that immigrants should give up their association with their country of origin in order to become part of the host society. Thus, immigrants should act like the host society in order to be successful in the new country. The assimilation theory was metaphorically represented as the "melting pot" in which a cultural fusion takes place in order to transform a heterogeneous society into a more homogeneous one. According to assimilation theory, if immigrants were not able to fuse with the host society they were viewed as either not prepared or not able to identify with the native way of acting and being in the new country. It is the immigrant's responsibility to assimilate into the new country.

Assimilation theory (Park, 1937) assumes that the post immigration experience is a

steadily linear process in which one assimilates more and more into the new society as time goes by. Park also assumes that immigration is a unidirectional process in which the immigrant has to learn everything about the host country but brings nothing to or does not transform the host country. The “melting pot” metaphor assumed that once the immigrant has assimilated, she or he is able to find a place in the community based on her or his individual merits without any reference to her or his racial and ethnic origin. In other words, the assimilation theory is somewhat color blind as well as ethnicity blind as it blames the individual for her or his own misfortune as if discrimination and prejudice were not present.

Studies on immigration based on the assimilation theory do not reflect the perspectives of the immigrants themselves but focuses the effort to maintain a homogeneous national identity by measuring how much the immigrant blend within the new country (Bhabha, 2004). Indeed, assimilation theory explores the degree in which the immigrant has learned the culture and language of the host country but does not attend to the experience of the immigrants when their original beliefs and worldviews change in a direction that is not necessarily the one of the mainstream society.

Along the same lines, a more recent concept has been used to explain the adjustment process that immigrants go through post immigration. This concept is acculturation. *Acculturation* is a “process that begins when individuals from different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact and that leads to changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Drachman & Ryan, 2001, p. 661). According to acculturation theory, immigrants are caught in between two states: 1) maintaining their cultural identity and characteristics of the country of origin and 2) acquiring cultural traits from the host

society. Four types of acculturation were defined (Drachman & Ryan, 2001). First, *assimilation* occurs when the immigrant rejects his or her original cultural identity and fuses with the larger society. Second, *integration* occurs when the immigrant retains his or her original identity and participation in the larger society is also accepted. The third notion is *separation* and refers to maintaining one's original identity and rejecting any type of participation in the host society. The fourth is *marginalization* and refers to the rejection of both the original cultural identity and participation in the larger society.

Both assimilation and acculturation theories assumed that the more the immigrant is able to blend with the host society, the better for her or his psychological well-being and also for the construction of a more culturally homogeneous country. According to Souto-Manning (2007), the ideology conveyed by both assimilation and acculturation theory is “similar to colonist ideology where colonizer attributes are believed to be superior” (p.403).

Theories of assimilation and acculturation assume that immigration is a static and predictable process in which the immigrant's lack of identification with the new culture is due to a cultural clash. Such a cultural clash is seen as a deficit in the immigrant's culture rather than the failure to address cultural differences in the host society. The image of the immigrant as either psychologically embedded in the old country or in the new country pose a false dichotomy between assimilated or acculturated and unassimilated or unacculturated immigrant. For this reason, to look at a the liminal space in which immigrants move through opens the opportunity go beyond the degree in which the immigrant has been able to blend into the new country as a desirable and normal outcome post immigration. Rather, exploring the liminal space through the immigrant's experience

elicits the way in which one neither identifies culturally and psychologically with the old nor with the new country but negotiates a more complex narrative and identity of oneself while searching the multiple, dynamic and oftentimes contradictory meanings of the post immigration experience. Exploring the liminal space in which the immigrant is situated differs from the fourth acculturation stage (in which one does not maintain the original ethnic identity and does not participate in the larger society) That is, moving through a liminal space does not imply having no connection with the old and new cultural settings; but rather there is a connection from both that influence the metaphorical creation of a transitional- also liminal or third- space that contain the complexity of the experiences of the immigrant.

In the present study, the aim is to explore the dual liminal space in which South American Latino immigrants move through, immigration is seen as dynamic process rather than just a change of geographic location (Deaux, 2006). As Deaux (2006) pointed out “immigration is not a “done deal” but instead a part of one’s life that continues to have relevance in years and indeed generations to come. Here is where issues of meaning, of expectation and of memory, must be considered as well as the processes of active identity negotiation” (p. 4). For the immigrant, there is an ongoing process of negotiation of her/his identity in relation to other people and other cultural groups. The negotiation of ones identity also interplays with the expectations that one brings to the new country. Some of the memories that immigrants bring with them will continue while other memories will be discarded. The ongoing process of balancing both past and present experiences and memories is a process of constantly redefining oneself in relation to the current context in the lifelong journey of finding meaning in post immigration

experience. Finding meaning is an important characteristic of the liminal space in which immigrants move through, as taken-for-granted social representations- or shared meanings in one's culture- are not longer widely shared within the new country and culture(s). Rather those social representations may differ sharply as one moves between societies.

Impact of Immigration on Adolescents

Some of the psychological effects that immigrants experience include anxiety, depression, stress and disorientation, which reflect the sense of loss and lack of sense of belonging to the new country (Slonim-Nevo, Sharaga, Mirsky, Petrovsky, Borodenko, 2006). In this frame, immigrant adolescents are more likely to go through more grief experiences by the time they are twenty than monocultural individuals do in their entire life (Nette & Hayden, 2007). According to Nette & Hayden (2007), the sense of loss associated with the immigration experience affects the child's attachment and causes the child to have a lack of belonging and a sense of rootlessness. The lack of belonging creates in the immigrant a sense of being a "perpetual visitor" or a "perpetual outsider" which is first reinforced by the fact that immigrant adolescents do not know the language, culture and expectations of members of the new country (Nette & Hayden, 2007).

Henry Chow (2007) also explored the relationship between sense of belonging and psychological distress. He concluded that the sense of belonging to the new country is closely related to feeling positive about oneself, feeling trust and positive regard from and for others. Chow (2007) critiqued the fact that the readiness to become a citizen has traditionally been used as a measure of immigrants' sense of belonging. Rather, he

stressed that the age at immigration emerged as the strongest predictor of sense of belonging. Chow assumed that those who came at a later stage in life would have had a greater influence on the family's decision to migrate, therefore, experience a higher sense of belonging. However, it is questionable if greater influence on the family decision to migrate guarantees a higher sense of belonging.

For the most part research on the psychological, social and cultural impact of immigration has focus on adults (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 2005). Little research has been conducted to address this topic on children and adolescents. Unfortunately, even less research has been conducted on how immigration impacts developmental processes including adolescence. Moreover, the majority of research has focus on the adverse consequences of immigration, describing periods of depression and psychological distress (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 2005). As Garcia-Coll & Magnuson (2005) stressed: "the emphasis of immigration as a stressful experience has prevented researchers from trying to understand the ways in which immigration might serve as a growth-enhancing event" (p. 107). Therefore, moving away from an underlying assumption that migration has only negative psychological effects on immigrants may bring a more complex understanding of the impact and process of immigration. Indeed, the complexities of the impact of immigration include taking into account the contradictions in which an immigrant may simultaneously go through a stressful and growth-enhancing experience (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 2005).

Along the same lines, Carola Suarez-Orozco and Avarly Carhill (2008) stressed that psychology has focus on the adaptive process including acculturative stress and migration morbidity, relational strains in family dynamics, challenges in identity formation, and

educational adaptations and outcomes. This line of research searches “for a link between the stresses of the migratory experience and an expected negative fall-out (depression, marital conflict, crises of identity, incarceration rates, and the like) resulting from that experience” (Suarez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008, p. 89).

Impact of Immigration on Families

Families usually bring their own set of coping skills post immigration. Some of those coping skills and ways to manage with challenging situations may not be as effective as they were in the country of origin. Garcia-Coll & Magnuson (2005) stated that “migration frequently requires a family to adopt new patterns of interaction and coping that may conflict with the well-established patterns of homeland” (p.112). Post immigration family dynamics change as roles of the family members also change. According to Dion and Dion (2001), immigrant families’ gender-related roles are challenged in the new country, as they are not sustainable in the new socio-economic context. Nancy Foner (2005) highlighted how Dominican women post immigration claimed to have more egalitarian relations with their spouses. Along the same lines, cultural norms and gender relations of Vietnamese immigrants in the United States were influenced by American notions about the equality of men and women (Foner, 2005). Therefore, these notions created a greater acceptance of Vietnamese women who smoke, drink beer, and wear cloths that showed more their bodies (Foner, 2005). Indeed, post immigration, parents may modify their demands as the new culture supports or disapprove cultural beliefs that immigrants bring from their country of origin. As Foner (2005) explained: “American ideas about what kinds of dating and premarital sexual

behavior are appropriate, as well as about romantic love and free marriage choice, provide ammunition for immigrant children who want to reject (...) close supervision of their relations with the opposite sex” (p. 163).

South American Immigration to the United States

As of 2007, the foreign-born population represents 12.6% of the overall population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2007). Latino immigrants represent 54.4% of the overall foreign-born population and Latino immigrants between 15 to 24 years old represent 14% of the Latino foreign-born population (United States Census Bureau, 2007). The foreign-born population from South America represents the 12.4% of the overall Latino foreign-born population from which the 12.3% represent the foreign-born population between 15 to 24 years old (United States Census Bureau, 2007). This means that a considerable number of South American youth comes to the US and is the second age range in the Latino foreign-born population with the highest percentage after the population between 25-35 years old.

South American Latino Immigrants: Settlement and Motivations to Migrate

The Latino foreign-born population has historically established ethnic communities that serve as a magnet for new immigrants from their country of origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). These ethnic communities that are numerically strong offer social and moral resources that support immigrants’ emotional and economic well being. The concentration of ethnic minorities in certain areas assures them at least some economic and political influence in the community. According to Portes and Rumbaut

(2006), there are four main positive consequences that result from the ethnic spatial concentration. First, immigrants in ethnic communities are more likely to preserve their valued lifestyle. Second, the pace of acculturation can be regulated. Third, in the ethnic communities there is greater social control over the young. Fourth, there is a greater access to community networks for social, cultural, economic and emotional support.

According to Portes and Rumbaut (2006), there are a variety of reasons why Latino families decide to migrate. On the one hand, migration stabilizes family livelihoods and meets families' long-desired aspirations (e.i a car, additional land, domestic appliances of all sort, to name a few). On the other, for professional immigrants, migration is a way to reach life standards that include their past achievements and desire to advance their careers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Contrary to media's portrays of Latino immigrants, today's South American immigrants, even the undocumented, have had some education and come from cities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Indeed, immigrants do not come from the poorest countries but from middle-income nations, and typically they come from groups that are relatively advantaged in comparison to the rest of the population. Therefore, "the average educational and skill credentials of the immigrant population of the United States at present are not much inferior to those of the native-born" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, p. 15). Immigrants learn in their country of origin about the labor market opportunities available for them, and established migrant communities assist the settlement of newcomers.

Due to the fact that moving abroad is not an easy process, even under the most favorable circumstances, immigrants represent only the 3% of the global population (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Migration is not a rational calculation of the present wage in

comparison to the wage that immigrants could earn in the new country. Even when the opportunities are available, those opportunities must be desired: “desirability is less a question of the gross earnings disparity between sending and receiving countries than the *meaning* that these economic advantages have for households and communities” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006, p. 17).

South American Latino Families Post Immigration

Jaes-Fallcov (2005) explored the ambiguous loss that Latino Immigrants go through post immigration. Jaes-Fallcov (2005), as well as other authors (Slonim-Nevo, Sharaga, Mirsky, Petrovsky, Borodenko, 2006), have stressed that the recurrent psychological stress that immigrants experience is related to the multiple losses post immigration. Latino immigrants experience high degree of loss and mourning as “gone are family members and friends who stay behind; gone is the native language, customs and rituals; and gone is the land itself” (Jaes-Fallcov, 2005, p. 197). Jaes-Fallcov (2005) defined the grieving process that comes with immigration as incomplete, postponed and ambiguous as post immigration one often fantasizes the eventual return or forthcoming reunion.

Latino families have a tendency towards *familism*, which means the responsibility to care for and support one another in one’s extended family (Chahin, Villarruel & Viramontez, 1999; Jaes-Fallcov, 2005). Post immigration “familism may be manifest in the persistence of long-distance attachments and loyalties in the face of arduous social or economic conditions, in attempts to migrate as a unit and live close to one another, and in the desire to reunify when individuals have taken up the journey alone” (Jaes-Fallcov, 2005, p. 200). As immigrants adapt and learn to master at some degree the new

environment, they learn to interact in a culture that values assertiveness, independence and achievement. However, to learn the values of the new culture does not imply that the immigrant abandons his or her connectedness with family and culture of origin. Jaes-Fallacov (2005) concluded that Latino families have learned to restore continuity by recreating cultural spaces including family reunions and gatherings within the Latino community as well as urban landscapes of open markets and ethnic neighborhoods. These family reunions and gathering acquire different meanings post immigration but those meanings reflect the disruption and necessity to re-build at a symbolic level continuity to one's experience of immigration.

Summary

Liminality is a shared characteristic of the experiences of being an adolescent and being an immigrant. New studies on immigration strived for a re-formulation of the theories of assimilation and acculturation that have traditionally guided the analysis on the experience of immigrants in the US. These new theoretical trends attempt to understand immigration as a dynamic process that has contradictory, both positive and negative, outcomes for the immigrant.

The interception of the experience of being an adolescent and being an immigrant has not been explored from these new theoretical approaches. Moreover, research on the impact of immigration on developmental processes including adolescence has focused exclusively on the psychological distress that adolescents go through post immigration. Further exploration on how immigration impacts the subjective experience of being an immigrant needs to be conducted. This study aimed to contribute to expand the

understanding of how the socio-economic and cultural circumstances post immigration shape both the experience of being an adolescent and immigrant in the US.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The research question for this qualitative, exploratory study was: How do South American Latino adolescents move through the cultural and developmental liminal spaces post immigration? This qualitative, exploratory study used flexible methods to gather data in the form of stories from South American Latino adolescents post immigration. The primary objective was to explore the dual liminalities (i.e. developmental and cultural) that these adolescents experienced and the challenges that this population brings to therapy. Data for this study was gathered through face to face interviews with semi-structured, open-ended questions that elicited narrative data from the participants. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated into English by the researcher.

This methodology chapter consists of several sections. These sections are: 1) definition of key terms, 2) sample, 3) ethics and safeguards, 4) data collection, 5) data analysis and 6) discussion (including expected and unexpected findings, limitations and potential biases).

Definition of Key Terms

Cultural liminal spaces refers to the cultural transition inherent in the immigration experience; specifically, the cultural transition where one experiences the taken-for-granted social representations as uncertain, ambivalent and contradictory. *Social representations* are shared meanings in culture or beliefs about concepts or objects that are jointly constructed by members of a society, and determine the way one acts and feels (Deaux, 2006). *Developmental liminal spaces* refer to the social, cultural and developmental markers that are perceived as the beginning and end of adolescence. As one navigates through adolescence, one experiences the developmental struggle to leave childhood and become less dependent upon parental figures while trying to find one's place in the world: "There is a search for meaning beyond the self in the cosmological contemplation of where one fits into the universe" (Frankel, 2009, p. 123). Both immigrants and adolescents are in the quest for meaning and these particular circumstances bring challenges that are important to better understand as clinicians.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative, flexible exploratory research design with an in-person interview format. This research design is defined as "those flexible methods of systematic, empirical inquiry intended to define, explore, or map the nature of emergent, complex, or poorly understood phenomena" (Anastas, 1999, p.55). The purpose of the flexible method research design is to expand or redefined a phenomenon in a way that remains close to the experience of the research participants themselves (Anastas, 1999).

Open-ended interviews elicited accounts of subjective experience. In other words, qualitative open-ended interviews attempt to understand and unfold the meaning participants attribute to their experience (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). As Silverman (2006) explained,

If interviewees are to be viewed as subjects who actively construct the features of their cognitive world, then one should try to obtain intersubjective depth between both sides so that a deep mutual understanding can be achieved (p.124)

In this frame, interviews are viewed as spaces in which both the interviewee and interviewer co-construct meaning as they explore past and present experiences. As the researcher conducts the interview, the participant engages in a dialogue that guides his or her responses. It would be inaccurate to assume that the interview gathers information of the participants' experience in a way that corresponds to an objective and single reality. However, interviews have the potential to unfold stories and new insights that may lead to new interpretation of well-known phenomena (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Along the same lines, qualitative interviews may capture the complexities and contradictions of human experience in a richer manner than positivist and quantitative research methods alone.

This study is also a retrospective study since most of the participants were not longer adolescents (between 12 and 20 years) at the time of the interviews. The design of this research was intentionally proposed as a retrospective one in order to gather participant's reflections upon their experience as a whole. These reflections would not have been possible to collect if all participants were going through their adolescence at the time of the study.

Sample

A total of 12 South American Latino adolescents who immigrated to the US during their adolescence were interviewed. Participants of this study came from Spanish-speaking countries of South America including Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Subjects came to the United States when they were between the ages of 12 to 20. These participants have been in the US between 3 and 13 years. I recruited an equal number of females and males in order to establish gender differences in terms of their experiences as South American adolescents and immigrants. At the time of this study, participants were 18 and older but none of the participants were older than 30.

I recruited participants by introducing this study to a few South American Latinos I knew in the community. Those South American Latinos referred me to other potential participants. Once potential participants contacted me by phone, I explained the study, the inclusion criteria and the process of the interview. Twelve potential participants contacted me, and all of them met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate. I had planned to distribute flyers but it was not necessary because the referrals I got from Latinos in the community were enough for this study.

Most interviews were conducted at local coffee shops in the area and three at the participants' home. Interviews' length ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Eleven interviews were conducted in Spanish, as participants requested. One interview was conducted in both English and Spanish as the participant expressed how some words came out naturally in English and others in Spanish. This participant has been in the US for 13 years and came at the age of 12.

Ethics and Safeguards

Upon receipt of the approval letter from the Smith College School of Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix A), a consent form (Appendix B) was given to every participant explaining the goals of the project and the risks and benefits of participating in this study. It was explained in the consent form that I as the researcher would protect the confidentiality of the participant. Any identifying information contained in the audio-taped interview was omitted from the transcription. The information gathered from the interviews was tape-recorded and the cassettes are kept in a safe, locked location for three years according to federal regulations, at which time they will be destroyed. Signed consent forms, interview tapes and transcripts were numerically coded to be able to identify data if a participant decided to withdraw from participation at a later time before the end date for the study. The consent form had my contact information in case a participant needed to withdraw from the study. A list of counseling referrals was provided in case any participant required further psychological and/or emotional support.

Data Collection

An interview guide consisting of questions that emerged from the literature review and the overarching research question was developed. These open-ended questions were designed to elicit narratives about the participants' experiences as South American Latino adolescents and immigrants moving through a dual liminal space. Two examples of the questions (Appendix C) from the interview guide are as follows: "Please tell me about the factors that influenced your family's decision to immigrate to the US".

And “What are the major changes that you and your family experienced when you came to the US?” Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time or interrupt the interview as necessary. Feedback from the HSR committee regarding the relevance of the interview guide in relation to the research question was incorporated. Therefore, some questions were added and others modified in the interview guide. In order to ensure clarity of the questions, pilot interviews were conducted to three individuals fluent in Spanish and English who were not participants of this study. Based on their feedback, questions were modified using words that were more accurate or precise. Also, repetitive questions were omitted in order to maintain fluidity of the interview and decrease the length of the interview

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed and translated from Spanish to English by the researcher. Participants’ answers to each question were gathered altogether in one file. For each question, the researcher looked for recurrent themes across participants’ answers, as well as for irregular or uncommon themes that participants reported in the interviews. Meaning coding and deconstruction approaches were used to analyze the interviews. In meaning coding “the goal is the development of categories that capture the fullness of the experiences and actions studied” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, 202). Therefore, data from the interviews was divided in seven categories as presented in the findings chapter: demographic data of participants, pre-immigration, post immigration, developmental liminalities: experiences of being an adolescent in the US, cultural liminalities: experiences of being an immigrant in the US, use of resources, and

participant's perceived lessons from the experience of migrating to the US during their adolescence.

In addition, recurrent concepts mentioned by the participants within the categories described above were analyzed using a deconstruction approach as proposed by Derrida (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). According to this approach, "the focus is not on what the person who uses a concept means, but on what the concept says and does not say" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.230). In this frame, concepts that participants' related to their feelings and actions were denaturalized in the sense that their taken-for-granted value was highlighted. In other words, the meaning participants associated to their experience also denotes the exclusion of other possible meanings to their experiences. The deconstruction of taken-for-granted concepts used in daily life challenges the researcher's assumptions about the meaning and value posed on concepts as the participant may attribute a different value to the same concept. Along these lines, concepts evoke values that have become natural, obvious and ordinary for those who share cultural backgrounds. Deconstructing those concepts elucidates what is appreciated and what is not, for the individual and for a particular society and culture.

This approach was selected for this study mainly for one reason: analyzing ordinary and daily experiences may be seen as unproductive as their extraordinary value has been socially diluted, normalized and hidden. To deconstruct the meanings of ordinary concepts shows the lenses from which experiences are being frame. Indeed, deconstructing common experiences brings to the surface values that otherwise are taken-for-granted.

Limitations and Biases

This study has some issues that need to be considered. First, as a South American Latina and immigrant, this study is biased by my own experience. While my own experiences have contributed to my understanding of the several complex layers that cover this topic, they have also placed my perceptions at one angle of the issue. It is often more difficult to deconstruct one's own values and meanings as they become natural and mechanic. Due to the fact that participants from this study shared the researchers' cultural background, concepts may not have been perceived as significant social constructions that guided the experiences of being an immigrant and adolescent in the US.

Second, the diversity of Latinos included in this study may lead to assumptions that are not necessarily true for other Latinos. In order to capture the "reality" of the majority of Latinos from one cultural background, participants from the same country may have more cultural similarities that may reflect the experiences of other individuals from the same context. In this study, Latinos from Spanish speaking countries from South America were interviewed in an attempt to recruit more participants to the study who meet the criteria.

Third, while a qualitative approach may captures the complexities of human experiences, it is important to note that interviews are not "completely open and a free dialogue between egalitarian partners" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.33). Indeed, the interviewer determines the topic and decides which answers to follow up. It would have been optimal to give the interpretations of the data back to the subjects to lesser the monopoly of interpretation that the interviewer has over the subjects' statements.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from twelve interviews conducted with South American immigrants who came to the United States during their adolescence. The interview questions were designed to elicit a response, in the form of narrative text, concerning participants' experience as an adolescent immigrant in the United States, and the ways in which they navigated through those experiences. As a retrospective study, participants were asked questions regarding experiences in their home country related to the decision to migrate, the process to settle in post immigration, and supports and resources that they used. In order to address the dual liminality (e.i developmental and cultural), participants were asked questions regarding frequent interactions in which cultural differences took place, and how those interactions affected their sense of mastery of the environment as adolescents and as immigrants. Finally, participants were asked about how their sense of belonging to a country and the experience of being an adolescent changed post immigration, and how these changes have impacted their current sense of self.

Virtually all participants described their experience as immigrants as a state in which one is neither never entirely part of the host society nor part of one's country of origin. Participants described this state as a process in which one is constantly negotiating

one's values, culture and beliefs while trying to fit in the host society. In addition, participants commented on how the fact that this experience of immigration happened during their adolescence -and not before or after- has impacted their sense of self in a deeper manner. Participants also agreed with the fact that, even though transitions post immigration (i.e. developmental and cultural) were hard to deal with (many experienced depressed mood evidenced by relentless crying spells, sense of hopelessness about the future and lack of interest in activities that they enjoyed before), they perceived their selves as ultimately stronger and more capable of dealing with situations than pre-migration. Finally, participants described several resources and ways in which they coped with changes post immigration. These resources included re-assessing goals and plans for their life, gathering with their family members more often, joining informal groups to expand social networks, learning English and maintaining constant communication with friends and family in their country of origin. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned psychological support/ therapy as a resource.

The data from these interviews are presented as follows: demographic data of participants, pre-immigration, post immigration, developmental liminalities: experiences of being an adolescent in the US, cultural liminalities: experiences of being an immigrant in the US, use of resources, and participant's perceived lessons from the experience of migrating to the US during their adolescence.

Demographic Data

The sample for this study was comprised of 12 South American immigrants: women and 6 men. Participants' country of origin included: Colombia (n=9), Ecuador (n=2) and Peru (n=1). Participants' age ranged between 18 and 30 years old. At the time of migration subjects' age ranged between 12 and 20 years. Respondents migrated to the US between 1996 and 2007. The time that participants have been in the US ranged from 4 and 13 years, with six participants being in the U.S. for 10 years. Most participants, except one, were fluent in both English and Spanish. (See table 1)

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Age at the time of migration:	12 n=4	14 n=2	17 n=2	19 n=2	20 n=2
Gender					
Female	1	2	1	1	1
Male		3		1	1
Country of Origin					
Colombia	1	2	2	1	2
Ecuador	2				
Peru				1	
Years in the US					
	4-6 n=3	7-8 n=2	10-13 n=7		
Participant's age (years)					
	18 n=2	21-22 n=4	25-26 n=2	30-29 n=4	

Pre-Immigration

This section presents participants' responses to questions regarding their story of pre-migration including: (1) what they remember most about their country of origin, (2) motivations and expectation before migrating to the United States of America.

If there is nothing like home, why did I (we) migrate?

When I asked participants what they remembered most about their country of origin, nine participants spoke about their group of friends and the nature of their relationship with these friends. These relationships were described as “real” friendships compared to the ties that they have consequently built with friends in the US, notably from different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. Participants described three particular characteristics of these friends from their country of origin: sincere, last longer, always able to count on the other. Along the same lines, eleven out of twelve participants commented on how warm and open people were in their country of origin. When I asked each to explain in more detail about what it meant to be a warm and open person, one participant stated:

You feel the difference when you go to your home country. People there make you feel welcome even when you are not expecting to be welcomed. There is always someone willing to help you, even if they don't know you. One can smell the generosity and kindness of South Americans. This is what I call the “smell of people”.

Participants (n=7) noted two traits that defined the population in their home country: friendly and respectful. Participants described *friendly* as the way in which people in their country of origin relate to each other with no fear of being hurt in a

physical or emotional way. Participants compared this fear with the fact that in the US one does not know his or her neighbor. As one participant stated,

You don't know your neighbors. If you need help there is no one you can trust. And if you try to approach your neighbor, most likely that person will be afraid of you or will give you a bad look.

Participants referred to *respect* as the respect one has for anyone who is older and is an authoritative figure. In this frame, respect is not exclusively for the elder but was also expressed in relationships between teachers and students and parents and their children. Respect was described as the manner in which hierarchical relationships are maintained within the family and within society. In the family, parents, especially paternal or male figures, have authority over their children; therefore respect from sons and daughters to their parents is expected. Within the society, participants (n=3) described the respect that lower socio-economic class people have for higher socio-economic class people. Four participants commented on how shocked they were when they entered middle school or high school in the US and perceived the relationship between students and teachers being more like a friendship than an authoritative and hierarchical relationship. As one participant explained:

I could not believe my ears. A teacher asked a student to do something. I think the teacher asked the student to sit down and do his work. But the student simply ignored the teacher. When the teacher asked the student again to sit down, the student yelled at the teacher listing the many reasons why he did not want to do his work. The teacher argued with the student; but they were arguing like two friends would argue. I asked my self: "Where is the respect? You don't argue with the teacher, you follow the rules, and if you don't like them, too bad for the student." That is why classrooms many times were a mess, because there is no respect.

Consequently, participants described respect as a trait that insures order in both family and society.

Nine out of twelve participants mentioned that what they remember most about their country of origin was the unity in their family. In this sense, participants commented on the time they use to spend together as a family in their country of origin (n=9) and the importance of the family input on individual decisions (n=3). Respondents (n=9) concurred that the time they spent together with their families in their home country has been noticeably reduced either because their families did not migrate with them (n=3) or because in the US there is no time to meet with family members due to differences in their work or school schedules (n=9). In addition, participants (n=2) attributed the lack of family reunions to the fact that family members who did not work in their country of origin had to start working in the US to help support their families economically. Participants (n=8) described family reunions as a space to share every day experiences, good and bad moments, ask for advice or support, or simply spaces to have fun. In this same manner, participants (n=3) stressed how family played an important role in supporting or disapproving decisions made by members, and how family reunions served as a place to discuss the viability of individual and collective decisions. A participant described family reunions as follow:

Usually family reunions in my country of origin took place every weekend. We would talk about how was work or school the week before, hear music, and have lunch or dinner together. But also before you date someone, you have to present him or her to your family during the family reunions so that everyone have the chance to meet who you're dating, and give an approval or disapproval. Of course, your parents' approval is the most important one.

All participants (n=12) were attending school before coming to the US. Only two participants stated that they worked and went to school simultaneously while in their country of origin. Indeed, six participants stated that one of the things that they remembered and missed most about their home country was that they had no

responsibilities other than going to school. Participants contrasted the feeling of having no responsibilities with the rapid changes that occurred post immigration including acquiring economic responsibilities as well as educational ones. This particular finding will be discussed in more detail in the following sections of this chapter since it impacted the way some participants (n=9) perceived their selves post immigration as young adult and no longer adolescents.

Most participants (n=10) referred to their experiences in their country of origin as “those were the good times” and “there is nothing like home”. Three participants mentioned that they missed the food from their country of origin. One participant stated that he remembered how active the lifestyle in his country of origin was compared to how sedentary life is in the US. As one participant noted:

Now that I think about my home country, I realize how great it was. There is nothing like home, and I ask myself why did I (we) migrate? But after, I remind myself that my country is no the country I used to live in, I have changed same way people there have changed. I still believe coming to the US has been the best decision.

All participants described what they remembered most about their country of origin in comparison with what they have encountered in the US.

The Magic Formula: the American Dream

Participants were asked why they, or their families, decided to come to the US. Eleven participants stated that they already had family members in the US who supported and encouraged them to migrate. One participant reported that her family decided to migrate because the participant had medical issues and needed specialized treatment that was available in the U.S. Three participants stated that their country of origin was facing

a serious economic crisis and, in order to secure the family's financial future, coming to the US was seen as the best option. Three participants reported that violence in their country was increasing. Thus coming to the US was a viable option for safety reasons. Five participants recalled that the main reason to come to the US was to increase their economic assets but this was not a critical issue for them in their home country. Five participants mentioned the educational opportunities offered in the US, and how higher education will guarantee them better jobs, a decent salary, therefore a better quality of life. Six participants stated that they did not agree with their family's decision to come to the US. Nevertheless, those six participants stated that the rationale behind the decision of migrating to the US, made sense to them now.

The expectations that participants had about the US were similar to the typical motivations to migrate. Those expectations were: to find more and better paid jobs (n=7), more and better educational institutions (n=5), less violence (n=3). Yet, what was interesting about this question was that participants (n=7) described how financial stability and more economic opportunities were synonymous with being "successful" or "being someone in life". As one participant mentioned:

I expected to be "someone" here, you know? To have the economic means to support a family, have money to buy a house, a car. I expected to be independent economically. Again, as I said, to be someone in life. This is the American dream.

On the other hand, one participant mentioned that her mental image of the United State was Disneyland. This subject commented:

When my mother told me that we were going to the US, I immediately thought of Disneyland. In the movies Disneyland is the perfect land because is full of happiness. I just did not realize at that moment that happiness is not the same everywhere.

Two participants reported that they expected to come to the US, work hard for a while, save money, and return to their home country. However, they did not return to their home country as expected. The following section examines challenges and changes participants experienced post immigration.

Post Immigration

This session presents participant's responses to questions regarding what was easy for them as well as challenging post immigration. Interviewees were also asked to describe the changes they first noticed in their life style and themselves post immigration.

Incommunicado: Re-learning Spanish and learning English

Participants were asked what was easy and challenging for them after migrating to the US. Seven participants reported that the most challenging aspect they had to overcome was their depressed mood which was described as constant crying spells, lack of interest in activities they enjoyed in their home country, feelings of hopelessness about the future and melancholia about their family and friends in their country of origin. Six participants reported that the hardest challenge was to meet new people, especially because participants did not speak English at the time they came to the US or because even other Latinos were culturally very different from them. As one participant stated:

When I came to the US, I entered middle school. I was very excited about going to school, but after the first day I did not want to return to school any more. I could not speak English. I tried to speak with other Latinos in Spanish but they made fun of my accent and of the cloths I was wearing. After some time, I just ended up feeling like I was invisible, I could not communicate with either group: the American or the Latino.

Six participants reported that learning English was really difficult for them and was a barrier to find better jobs. Not knowing English and finding other Latinos culturally different from them increased participants' social isolation and depressed mood. Along the same lines, five participants reported that due to work and school, members in the family did not have time to meet as they used to, increasing the social isolation and lack of support while navigating through these changes. Most participants (n=10) reported that they had to face these transitions by themselves with little or no support from others.

Seven participants reported that the hardest aspect post immigration was to realize that they did not fit in anywhere, even after learning English. As one participant described it:

Participant: At the beginning I felt like a tourist, you know?

Researcher: How do you describe that feeling?

Participant: Like when you visit a place and everything is strange to you but you know you will be back home. Rationally, you know you are not going back home but that is how you feel. You feel numbed like in a dream, a good one or a bad one, it does not matter. I thought I did not understand the culture because I did not know the language. When I learned English, it really made no difference, in terms of relating with others because I was still feeling like something was missing. Ten years have passed and I still feel it is hard to connect with people here.

Five subjects also mentioned the feeling of being a tourist right after immigrating to the US. This state was described as feeling numbed, living in a dream (for some participants was a nightmare (n=3), for others was actually a good dream (n=2)), and living someone else's life. Participants who reported that they felt like a tourist also mentioned that those feelings went away approximately after the first year in the US.

Changes Post Immigration: Nothing but Responsibilities

Participants were asked to identify changes they noticed in themselves and their life style post immigration. Nine participants stressed that they became more responsible after immigrating to the US. Those same participants also explained that they became accountable for their economic needs, and in some cases, also for their families' economic needs. Thus, they perceived themselves as more responsible than in their country of origin. As one participant described it:

When we came to the US, my parents were expecting to find a job and support us economically. But my father was too old to work on the kind of jobs they offer here for people who don't speak English. So, I had to start working in order to support my family and myself. I began paying my own bills, something that I did not do in my country of origin. I became much more responsible than what I was before because I had to provide for my family and myself.

Some participants (n=5) commented on how being accountable for their economic needs, also impacted their sense of being more independent. The same participant also explained:

Being economically independent, also affects the relationship with your parents because somehow you start making decisions without their consent. I was not depending on my parents as much as I did in my country of origin anymore so I gained more independence in many aspects of my life. For instance, I did not have to ask my parents to allow me to go out anymore or I did not have to negotiate with them the time at which I had to be back home. Consequently, I set the time and I just let them know.

Three participants stated that as they gained more independency after immigrating, this became an issue for their parents because the hierarchical relationship between parent and son or daughter was being challenged. Indeed, as the participant stated in the above comment, parents lose some, if not all, of the authority they had over their children creating a sense of chaos in the family. Thus, some participants (n=4) reported that their parents felt that they were not doing their best to support their children

due to the fact that their children did not work to contribute economically to the family when living in their country of origin. One participant commented:

My parents felt bad about the fact that I had to work and support them and not the other way around. I think they felt they were losing control over the family and that there was something terribly wrong with them. It was hard for them to understand that I was actually enjoying that independence without them feeling remorse or that the principles they taught us were not longer important for my siblings and me.

Many participants' sense of being more responsible and more independent was also related to a sense of becoming more mature after immigrating to the US. Participants (n=6) reported they became more mature due to the factors described above (i.e. more independence and responsibilities). One participant described what it meant to be more mature:

I had to learn how to do things that in my home country some else would do them for me like: cook, laundry, basic plumbing, fix a car. Here we could not afford anyone to do it for ourselves. I had no time to have fun. That is when you start becoming more mature.

This participant's comment highlighted two characteristics of what it means to be more mature. First, one acquires more responsibilities and duties. Second, one has to give up activities that are enjoyable in order to meet those responsibilities and newly acquired duties. Participants (n=6) who perceived themselves as more mature post immigration described their experiences similarly to the above statement.

Participants (n=4) also reported that they not only started supporting their families economically but also performed some of the duties described above including doing laundry, cooking, fixing the car, to name a few. One participant recalled babysitting her niece as one of the duties gained post immigration:

I was 15, and my sister had no one else to take care of her baby while she was working. I had to run from school to home so my sister could go to work, and I could stay with my niece. I knew it was not my job but I had to do it. I was also working part-time. I found a job under the table to pay my bills and save for college because I knew my parents were not going to be able to pay for it.

Therefore, participants reported that they became key economic assets and economic suppliers to maintain the family and its members' stability.

Participants noted three main consequences of the changes described above: (1) spending less time with family members than in their country of origin (n=7), (2) spending less time socializing with peers (n=5), (3) having a more sedentary life style than in the participants' home country due to the fact that there was no time to practice any sport or go out to the park (n=3). The following section presents the participants' experiences of being an adolescent in the US.

Developmental Liminalities: Being an Adolescent in the US

Participants were asked to share their experiences as adolescents living in the US, as well as the most salient challenges that they faced during this period of their lives. Subjects were also asked to explain how the experiences of being an adolescent in a foreign country affected their sense of self as compared to previous experiences in their country of origin.

What is the point of being an adolescent?

Participants (n=7) reported that despite the independence that they acquired as they became key economic providers for the family, they had few or sometimes no friends to share their experiences as adolescents. Participants (n=7) stated that during

their adolescence feelings of solitude were frequent. Six participants stated that they had to turn to their family members to diminish their feelings of isolation and solitude. Four participants affirmed that their family members were not available for them due to their own work and school schedules, thus increasing participants' feelings of loneliness and lack of support while going through many changes in their lives. Some participants (n=4) agreed that even when they had family members available to talk to, they wanted and needed to have friends to share these experiences. Along the same lines, participants (n=6) recalled how much they missed the company of a peer group during this time of their lives.

As described in previous sections in this chapter, participants (n=7) reported that, post immigration, their families needed their economic (e.i working and bringing money back home) and non-economic support (i.e. helping with chores, babysitting, repairing things at home so that other family members could go to work) more than when they were in their country of origin. Thus, half of the sample (n=6) concurred that they constantly had to juggle their desire to be independent and their families' need for their support.

Participants (n=5) reported that the lack of friends and the greater interdependence among family members made them feel like they had no time to be adolescents anymore. The sense of having no time to be an adolescent was also related to the sense of becoming an adult at a faster rate than expected. Participants' (n=7) reported that growing up faster than in their home countries was overwhelming, especially because they had little or no support at all. One participant described how changes post immigration took away the sense of being an adolescent:

I was taken away from my friends when we migrated. I lost the opportunity of having a peer group in my home country and during my adolescence. But most important my adolescence was taken away from me after immigrating to the US. I became an adult when I was only 14-years-old. Now that I am 22, I don't think I could ever get that time of my life back. I had to grow up faster than what I would have if I had stayed in my home country.

A few participants (n=4) were aware that feelings of nostalgia arose while remembering their experience of walking out of their adolescence at such a fast and unpredictable rate. Participants also (n=3) described leaving behind one's adolescence as a process of grieving. One participant commented on the feeling of mourning one's adolescence and childhood:

Researcher: how did you feel about not being an adolescent anymore?

Participant: I felt like part of me had died, and I was saying farewell to my childhood in order to become an adult. It's not that I did not want to be an adult; it's just that I was not expecting to be an adult yet.

On the other hand, participants' (n=6) spoke about the difficulties they had while learning English as a second language. Participants explained that because they did not anticipate the challenges that emerged while learning a new language, their plans and expectations pre immigration had to be re-assessed and modified. These participants migrated to the US between 17 to 20 years of age. One participant stated:

In my country, you are done with high school when you finish eleventh grade. In the US is twelve grade. When I came to the US, I had to go back to high school when I really wanted to start college. I felt frustrated because all of my friends in my country of origin were attending college, and I was still in high school. On top of that, my English was not good enough to go straight to college. I knew I needed to take English classes before applying to college. At that point I did not know how long it was going to take me to learn English, so I started thinking about college as something that was not for me. I did not want to be in college when you are supposed to be married or just working. Now I understand that I was not the only one going through that. I was definitely more independent - especially economically independent - but at the same time I felt like I was learning baby steps at a time in life when you really don't want to start all over again. I felt like time was running against me. It is really confusing to find your place in life after immigrating.

Some participants (n=4) stated that while trying to consolidate what they wanted to do as opposed to what they could actually do in the new country, many plans they had were abandoned or modified. Similarly, participants (n=5) concurred that it was then when they contrasted their expectations pre-immigration with their new reality post-immigration. As one participant commented:

Participant: I was disappointed because learning English wasn't easy for me. I had to begin thinking about a different life for myself. Unfortunately, I had to give up to some of my dreams or expectations I had before coming to the US.

Researcher: Like what dreams?

Participant: like my dream of going to college and have a better job and better quality of life. Also, before I came here I thought I was going to be able to visit my relatives in my country of origin more often but that was impossible because I had to work and pay bills. I had a constant fear because I did not know if by the time I could go back to my home country my grandmother was going to be alive.

A variety of circumstances, including participants' economic needs and post-immigration acquired responsibilities, changed participants' plans and expectations that motivated them and their families to migrate in the first place. In terms of participants' educational goals, six out of twelve participants have completed a higher education degree in the US; two have completed an associate degree and four have 4-year bachelor degree. All 12 participants have a high school diploma either from their country of origin or from the US. The following section presents participants' adaptation to their new country in terms of cultural differences and similarities encountered in the US.

Cultural Liminalities: Being an Immigrant in the US

This section presents information pertaining to the participant's experiences of being an immigrant in the US with a focus on the cultural similarities and differences they encountered post-immigration. This section also explores changes post-immigration that participants experienced in regards to their sense of belonging to a country and how these changes also affected participants' sense of self and experience of being an immigrant.

Trapped Betwixt and Between

Participants were asked to explain how their sense of belonging to their country of origin changed post-immigration. All participants stated that they considered themselves as natives of their country of origin. This means participants still consider themselves as Colombians, Peruvians and Ecuadorians. However, in terms of how their relationship with their country of origin changed post-immigration, participants (n=6) spoke about how they have changed post immigration, and how different they have become compared to their friends and families that stayed in their home country. In this sense, participants (n=5) stated that their country of origin had changed in addition to their own changes making them feel that they do not belong to their home country in the same way that they used to before migrating to the US. One participant explained:

I went back to visit my home country after 5 years of being in the US. In my mind, everything and everyone was the same as when I left. I thought I had not changed that much. I knew rationally that people change but I did not realize how much I had changed or how much my relatives in my home country had changed until I got there. The first day when I arrived at my country of origin, I noticed some changes but later I realized I was "metaphorically" speaking a different language. At that moment, part of me wanted to be back to the US but at the same time I knew I wished to come back for so long and visit my family. It was a

strange feeling because I knew that I didn't fit in completely in the US but at that moment I realized I was also a foreigner in my own country.

Participants (n=9) who have returned to their home country concurred that they have noticed how their worldviews differed from their families' and friends' worldviews in their country of origin. Participants explained that these differences were not present when they were living in their home country. As one participant explained:

I used to be very materialistic when I was in my home country. I thought that the goal in life was to acquire material goods. In my country of origin that is the mentality; the more you have the better because you will have a higher socio-economic status, and so you will be respected. When I came here, I realized that I could make money and buy what I needed and even more working on an unqualified job. But I also realized that making money was not everything in life. I think maybe because in the US there are not such marked class differences, showing off that you make money is less important. In the US, one can make money working as a waitress while in my country of origin you won't even pay your basic needs with that unqualified job. When I went back to my home country, I heard my friends talking about money all the time. Indeed, one of my closest friends in my home country was dating someone much older than her because he had money. It was very sad but at the same time I was glad that I was not thinking like that anymore.

Another participant described those differences with family in the country of origin as follows:

When I went to visit my home country, my cousin was talking about married women and how they don't meet their husbands "requirements". I immediately thought: what is wrong with my cousin! Doesn't she know about women being historically oppressed by men? I did not say a word because I realized that I would have said something similar if I had stayed in my country of origin.

Along the same lines, one participant spoke about how in his country of origin his father was aggressive and due to laws against domestic violence in the US, his father's aggressive conduct stopped. This participant explained:

My father was very aggressive while in my home country. His aggressiveness was also socially accepted. My family knew about it as well as friends. When we migrated to the US, domestic violence was not socially accepted; instead it was considered a serious crime. We never talked about that in my family but my father changed without ever getting in trouble with the law. My parents had a baby in the US, and I can see how different my sibling is being raised compared to how my older siblings and me were raised before and after coming to the US.

These differences that participants perceived in worldviews compared to their friends and family in their country of origin, changed their relation with their home country and some participants' initial plans to return to their country of origin. Participants concluded that even though they missed their country, they often found that what they missed was no longer there. In this way, participants' (n=6) agreed that once you migrate inevitable changes occurred, and those changes will remain even if one returns back home.

Participants also noticed that their cultural beliefs have changed as a result of their daily interaction with their families in the US. As one participant commented:

When I started dating my boyfriend, who was an American, I knew the right thing to do was to present him to my family. But when I talked to him about it, he freaked out. I understood that for him, one only meets the family when there are plans to get married. The first time was awful because my parents did not accept not meeting him right away but after a while they became more flexible. They accepted the fact that we live in a country where there are people from different cultures and that it was not something personal.

This participant described how changes in family interactions have taken place. Other participants (n=4) noted how the importance that was previously given to the hierarchical relationship within the family and within the society has lessened thus creating a different way to relate to other members in one's family and in society.

Participants were asked if they thought that they fit better in the US after they realized all the changes that have taken place post-immigration. Nine participants stressed that even though they would not go back to their country of origin because they already have a “life” here, they did not feel that they completely fit into the US culture. Participants concurred that many cultural “misunderstandings” still occur after years of being in the US. For instance, one participant spoke about the relationship with an American partner and how cultural differences constantly arise while trying to negotiate what one expects from the other in their relationship. This participant said that while for her family input is crucial, for her partner it is insignificant. This participant also stressed that even when she recognized that the misunderstandings come from cultural differences, it does not mean that her family’s suggestions and comments will not matter for her.

Another participant spoke about how one learns to be more careful when approaching others, taking into account that cultural differences may arise and that others might take offense. This participant noted that one is constantly hiding one’s cultural forms of relating to others in order to fit in the US. Along the same lines, four other participants explained how while interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, one might be misinterpreted or placed into categories that correlate to stereotypes related to Latinos in general. One participant spoke about her interactions with her son’s pediatrician:

I know that if I tell my son’s pediatrician that he, who is almost three, still sleeps with us sometimes, the pediatrician will give me a certain look. A look that I know tries to tell me that as a Latina I am not educated enough to know what is good for my son and me. I know there is no problem with how I am raising my son because that is how my mother did it with me and my grandmother did it with my mother and so on. That is how it has worked for many years in my country of

origin. I am not going to change my cultural practices just like that but at the same time I not going to start that conversation with my son's pediatrician. I prefer not to say anything about it. I am not going to get in trouble for that.

In this comment the participant expressed her concern for not only being mistakenly judged, but she also was aware of the inequality of power that the pediatrician might have about the participant justification for the cultural practices considered appropriate to raise a child in her country. Other participants (n=5) also concurred that they constantly find themselves negotiating their beliefs with others either by not explicitly expressing their thoughts about a certain topic in certain spaces where cultural differences may arise, or by acting in a way that goes along with accepted U.S. worldviews. Participants who have been in the US for more than 7 years, reported that they mostly perceived those cultural negotiations in the first years of post-immigration. But, when they thought more about their current interactions they realized that those negotiations still happening even though they have become more automatic and natural. Participants (n=5) reported they have learned to master their new environment but mastering their new environment did not mean that they have left behind their cultural beliefs or that their cultural beliefs have remained intact even after they immigrated to the US. The following section presents the resources that participants utilized as they tried to copy with the changes inherent from the experience of being an immigrant and adolescent in the US.

Use of Resources

This section presents the resources that participants reported that they used as they navigated through their experiences of being an adolescent and immigrant in the US. Participants spoke about reassessing their life plans, family and informal groups and imitating native US adolescents.

Plans in Mind: Assessing and Re-assessing One's Life

Participants were asked to describe the resources they use to cope with the challenges that they encountered as they were navigating through their adolescence and cultural changes in the US. Six participants concurred that having clear goals helped them to overcome challenges they encountered post-immigration. As one participant explained:

It really helped me to keep my goals in mind all the time. It helped me to remember what pushed me to come to the US in the first place. When I faced a challenge or difficulty, I weighted what I was giving up by coming here and what I could gain in the US. I realized that even though it was hard not knowing the language among other things, it was worth it. I think having clear goals helps you to find motivation and strength.

As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, participants reported that once they immigrated, expectations that they had pre-immigration had to be re-formulated and so their plans for life. Participants associated those plans for life with the way they viewed themselves. Therefore, reassessing those plans also implied to reassess their sense of self and their role in the new country. Along the same lines, five participants reported that a change in their way of thinking and attitude about life and themselves helped them to cope with the changes and difficulties they found post immigration. Participants' changes in themselves were described as being more open-minded (n=5), being more

flexible and tolerant to changes in plans in life (n=4), appreciating cultural differences (n=6), viewing challenges as opportunities to grow (n=4).

Family Members and Informal Groups

Five participants stated that family members helped them to overcome challenges and difficulties post-immigration. As presented in other sections of this chapter, eleven participants reported that they had already family members in the US before they migrated to the US. In the same way, participants reported that family members that migrated with them were also a significant support post-immigration.

Four participants stated that they expanded their social networks by joining informal groups such as group of native people from participants' home country. In addition, participants also joined local churches. Some of these participants (n=3) stated that they joined religious congregations that did not necessarily professed the spiritual or religious beliefs that they professed in their home country but such congregations offered a space to meet other persons. Thus, participants were able to compensate recurrent feelings of solitude.

Imitating US Adolescents

Four participants concurred that when they entered school they tried to imitate the way other students dress even though it was not the style they use in their home country. Participants described imitating other adolescents as a way to cope with challenges such as adapting and fit in a new social context. One participant explained:

One of the things that made me feel different when I first went to school was the way I was dressed compared to the way people at school were dressed. I really

wanted to fit in or at least not be perceived as “the weird one” or “the immigrant”, so I paid close attention to what other students were wearing as well as I watched T.V to learn more about what was “in” and what “was not in”.

Two participants stated that they maintained a strong bond with family and friends from their country of origin as a way to cope with changes in the US and to compensate for the lost post-immigration. One participant expressed that reading about personal growth helped to feel more confident about the transition and its challenges. The following section presents the lessons that came out of participants’ experiences as adolescents and immigrants in the US as well as resources that they used.

*Participant’s Perceived Lessons from the Experience of Immigrating to the US
During their Adolescence*

As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, participants reported that a double loss took place post immigration: (1) the loss of leaving their friends, family and country of origin behind, and (2) the rapid loss of participants’ perceived developmental stage of adolescence. The first loss represents the geographical separation between participants and their families and friends as well as the cultural changes post immigration that modified participants’ worldviews and social representations to the point that they perceived themselves as “foreigners” in both their native land as well as in the US. The second loss speaks to the fact that post-immigration participants faced different social and economic circumstances that changed their perceived developmental stage as adolescents as they acquired new roles that were associated to a different developmental stage in their life such as being adults and not longer adolescents.

Based on these two major changes, participants described how their sense of self was affected by the intersection of their experience as South American adolescents and immigrants in the US. Participants (n=6) reported that after dealing with several changes, they felt stronger than in their country of origin. Participants concurred that they have learned more about themselves and the way they cope with changes. Indeed, participants (n=5) have been able to experience how adaptive they have become to new social, developmental and cultural circumstances. Participants (n=7) also spoke about how facing these challenges have made them feel more confident about themselves. Moreover, participants (n=6) reported that their self-esteem has also increased as they have learned to navigate through the cultural and developmental changes post-immigration. Participants (n=4) also defined perceiving themselves stronger as being more resistant and resilient to physical disconnections with friends and family in their country of origin. Some participants (n=3) referred to feeling more prepared to manage material losses and the loss of social networks and support from family and friends. One participant explained as:

I have learned to be a big fighter. I have learned how strong I am after all the challenges I had to face. I also think I've gotten to know myself better: know what I am capable of. The fact that I had to do everything by myself has made me a stronger person.

Participants (n=5) agreed that post immigration they have acquired a deeper appreciation of their country of origin and the relationships they had with friends and family back home. Participants (n=6) added that they have a greater appreciation and feeling of gratitude towards life and God. Along the same lines, participants (n=4) reported being more humble and sensitive to other persons' (either from their country of

origin or not) struggles. Indeed, participants (n=4) stressed that they appreciate life even more and cherish cultural differences (n=7). As one participant described it:

What I have learned after dealing with all these changes has helped me to realize that even though I miss my country and my family, it was worth it. Most people including myself have come to the US looking for the American dream; looking for ways to make more money. But I think that what we've gotten as immigrants is a lot more important than just having more opportunities to make more money than in our country of origin. What one learns from this experience is greater appreciation for one's own country and culture, and for other people's culture. What one really gets out of this experience, in my opinion is priceless.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from interviews conducted to 12 South American immigrants who came to the US during their adolescence. Findings concurred that the experience of being an immigrant was impacted by the experience of being an adolescent and vice versa. The resulting intersection of both experiences highlighted how participants navigated through cultural and developmental changes post immigration. As a result, participants stressed that social, cultural and economic changes post immigration affected their sense of being adolescents. These changes were mostly perceived as unexpected leading the participants to experience themselves as more mature, and in most cases as not longer adolescents.

In terms of cultural changes, participants reported that constant negotiations with their new environment have taken place in which their worldviews were challenged and some times modified. Most participants expressed that even after many years of being in the US it continues to be difficult for them to re-build a social network. Most participants reported that even though they have not felt that they completely belong to or fit in the US, changes in their worldviews and opportunities in the US made them feel strangers in

their home country. Most participants described the experience of being an immigrant as being trapped between their home country and the US.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the dual liminalities (e.i cultural and developmental) that South American adolescents experienced post immigration. In other words, this study explored the intersection of the experience of being an adolescent and being an immigrant in the US and gathered narrative data about how South American adolescents navigated through both experiences. Liminality was the common characteristic attached to both experiences as described by the participants and in the Literature Review. Additional findings elucidated how immigration impacts developmental processes including adolescence, and one's subjective experience of being an adolescent due to socio-economic and cultural changes in the new society.

It became apparent that immigrants go through constant cultural negotiations and that the adaptation process is not a linear and progressive one. Rather adapting to a new country is a contradictory, uncertain process of finding meaning to one's experience as one realizes that one does not fit completely into the new culture but does not belong to one's country of origin any more.

This chapter is presented in the following order: 1) key findings: comparing and contrasting the study results and previous literature, 2) implications for social work practice, 3) implications for theory, 4) recommendations for future research in the area of immigration and adolescence.

Key Findings

This section is a presentation of the findings of this study in comparison to the previous literature. This section is divided into the following subsections: pre-immigration, post-immigration, developmental liminalities: experiences of being an adolescent in the US, cultural liminalities: experiences of being an immigrant in the US, use of resources, participant's perceived lessons from the experiences of migrating to the US during their adolescence, and summary.

Pre-Immigration

Chahin, Villarruel & Viramontez (1999) and Jaes-Fallcov (2005), noted Latino families have a cultural tendency toward *familism or family connectedness*. The importance of family connectedness was also present in the participants' narratives as one of the things that they missed the most about their country of origin. However, it is important to understand that cultural values are not static and that their meanings are shifting according to the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of the broader context in which one is emerged. Therefore, participants' concerns about losing their family connectedness is related to the fact that post immigration external circumstances affected the family dynamics, so that the influence of the family input on individual decisions also changed.

Along the same lines, another important cultural value reported by participants was *respect*. Chahin, Villarruel & Viramontez (1999), also noted that this cultural value was significant for Latino families. It is important to remember that a literal translation of the word *respect* from Spanish to English would not capture the cultural significance of

the concept. In this study, participants assumed that respect had the same meaning in different cultural contexts. Thus, participants expected to find the same hierarchical relationships and ways to relating to others as in their country of origin. These types of cultural differences are the ones that immigrants constantly negotiate in the US. Jaes-Fallcov (2005) have described cultural values pertinent to Latino immigrants but tend to idealize them as family-oriented versus a more individualistic-egocentric society. Moreover, these authors, as well as the theories of acculturation and assimilation, present cultural values and the differences that arise as static and traditional as if immigrants were unable to understand the values that are predominant in the US. In this sense, cultural differences are not just a clash of cultures: “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (Bhaba, 2004, p. 3).

It is important to note that what participants missed about their country of origin is in relation to what they have found in the US. Therefore, the fact that certain cultural values were present in the participants’ narratives highlights the cultural values that have interacted and were contrasted with the ones in the host society. Participants’ presentation of their values and culture is not isolated from the interaction and experiences they have had in the host society. Indeed, participants’ values and culture as presented by them in the interviews are in response to their current experiences within the US and not exclusively to their experiences in their country of origin. Thus, culture and cultural values are neither traditional nor static. The image of the immigrant as wrapped in his or her cultural values and unable to assimilate or acculturate in the new country, denies the

immigrant's constant negotiation in the new country and the ways in which immigrants are constantly defining and re-defining themselves, and their worldviews, in relation to the new country.

The results of this study showed that participants' decision to come to the US was primarily because their families wanted a better future. As Portes and Rumbaut (2006) stressed, contrary to the neoclassical theory that immigrants do not "rationally calculate the gap between their present wages and those that they could earn abroad, times the probability that they would obtain employment there" (p. 15). Rather, desirability plays an important role in one's decision to migrate. This desirability reflects the meaning that immigrants confer to their experience and expectation pre and post immigration. In this study, participants' decision to migrate was associated with "being someone in life" and "being successful". In this sense, participants' desirability to migrate is a socio-cultural construction that little has to do with rational calculations; instead it shows expectations of socially-desired lifestyles that somehow were difficult to fulfill in their country of origin. These social constructions that guided the expectations pre-immigration, are re-formulated over and over again as immigrants try to resolve the contradictions between the reality post immigration and their life goals.

Post-immigration

The results of this study showed that due to socio-economic conditions participants acquired new responsibilities that ultimately affected their experience as immigrants and as adolescents. As Garcia-Coll and Magnuson (2005) stressed, research on immigration that primarily concentrates on the negative impact of immigration fails to

capture the socio-economic conditions that shapes the experience of both being an immigrant *and* an adolescent in the US. The way in which these particular circumstances shape the experience of being an immigrant and being an adolescent will be discussed in the following sections.

Even though the results of this study showed that most participants experienced depression and have gone through a grieving process post immigration, the context of this psychological distress along with the totality of the immigrants' experience should be included in order to understand complexities and contradictions that come along with the experiences of immigrants. Results of this study showed that the distress that participants experienced was often accompanied with a sense of being more mature, being more responsible, and having a greater appreciation of one's culture. This will also be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Developmental Liminalities: Experiences of Being an Adolescent in the US

From a sociological and phenomenological perspective on adolescence, one's subjective experience is crucial to understand how acquiring particular transition roles guides one's entrance and exit to developmental life stages (Benson & Furstenberg, 2007). In this study results showed that once immigrants acquired more responsibilities (e.i economic and intangible responsibilities), they perceived themselves as younger adults and not longer adolescents. Along the same lines, findings showed that participants also perceived themselves as more mature and more responsible confirming their sense of not longer being adolescents. These results substantiated the previous literature that reports that the sense of being an adult or a younger adult is associated with the

acquisition of certain “role transitions” (Benson & Furstenberg, 2007). In this study these roles included paying bills, chores at home, babysitting nieces, nephews or younger siblings. However, a difference was found with previous literature in that Arnett (2000) assumed that individual traits such as independence and maturity were part of one’s personality and not a product of particular circumstances.

Benson and Furstenberg (2007) and Andrew, Eggerling-Boeck, Sanderful and Smith (2007) failed to explain how external socio-economic and cultural circumstances guide the acquisition of certain transitional roles and subsequent subjective experience of being an adult. In this study, results showed that participants acquired transitional roles that were related to being an adult due to economic pressures that forced almost everyone in the family to contribute to household responsibilities (i.e. cleaning, cooking, taking care of relatives or relative’s children) and financial responsibilities (i.e. financially supporting self and one’s family). Furthermore, family members depended on one another even more than in their country of origin to meet their needs; therefore, they acquired new roles that transformed not only the family dynamics (i.e. changes in the hierarchical relationships within the family and impact of family input on individual decisions) but also the subjective experience of being an adolescent. Contrary to Benson and Furstenberg (2007), the findings of this study showed that one does not elect to acquire transitional roles. There are cultural expectations as to when should one become an adult as well as socio-economic circumstances that shape one’s perceptions of being an adolescent and being an adult. In this study, participants’ socio-economic circumstances post immigration were not congruent to their cultural expectations as their perception was that they were not expecting to become adults in such a fast rate.

According to Arnett (2000) and Erick Erickson (1950) adolescents test out a variety of possible life directions. Arnett (2000) described this process as *emerging adults* and Erickson (1950) as *moratorium*. Findings in this study showed that participants did not explore a variety of life trajectories nor did they delayed entering to adult roles in order to test out possible life directions. On the contrary, participants in this study assumed transitional roles that supported their families to face the new circumstances.

Benson and Furstenberg (2007) concluded that individuals who assumed more adult roles such as establishing an independent household, living with or married to a partner, and having a child were more likely than other individuals of the same age to perceive themselves as adults. In this study, findings showed that these roles were not the ones that participants (except one) acquired that consequently made them feel like they were not longer adolescents. However, the level of responsibility attached to the roles that participants in this study acquired is similar to the roles described by Benson and Furstenberg (2007). In addition, findings showed that participants perceived themselves as more independent despite the fact that they were still living with their family. According to Benson and Furstenberg (2007), youth do not feel independent until they have physically separated from their family. Benson and Furstenberg's assumption is not true for this sample, in part because participants in this study felt that family input had less impact than in their country of origin.

The findings of this study led to the conclusion that participants' experience of being an adolescent in the US was a liminal experience in the sense that socio-economic circumstances and cultural circumstances post immigration described above were uncertain and unfamiliar. Participants' experience of being an adolescent coincides with

the liminality state described by Victor Turner (1975). It is important to note that participants' experience of liminality as adolescents post immigration was not, as psychoanalytic theories assumed, a product of merely internal and psychological processes but instead of socio-economic and cultural ones.

Cultural Liminalities: Experiences of Being an Immigrant in the US

Findings in this study showed that participants ultimately felt that they no longer belonged to their country of origin in the same way as before migrating. At the same time they did not completely fit in the US. These contradictory and complex feelings towards both countries confirmed the ambiguous, or liminal, experience that immigrants go through post immigration (Turner, 1975).

Findings of this study showed that participants saw themselves as constantly negotiating cultural values within the new society. In these negotiations immigrants experienced the inequality of power that their worldviews and social representations have in relation to the ones that are more accepted in the mainstream society. However, it would be inaccurate to assume that immigrants' cultural beliefs are static and have no reference to the cultural norms of new country. Bhabha (2004) states that these negotiations are not spaces in which immigrants search for affirmation or authentication of their cultural origins or values but instead is a political practice that elucidates a disconnection of the representation that the new country has about immigrants and the immigrants' expectation to expand such representation. These negotiations have been assumed by theories of assimilation and acculturation as immigrants' inability to learn the social and cultural norms of the new society. Indeed, such negotiations take place mostly

because immigrants do understand the representations and stereotypes, which are social and cultural representations that have been attributed to them. Therefore, the experience post immigration is not exclusively an internal and psychological process of adaptation, as theories of acculturation and assimilation have stated, but also a process of constant interaction with the new society in which cultural differences arise and cultural representations of the other are being negotiated and re-invented.

Results of this study showed that families go through a set of transformations that alter interactions between members. Findings of this study concluded that participants' families changed their ways of relating to each other as hierarchical structures did not operate in the same way as in their country of origin. Foner (2005) states that these changes also alter gender-related roles in the families. In this study, the economic independence that participants acquired had a cultural impact on the *respect* that was posed in parental figures, especially in male parental figures. In addition, findings of this study concluded that American ideas about dating did influence participants' cross-cultural and mono-cultural relationships. Foner (2005) also highlights the importance of the legal system in promoting changes within the families. Findings in this study showed that in some cases, aggressive outbursts were reduced due to the fact that immigrants' family members were highly conscious that such behaviors are illegal in the US.

Use of Resources

The resources that participants reported in this study (i.e. accurately re-assessing one's future plans, attending informal groups, finding support within the family, imitating US adolescents, and building strong bonds with family and friends from country of origin) showed their need to reconstruct meaning in the face of disruption. As Jaes-

Fallcov (2005) pointed out, attending informal groups and finding support within one's family are ways to reconstruct cultural spaces that effectively re-establish to some extent links with the home country while attributing meaning to one's experience post immigration. Re-assessing future plans as one compares and contrasts real circumstances with envisioned plans for life was also described by Jaes-Fallcov (2005) as a way to provide meaning and coherence to one's experience post immigration.

Findings of this study confirmed the importance of restoring continuity even when family dynamics have changed and have transformed interactions within the family (Jaes-Fallcov, 2005). In this sense, Jaes-Fallcov (2005) stressed the importance to understand not only stable and shifting meaning of the resources used by immigrants but their functions as metaphors for continuity and change.

Participants' Perceived Lessons from the Experiences of Migrating to the US During their Adolescence

Participants' perceived lessons supported Garcia-Coll and Magnuson's (2005) assumption that immigration does not only have negative outcomes. In fact, findings in this study supported the notion that immigration is also a life-enhancing experience as participants perceived themselves to be stronger, to have learned more about themselves, to be more adaptive to new situations, to be more confident, to be more appreciative of their country of origin and culture, to name a few.

Along the same lines, exploring the perceived lessons helped the participants to understand the complexities and contradictions that surround the impact of immigration as well as the ambiguities and liminalities of this experience. Results of this study

showed that being an immigrant while being an adolescent has a deep impact on one's sense of self, and such impact can not be fully understood if positive *and* negative outcomes are not explored.

Summary

Findings of this study support much of previous literature on the ambiguous and contradictory traits that are inherent to the post immigration experience (Bhabha, 2004; Jaes-Fallcov, 2005; Turner, 1986). A variety of socio-economic and cultural changes post immigration affected South American immigrants' experience of developmental processes in particular their adolescence.

Those changes also challenged the family dynamics that were effective in their country of origin, ultimately transforming the ways in which members interacted between them.

Findings of this study showed that participants used a wide variety of resources to restore continuity in the face of the disruption that accompanies immigration. Along the same lines, this study showed that the immigration experience is also a growth-enhancing experience despite the psychological distress that has been largely documented in previous literature.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This section presents guidelines for clinicians who work with Latino Adolescents post immigration for social workers and other mental health professional based on the findings of this study. These recommendations may be useful to both non-Latino and Latino social workers.

One of the most salient results from this study is the concept of liminality as a normal characteristic that describes the experience of Latino adolescents post immigration. Introducing this concept as a way to normalize and validate this particular population's experience may bring a non-pathologizing frame to understand the complexities and contradictions of immigration in general. Normalizing the liminal experience of immigrants and reframing the process of adjustment as a dynamic and non-linear one also requires the clinician to re-assess the goal for therapy with this population. In this manner, the treatment goal should not be to omit the ambiguities and uncertainties but instead embracing them while clinician and immigrant client find meaning to his or her experience post immigration. The tendency to over simplify immigrants' experiences as a progressive process of blending into the new society may be more counterproductive than helping the immigrant client hold a more complex and contradictory narrative of this experience.

In terms of working with immigrants and adolescents, it is important to value the richness that the subjective experience of developmental processes brings to the therapist's understanding of the client's internal and external world. If the clinician takes an exclusively psychoanalytical and psychological perspective, the varieties of socio-economic and cultural factors that guide and affect developmental processes are diluted.

The tendency to avoid contemplating these factors has frequently framed cross-cultural experiences of developmental processes as dysfunctional.

It is important to acknowledge that cultural values related to South American Latino immigrants fluctuate in response to the broader society as immigrants find themselves constantly negotiating their worldviews in the new country. Therefore, culture is not a bubble that surrounds oneself and never changes, but instead is the set of social representations that are defined in relation to a culturally different other. There is no magic formula to completely understand clients' cultural beliefs and culture. However, as clinicians learn to question their own cultural values and bias, they will also learn to understand that culture permeates psychological discourses and professional practices that are often taken-for-granted. Therefore, the therapeutic encounter is a cultural encounter in which client and clinician bring their own worldviews and social representations to the room. The therapeutic encounter may serve as a recreation of the cultural negotiations in which client and clinician are exposed in the broader society.

Implications for Theory

The theoretical framework used for this study was an attempt to understand immigration as a dynamic, uncertain, contradictory and non-linear process. The concept of liminality was introduced to describe this process and therefore, challenged the traditional theories of assimilation and acculturation. It is important that theories on the experience of immigrants continue to explore the complexities of immigration rather than focus on the ability or inability that immigrants have to blend and acquire traits of the new society.

Along the same lines, researchers who exclusively look at negative outcomes may overlook and devalue the ways in which immigration may be a life-enhancing experience. In this sense, the concept of liminality does capture the ambiguities in which immigrants may simultaneously go through a stressful and growth-enhancing experience.

The idea of the subjective experience of developmental processes brings a new lens in terms of understanding how external circumstances shape one's experiences of developmental processes post immigration. This concept may clarify not only cross-cultural values but also different factors that affect one's entrance and exit into certain transitional roles and life stages. In this study, looking at these factors elucidated how the experience of immigration intercepts with the experience of adolescence. Without this theoretical framework such interception would not have been apparent.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section is divided into two major sections. These subsections are: 1) limitations and biases, 2) future studies.

Limitations and Biases

There are several limitations that need to be addressed. First, this study was biased by my own experience as Latino Immigrant. As stated in the methodology chapter, my experience has helped me to understand complex layers of this topic. However, my experience placed my theoretical frame at one particular angle. Along the same lines, my own experience of immigration may have biased the interpretation of the data and analysis. It would have been important to have several readers who offered different

interpretations of the data and analysis, as well as theoretical suggestions.

Second, the generalizability of these findings cannot be assumed. The sample size for this study is small. Most participants were recruited in the Western Massachusetts area. Different socio-economic conditions in other areas across the country may have affected immigrants' experience post immigration. Also, most participants were from Colombia. Differences across countries in South America may have affected participants' experience post immigration.

Third, it would have been ideal to discuss the findings with participants in this study in order to reduce the monopoly of interpretation by researcher. In this manner, misinterpretations may be clarified and results may be closer to the participants' experience. Also, a second interview could have revealed more details of participants' experience. In the first interview, participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing aspects of their lives with someone they barely knew.

Future Studies

More research needs to be conducted on how the experience of immigration impacts developmental processes from a sociological and phenomenological perspective. The analysis of subjective experiences of developmental processes has not been largely documented on immigrants. Differences of gender should also be included in future research. In this study the transformation in the dynamics inside the family post immigration did not capture how differences in gender could have affected the experience of immigrants.

Most of the participants were from Colombia. It would be interesting to recruit more participants from other South American countries and contrast if there is any difference in their experience.

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Appendix A

HSR Letter of Approval



Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

February 16, 2010

Erika Hajati

Dear Erika,

Your recent set of revisions has been reviewed and they are fine. We are glad to give final approval to your very interesting study.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your study. I hope you are successful with recruitment. You will have better interviews with people who volunteer because they are interested in participating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Hartman".

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jean LaTerz, Research Advisor

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Erika Hajati, and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting an exploratory study on the experiences of South American Latino adolescents post immigrating to the United States of America. Your experience as a South American Latino(a) and immigrant during your adolescence could be a valuable insight to promote culturally sensitive community-based programs as well as a better understanding of the strengths and challenges that you faced as an immigrating adolescent. This study is a requirement of the Master's of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work and may be used for future presentations and/or publications.

The purpose of this study is to explore how adolescents adapt after migrating to a new country while also dealing with emotional, physical and psychological changes that come with their age. Participants must have come to the US during their adolescence (between 12-years-old to 20-years-old), must have been in the US for at least three years. Participants must be older than 18-years-old but no older than 30-years-old. Participants' country of origin must be a South American Spanish-speaking country (Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia). Participants must speak either Spanish or English. As a participant, you will be interviewed about your experience as an immigrating adolescent and how you adapt to or cope with that experience. You will be asked questions related to your experience prior to and after migrating to the United States of America. You will not be expected to discuss your immigration status with me, and for that matter, you should know that I am not affiliated with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services or any immigration control services. The interview will take place in a quiet local coffee shop or library. Interviews will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be tape-recorded. I will transcribe the interview.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. It is possible that during or after the interview you might experience feelings of sadness and/or anxiety due to the fact that you will recall past memories and significant events in your life. A list of referral sources is included with this consent form in case you would like further counseling or emotional support. There are no financial benefits or compensation for your participation. However, this study gives you a safe space to share your experience and an opportunity to help people who work with immigrants to better understand what they go through. In the same way, I hope that this study help leaders in the community to implement programs that might be helpful to you and other immigrants who are looking for further support after migrating to the US.

I will do my best to keep your identity confidential. I will omit all the identifying

information from the tapes and transcripts before the thesis advisor will have access to them. The data gathered will be presented as a whole and no identifying information from the participants will be included. In case of using quotes in the final presentation or publications they will be carefully disguise. All tapes will be store in a secure locked box for a period of three years as required by Federal Guidelines. If I need the materials beyond the three year period, they will continue to be kept in secure locked box and will be destroyed when no longer needed.

If you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you keep in mind that you can answer as much or as little as you want to the questions I will be asking you during the interview. Indeed, you can refuse to answer any questions. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time and if you do so, all the information that you have provided me will be destroy immediately. The final date for withdrawal is April 1st 2010, when the final report will be written.

If you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study please feel free to contact me at xxxxx or at my email xxxxx or you can also contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee, Ann Hartman at (413) 585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ OR HAD READ TO YOU AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS TO NOT BE INDENTIFIED IN THE STUDY AS A PARTICIPANT.

Please keep a copy of this informed consent for your records.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw from the study please contact:

Erika Hajati
Mobile: XXXXXXXXX
Email: XXXX

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form (Spanish)

Querido Participante:

Mi nombre es Erika Hajati, y soy estudiante de Maestria en Trabajo Social en el Smith College School for Social Work. Estoy llevando a cabo una investigación sobre la experiencia de los adolescentes Sur Americanos despues de migrar a los Estados Unidos de America. La experiencia como Sur Americano e inmigrante durante la adolescencia es un aporte importante para promover programas comunitarios y otros servicios para esta poblacion. Este estudio es llevado a cabo como requisito para completar la tesis y obtener el grado de Maestria en el Smith College School for Social Work.

El proposito de este estudio es explorar como se relacionan las experiencias de ser inmigrante y adolescente, y como la una afecta a la otra y viceversa. Como posible participante, usted sera entrevistado sobre su experiencia al migrar a los Estados Unidos de America durante sus 12 a 20 anos de edad. Asi mismo sera entrevistado sobre su experiencia antes y despues de migrar a los Estados Unidos. En ningun momento se le pedira discutir su status migratorio ya que como investigador, yo no estoy afiliada a ningun organismo estadounidense de control de inmigracion. La entrevista durara entre 40 a 90 minutos y se llevara acabo en una libreria o café. Con su consentimiento la entrevista sera grabada con una grabadora de cassette. La entrevista sera codificada numericamente para omitir cualquier informacion que lo pueda identificar. Toda la informacion que usted me provea sera confidencial.

Su participacion en el estudio es completamente voluntaria. No hay ninguna recompensa monetaria por participar en este proyecto. Sin embargo, este estudio le dara la oportunidad de compartir su experiencia y ayudar a personas en la comunidad que trabajan con otros inmigrantes. Espero que en el futuro este estudio le permita a lideres en la comunidad fundar programas que lo apoyen a usted al igual que a otros inmigrantes que buscan una ayuda extra despues de migrar a los Estados Unidos.

Es posible que durante o despues de la entrevista usted experimente sentimientos de tristeza o ansiedad. Esto puede suceder ya que al contar su experiencia, usted traera a su mente memorias que pueden causar reacciones emocionales fuertes. Junto con este consentimiento, se le entregara una lista de agencias en el area que ofrecen servicios de consejeria y asistencia psicologica en caso de que usted lo necesite.

Su identidad en este proyecto sera confidencial. Yo me comprometo a que toda la informacion que lo identifique sea omitida o borrada de las transcripciones de la entrevista y del cassette que se utilizara para grabar la entrevista. Los datos de la investigacion seran presentados sin mostrar la identidad de los participantes, y en caso de citas textuales, cualquier informacion que lo identifique sera cambiada. Todos los materiales de la entrevista seran guardados por un lapso de 3 anos en una caja de

seguridad a la cual solo el investigador tendra acceso. En caso de requerir los materiales por mas de 3 anos, seran igualmente guardados en una caja de seguridad.

Si usted decide participar en este estudio, es importante que sepa que usted puede responder a las preguntas que se le hagan tan breve o extensamente como lo desee. De la misma manera, puede no contestar las preguntas que se le hacen y salirse del proyecto si asi lo desea. Si decide dejar de participar en el proyecto de investigacion, toda la informacion que usted le dio al investigador sera destruida. La fecha final para salirse del estudio y destruir toda su informacion es Abril 1 del 2010, fecha en la cual el reporte final sera escrito en su totalidad.

Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante o sobre el estudio, no dude en contactarme al xxxxxx o al email xxxxxx o a la directora del Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee, Ann Hartman al xxxxxx.

SU FIRMA INDICA QUE UD HA LEIDO O LE HAN LEIDO ESTE DOCUMENTO, Y QUE UD ENTIENDE ESTA INFORMACION, AL IGUAL QUE HA TENIDO LA OPORTUNIDAD DE HACER PREGUNTAS ACERCA DE ESTE ESTUDIO, ACERCA DE LO QUE CONLLEVA SU PARTICIPACION, Y ACERCA A SU DERECHO A NO SER IDENTIFICADO COMO UN PARTICIPANTE EN ESTE PROYECTO.

Firma del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del investigador: _____ Fecha: _____

Si tiene alguna pregunta o, si decide retirar su participación, por favor contacte a:

Erika Hajati
Celular: xxxxxx
Email: xxxxxx

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Demographic questions:

1. Where are you from?
2. When did you come to the US?
3. How old were you when you came to the US?
4. How old are you now?
5. How long have you been in the US?
6. Female or Male?

Pre-Immigration:

1. How was your life in your country of origin?
2. What do you remember most about your country of origin?
3. Why did you or your family decide to come to the US?
4. What did you and your family expect to find in the US?

Post-Immigration:

1. How was your life after migrating to the US?
2. What changes in your life style did you first notice after migrating?
3. How did you negotiate these changes?

Developmental Liminalities:

1. How was your experience as an adolescent in a foreign country?
2. What were the most salient challenges that you faced during your adolescence?
3. How do you think being an adolescent in a foreign country affected your sense of self?
4. How do you think your experience as an adolescent would have been different in your country of origin?
5. How did you manage the changes you faced as an adolescent in a foreign country?

Cultural Liminality:

1. What are some of the cultural differences that you notice in the US as compared to your country of origin?
2. How did your sense of belonging to a country or national identity change after migrating to the US?
3. In what ways did your values, culture and traditions change after migrating to the US?
4. How did you negotiate the differences in values, culture and traditions after migrating to the US?

Appendix C

Questionnaire (Spanish)

Preguntas demográficas:

1. ¿De dónde es usted?
2. ¿Cuándo vino a los Estados Unidos?
3. ¿Qué edad tenía cuando vino a los Estados Unidos?
4. ¿Qué edad tiene ahora?
5. ¿Cuanto tiempo lleva en los Estados Unidos?
6. ¿Es usted hombre o mujer?

Pre-immigración:

1. ¿Cómo era tu vida en tu país de origen?
2. ¿Qué es lo que más recuerdas de su país de origen?
3. ¿Por qué tú o tu familia decidió venir a los EU?
4. ¿Qué expectativas tenías tú o tu familia al llegar a los EU?

Post-immigración:

1. ¿Cómo era tu vida después de inmigrar a los Estados Unidos?
2. ¿Qué cambios en tu estilo de vida notaste al llegar a Los Estados Unidos?
3. ¿Cómo manejaste esos cambios?

Liminalidades- adolescencia:

1. ¿Cómo fue tu experiencia como adolescente en un país extranjero?
2. ¿Cuáles fueron los retos más significativos que enfrentaste durante tu adolescencia?
3. ¿Cómo crees que la experiencia de ser adolescente en los EU afectó tu identidad?
4. ¿Cómo crees que tu experiencia como adolescente ha podido ser distinta en tu país de origen?
5. ¿Cómo manejaste los cambios que encontraste en Los EU en este aspecto?

Liminalidad cultural:

1. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las diferencias culturales que notaste al llegar a los EU?
2. ¿Cómo cambió tu sentido de pertenencia a un país o identidad nacional después de inmigrar a los EU?
3. ¿En qué sentido tus valores, cultura y tradiciones cambiaron después de inmigrar a los EU?
4. ¿Cómo balanceaste y negociaste la diferencia de valores, cultura y tradiciones después de inmigrar a los EU?