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# Raíces en ambos países : voices of Latino immigrant parents raising U.S. born children in the Washington Metropolitan Area

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## ABSTRACT

The following qualitative study sought to explore the living and parenting experiences of

Latino immigrant parents in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Snowball sampling, via an email

to the researcher's family, friends and colleagues, was used to recruit a total of twelve

individuals (female=8; male=4) for participation in the study. Participants ranged from 31 to 68

years of age and had immigrated to the United States from Peru (n=6), Colombia (n=2), El

Salvador (n=2), Ecuador (n=1) and Uruguay (n=1). Data for the study was gathered during

individual, semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants, which were audio

recorded, transcribed and manually coded. Participants' narratives revealed personal accounts

with acculturation and socialization; varying feelings associated with ethnic identity (i.e. pride,

liminality, advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism) preparing for and experiencing

discrimination in the U.S. and efforts to preserve their second generation children's cultural

identity and sense of family unity. The study illuminates the need for social workers to meet

immigrants' intersecting identities, struggles and achievements with sensitivity, empowerment

and a lens that encompasses analysis of immigrant individuals and their families within the

varying contexts of their environments.

**RAÍCES EN AMBOS PAÍSES: VOICES OF LATINO IMMIGRANT PARENTS**

**RAISING U.S. BORN CHILDREN IN THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA**

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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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction**

A reflection on the immigrant experience, as told by a participant of this study:

> In the beginning, it was a little bit tough because you try to survive in the new environment. New language, new food, new schedules, new people. Everything is new. I really think, not only because I experienced it, that I could value and be proud of all the people who do this. All of the effort that it takes to be here, to be in a completely new…it's like going to a different planet to come and leave their countries. To live and work here, look for a better life. I really think that they are people that we should admire.

When I was in the 4th grade, I remember sitting in class when a classmate of mine ran up to me, pointed his finger at me and proclaimed in front of the entire class, *"Your parents are aliens!"* At first, I was confused. That didn't make any sense. My parents weren't aliens; they weren't green or had three eyes like I'd seen on TV. Before I could say anything, the little boy, now yelling, continued, *"Your parents are aliens! Your parents are aliens!"* After what seemed like an eternity of crying, my teacher approached me and tried to console me by telling me that "alien" was another word for someone from another country. I continued to cry.

Many years and vocabulary words later, I have come to know that there are many others like me. Immigrant family households, or households where some or all family members are born in different countries, are on the rise in the United States. Between 2000 and 2005, the U.S. saw the highest 5-year period of immigration in its history (Camarota, 2005). Yu & Singh (2012) cite Census data that indicate that 22% of children, or 16 million, lived with a foreign-born householder in 2007 (p. 2102). Among the hardships faced by immigrant families, those related to economic conditions, health insurance, acculturation, access of public benefit programs and

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English proficiency are likely the most challenging (Beiser, 2005; Yu, Huang, Schwalberg &

Nyman, 2006).

Berry (2001) defines acculturation as being a process that entails contact between two

cultural groups, which results in numerous cultural changes for both parties with the

nondominant group often bearing the greater impact (p. 616). Within such process, exist four

strategies that further define immigrants' cultural changes. The first is the *assimilation* strategy,

which is used by immigrants who no longer wish to maintain their cultural heritage and, instead,

seek interaction with other cultures. The alternative is *separation*, which occurs when

immigrants avoid interaction with others in an effort to maintain their original culture. Next, in

the middle, lies *integration*, which define immigrants' efforts to both maintain their original

culture and engage in daily interaction with other groups. Finally, immigrants experience

*marginalization* when there is little possibility or interest in both their cultural maintenance and

interactions with others, often due to reasons of enforced cultural loss and discrimination

respectively (p. 619).

Varying combinations of immigrant family types have been shown to confer different

risks on children's health care access and utilization outcomes (Huang,Yu & Ledsky, 2006).

While parenting stressors are common in all families, immigrant family households are unique in

the fact that issues of acculturation tend to exacerbate everyday parenting duties and stressors.

Differences in documentation status between parents and their children, for example, can create

barriers for parents to obtain supportive services for their families. Similarly, low English

proficiency can impede, if not nearly obliterate, immigrant parents' ability to learn about such

services or fully interact with their children's wide range of service providers (i.e. school

officials).

Ethnic identity can also be an added tension among Latino immigrants, with recent literature focusing on the emotional tolls, like low self-esteem, that may arise from identification with a marginalized identity. Furthermore, literature on Latino immigrants has also emphasized the negative effects that assimilation brings on to immigrants and increasing ethnic socialization (i.e. messages about ethnicity, culture and race) practices being adopted by immigrant parents in an effort to preserve their family's culture. Common in all of these themes, however, are the predominant perspectives of immigrants who have recently entered the United States and who are often in the midst of the shock that acculturation can bring.

The following study hypothesizes that the aforementioned stressors faced by Latino immigrant families can create unspoken pressures to assimilate in order to be better equipped to provide for one's family. Such pressures, in turn, can prove threatening to both the immigrant and their family's cultural identity. While it is useful to know that acculturation impacts immigrant families in their initial stages of arriving to a new country, this qualitative study tried to gather a deeper look into Latino immigrant parents' living and parenting experiences over time. Additional focus was also placed on immigrant parents' added efforts to protect and preserve their second-generation children's cultural identity.

I chose to interview Latino immigrant parents for this study because, as a U.S. born daughter of two foreign born Latino immigrants, I have witnessed and have a profound respect for the work and dedication that it takes to raise a child in a country other than one's own. I say this all the while acknowledging that hard work and dedication are components of all parenting, regardless of country of origin. However, I am especially in awe of the added effort that many immigrant parents take on to preserve their family's culture; efforts which may not have otherwise been necessary to emphasize if raising children in their native country.

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As such, the intent of this study is to help bring attention to the unique living and parenting experiences of Latino immigrants in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Following this introduction, Chapter II will further summarize literature about Latino immigrant families to include recent U.S. immigration trends and issues of acculturation commonplace to immigrants. Chapter III will follow to describe the study's sample, design, recruitment, data collection and analysis methods. A synopsis of the study's findings will then be presented in Chapter IV prior to concluding with a discussion of the findings in Chapter V.

In closing, my goal for the study is to showcase the life and parenting experiences of Latino immigrants raising children in a country other than the one they were raised in. It is hoped that social workers and all service providers who may work with immigrant families take such insights as reminders of the importance of analyzing persons within the context of their environments, so that all can feel a little less like green, three-eyed space creatures.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Literature Review**

The following chapter will present literature depicting immigration trends of the Latino population in the United States as well as the makeup of Latinos in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Further, the literature will touch upon characteristics and concerns prevalent in the Latino immigrant community, including ethnic identity, acculturation, liminality and ethnic socialization.

**Latino immigration trends in the U.S.**

During the mid to late 1900s, a series of political occurrences and economic pressures in Latin America contributed to a great shift in the United States' Latino population makeup. During World War II, the United States was in dire need of rebuilding and urgently implemented the *bacero* (manual laborer) program. The program ran between 1942 and 1964 and allowed for nearly five million Mexicans to move and work in the U.S. as seasonal contract workers for U.S. growers and farmers (Anderson, 2003; Davies, 2009). By the mid 1960s, the industrialization of *maquilas*, or factories, along the U.S.-Mexico border, ended the *bacero* program. Nevertheless, Mexican workers continued to enter the country to work in the *maquilas*, where there existed both a demand for labor and tax free trade zones for international, in particular, U.S. companies (Davies, 2009). Moreover, the work provided a refuge from crime-ridden and impoverished cities in northern Mexico.

In 1959, Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba after overthrowing the regime of former dictator Flugencio Batista and his plans to operate under communist principles were not supported by the United States and many Cubans alike. After the U.S.' botched 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, a massive exodus of Cubans fled to parts of Florida and New York, leaving countless of families separated (Gutiérrez, 2013). Castro later agreed to allow Cubans who wished to be reunited with their families in the U.S. to do so and, as a result, an additional 300,000 Cuban refugees, this time documented, entered the U.S. between 1965 and 1970 (García, 2006). A similar incentive was behind the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, also referred to as the Hart Cellar Act, which relaxed immigration policy from 1965-1975, facilitating the entry of Mexicans to be reunited with family or become sponsored by their employer in the U.S. (Davies, 2009).

During the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, hundreds and thousands of Central American immigrants fled to the United States in an attempt to escape the social and economic devastation left behind in their countries (Gutiérrez, 2013; Singer, 2003). However, because of the U.S. Government's support for the Guatemalan and Salvadoran Governments, less than 3% of applicants from these countries received asylum (Menjivar & Abrego, 2009). Such individuals, unlike Cuban refugees granted legal protection, were left in an especially disadvantaged position as displaced persons that could neither return to their war-torn countries nor qualify for documentation so as to become legally integrated in the United States.

In the years that have followed, the United States' Latino population has continued to rise at outstanding rates. Data from the 2010 census shows that Latinos increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million increase in the total

population of the United States (Ennis, Rios-Vargas & Albert, 2011). Approximately 52% of the country's 16 million Latino children are now second generation, or U.S. born of at least one foreign-born parent from Mexico, Central or South America (Fry & Passel, 2009).

**Latinos in the Washington Metropolitan Area**

Looking at the Washington Metropolitan Area (see Appendix A: Map of the Washington Metropolitan Area) specifically, the United States Census Bureau, as reported by the Immigration Policy Center (2013), notes that the Latino population has risen from 5.4% in 1990, to 7.9% in 2000, to 9.5% (or 58,744 people) in 2011 (pg. 1). About three fourths of the DC region's foreign born population is either Latino (39.4%) or Asian (34.5%), with roughly one third of the area's Latino population coming from El Salvador (Leon, Maronick, De Vita & Boris, 2009).

Living patterns of Latinos in the Washington, DC region tend to differ in comparison to other historically, immigrant gateway cities like New York. Within the District itself, census data indicate that foreign-born populations have held steady at roughly 12.9% since 2000 (Leon et al., 2009). However, in addition to following family and social networks, the District's rising housing costs have significantly contributed to immigrants choosing to settle in the area's suburbs, particularly, Prince George's and Montgomery counties in Maryland and Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties in Virginia (Gabriel, Bettenberg, Chang, Dennett, Hoffman, Mehta & Memminger, 2002; Leon et al., 2009; Sheridan, 2001; Singer, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Friedman, Cheung, Price & The George Washington University, 2001; Singer, Wilson & DeReniz, 2009). Despite the influx of immigrants in Washington, DC's suburbs, the concentration of the area's immigrant serving nonprofit

organizations still lies within the District itself (see Appendix B: Distribution of nonprofits serving Latinos, Asians and Africans).

In a 2009 report chronicling community based organizations in the Washington Metropolitan Area, Leon et al. aim to explain the discrepancy between demographic shifts and nonprofit growth by further describing the area's varying attitudes towards immigrant populations. The District, they recount, has primarily been viewed as immigrant friendly due to its open policies and legislative efforts on behalf of minorities, like mandating cultural and linguistic competency for city services through its 2004 Language Access Act and advocating for health, educational, employment and social service for Latino populations via the DC Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (p.27). Moreover, although resources are much fewer in Maryland, supports like Montgomery County's Office of Community Partnership and Prince George's County's Office of Community Relations serve as liaisons between the counties' minority residents and County government, despite documentation status (p. 28-29). The same support cannot be vouched for in Northern Virginia, however, with Fairfax County restricting social services to legal county residents and Prince William County, per 2007 legislation, allowing law enforcement to detain people whom they suspect to be undocumented immigrants (p. 29-31).

**Acculturation and liminality**

In general, the immigration process is comprised of three parts: an individual's departure from their native country, a period of transition and integration into a new host country's culture and customs, which varies personally. The second stage, often referred to as a "liminal" space, describes immigrants' adjustment between two societies (home country and host country), which entail acculturative efforts, like learning a new language, that facilitate immigrants' navigations of their new surroundings (VanGennep, 1960).

Research on immigration, liminality and acculturation note common feelings of disorientation, loss and a sense of disconnection with one's former surroundings and sense of self among immigrant populations (Akhtar, 1995; Garza-Guererro, 1974). Smart & Smart (1995) add that immigrants can also enter into "conflict with sociocultural expectations and, therefore, feel guilt and shame" (p. 395).

Immigrants' individual experiences with the aforementioned emotional stressors, or culture shocks, however, can vary immensely depending on the characteristics of their migration experience and available support in a new host country. Length of immigration (temporary vs. permanent); reason for or degree of choice in leaving one's country (at will vs. exiled); ability to visit one's home country (dependent on socioeconomic and documentation status) and the host country's treatment (acceptance vs. rejection) can all significantly shape immigrants' perceptions of their immigration experience as positive or negative (Akhtar, 1995; Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker & Olds, 2009; Ornelas & Perreira, 2011; Negy, Schwartz & Reig-Ferrer, 2009). Family reunification and access to social supports, on the other hand, can greatly reduce the extent to which immigrants are negatively affected by acculturative stress (Piedra, Byoun, Guardini & Cintrón, 2012).

The intensity of acculturative stressors, however, can likely decrease for members further down the familial generational line. For example, in comparison to their first-generation immigrant parents, second-generation children are thought to possess specific knowledge of both cultural practices and coping strategies for discrimination that facilitate a successful navigation of mainstream society. Still, exposure to acculturation processes remain primarily determined by immigrant parents' lifestyle circumstances and generally reflect the family's sociological

characteristics, neighborhood and the social environments to which the parents expose the children (Quintana & Scull, 2009).

**Latino ethnic identity and socialization efforts**

Social identity theory describes the psychological process of identification with a group, highlighting that individuals will perceive more similarity with members of their same social group than with members of another group (Tajfel, 1978). Literature supporting social identity theory to Latinos' ethnic identity describes that to identify as Latino means to identify with a stigmatized group of people. Moreover, Latino identity, Quintana & Scull (2009) add, "will reflect the sociological processes associated with acculturation and enculturation, as well as the psychological principles associated with social identity " (p. 82). Making reference to one's national origin, for example, can be viewed as an added effort for Latinos to politicize their subgroup's distinct reason for and context of immigration, as well as their sociocultural history with the U.S. (Quintana & Scull, 2009; Romero, 1997).

Given the aforementioned historical, social and racial diversity that exist within Latinos, "Latino", interchangeably used with "Hispanic", is experienced more as an ethnic and cultural category than a racial one. For many Latinos, common experiences and features such as the use of the Spanish language, the emphasis on cultural preservation, the value placed on family and religious traditions all contribute to the "groupness" of the identity (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). On the other hand, someone who claims Latino identity based solely on ancestry, as opposed to lived cultural markers, is less likely to be perceived as a genuine member of the group and, therefore, may experience rejection-identification, or rejection from their same ethnic group (Corlett, 1999; Wiley, 2013). Similarly, individuals who identify as bi or multi cultural (i.e. identifying as "Mexican-American" vs. "Mexican" or "American") may experience comparable

group rejection from their home country, despite lack of intentional low identification with such country.

Experiences with discrimination can positively strengthen ethnic identity for Latinos while also negatively influence their attitudes towards their ethnicity (Quinatna & Scull, 2009; Wiley, Lawrence, Figueroa & Percontino, 2013). What often follows is the dilemma of balancing self-esteem and ethnic pride amidst stigmatization or group rejection. While historically more associated with African-Americans, ethnic socialization, interchangeable with cultural socialization, is now being applied to research across various ethnic groups as methods to preserve and protect cultural identity. (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota & Ocampo, 1993; Quintana & Vera, 1999).

Studies especially highlight parents' socialization efforts, ranging from protective measures, like preparation for discrimination, and cultural pride reinforcement as common among Latino families (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Quintana & Scull, 2009; Stevenson, 1994 & 1995). Some parents, however, decide against speaking with their children about discrimination for fear of instilling animosity toward other ethnic groups or because their children are not yet old enough (Hughes, Rivas, Foust, Hagelskamp, Gersick & Way, 2008). Regardless, all are thought to be integral contributors in the development of ethnic identity amidst a society where minority and dominant groups coexists, like the United States (Rosenthal, 1987).

**Conclusion**

In closing, with immigration rates climbing and immigrant Latino families emerging, it is imperative to deliver services that support the well-being and cultural preservation of Latino families. Whether learning the English language or navigating new systems, Latino foreign-born parents seem to be confronted with certain pressures to assimilate in order to be better equipped

to provide for the children they are raising in the Unites States. While perhaps not as cognizant in the very beginning, over time, such necessary pressures could be viewed as a threat to one's ethnic identity.

While a lot of literature focuses on the acculturation process and its negative effects on recently immigrated foreign-born immigrants, little attention is paid to their parenting and cultural preservation efforts, or lack thereof, over time. Moreover, when ethnic socialization is researched, more emphasis is placed on adolescents' viewpoints on what they learned from their parents, versus parents' personal accounts of their parenting. The proposed study, therefore, sought to highlight the living and parenting experiences of immigrant families in the Washington Metropolitan area in an attempt to remind service providers of the gravity of analyzing persons within the contexts of their environments.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

This chapter explains in more detail the study's overall purpose as well as its design, recruitment, data collection and analysis methods To start, the following are a description of frequently used terms:

The term **Latino** refers to a person, living in the United States, who was born in the territory of Puerto Rico or one of the following countries in Latin America: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay or Uruguay.

Operationally, the term "Latino" will be used interchangeably for "Hispanic". It will also be used to describe the ethnicity of immigrant parents (excluding Puerto Rican individuals) and their families (second-generation children, etc). An explanation as to why Puerto Rican individuals were excluded from participating in this study can be found in the "sample" section of this chapter.

A **first-generation immigrant, foreign-born individual** or **immigrant** is a person who lives in a different country than the one they were born in. Operationally, all immigrant and foreign-born persons will refer to parents that were born in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia,

Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay and who hav**e** lived in the United States for a minimum of 15 years.

A **second-generation** or **U.S. born individual**, operationally, is someone who was born in the United States to a first-generation immigrant parent from Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay or Uruguay.

**Acculturation** refers to the process of adjustment to a different culture, typically the dominant one. Operationally, the process will refer to that of Latinos, foreign or U.S. born, adjusting to the dominant White/American culture.

As defined by Berry (2001) in Chapter I, within acculturation exist four strategies to further define immigrants' cultural changes. The first is **assimilation**, which refers to when immigrants no longer wish to maintain their cultural heritage and, instead, seek interaction with other cultures. The alternative is **separation**, which occurs when immigrants avoid interaction with others in an effort to maintain their original culture. Next, in the middle, lies **integration**, which define immigrants' efforts to both maintain their original culture and engage in daily interaction with other groups. Finally, immigrants experience **marginalization** when there is little possibility or interest in both their cultural maintenance and interactions with others, often due to reasons of enforced cultural loss and discrimination respectively (p. 619).

**Immigrant families** are immediate families or households where some or all members are born in different countries. Operationally, immigrant families will refer to families where the parent is a foreign-born Latino immigrant from Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela,

Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay or Uruguay (regardless of documentation status or original or additional citizenship) and their children are U.S. born (American citizens).

**Cultural preservation efforts**, whether verbal or practiced, aim to protect and promote one's ethnic/cultural identity. Such efforts could include **ethnic/cultural socialization**, which include explicit or implicit messages, either positive or negative, seeking to inform one about their ethnicity or culture. Operationally, both terms are used in relation to Latino immigrants' parenting practices, if at all present.

## Research purpose

The study sought to explore the living and parenting experiences of Latino immigrant parents in the Washington Metropolitan Area. While parenting difficulties are common in all families, the study hypothesized that immigrant family households are unique in the fact that issues of acculturation tend to exacerbate everyday parenting duties and stressors.

Furthermore, recent literature has focused on the impacts of assimilation on recently immigrated families. This qualitative and exploratory study, on the contrary, tried to gather a deeper look into Latino immigrant parents' living and parenting experiences over time. Additional focus was also placed on participants' ethnic identity and efforts to protect and preserve their second-generation children's cultural identity. Due to the fluid nature of such topics, semi-structured interviews, both in person and over the phone, were used to provide a more intimate and flexible setting for participants to share phenomenological narratives.

## Research design

Prior to beginning the study's recruitment process, the study's proposal underwent the Smith College Human Subject Review (HSR) application to ensure that the study was in

accordance with federal guidelines for research with human participants. Revisions to the study were made, as directed by the HSR Committee, and re-submitted until final committee approval was granted (see Appendix C: Human Subject Review Committee – letter of approval).

Ultimately, the qualitative study used in-person, semi-structured interviews to conduct exploratory research on the living and parenting experiences of Latino immigrant parents of second-generation, U.S. born children. Qualitative interviews, applied through an interpretivist framework, also gave room for participants to share what their cultural preservation efforts, or lack thereof, meant to them as parents of children born in the U.S.

**Sample**

Overall, the Latino immigrant parent population remains hidden, despite census citations by Yu & Singh (2012) that indicate that 22% of children, or 16 million, lived with a foreign-born householder in 2007 (p. 2102). As a result, the study did not have a sampling frame and rather, recruited participants in Latino immigrant households via snowball sampling by way of an email message to the researcher's family, friends and colleagues (see Appendix D: Recruitment email message for snowball sampling).

Emailed recipients were encouraged to either partake in the study or circulate the email to others who met the following inclusive criteria: be 18 years or older; be able to communicate in English; have been born in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay or Uruguay; have at least one biological or adopted child (any age) that was born in the United States; currently live in the Washington Metropolitan Area (District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia); and have lived in the U.S. for a minimum of 15 years. Individuals from Puerto Rico were excluded from

participating in the study for the purposes of gathering narratives about participants' experiences as immigrants living in the United States. The 15-year residency minimum was set with the intention of gathering a more "in hindsight" living perspective from participants, whether they began parenting soon or well after their initial entry into the U.S.

Aside from a small sample size of twelve participants, it is important to note that the ultimate makeup of the study's sample makes it difficult to generalize the research to other studies on Latino immigrant parents. Furthermore, it seems that the study's recruitment method of snowball sampling seems to have altered the representation of the intended sample within the larger Latino population of the Washington Metropolitan Area in three ways.

The first is the study's recruitment of mainly South American immigrants, despite the area's more predominant Central American Latino population. Secondly, although never listed as inclusive participation criteria, recruitment brought in a higher percentage of participants that belong to a middle socioeconomic status. This inference was made based on narratives, further outlined in the next chapter, that included participants being able to afford luxuries like private education and international travel. Lastly, including comprehension of the English language as a prerequisite to participation resulted in the entire sample being bilingual, which may indicate that such participants had more resources at their disposal (i.e. time or social support as facilitators to learn English) otherwise not guaranteed for all immigrant individuals.

**Data collection**

Data for the study was gathered via individual, semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants, which were informal in nature and conducted in the participant's language of choice (either English or Spanish). The majority of the interviews took place in

participants' homes, with the exception of four, which were conducted over the phone due to scheduling restraints.

Following the initial recruitment email, individuals who expressed interest in participating in the study were emailed the interview questions as well as the informed consent form (see Appendix E: Consent to participate in a research study) prior to scheduling an interview. Providing such materials was done with the thought that a preview of the questions would give participants more time to develop answers to questions that were not necessarily at the forefront of their everyday thinking, in addition to helping them decide whether or not they felt comfortable moving forward with an interview.

Upon meeting in person or via a telephone call, participants were reminded of the risks of participation and provided with a list of organizations in DC, Maryland and Virginia that offer free or low cost, bilingual mental health services (see Appendix F: Supportive resources for research participants). Participants were then given another chance to review the informed consent form before they signed it. All participants verified that they could understand the informed consent form, available only in English, despite some individuals' preference for the Spanish language.

In an effort to protect their identity, participants were assigned numbers, which were used to address them during their interview (i.e. Participant #1 and so forth). Lastly, interviews, made up of the following questions, were audio recorded for later transcription.

1. How old are you?

2. What is your gender?

3. What country were you born in?

4. How you do ethnically identify?

5. How old were you when you came to the United States?

6. How many years have you lived in the United States?

7. What messages, if any, did you get from your parents about your ethnicity/culture?

8. What has your experience been like as a Latino immigrant living in the U.S.?

9. What has your experience been like as an immigrant parent of a U.S. born child?

10. What messages have you given your kid(s) about their Latino ethnicity/culture? If none, what are your reasons for choosing not to?

11. What helped you give your kids such messages?

12. What made it harder to give your kids such messages?

13. What, if anything, would you like to add that I have not asked you about?

**Data analysis**

Data gathered in this study was audio recorded and analyzed manually, incorporating a phenomenological analysis approach. Interview transcriptions were coded by copying and pasting data on to an Excel spreadsheet that organized participants' responses into separate themes and subthemes. Both the transcriptions and Excel spreadsheet referred to participants by their assigned numbers, as was done throughout the interviews, so as to keep their identity confidential. Participants' demographic information was examined through a univariate analysis and documented on three tables (see Appendix G: Tables). The study's ultimate findings are presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Findings

The following chapter highlights the study's participant demographics and how snowball sampling may have influenced the study's sample. Furthermore, this chapter identifies the study's findings as they relate to five areas of participants' living and parenting experiences: acculturation and socialization; ethnic pride and multiculturalism; preparing for and experiencing discrimination in the U.S., liminality and family unity as an important, Latino cultural value. All names, as found throughout this chapter, have been changed to protect participants' identities.

## Participant demographics

To start, the study gathered narratives from twelve immigrant individuals (female=8; male=4), aged 31 to 68 years, who were originally born in Peru (n=6), Colombia (n=2), El Salvador (n=2), Ecuador (n=1) and Uruguay (n=1). Two couples made up four of the twelve participants. All participants immigrated to the United States between the years of 1962 - 1999 and averaged 30 years of living in the United States. Nine of the participants migrated as adults, while three did so at six, eight and seventeen years of age. At the time of the interviews, participants resided in Northern Virginia's Fairfax and Prince William counties (cities of Alexandria, Arlington, Burke, Chantilly, McLean and Woodbridge) and Maryland's Montgomery County (city of Rockville) (see Appendix A: Map of the Washington Metropolitan Area) and held careers in administration (n=3), childcare (n=2), finance (n=2), architecture

(n=1), construction (n=1), education (n=1), food service (n=1) and information technology (n=1).

**Acculturation and socialization**

As is the case for many immigrants in a new country, participants reflected on their adjustments to a new language and unfamiliar socioeconomic statuses and gender norms that they encountered as both new residents and new parents in the United States.

Participants, like Yolanda, recalled the difficulties they faced as they worked to learn the English language. Yolanda, now 61 years old, immigrated to the United States from Uruguay when she was 26 and spoke about how real and perceived language barriers impacted both her and her son.

> "When my kids were babies and I was 30 years old, my conversation was so limited that it only created frustration with everything. Everything. For example, confronting a teacher that says that your kid has A.D.D. Then you're there with a whole committee, with the county, with language specialists… you with eight people around the table, not knowing how to express yourself, not being understood or not understanding. You're not able to express what you want to express - 'You're not evaluating my kid as a kid who speaks two languages and who doesn't have the same vocabulary as an American boy.' I went through all that. I cried so much. It was really, really frustrating."

Adapting to new socioeconomic statuses and gender roles also proved unexpected for some participants. For example, Carmen, a 56-year-old immigrant from Peru who self identified as middle-class, talked about how it was difficult for her to forgo certain child-rearing services (i.e. nanny) that, in Peru, middle class families could reasonably afford. In contrast, Lourdes, 50, expressed feeling relieved when she learned that her children could be picked up from home by their school's bus, a service that Lourdes' mother had not been able to financially afford for her when growing up in Colombia.

Lastly, regarding gender norms, one participant, Francisco, 56, laughed as he recalled how his duties as a new parent initiated a shift in his more traditional and *machismo*, or masculine, beliefs around common gender roles in his home country of Peru.

> "The first time we had our daughter, my wife asked me to change her diaper. I looked at her like she was crazy – how could I do that? She's my daughter, I couldn't see her private parts! For me it was a total shock. In my country, aside from the fact that men didn't do those kinds of chores, it was especially not ok for a grown man to touch *there*. That's how I grew up and, when we had our daughter, I had to let that go."

Now a father of two daughters, Francisco prides himself in having adopted more modern views around gender roles that, he felt, enabled him to instill within his daughters messages encouraging independence. This same sentiment was shared among other male and female participants alike, regardless of their children's gender. Moreover, various female participants believed that they had been able to advance further, professionally, in the United States than had they stayed in their home country.

**Ethnic pride and multiculturalism**

Pride, specifically in relation to one's ethnicity was widely expressed throughout participants' interviews. Nearly all participants communicated feeling proud of their country, ethnicity/culture and/or cultural customs. While a couple of participants mentioned that being proud of their culture were messages that they had heard from their own parents, the majority of them attributed the feeling as naturally coming from within themselves, with no intentional education around it. Interestingly enough, nearly all participants claimed to have verbally told their children to be proud of where they came from and to "never forget their roots".

The topic of multiculturalism was also recurrent throughout interviews, especially between, Luis and Ricardo, the two participants who immigrated to the United States as small children. While both had grown up in the United States, Luis and Ricardo held almost opposite

views of how their multiculturalism impacted their identity and parenting of their second-generation children.

Luis, now 58, immigrated to the United States from El Salvador when he was six years old. As a father of teenagers, Luis took comfort in feeling like he could better understand his children because he knew that, culturally, they would likely be different than him, as he felt he was in comparison with his own immigrant parents. Having lived the American culture while witnessing his parents' lived Latino culture, Luis felt, put him in a better position to teach his children about both cultures.

On the other hand, Ricardo, who immigrated to United States from Ecuador when he was eight years old, viewed his multiculturalism as a source of confusion throughout his childhood. Now 31 and a new father, he questioned whether he wanted to expose his infant son to a similar upbringing.

> "You know, one thing that I've always though about is my name, 'Ricardo' [said in Spanish accent], and the way I say it. It's always been interesting to me how you never know how you change it. Everyone has always called me 'Ricardo' [said in English accent] and the way I say it I've struggled with my entire life, depending on whom I'm talking to. There is a certain kind of loss of identity that I think comes with being multicultural sometimes, I feel. And so there is a small part of me that almost wants to– well, not have my son feel that. 95% of me says that I want to expose him to his culture, how to learn Spanish and feel the multiculturalism. But there is also a part of me that, just from growing up…there were times where it was just more complicated and I felt like I didn't have the same identity of people that were just 'John Smith' that were born here and it was very easy. Like ordering a pizza on the phone, to just say, 'John Smith' instead of having somebody say, 'excuse me?' You say your name correctly until, ultimately, you say, 'Ricardo' [said in English accent]."

**Preparing for and experiencing discrimination in the United States**

When talking about discrimination, there seemed to be a difference in how female and male participants approached the topic. Female participants, for the most part, communicated their efforts to prepare their children for racism, most notably by emphasizing cultural pride and

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formal education as protectors against discrimination. Mothers verbally encouraged their children to "know they were as good as anybody else" and "embrace their differences", messages that, for some, still remain as personal mantras.

Additionally, formal education was seen as upwards mobility that could demystify the negative stereotypes associated with being Latino. Sabrina, a 57-year-old immigrant from Peru who obtained her Bachelor's degree in the United States, pointed out that introducing her children to fellow Latino immigrant college graduates allowed her to show them the "[other] part of being Latino that is less shown in the media".

Male participants, on the other hand, spoke more openly about their personal experiences with discrimination. Take, for example, Sergio, a 50-year-old immigrant from Colombia and construction worker who shared his painful memory of the events that lead to his decision to pull his son out of a predominately white, private school.

> "I would always pick him up from school in my truck, my working truck and sometimes I had things on top of there- trash, drywall, things like that. The kids there, well you know, most of them got picked up by their moms, in nice cars, and he was the only one that was being picked up in *my* particular car. So they called him 'Speedy Gonzalez' and other names and I always said to my son, 'just be careful, don't get into a fight.' Well, he got into a fight and got suspended. I went to the school and the principal only attacked the physical violence. I said that if my son was going to be suspended, then the other kid should too because he had been bullying him for so long. They said no. The other boy, he was white and the son of a lawyer so they didn't suspend him. It was very unfair. After he [son] finished middle school, we decided to put him into public school because it was not worth it, the discrimination. If the discrimination is to me, I can handle it. But when it's to your kids- no."

Sergio's anecdote illustrates the micro, macro and intergenerational manifestations of racism that will be further discussed in the next chapter.

**Reflections on the liminality of immigrants**

Liminality, or the time of transition between an individual's separation from one society and their full integration into another one, was a recurring theme throughout participants'

interviews. Many participants, like Roxana who emigrated from Peru at 24 years old, spoke

about how the physical separation from their home countries contributed to a sense of not fully

belonging to either the United States or the country of their birthplace.

> "When you are here, you know you're not from here. Your house is here, you live here, but then your country, your homeland, is there. But when you go there, and you've been here for so long, you're not from there anymore. You missed a chunk of time. You are like a foreigner there. It's like you don't belong there because you missed history and events that happened while you were gone…you end up having this kind of limbo. It's weird but you get used to it."

Other participants spoke about how their own second-generation children's liminality and need

for peer acceptance added to their own as immigrants, as told by previously mentioned

participant, Carmen.

> "Now that I have teenage kids, it is even tougher. It's hard for them to decide where they belong to…it's hard to lead and guide my kids in the way that I was brought up – putting family first and making sure they follow our rules because their friends are not doing the same. So I get a lot of resistance from them and they'll tell me, 'Mom, we are not in your country. Mom, we are not Latin. We are here and you need to let go.' That's what I get from them. So it's been hard."

Moreover, when it came to language, both Roxana and Carmen talked about their

insecurities with their Spanish accents, cultural markers that they felt set them apart from others

when speaking in English. While embarrassed by it at first, both talked about how time helped

them overcome their unease with standing out, to the point that they now felt proud that their

accents reminded them, and others, that they came from another country. On the other end,

Ricardo, presented earlier, expressed feeling "less authentic" to his Ecuadorian culture when he

started to lose his accent and, additionally, prefer to speak in English instead.

**Family unity as a significant, Latino cultural value**

Most participants saw preservation of the family unit as the most important cultural value

that they could pass on and model for their children. Messages to politely acknowledge adults,

look out for siblings and care for the elderly were common among participants' teachings to their

children. Participants saw these values as deeply engrained within the Latino culture and often mentioned having heard the same from their own parents. Maintaining family ties, whether near or far, was frequently seen as a sign of respect for the Latino culture and, further, as a way to honor their family's reminders to "remember their roots".

Albeit engrained within the Latino culture, family cohesion was also seen as threatened by certain realities like popular American customs and geographical distance. The United States' emphasis on independence at a young age, for example, proved concerning for Beatriz, an immigrant mother from Peru who immigrated to the U.S. almost 25 years ago. Beatriz, 55, talked about her disapproval when her children, both in their 20s, said they wanted to move away from home, justifying that,

> "[Latino] families are different from American families because in our culture, children stay home until they are married. Independence is just not as important to us like it is for Americans."

Additionally, Francisco, introduced earlier, spoke of the personal guilt that can be felt when distance creates painful shifts in family cohesion, as depicted by his following reflection,

> "My uncle from back home died and, when I heard, it was sad but I didn't *feel* sad. I asked my dad, 'didn't I love him?' He said that it was probably the distance and, for a moment, I felt horrible. How could I not love him? It was a weird feeling…not knowing if it was the distance or not."

Lastly, family unity was deemed as necessary in preserving children's cultural authenticity, especially in terms of maintaining the Spanish language. Parents talked about the importance of speaking to their children in Spanish, which, for some, was easier than others depending on their own language preference and, in two-parent households, each partner's commitment and/or ability to do so. Nearby family, especially grandparents, were also seen as cultural educators, in addition to support in childrearing. Travel to one's home country, for those

who could afford to do so, was viewed as a means to reconnect family ties as well as expose children to where they came from so as to encourage cultural pride.

**Summary of findings**

In closing, the above-mentioned narratives provide a glance into the fluidity of life and parenting experiences that can exist within the Latino immigrant community. As individuals, participants recounted their frustration with learning the English language, surprise over new U.S. gender and social norms, pain with discrimination and the pride they felt towards their ethnicity, albeit obscure, at times, depending on liminality. Moreover, as parents, participants described their efforts to prepare and protect their children from discrimination as well as emphasized the importance of preserving their family's cultural and relational unity. The next, concluding chapter will offer additional insight into the study's implications for social work practice with Latino immigrant families as well as present its limitations and suggested areas for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

This final chapter will highlight implications for social work practice with Latino immigrant families, list the study's limitations and conclude with suggestions for future research.

As previously stated, the study sought to explore the living and parenting experiences of Latino immigrant parents in the Washington Metropolitan Area. In total, twelve immigrants participated in the study; their narratives offering a brief look into the fluidity that can exist within the Latino immigrant community. Participants spoke of their personal frustration with learning the English language, shock at new gender and social norms in the U.S., pain with discrimination and the mixed feelings that come with ethnic pride. Within their parenting role, participants conveyed their efforts on how they continue to prepare and protect their children from discrimination as well as emphasized the importance of preserving the cultural and relational ties within their family.

**Implications for social work practice with Latino immigrant families**

The narratives in the previous chapter point to the subjectivity of the concept of "home", familiar to numerous immigrants who have been raised in one country and established adulthood in another. Loss is an inevitable part of immigration. Whether it is loss of language, family support or a straightforward sense ethnic identity, immigrant families continuously navigate between various worlds. As social workers, it is imperative that such intersecting identities, struggles and achievements be met with sensitivity, empowerment and a lens that encompasses

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analysis of immigrant individuals and their families within the varying contexts of their environments.

**Language and bilingualism.** As new residents and parents in a foreign country, participants showcased that adapting to a new country's customs takes time and, even more, lived experience that will often prove more exasperating before becoming easier. Yolanda's meeting with school and community officials, for example, highlights how language barriers can enhance feelings of isolation that many immigrants encounter as they acclimatize to living in a new country. Her experience shows how such barriers can prove especially painful for parents when they interfere with their ability to advocate for their children's well-being, almost threatening individuals' identities as caretakers. In order to support monolingual immigrants' parenting efforts, social workers should advocate for and coordinate access to language interpretation services, whether in person or over the phone, so as to create a culturally appropriate environment that encourages parental involvement.

Additionally, the quick labeling of Yolanda's son as someone with Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.) problematizes children being raised to speak more than one language as well as undermines proper mental health diagnosis. Aside from the practical advantages of being able to communicate in more than one language, bilingualism is now increasingly being viewed as an enhancement of the cognitive control system. Studies, like that of Kovács and Mehler (2009), provide evidence that both language systems are active in a bilingual person's brain even when only one of the languages is being spoken, forcing the brain to resolve internal conflict. Such continuous cognitive exercise can facilitate problem-solving skills, boost increased awareness of surroundings and augment focus and memory.

**Cultural expression and markers.** As is the case for most social communities, Latino immigrants may interact in a particular way with individuals within their same ethnic community (i.e. family) but choose to alter their mannerisms when in the presence of those outside of it. This effort to blend in can stem from a desire to obtain social acceptance, a common need for many individuals, especially when identified as a minority population.

Ricardo, from the previous chapter, demonstrated this need with his decision to alternate between how he pronounced his name, either in a Spanish or English accent depending on who he was speaking to (someone in or out of his Latino ethnic community). His name, additionally, is also a unique reminder of how cultural markers can be more or less obvious depending on which of the five senses is at play. During his interview, which was conducted over the phone, Ricardo described himself as being visually able to pass as white due to his fair complexion. Over the phone, however, as in his example of ordering a pizza, his name, regardless of its pronunciation, could give him away as being Latino.

Given Ricardo's story, it is important that social workers working with Latino communities carefully explore any cultural insecurities that their clients may be experiencing. Left to fester, these insecurities could turn into poor self esteem or, as Ricardo mentioned, a loss of identity, which could further worsen clients' social and personal sensitivities.

**Latino stereotypes and perceptions of cultural authenticity.** Negative Latino stereotypes are not anything new to Latinos and society at large. Take, for instance, when college-graduate, Sabrina, mentioned that she illustrated "the [other] side of being Latino" to her children when she introduced them to fellow, Latino immigrant graduates. Her statement, pointing to the media's depiction of Latinos as uneducated individuals, showcases the existing

internalized oppression felt by countless Latinos, and people of color alike, despite personal efforts to break negative racial stereotypes.

On another note, it is also not uncommon for some Latinos to feel that, in order to be "authentically Latino", one must play into mainstream media's general depiction of Latinos as lazy, uneducated and violent persons. Individuals with such beliefs might argue, for example, that someone like Sabrina, who obtained higher education, is not "truly" Latina for having "gone against her roots". This way of thinking can prove highly detrimental for Latinos' personal and professional growth and, as social workers, such mental barriers should be acknowledged and discouraged in an empowering fashion.

Still, negative stereotypes and micro, macro and intergenerational manifestations of racism are well engrained within the Latino community, as demonstrated by Sergio's anecdote in the previous chapter. On a personal level, Sergio's son was being bullied in school by being called "Speedy Gonzales", a Warner Brothers cartoon character known for his portrayal of several Latino, particularly Mexican, stereotypes. The school's decision to only suspend Sergio's son, despite the other child's racist and persistent bullying, institutionally, perpetuates the negative stereotype that Latino boys are the ones who are threatening and violent. Such administrative actions also contribute to and, as seen in Sergio's decision to remove his son from the school, encourage a low representation of Latinos in higher education. Lastly, Sergio's decision exemplifies the sacrifices that immigrants are often willing to make in an effort to protect their children's cultural identity and pride, even if at the expense of other beneficial opportunities.

Sergio's story serves as a reminder of the multiple roles that social workers need to embody in order to preserve the dignity and promote the advancement of oppressed populations.

As mental health providers, social workers can extend emotional support to those experiencing their own or a loved one's discrimination. Moreover, as advocates for social justice, social workers can help highlight to school officials how a plan to suspend children like Sergio's son not only feeds into negative Latino stereotypes, but also glorifies bullying by dismissing and silencing its victims. Lastly, as educators, social workers can note the racial hostility towards people of color, both from an administrative and student body perspective, and organize a lecture or workshop on how to create more culturally supportive environments for people from varying backgrounds.

**Limitations of the study and suggested directions for future research**

Overall, the study's small sample size of twelve participants makes it difficult to generalize to other studies on Latino immigrants. Additionally, it is important to note that certain constructs of the study's recruitment method seem to have altered the representation of the intended sample within the larger Latino population of the Washington Metropolitan Area.

To start, snowball sampling appears to have contributed to the study's recruitment of mainly South American immigrants, despite the area's more predominant Central American Latino population. Moreover, discussion around the study's findings, as presented by the researcher, a second-generation child of two Peruvian immigrants, might also represent biased and informed thoughts of someone having been raised in an immigrant household.

Next, although never listed as inclusive participation criteria, the study seems to have drawn in a higher percentage of participants that belong to a middle socioeconomic status. This inference was made based on narratives like those that included participants being able to pay for their children's private school or their family's travel to their home country. Reversely, including comprehension of the English language as a prerequisite to participate in the study resulted in the

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entire sample being bilingual. This may indicate that such participants had more resources at their disposal (i.e. time or social support as facilitators to learn English) otherwise not guaranteed for all immigrant individuals.

Based on the aforementioned limitations, suggested directions of research of Latino immigrants might include: undocumented individuals, immigrants with different socioeconomic backgrounds, mixed status families/households and immigrant parents' and children's perspectives on reunification after prolonged separation due to immigration or deportation.

**Conclusion**

In closing, the study explored and collected accounts of the living and parenting experiences of twelve Latino immigrant mothers and fathers in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Although not entirely generalizable to the Latino population as a whole, participants' stories shed light on the varying relationships and experiences with language barriers, ethnic identity and discrimination commonplace for individuals adapting to living in a new country. Participants also recounted efforts that exemplify how parenting in a country other than one's own place of birth entails added work to protect and preserve second-generation children's cultural identity and regard for family unity.

While several participants referenced feeling proud of their Latino ethnicity and culture, it is important to keep in mind that, as previously mentioned in Chapter II, to identify as Latino is to identify with a stigmatized population. It is hoped that the study's findings of Latino immigrant parents' experiences with acculturation, varying ethnic identities, discrimination, liminality and family unity will remind service providers of the importance of analyzing such individuals and their families within the contexts of their environments.

As case managers, mental health providers and advocates, social workers can serve as key allies in supporting the practical and emotional needs of Latino immigrant families. If not bilingual themselves, those working with monolingual, Spanish speaking clients should advocate for and coordinate access to language interpretation services, whether in person or over the phone, when necessary (i.e. individual therapy, parent-teacher conference, medical appointment). Doing so creates more culturally inclusive environments where Spanish speakers can feel understood, valued and, in turn, self empowered.

From a mental health perspective, social workers should note the fluidity that exists among Latino immigrants' ethnic pride and identity, which can vary greatly by individuals' own upbringing, social supports, time in the United States and experiences with discrimination. Providers are encouraged to cautiously inquire about any cultural insecurities that their clients might be facing (i.e. liminality) both personally and within their families and social circles. Furthermore, using sensitivity when exploring clients' experiences with racism and discrimination could help in establishing the foundation for safe, mental processing that addresses Latino immigrants' increasing tensions around self-esteem or loss of identity.

Lastly, as advocates for social justice, social workers can stand up for Latino immigrant families by fighting against individual and institutional efforts that further marginalize Latinos. Whether glorifying negative Latino stereotypes or dismissing the representation of communities, providers can engage in micro and macro educational and political work to promote the advancement, maximize the cohesion and highlight the resiliency of Latino immigrants and their families.

**Appendix A: Map of the Washington Metropolitan Area**
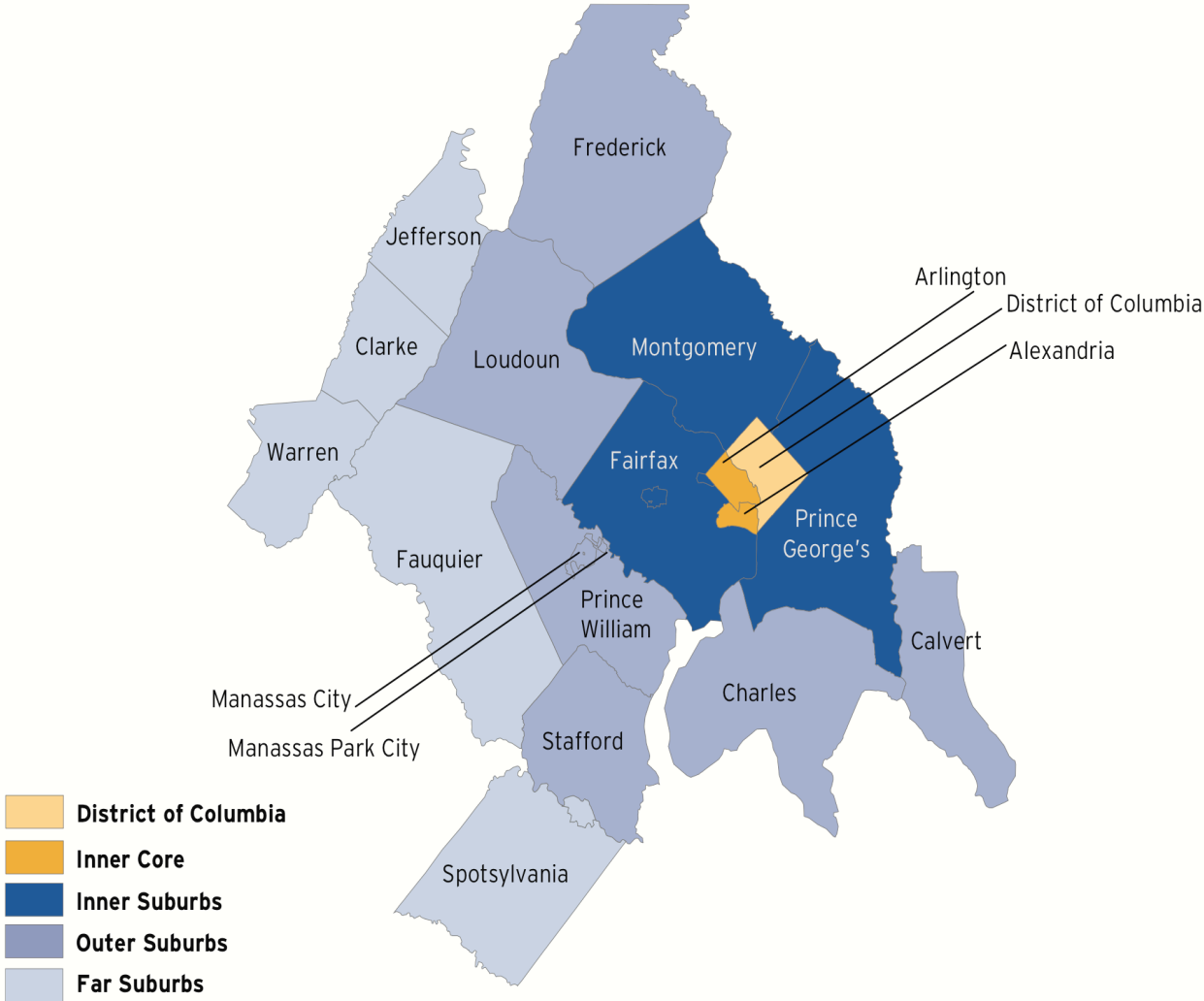


(Office of Management and Budget Metropolitan Area, 2003)

**Appendix B: Distribution of nonprofits serving Latinos, Asians and Africans**

| Jurisdiction | Latino | | Asian/ Pacific Islander | | African | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| DC, immigrants | 35,102 | 4 | 12,181 | 1 | 10,179 | 1 | 57,462 | 6 |
| DC, nonprofits | 43 | 9 | 31 | 7 | 27 | 6 | 101 | 22 |
| MD, immigrants | 190,513 | 20 | 138,281 | 14 | 87,464 | 9 | 416,258 | 43 |
| MD, nonprofits | 62 | 14 | 121 | 26 | 15 | 3 | 198 | 43 |
| VA, immigrants | 202,796 | 21 | 221,134 | 23 | 64,973 | 7 | 488,903 | 51 |
| VA, nonprofits | 27 | 6 | 121 | 26 | 11 | 2 | 159 | 35 |
| Total, immigrants | 428,411 | 45 | 371,596 | 39 | 162,616 | 17 | 962,623 | 100 |
| Total, nonprofits | 132 | 29 | 273 | 60 | 53 | 12 | 458 | 100 |

(The Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File, Intern Revenue Service, Exempt Organization Business Master File circa 2008 & Integrated Public Use Microdata Series Databases from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2007)

**Appendix C: Human Subject Review Committee – letter of approval**

SMITH COLLEGE

**School for Social Work**
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950    F (413) 585-7994

December 17, 2013

Vanessa Leon

Dear Vanessa,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

*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.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Thao Pham, Research Advisor

**Appendix D: Recruitment email message for snowball sampling**

Dear Family, Friends & Colleagues,

As many of you may know, I am currently in my final year of graduate school at Smith College School for Social Work and am conducting research for my Master's thesis. My research will seek to explore how Latino immigrant parents try to preserve the Latino ethnic and cultural identity of their U.S. born children while living in the United States.

I am sending you this email to ask for your help in recruiting participants for my study, which will involve meeting with me for an informal, 20-40 minute interview. For your convenience, I have provided my study's participation eligibility criteria below. **If you meet the criteria, I highly encourage you to contact me and take part in my study. If you do not meet the criteria, I would greatly appreciate it if you could <u>please forward this email</u> to anyone you know who does.**

> <u>**Participation Eligibility:**</u>
> • be 18 years or older
> • be able to communicate in English
> • have been born in Mexico, Central America, Cuba, Dominican Republic or South America
> • have at least one biological or adopted child (any age) that was born in the U.S.
> • currently live in the Washington Metropolitan Area (DC, MD or VA)
> • have lived in the United States for a minimum of 15 years
> • be willing to sign an informed consent form prior to being interviewed
>
> Please note that Individuals who are from Puerto Rico will be excluded from participating in the study for the purpose of gathering narratives about participants' experiences as immigrants in the U.S. Additionally, individuals who are current or previous clients of mine will also be excluded from participating in the study.

By participating in this study, participants could help bring attention to the unique parenting experiences of Latino immigrants. Responses could also offer valuable insight for service providers, who work with immigrant families, on how to better create culturally affirmative and supportive interventions for mix status Latino families.

If you have any questions about my research or the nature of participation, please feel free to contact me at XXXXXX. I really appreciate your time in reading this and your interest in my research topic!

Sincerely,

Vanessa León
MSW Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work

**SMITH COLLEGE**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**
**Smith College School for Social Work ● Northampton, MA**

...............................................................................

**Title of Study:** Raíces en ambos países: Voices of Latino immigrant parents raising U.S. born children in the Washington Metropolitan Area

**Investigator(s):**
Vanessa León, MSW Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

...............................................................................

**Introduction**
You are being asked to be in a research study of Latino immigrant parents of U.S. born children. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 year or older, can communicate in English, were born in either Mexico, Central America, Cuba, Dominican Republic or South America, have at least one biological or adopted child that was born in the Unites States (any age), currently live in the Washington Metropolitan Area (DC, MD, VA) and have lived in the United States for at least 15 years. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Purpose of Study**
The purpose of the study is to explore how Latino immigrant parents try to preserve the Latino cultural identity of their U.S. born children while living in the United States. This study is being conducted as a thesis requirement for my master's in social work degree. Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

**Description of the Study Procedures**
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: meet with me for a 20-40 minute interview where I will ask you a series of questions (see attached). If you are unable to meet in person, the interview can take place over the phone. The interview will be audio recorded and stored on my personal computer so that either a professional transcriber or myself can later transcribe it. If a professional transcriber is used, he or she will sign a statement of confidentiality so that your responses will be kept private.

**Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

The study has the following risk:  Participation could cause you to feel uncomfortable or nostalgic feelings (i.e. sadness) about your ethnic or cultural identity, country of origin, childhood, immigration and/or parenting experiences. I will provide you a list of supportive resources should you wish to talk with someone about any feelings that may come up for you during your interview with me. Please note
that at any time during the interview, you could take breaks, skip over questions or stop the interview altogether.

**Benefits of Being in the Study**
The benefits of participation include a unique opportunity to reflect and talk about your Latino identity, values and practices as well as your experiences as an immigrant parent.  This could prove to be empowering to you.
The benefits to social work/society include bringing attention to the unique parenting experiences of first-generation Latino immigrants. This could inform service providers, who work with immigrant families, on how to better formulate culturally affirmative and supportive interventions for Latino families.

**Confidentiality**
Your participation will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file.  Only myself, my research advisor and possibly a professional transcriber will have access to the interview audio recordings.

All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

**Payments**
You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**
The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you.  You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* (up to the date noted below) without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College.  Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled.  You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by April 25, 2014. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

**Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**
You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research.  If you have any further questions about the study, at

any time feel free to contact me, Vanessa León, at XXXXXX or by telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

**Consent**
Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. You will also be given a list of referrals and access information if you experience emotional issues related to your participation in this study.

**……………………………………………………………………..**


Name of Participant (print): _____
Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____


**……………………………………………………………………..**

**[If using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures]**


**1. I agree to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): _____
Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____


**2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): _____
Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

# Appendix F: Supportive resources for research participants

## Supportive Resources in Washington, DC

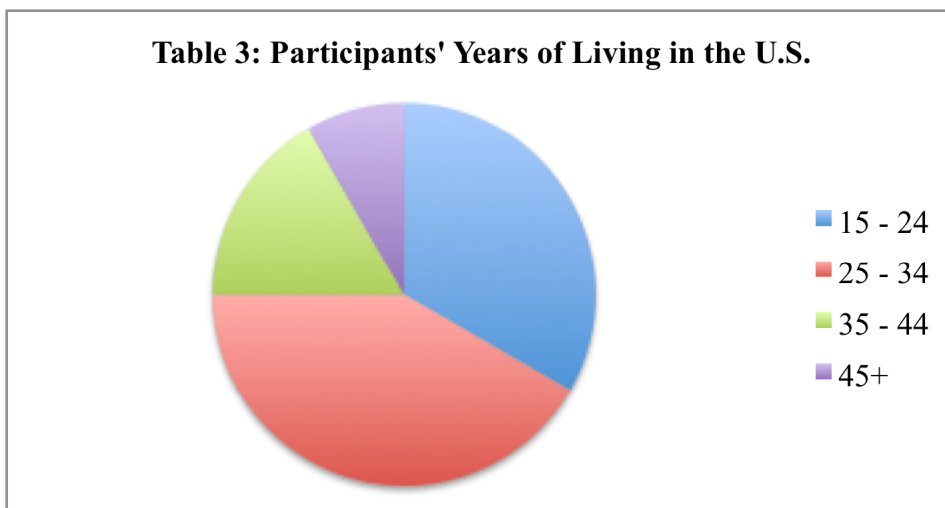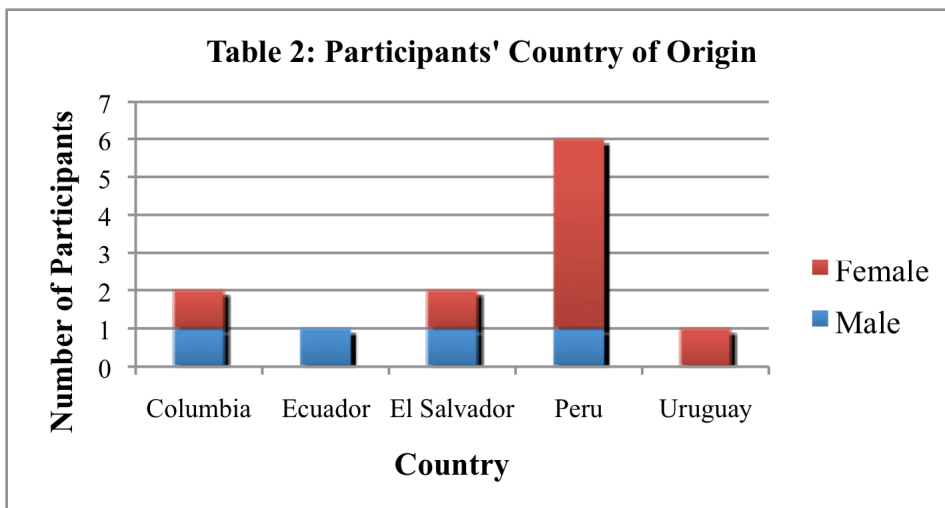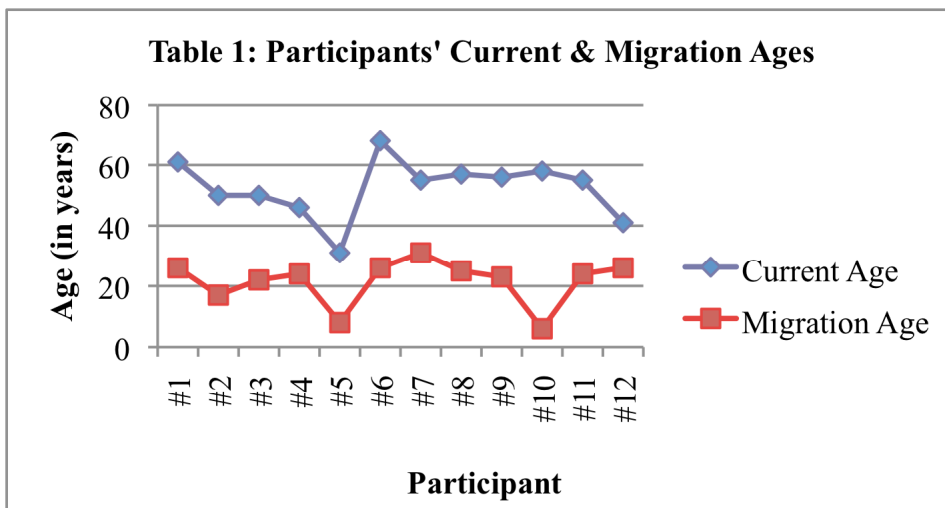| Organization | Phone & Website | Supportive services include: |
|---|---|---|
| **AYUDA**<br>6925 B Willow Street NW<br>Washington, DC 20012 | (202) 387-4848<br>www.ayudainc.org | Immigration & family law assistance; social services support for anti-trafficking, domestic & sexual violence. |
| **La Clínica del Pueblo**<br>2831 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW<br>Washington, DC 20009 | (202) 462-47988<br>www.lcdp.org | Community health action; interpretation; mental & patient services; substance abuse counseling. |
| **Mary's Center**<br>2333 Ontario Road NW<br>Washington, DC 20009 | (202) 483-8196<br>www.maryscenter.org | Literacy classes; medical and mental health services; tutoring. |
| **Neighbor's Consejo**<br>3118 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW<br>Washington, DC 20010 | (202) 234-6855<br>www.neighborsconsejo.org | Community outreach; mental health services; substance abuse counseling. |

## Supportive Resources in Maryland

| Organization | Phone & Website | Supportive services include: |
|---|---|---|
| **Casa de Maryland**<br>Social Service Program<br>734 University Blvd. E.<br>Silver Spring, MD 20903 | (301) 431-4185<br>www.casademaryland.org | Medical services; mental health care; legal assistance; emergency shelter. |
| **Esperanza Center**<br>430 South Broadway<br>Baltimore, MD | (410) 522-2668<br>www.esperanzainfo@cc-md.org | Legal counseling and representation |
| **IRC Resettlement Center**<br>8719 Colesville Rd., 3<sup>rd</sup> floor<br>Silver Spring, MD 20910 | (301) 562-8633<br>www.rescue.org/us-program/us-silver-spring | Social service support and legal assistance for refugees. |

## Supportive Resources in Northern Virginia

| Organization | Phone & Website | Supportive services include: |
|---|---|---|
| **AYUDA**<br>2755 Hartland Road, #100<br>Falls Church, VA 22043 | (703) 444-7009<br>www.ayudainc.org | Immigration & family law assistance; social services support for anti-trafficking, domestic & sexual violence. |
| **Hispanic Committee of VA**<br>2049 N. 15<sup>th</sup> St. , #200<br>Arlington, VA 22201 | (703) 243-3033<br>www.nvfs.org/hispaniccomittee | Medical and mental health services; legal assistance. |
| **Hogar Immigrant Services**<br>6201 Leesburg Pike<br>Falls Church, VA 8251 | (703) 534-9805<br>www.hogarimmigrantservices.org | English & citizenship classes; legal services. |
| **Tahirih Justice Center**<br>6402 Arlington Blvd., #300<br>Falls Church, VA 22042 | (571) 282-6161<br>www.tahirih.org | *For female survivors of gender based violence only:* immigration & family law; social service referrals & case management; pro bono attorney work; referrals to service providers. |

**Appendix G: Tables**

**Table 1: Participants' Current & Migration Ages**



**Table 2: Participants' Country of Origin**



**Table 3: Participants' Years of Living in the U.S.**

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