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# Understanding the Experience of Immigration Among Adult Mexican-Born Males Living in the United States: An Exploration of Grief, Loss, and Coping

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UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION AMONG ADULT MEXICAN-  
BORN MALES LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES: AN EXPLORATION OF GRIEF, LOSS,  
AND COPING

A Dissertation presented to the faculty of

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY SANTA BARBARA

in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for the  
degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY  
in

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

By

Mauricio Ortiz, MA

April 2017

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION AMONG ADULT MEXICAN-  
BORN MALES LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES: AN EXPLORATION OF GRIEF, LOSS,  
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This dissertation by Mauricio Ortiz, MA, has been approved by the committee members signed below who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of Antioch University Santa Barbara in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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## **Abstract**

This study uses psychoanalytic object relations theory to understand and analyze the lived experiences of adult Mexican males which will include the psychological meaning of loss and grief resulting from immigrating into the United States. The literature review illustrates and serves as a guide to broaden the understanding of the complex psychological and emotional processes that adult Mexican immigrants experience when faced with the reality of adapting to a host-culture. Participants were interviewed through a descriptive phenomenological approach seeking a complete description of their lived immigration experiences of grief, loss, and coping. After analysis of the transcriptions, several notable themes emerged that can be divided into two main sections. The main themes in Part A indicate how participants described their experience in the United States: excitement, post-immigration fear-based living, overall positive life changes, struggling to learn a new language, adapting to new ways of living, feelings of gratitude and valuing all work opportunities. The main themes in Part B indicate how participants identified and described losses, grief, and ways they coped after immigrating: family separation, loneliness, being unable to touch or see family for years, and irreparable time loss with family. They found comfort from supporting family financially, calling or writing letters as a way to communicate, and utilizing grief as a motivator. The electronic version of the dissertation is accessible at Ohiolink ETD center <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd>.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Immigration**

This study originated in my personal and professional experience of immigration. Learning to live in a new country has deeply impacted my identity as a Mexican man, husband, and son. My immigration experience of loss and grief appears to resemble the phenomenon described as “cultural dislocation,” which refers to an unsettling sense of self beyond the personal domain into a collective experience perhaps common to all immigrants (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). This study gives voice to a small and selected number of participants as they share their lived immigration experiences and challenges to raise social awareness on the modern immigrant’s needs. Results from this study will have clinical implications and practical applications for services impacting the immigrant community.

While there has been a heightened level of discussion in recent years regarding immigration reform, the place for immigrants in the U.S., and the cost benefit analysis of what immigrants mean to economic and political arenas, the psychological aspect of these issues is relegated to the periphery at best. Writing about the immigration experience continues to be understudied and the phenomenon needs much attention and understanding. While some immigrants can continue with graduate studies, others seem to be trapped in a post-immigration experience of loss and grief. In this research study, the immigrant’s experience will be examined as a means to describe the psychological impact each one of them lived through including the experience of loss and grief and the ways they coped, which go hand in hand after arriving at a new country searching for a new life.

I am a 35-year-old married, male and part of an all Mexican-born family made up of my mother, father, older brother, and younger sister. My father immigrated to the United States on a temporary basis. Our family was separated and lived in Mexico until 1995. I was born in 1981 and saw my father once a year. He visited us during Christmas for a few weeks and would leave me and my family back in Mexico when the rainy season stopped and there was work to do in California. I was thirteen years old when my family and I immigrated to the United States and finally joined my father, a dream come true. I departed Mexico during 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I was signed up for school the first week I arrived. I was placed in 9<sup>th</sup> grade due to an extensive middle school credit history. After graduating from high school, I went to the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, CA. I graduated with a B.S. in Social Psychology in 2004. I began working for a local masonry construction company to gain experience in the private business sector. Five years later, I was laid off due to the 2009 housing market crisis and national economic downturn. Within a few months of being unemployed, I enrolled in a clinical psychology doctorate program at Antioch University in Santa Barbara, CA.

In my social realm of experiences, there seemed to be a pattern of emotional losses that continued to cause grief for myself and my immigrant friends and colleagues. Some of them have commented about the losses and hardships that still exist in their lives after their arrival from Mexico and living in a new country after several years. Family members talk about the daily struggles that make life difficult to live as immigrants, including not being able to travel and visit family left back in Mexico when they are in need or if they have an illness. Being an immigrant is a difficult journey of unclear endings and inconclusive possibilities but it is also a rewarding quest that continues to present gifts of friendships, work opportunities, and lifelong friends.

In some instances, immigrants may prefer not to share their feelings and emotions, including losses and ways they adjusted after immigrating into the U.S. This research study can be a channel for adult Mexican-born immigrant males to speak openly and privately about their losses, grief, and ways they coped with their immigration experiences. Furthermore, a review of how personal losses and grief have impacted the psychological wellbeing of the participants will be presented and expanded upon. It is important to give participants an opportunity to share some of the protective factors that they believe helped cushion the hardships and emotional distress of the immigration journey.

### **Personal Immigration Experience**

Is my story of loss and grief experiences similar to that of other Mexican male immigrants living in the United States? The answer is not a simple one and this question continues to capture my attention to this day. I did not expect the difficulties that awaited my family and me in terms of education, language, and social expectations. I faced three main challenges after I arrived in the United States: the new language, loneliness, and a systematic lack of guidance. I consider three areas important to emphasize regarding my experiences after my arrival from Mexico in 1995: life at home, life at school, and life in the community.

### **Life in the New Home**

Being at home with my family for the first time did not provide me a sense of safety or comfort for the first few years. While we were excited to be together, each family member communicated a sense of fear and anguish for no one could really provide reliable answers to the many unknowns. One of the first difficulties we encountered as a family was the new language. None of us had prepared for the need to speak in English. Home was the only place Spanish was spoken for several years. With “broken English,” we struggled to get connected with new

schools, the local church, and jobs. In terms of the jobs we looked for, we focused primarily on low-skilled jobs in restaurants, hotels, or the agricultural field. We realized very quickly that both of our parents had to work to make ends meet. Our mother started working full-time and she was less available to cook family meals or hear about our daily sorrows. The food we ate had changed as we started eating out and frequently visited fast food restaurants because “it saved us time” in our increasingly busy lives. We had traded one of our family traditions for the sake of time.

I felt alone most of the time and it did not matter if my family members were next to me. Everyone appeared to be looking for a way to adapt and learn to live in a culture different than ours. I found myself having little in common with other kids of my age and I was left feeling lonely and lost. My parents worked long hours and were not available to consult about my doubts and anxieties. It felt as if there was a secondary family split or separation. At that point in my life, expressing my emotions became very difficult. I retreated into my sense of loneliness and kept quiet for years. I remember being labeled, “the defensive and angry one” of the family. High levels of anxiety from each family member appear to be a normal part of the adaptation to new ways of living and functioning. I missed all my friends, my school, and our church activities but my family had no intention of returning to Mexico. It has been 22 years since we migrated to this country and I still remember having a shoebox with letters from my childhood friends who kept in contact after I left. I wrote letters to them and to wait for their response kept me going, as I had no friends to speak to in my new school. In my case, the letters became both a link to my life in Mexico and a cushion to help me survive in a strange world. Other immigrants sustain strong family bonds that help them manage the transitional space between them. I have observed

that current immigrant families call loved ones and write letters to show they continue to care for them emotionally and financially.

Looking back, I wonder why there was a lack of guidance in my family. No one had answers to my questions. There were unspoken family rules which then became expectations and I made them part of my own rules to follow: "Don't get yourself in trouble; be happy with what you have and don't complain as we don't have time to deal with more problems." These unspoken messages became the rules I would use to guide my developing journey as a teenager into adulthood.

My adolescent life focused on my scholastic experience and I was submerged into the role of a student. I ended up missing the important experiences other classmates spoke about of activities they did outside of school such as exploring the town, playing pick-up soccer games, hanging out at the beach or going camping for the weekend. My mother kept my siblings and I close to her and requested us to stay home where she could make sure we were safe in this new country. These requests, in turn, fueled the already high levels of anxiety and fear in me and led me to believe the world outside of home was dangerous. On the other side, I received messages of protection and love from my mother.

My father had his own assumptions and fears regarding drugs and gangs. I remember listening to my father's advice and the countless warnings to avoid using illegal drugs or joining a gang. It appears that the family was synchronized on fearing the unknown. In retrospect, I never thought how difficult it would be to embark on a new immigration journey at an early age.

### **New Life at School**

There was a sense of grief and loss once I arrived at my new high school. The culture shock and being unable to communicate tightened my throat and my tears accumulated on the

edge of my eyes. I remember suppressing this torturing and suffocating feeling of impotence. I only spoke Spanish, which felt insufficient to learn class materials, and most importantly I had lost my lifelong friends to lean on in moments like this. My inability to communicate with other students impaired my chances not only to ask for help but also to create friendships. For several years, I felt alone at school adding to an immense sense of insecurity, anxiety, and confusion. I had never expected life in a new country to be confusing and full of losses and pain. The overwhelming sense of being alone during my high school years mimic a nightmare that seems to last an eternity. I remember the first year in high school was the most painful of all. The pain started to dissipate once I became more fluent in understanding the classwork and participating in several school activities such as the school choir and the auto mechanic club. I do not understand why a school counselor placed me in such language-based clubs when he knew I hardly could communicate. In retrospect, the choir practice and bonds created were strong pillars for my future participation in community presentations. By the time I was a senior in high school, I had developed my niche and a sense of belonging by becoming skilled at singing music and excelling at auto mechanic skills and contests.

Within three years and six months of living in the United States, I had the opportunity to apply to the local university and was accepted. My English proficiency appeared to be lower than the required level to be enrolled in college level classes. I was placed in the lowest math and English classes for the first year, as I had not performed well on the SAT tests. Once I proved that I had a stronger English proficiency and passed the basic mathematic classes, I was allowed to sign up for further classes in the mechanical engineering major. I remember doing all my work alone and with little help from others. I was the first of my family to attend a state university and had no one to guide me through my journey. My family supported me but encouraged me to ask

counselors if I had questions. I looked for several part-time jobs and kept working and studying for the rest of my time at the Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo. It took me six years to graduate from the university. At one time, I had three part time jobs and studied full-time. I worked at the mechanic shop and washed cars for the university; I worked for the disability resource center and provided transportation to students with physical disabilities; and to finish my day, I worked in the evenings as a line cook for a restaurant downtown, which closed at 11 p.m. If I could go back and give myself some advice, I would have told my younger self to work less and focus entirely on my education.

When I started the university journey, I was 16 years old and I would have benefited from an experienced person giving me advice on how much time and energy to invest in school and at work. Today, I can see how my cultural values emphasized the need to work and support the family unit. Even though my experience in college was painful to get through, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn and to make my parents proud. I ended up changing my original major of mechanical engineering to social psychology, where I felt more comfortable and no longer felt lost as I did in advanced physics and engineering classes.

### **New Life in the Community**

Looking back, what was challenging about the new community was trying to fit in and to find familiar traditions and activities. I realized that while I was trying to join in, I did not quite remember people in my community knowing of my struggles. It is almost like one person is trying to ask for a hug while the other person is not aware of what is going on.

Feelings of grief and loss continued to be present as I interacted in community activities. I continuously compared the feeling I had felt in my native community in Mexico with the community in which I was now living. I remembered how great it felt to be part of a community

in my country and having countless people share their interest in me as well as inviting me to their homes and share common hobbies such as sports and music. The lack of friendships and knowledge of the community activities ended up isolating me and I stayed home with my family most of the time I was not in school or at church.

The city I lived in was made up of mostly Caucasians (about 90%) and it took me several years to become accustomed to the lack of Latino food stores and lack of traditional gatherings to celebrate Mexican holidays. It was very depressing to search for connections to my roots in the community and not find any. The only way I could see families gather and celebrate national Mexican holidays was through television shows. One of the most difficult parts of being an immigrant in a town with few nationals from Mexico is the lack of guidance and companionship to facilitate the integration into the new culture. I consider my family's support and companionship the key protective factor to manage the challenges I faced.

### **Immigration in The Professional Experience**

The pivotal moment in which this study became a reality took place during a doctoral practicum experience with the San Luis Obispo County Mental Health department in 2011. The concepts of grief and loss crystallized as a personal focus of study after hearing and being a witness to many immigrants' experiences during their treatment. Immigration experiences, which include challenges and gains, provided the context for understanding and assisting clients dealing with psychological symptoms during therapy. Subsequent experiences while working at other county mental health clinics have indeed expanded and deepened my understanding of the trauma-related factors revolving around immigration as well as hidden immigrant strengths. After several years, I understood that mental health clients are not fully representative of the

entire Mexican migrant population living in the United States. My research interviews will shine a light on this topic.

I have not met every Mexican immigrant and my experience as a psychologist-in-training is limited. I am also aware that not all immigrants may face the same psychological and emotional reactions to migration that have been witnessed in community mental health clinics. Nonetheless, the trauma related to immigration is an imperative piece that needs to be studied as many Mexican immigrants look for mental health services to figure out how they can deal with a multiplicity of internal and external challenges. As a Mexican immigrant, this researcher embraces the opportunity to hear and find new meanings that originate from fellow immigrants willing to share their story.

### **Rationale for Study**

This study will highlight a shared experience for immigrants that arrived in the United States and have not had a chance to understand the origin of psychic pain or growth opportunities that originate from losses and grief. The results obtained in this phenomenological study will increase our understanding of the literature of immigration and possible protective factors of immigration and further the knowledge in understanding the struggles immigrants face when they move away from their families, country of origin, and sense of continuity. The results will benefit not only mental health therapists but also other professionals in administrative and political positions helping allocate resources and services more effectively.

### **Research Questions**

This study will examine the following questions:

1. How would an immigrant describe his experience in a new country?

2. How would an immigrant identify contexts or situations that influenced his experience of immigration?

### **Outline for Dissertation**

This dissertation will be divided into five chapters, a reference section, and an appendix section. Chapter one will provide an introduction to the experience of immigration, from my personal and professional experiences, the rationale for the study, and the research questions. Chapter two will provide a review of the literature including the four major research contributors on the psychology of immigration. The third chapter will describe the research methodology, which includes the selection of the participants, how the data was collected and analyzed, and any potential ethical concerns. Chapter four will present the results of the individual interviews. In this chapter, each key participant will be described in detail along with the emerging themes that will be formed from their collective data. The emerging themes will be presented accompanied with supporting quotes from the participants. The differences in the participants' perspectives will be shared to gain a greater understanding of their lived experiences after immigration. The last chapter will be used to interpret the results of the study, the implications for future research, the strengths and limitations of the study, and a conclusion will be provided based on the researcher's interpretations. The references section will list all resources used in all the chapters of this dissertation. The appendix section will include both English and Spanish versions of the interview questions, informed consent, a demographics questionnaire, community resources, and a letter of introduction.

Because of personal experiences, this researcher is inclined to believe that most immigration leads to anxiety, depression, or grief due to the personal losses but also that immigrants find ways to adapt and cope with multiple cultural changes. It is assumed that most

Mexican immigrants suffer from losses and that all immigration leads to grief whether they leave the country of origin willingly or forced by exile. It is also assumed that immigrants who emigrate with their close family units are able to withstand the pressures of loneliness, confusion, and adaptation better by having strong family ties, being open to new experiences, and having secure attachments. It is also believed by the researcher that Mexican male immigrants are resourceful and able to survive unknown environmental stressors.

The relevance of the topic to the clinical psychology field includes expanding the current research literature of immigration loss and its impact on male adults through grief how they coped with unexpected life changes and what new meanings originated throughout their process. Specifically, this research will be limited to the experience of immigration of adult males that emigrated from Mexico and not from other South or Central American countries. This study is also an act of social justice by having the immigrant's voices be heard. As an immigrant, I am motivated to speak up and educate colleagues about the importance of understanding how we experienced immigration difficulties and how our immigrant journey embraces the challenge of belonging to both cultures.

There are some limitations and strengths for using qualitative design. The limitations include the inability to be standardized; meanings change over time and there is not one universal truth. The strengths, however, include having multiple truths from the participants; people are experts about their experience, meaning changes as new information becomes available, and knowledge can be constructed by listening to people describe their experiences.

A new theory or new way of looking at immigration trauma will not be introduced. The intention is to expand the way we understand the psychological impact of the immigration experience. Another intention of this research is to continue the conversation of the immigration

experience among the professional field of psychology and to contribute to the pool of knowledge.

### **Definitions**

Throughout this research, terms will be used to describe the immigration experience and the psychological and emotional impact it has had on an immigrant.

*Acculturation* is traditionally regarded as the process of change in beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that occur as a result of continuous interaction between people of different ethnic groups (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). It is the modification that can occur when an individual and his/her culture come into contact with another group and begins to slowly take on the language, cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, and cultural behaviors of the dominant group (Archuleta, 2012).

*Identity* is an individual's sense of self-defined by (a) a set of physical and psychological characteristics that is not wholly shared by any other person and (b) a range of social and interpersonal affiliations (ethnicity) and social roles. Identity involves a sense of continuity: the feeling that one is the same person today that one was yesterday or last year (despite physical or other changes). In cognitive development, the awareness that an object remains the same even though it may undergo many transformations (American Psychological Association, 2009).

*Economic migrant* - A person leaving his or her habitual place of residence to settle outside his or her country of origin in order to improve his or her quality of life. It may be applied to persons leaving their country of origin for the purpose of employment.

*Grief*: The anguish experienced after a significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person. Grief often includes physiological distress, anxiety about being separated from the

person, confusion, yearning, obsessive dwelling on the past, and apprehension about the future (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 172).

***Immigration:*** A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.

***Mental Disorder:*** Any condition characterized by cognitive and emotional disturbances, abnormal behaviors, impaired functioning, or any combination of these. Such disorders cannot be accounted for by solely environmental circumstances and may involve physiological, genetic, chemical, social, and other factors (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 239).

***Mourning:*** The process of feeling or expressing grief following the death of a loved one, or the period during which this occurs. It typically involves feelings of apathy and dejection, loss of interest in the outside world, and diminution in activity and initiative (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 253).

***Object Relations*** is in a broad sense the attempts within psychoanalysis to answer the confounding observation that people live simultaneously in an external and an internal world and the relationship between the two ranges from “the most fluid intermingling to the most rigid separation” (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Object Relations Theory is concerned with exploring the relationship between the real, external people and internal images and residues of relations with them and how their psychic functioning is affected (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

***Object Loss*** in psychoanalytic theory is the actual loss of a person who has served as a good *object*, which precedes introjection and is involved in separation anxiety. In this perspective, adult grief and mourning are related to object loss and separation anxiety in infancy and childhood, which often intensifies and complicates the grief reaction (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 275).

*Trauma* is defined as any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative impact on a person's attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning. Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior as well as by nature and often challenge an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 435).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review focuses mainly on Hispanic researchers who explain the complexity of immigration from a first-hand perspective. Leon Grinberg and Rebeca Grinberg are important Argentinian researchers of the modern understanding of immigration and loss. Their theories on the psychology of immigration and the importance in how immigration has an impact on immigrants, specifically psychopathology, loss, grief, and mourning were foundational for this study. Sigmund Freud's work helps to understand the psychological dynamics of object loss and mourning through the psychoanalytic lens and he was also an immigrant exiled from his home country. Pauline Boss' understanding of ambiguous loss and Vamik D. Volkan's understanding of grief affecting psychological and emotional processes are considered platforms to understand the immigrant's lived experiences.

The immigrants' identity and psychosocial processes after immigration as described by Carola Suarez-Orozco, Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, and Salman Akhtar, which highlight the developmental challenges when immigrants cross at an early age will also be reviewed. Celia Falicov's understanding of mental health care needs of underserved families, particularly Latinos, will be reviewed and her ecosystemic view on acculturation is included. Ricardo Ainslie's understanding of conflicts of social adaptation is presented.

#### **Psychological Impact of Immigration**

Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) believe the decision to emigrate depended on motivations that originate internally and externally. The immigrant's past, the current moment they live in, and their individual characteristics make a difference if they decide to migrate. There are times

when an immigrant experiences a personal crisis and this might be the trigger to migrate and, consequently, begin to experience a series of different anxieties such as separation, persecution, depressive, and confusion anxieties. These anxieties paired with defense mechanisms, and the symptoms they may cause, are said to form a part of the “psychopathology of migration” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984). These authors point out that the course an immigrant takes will depend on the individual’s capacity for working through the anxieties, the feelings of loss and the feelings of being uprooted from the home country.

As Mexican immigrants travel to the United States, also known as “the north,” many find themselves encapsulated in a cloud of dark confusion and reorganization but hopeful to manage the uncertainty about making a living in this land. There are at least two important decisions to make following their arrival to the United States: either work or study and, for some, both. For many immigrants, it comes down to the financial necessity of the family when they have to make the decision. Most people who come to this country from Mexico are considered economic migrants and the main goal is to improve their financial stability by taking advantage of any work opportunities. It takes a visionary parent to see that favoring the education of their children may be more beneficial for their financial future. For other immigrant parents for whom education is not a priority and their current living standards are not a problem, they may strive to teach their children their traditional family values of honesty, respect, and collaboration.

Three factors in particular have been identified as driving migration trends: family reunification, search of work, and humanitarian refuge (American Psychological Association, 2012). Family reunification is one of the main goals of many immigrants. After several years of working away from their children and spouses, it is commonly stated in the Mexican immigrant community that in order to bring their close family to the United States, they have to save

enough money to pay for their journey through the desert or some decide to build their house and start up a small business in Mexico once they are ready to go back. Families are distanced by financial limitations and it becomes one of the main reasons for immigrants to be at risk of developing depression and anxiety (Breslau, et al., 2011). The search for work is also a common reason for parents to risk their family stability and hope to bring financial support to the family.

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) believed that “*Migration constitutes a catastrophic change insofar as certain structures are exchanged for others and the changes entail periods of disorganization, pain, and frustration. These vicissitudes, if worked through and overcome, provide the possibility of true growth and development of the personality*” (p. 70). Similarly, Lijtmaer (2001) wrote that, as a result of continuous contact with a new culture, the migration experience unchains a process that leads to the transformation of internal structures and internalized object relations. It goes without saying that not all immigrants experience the migration process equally and many may look at the experience as an adventure and an opportunity second to none. Nonetheless, it is important to find out how any experiences during or after immigrating can become impairments in one’s functioning that can lead to mental health symptoms.

## **Trauma**

*Trauma* is defined as “any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative impact on a person’s attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning. Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior as well as by nature and other often challenge an individual’s view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place” (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 435). If we look at the immigration phenomena, the long-

lasting impact can be experienced on a person's attitudes, behaviors, and functioning. In terms of the experience being disturbing and causing fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other intense feelings, it all depends on the type of immigration the person underwent. It makes a difference if their migration was voluntary or from being exiled; if the language or cultural differences are distinct from their own, and if they traveled by themselves or with their entire family.

In terms of migration, trauma, and crisis, Leon and Rebeca Grinberg (1984) believed migration is not an isolated traumatic experience that manifests at the moment of departure or separation from one's country or that of arrival in the new and unfamiliar place when the individual settles down. These authors strongly believed migration fell into the category of the cumulative and chronic traumas, which may not always be spectacular but have profound and lasting effects. One of the more specific qualities of reaction immigrants may experience after the traumatic experience of immigration is the feeling of helplessness.

The feeling of helplessness is related to the object loss experience that may bring a threat of disintegration or dissolution of the ego (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984). They believed that if childhood stages were neglected during development, the experience of anxiety and helplessness would more likely result after immigration.

There are four migration stages at which there is significant potential for traumatic experiences that may lead to serious psychological distress: pre-migration trauma; traumatic events experienced during transit to the new country; continuing traumatic experiences during the process of resettlement; and substandard living conditions in the host country due to unemployment, inadequate supports, and possible minority persecution (Perez Foster, 2001).

## **Loss**

In their book *Life After Loss: The Lessons of Grief*, Volkan and Zintl (1993) believe three things are fundamental to an understanding of mourning. First, there is an inescapable course through grief after each loss. Secondly, each loss revives all past losses and thirdly, if each loss is fully mourned, it can be a vehicle for growth and regeneration. Immigration typically activates mourning processes as people tend to mourn the loss of parents, siblings, or children. It is also common to mourn friends and important social relations who have helped define the immigrant's identity (Ainslie, Tummala-Narra, Harlem, Barbanel, & Ruth, 2013). Immigrants may also mourn a sense of place, including the familiarity of objects and towns that once structured their lives. Confronted by the new traditions and communities in the new country, immigrants are faced with multiple tasks of holding on to their losses and embracing new relationships.

Dr. Pauline Boss' description of "ambiguous loss" distinguishes between two types. First, people are perceived by the family as physically absent but psychologically present and, secondly, when a person is perceived as physically present but psychologically absent. Unlike death, an ambiguous loss may never allow immigrants to achieve the detachment necessary for normal closure and it ends up complicating the mourning process (Boss, 1999). Immigrants cannot start grieving because their situation is indeterminate. Boss explains that the confusion freezes the grieving process. People tumble from hope to hopelessness during the immigration journey, for many causing depression, anxiety, and, for others, somatic illnesses. Boss shared her experience in treating families psychologically where these symptoms affect the individual first and then radiate in a ripple effect, impacting family members and causing them to ignore or abandon each other.

The immigration journey is not only an external social conflict but also an internal battle that appears to last longer than expected. Boss (1999) believes that migration represents a

“crossover,” in that it includes elements of both types of ambiguous loss. Although loved family members and places are left behind, they are present in the mind of the immigrant and, at the same time, some family members’ sense of loss may leave them emotionally unavailable to support and encourage others. Boss notes that not all aspects of migration are sad and negative. The migration experience can bring a sense of adventure and excitement, as well as new hopes and dreams that would have never crystallized, such as greater financial stability, better educational opportunities, and protection against civil right violations.

### **Grief**

Grief and loss are a fundamental experience to human life. Grief can be defined as “the response to the loss in all of its totality – including its physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual manifestations – and as a natural and normal reaction to loss” (Hall, 2011). Hall (2011) made a strong statement when he stated, “grief is the price we pay for love, and a natural consequence of forming emotional bonds to people, projects, and possessions” (p.4). In some ways, grief is the price immigrants pay for the loved ones who are left behind, education, and their homes.

For Freud, working through grief involved a process of breaking the ties that bound the person to the deceased or lost object (Freud, 1917). There are three elements involved in grief work that may also apply to the immigrant experience: 1) freeing the person from the attachment to the deceased or lost object; 2) begin to adjust to new life experiences in the absence of the lost object; and 3) building new relationships (Hall, 2011). The task of working through grief from an immigrant point of view may sound as if they would have to forget their family bonds in order to heal. The difference is that their families are still alive and they can actually call them or write letters.

A recognized psychiatrist who introduced an important work on grief was Kubler-Ross (1969) with her book *On Death and Dying*. Her main contributions to the study of grief involve giving structure and naming the most prominent emotions people live through after losing a family member or an important person in their lives. The proposed and accepted emotions people go through during grief are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The stages are not meant to be static or linear but flexible and without order. Post-immigration denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance may also be common to most immigrants as they are also capable of experiencing these stages once they begin to grieve.

Additional research by Fragoso and Kashubeck (2000) found that a high level of restricted emotionality such as not expressing their insecurity, or vulnerabilities, in Mexican American men was associated with higher levels of depression and stress. If Mexican immigrants tend to restrict emotion, then grief may be a difficult process for them to live through as delineated by Kubler-Ross (1969). In clinical settings, this information can be helpful for therapists when working with immigrant adult males.

### **Mourning**

Freud (1917) provided the most important starting point for discussion of mourning in his paper titled "Mourning and Melancholia," where he defines mourning as "regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (p. 153). Freud explains that in some people the same losses produce melancholia instead of mourning, which turns it into a pathological disposition. Melancholia is defined as "a profound mental dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and lowering of the self-

regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (Freud, 1917, p. 153).

Freud saw mourning in terms of energy flow where the person engages in a process of reality testing, making sure the loved one or thing is really gone and then withdrawing feelings from them. The person needs to find a replacement object to be able to redirect his/her energies and move forward. For many immigrants who lose a country, a family member, or safety and stability, it is fair to think the process of mourning is to be the expected state in their lives. Each immigration journey is complex and differently experienced by each one of us. The value of each lost object is subjective and by describing their losses and grief, this research study can begin to understand the magnitude of their psychic pain and what new meanings they have created.

Volkan and Zintl (1993) suggested that unresolved losses might be even more devastating in intimate relationships. “When people are unable to mourn, they may also be unable to sustain long-term loving bonds, such as holding on too tightly or cannot hold tight enough” (Volkan & Zintl, 1993, p. 4). Three key aspects are fundamental to understanding mourning: 1) each loss launches people in an inescapable course through grief, 2) each loss revives all past losses, and 3) each loss, if fully mourned, can be a vehicle for growth and regeneration (Volkan & Zintl, 1993). With this mourning process in mind, immigrants would benefit from becoming aware of their losses and how to manage the process of mourning. Every immigrant brings a personal life history that has molded the way they experience the world and may complicate or facilitate their ability to mourn personal losses.

Volkan and Zintl (1993) provide four factors that impair a person’s ability to mourn: 1) “the emotional makeup of the survivor: those who had inadequate support for childhood needs or who have sustained a series of losses may have difficulty grieving, 2) the specific nature of the

lost relationship: A relationship that was overly dependent on unfinished business is harder to let go, 3) the circumstances of loss: When someone dies suddenly or brutally, the death is harder to accept, and 4) The modern prohibition against the expression of grief” (Volkan & Zintl, 1993, p. 5). These authors believe there is a culture of death deniers in the United States. They emphasize people are encouraged to praise stoicism rather than face our own vulnerability to losing family, friends or to be lost. Volkan and Zintl (1993) pointed out that culturally, “We are set up for complicated and delayed mourning” (p. 6). They provided common benefits of mourning once the person is allowed to move through the process. When one mourns fully, these authors explain that one ends up knowing more about the human condition and themselves. We gain not only greater psychological maturity but, with time, a heightened capacity for joy (Volkan & Zintl, 1993).

For Volkan and Zintl (1993), mourning consists of two stages. The first stage is called crisis grief and begins once the loss occurs or is threatened. They believe one’s body and mind hesitates to avoid facing death and one tends “to flip in and out of denying, splitting, bargaining, anxiety, and anger” (pg. 13). The crisis period ends once one is able to assimilate the terrible reality. The second stage of mourning begins after one has accepted the fact of death and begins the “subtle and complex negotiations required to convert the relationship into a memory that no longer preoccupies” (Volkan & Zintl, 1993, p. 13).

### **Immigrant’s Identity Process and Adaptation**

Immigration is a transformative process with profound implications for the family (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Not only do immigrants change their external environment but also internal structural changes manifest unconsciously as well. Lijtmaer (2001) also believes that as a result of continuous contact with a new culture, the migration experience

unchains a process that leads to the transformation of internal structures and internalized object relations. Many immigrants start their journey to cross the border as adolescents and end up living with distanced family members or strangers. Others are fortunate enough to migrate with their entire family and this difference may help to retain familiar object relations in a new country. Immigration is experienced as one of the most stressful events when a family is removed from a predictable environment and disconnected from their cherished relationships, jobs, customs, or language (Falicov, 1998). Immigrants lose the social roles that provided them with a sense of place in the world they lived in (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). All of these changes can disorient the immigrant and precipitate a profound sense of loss (Ainslie, 1998) (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Eileen McGinley and Arturo Varchevker (2013), in their phenomenological document on migration, loss, and connectedness, looked specifically at how migration may sometimes involve, when conditions are severe, the loss of the capacity to maintain emotional contact with one's past or a present with a possible future, calling the phenomenon "a loss of connectedness" (p. 59). At the most dramatic end of the stress spectrum, where immigrants experienced or witnessed killing, rape, or torture during their journey, is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These symptoms may be transient or stay for long periods of time. PTSD symptoms include recurrent traumatic memories, a general numbing of responses, as well as a persistent sense of increased arousal leading to intense anxiety, outbursts of anger, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and lack of sleep (American Psychological Association, 2009).

Many immigrants, upon arriving, focus their energies on immediate needs such as settling into the new country, finding a place to live, finding a job, and enrolling their kids in schools. Focusing on their emotions is delayed as they try to adapt to the new environment. Suarez-

Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) support the idea that while some immigrants will display acute symptoms that require treatment, the majority feel only transient discomfort and are able to adapt to their circumstances easily. Immigrants also spend time learning new rules in the new country so they can function in school and social activities. They are bound to experience acculturation stress until they gain an understanding of cultural expectations and demands (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). These authors also believe that without a sense of cultural competence, control, and belonging, immigrants are often left with a deep sense of loss and disorientation. Some may feel like an infant who has to learn to speak, read, dress, and behave all over again.

In terms of family roles, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) highlight that migration creates additional changes within the family structure. Children who acquire the language faster than their parents may have to advocate for them in school or other public places such as their doctor's appointments and banking institutions. This situation places additional stress on the family roles and creates confusion about how much power and authority children believe they have when they participate as adults at their parents' request.

Family is considered to be the most significant emotional foundation in the life of an individual. When immigrants lack any other social support networks, the family unit becomes a powerful support resource (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). These authors emphasized the importance of community supports, such as participation in a church and a close relationship with their religion, playing a positive role for immigrants. The absence of social support has been linked to disease, mortality, slowed recovery, and mental illness (Cobb, 1988).

For adolescents who migrate alone, they have to live a new life making all of the immediate decisions on their own. The transition from one country to another is added to the

natural developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. The central feature of adolescence is the internal process of individuation and separating from the parents on an external level (Sharabany & Israeli, 2008). Authors Sharabany and Israeli highlight that the internal process of an adolescent is complicated even more when they migrate. If the parent does not migrate along with them, the concrete separation interferes with the internal work of disengagement and individuation. This means that the adolescent is preoccupied with adjusting to a new culture and ways of living on their own and the natural process might be placed on hold.

### **Psychosocial Stressors of Immigration**

Dr. Celia Falicov who focuses her work on addressing the mental health care needs of underserved families, particularly Latinos, strongly believes that families are able to live in two worlds by altering their everyday practices, rituals, and cultural codes depending on the context in which they find themselves or by finding new hybrid cultural mixes (Falicov, 2011). For Falicov, migration risks test families' capacity for blending continuity and change and may result in clinical symptoms. Falicov (2011) agrees that immigration losses trigger processes of grief and mourning similar to the death of loved ones. She comments that migration loss has special characteristics that distinguish it from other kinds of loss and believes it is both larger and more complex. She believes that an immigrant's losses are not absolutely clear, complete, and irretrievable, making them more complicated than death (Falicov, 2002). She explains that for most immigrants, the immigration experience creates a remarkable mix of emotions such as sadness and elation, loss and restitution, and absence and presence that makes grieving incomplete, postponed, or ambiguous.

Falicov (2002) concludes that not all aspects of immigration are bleak or sad, as there are gains to be enjoyed. The immigrant can experience a sense of adventure and excitement,

generating new hopes and new dreams to live for. An important goal many immigrants have is to achieve economic stability and better their chances at having their civil and human liberties respected.

### **View on acculturation**

Falicov provided a framework for understanding the experiences of migration and acculturation, the changed ecological context, and issues related to the family organization and family cycle. Her contribution to acculturation literature is called the MECA Model, which stands for Multidimensional Ecosystemic Comparative Approach (Falicov, 2011). In her model, the immigrant family is exposed to multiple contexts of insertion and exclusion, which requires them to share meanings and perspectives imparted by dimensions of similarity and difference within its own group and within the host culture. These dimensions include ethnicity, race, language, social class, education, geography, climate, religion, nationality, occupation, and political ideology. Each family would have its own *ecological niche* (Falicov, 2002), which makes it unique. She opines that the process of adaptation and acculturation is intricately tied to each immigrant's ecological niche.

Traditionally, acculturation has been thought of as the process of change in beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that occur as a result of continuous interaction between people of different ethnic groups (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). It is the modification that can occur when individuals and their culture come into contact with another group and begins to slowly take on the language, cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, and cultural behaviors of the dominant group (Archuleta, 2012).

### **Conflicts of Social Adaptation**

Ainslie (2009) examined one dimension of the internalized world of how issues of social class, as they were experienced and internalized in the immigrant's countries of origin, came to be engaged and enacted in the host country. Ainslie states that social constructs are also psychological constructs that shape and defined how one views oneself and how one views others in their surroundings. He defines a social class as, "the sense of one's place within the broader social hierarchy, including the tensions, conflicts, and hatreds attendant to that positioning, forms a vital part of every person's identity."

Ainslie, et al (2013) argue that regardless of the motives for leaving one's home country, immigration typically activates mourning processes. They agree "immigrants mourn a sense of place, including familiarity of objects and the architecture that once structured their lives. The loss of the smells, tastes, sounds, and the rhythms of life that so deeply shaped the sense of self in the world over the course of development" (p. 665). As immigrants embark on a new journey, their identity is impacted in several ways as challenges arise.

### **Immigrant Identity**

An immigrant child or adolescent may benefit from growing up in a culture that is different from his birthplace but there is a long developmental phase that needs to happen before he can reap the benefits. The gift provided by growing up in two different cultures allow the immigrant to acquire a bicultural identity. Biculturalism is to be competent in two cultures and it is possible to be a competent member of two cultures without being conflicted by a serious psychological disorder (Padilla, 2006). Padilla stresses that bicultural persons are well adjusted, open to others, and cultural brokers between people of different cultures. The advantage

bicultural people have over others is that they have two social identities and they can switch from one cultural orientation to the other with native-like nature (Padilla, 2006).

In adolescence, there is an “identity crisis” that is expected to delineate a path to follow into adulthood. The adolescent immigrant is forced to deal with two sets of values, beliefs, and behaviors when alternating between home and school. Some Mexican immigrant parents may place their teenagers in conflict by demanding them to keep their Mexican identity even though the children have not visited their country for years, whereas in school they are expected to think about themselves first and family second. For immigrant children who emigrate before the age of 12, the changes typically result in less acculturative stress (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987).

Identity formation and consolidation are believed to start from the beginnings of prenatal life throughout the human life cycle including old age (Mann, 2006). There are two important factors that make a difference in the basic core of the child's identity: 1) a genetic blueprint and 2) parental expectations (Mann, 2006). Mann (2006) bases these two factors on Winnicott's (1965) theoretical concept that the genetic blueprint makes up the child's temperament in the environment the newborn is held. On the second factor, Akhtar (1999) supports Mann's idea in that immigrant parents who have recently arrived to a new country will impact their child's core self-representation by their mourning process experience. When adolescents are forced to migrate, there are several conditions such as dealing with double and often conflicting values that become challenges to their development of identity formation resulting in maladaptive defensive mechanisms (Anagnostopoulos, Vlassopoulos, & Lazaratou, 2006). Anagnostopoulos, Vlassopoulos, and Lazaratou (2006) support the viewpoint that teenagers need an ethnic reference support system from their minority group to help them function and provide a coherent

context for their adaptation. The most common obstacle for adolescents is the conflict of idealization of their own culture and the clash with the mainstream culture that views them as “the others”. Furthermore, these authors believe that immigrant adolescents may be overwhelmed by their ego and begin to function traumatically by triggering the processes of disturbed identity formation. There might be long-term implications that may require therapy for individuals as well as their families to address social conflicts.

### **Acculturative Stress**

When immigrants are presented with threats and opportunities to their cultural and individual identity post-immigration, they experience psychological stress or acculturative stress, regardless of their legal status (Williams & Berry, 1991). Values, identity, knowledge, and behaviors tend to change as the process of adapting to a new unfamiliar culture begins. Authors Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000) also highlighted the emotional and cognitive experience of threat to identity many immigrants face in a new country. The areas that are typically impacted are their meaning making process, negotiating their position while managing a complex set of cultural values to maintain their sense of self-efficacy, continuity, and self-esteem.

### **Summary of Literature**

Considering the primary reason for which a person decides to migrate to another country, whether it be legally, illegally, or as a refugee, can summarize the psychological impact of immigration. Researchers Leon Gringer and Rebeca Gringer contributed to the understanding of the psychopathology of immigration and considered immigration as a catastrophic change due to the internal and external structural changes, which can cause an immigrant to become disorganized, experiencing pain and frustration for not being able to function with the dominant host culture. Three factors in particular have been identified as driving migration trends: family

reunification, search of work, and humanitarian refuge (American Psychological Association, 2012). Deciding to migrate to a culturally different country entails the possibility that an immigrant can experience trauma, losses, grief, mourning, as well as the opportunity to develop adaptive behaviors to survive and succeed. Immigrating as a teenager brings on challenges to their identity and family structure as many times the family unit is split up. Teenagers may be given the task to mature prematurely to support the entire family financially once they cross the border. Acculturation takes place once the immigrants have time to settle down and make sense of their subjective experience and decide if they should change their beliefs, attitudes, values or behaviors, as they need to interact with others to function in a new society.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

Giorgi (2012) probed phenomenological philosopher Husserl and began to see possibilities for developing a frame for studying human experiential and behavioral phenomena that would be rigorous and non-reductionist. The hard sciences are a great way to measure things and procedures, whereas the qualitative research methodology implements methods and concepts to understand humans, their relationships, and their experiences such as feelings, behaviors, and unique ways of thinking and finding meaning.

This phenomenological examination of the psychology of immigration is based on three principles of phenomenology: 1) Knowledge can be constructed by listening to interviews and the descriptions of the lived experiences of a person, 2) a person is an expert in their own lived experiences, and 3) fidelity to a person's subjectivity yields "viable answers to questions about human behavior that have been determined by the hard sciences to be unanswerable but nevertheless important" (Treviño, 2008, p. 69). Phenomenology is a process of understanding and meaning and it will be used to understand the lived experiences of immigrants.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of ten Mexican adult male immigrants and understand how the phenomenon of immigration has impacted their lives. This study examined factors that may be present in the lived experiences of the participants' immigration journeys. Furthermore, this study attempted to understand how the process of immigration has impacted participants' personal and cultural identity as well as how they describe loss, grief, and how they coped as a result of immigration.

### **Description of Research Design**

The literature on the experience of Mexican-born male immigrants after their arrival in the past 10 years focuses mainly on psychopathology and less on the protective factors immigrants have to withstand the innumerable challenges upon arrival and live in a new country. As an immigrant scholar, it is important to increase the research on the experience of immigration to facilitate awareness and ways the host culture may be able to support the needs of immigrants.

Qualitative phenomenological research was used as a method of inquiry in which the lived experiences of immigration were analyzed to generate themes related to losses, grief, and coping on a sample of eight adult males living in the United States. Qualitative science helps understand human behavior by having the participants share their experiences through an interview as the main tool of data gathering.

### **Delimitation and Limitations**

This research intentionally will not give a complete view of the psychopathology of immigration. A new theory on the psychology of immigration will not be proposed. Other researchers may interpret data and conclusions differently and their differing viewpoints are welcome to continue the ignited fire and keep a light on the important immigration phenomenon. This phenomenological qualitative research consisted of a small sample of eight participants specifically from a similar geographical origin and the results are not intended to be generalized to the larger immigrant population of Mexican decent. The interviewed group consisted of eight adult males located in the central coast of California and represented a small geographical location in the West coast of the United States.

### **Assumptions**

The following statements are intended to verbalize this researcher's awareness of his own assumptions but they will be set aside to minimize their impact on how the information was gathered and analyzed. As an immigrant, this researcher experienced immigration as shocking and assumed that others who emigrate may also experience the impact of immigration as being reflected on their identity and experiences of loss and grief in the new country. This researcher assumed that within five years of arrival to this country, participants were able to competently use the English language and culturally acquire an ability to navigate both cultures.

The next assumption was that this researcher had a better understanding of the particular familiar and cultural losses and grief than a non-Mexican born researcher. Additionally, this researcher hoped that by interviewing eight male adult immigrants, they generated greater self-understanding and meaning about their lived experiences of immigration.

The last assumption was that the adult participants had an average intelligence level and maturity that allowed them to use their preferred language to communicate their experiences in a coherent way during the interviews. The last bias was that participants had the ability to recall their experiences accurately after living in the United States for five or more years.

### **Selection of Participants**

Eight adult males born in Mexico and living in the United States for at least 5 years were interviewed. Originally, ten participants were chosen but two withdrew from the study for unknown reasons and their decision was respected and no questions were asked. The participants were given the option to be interviewed in the language of their choice, Spanish or in English, to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their experience. All the participants were over 18 years of age. Their educational background ranged from having completed some high school to being college educated. The selection criteria included having emigrated either legally or illegally.

Data gathered regarding legal status was not used during this study but can generate information for future studies to contrast the stressors and gain a greater understanding of each type of experience. Exclusion criteria for participants included factors such as being born in the United States, being immigrants not from Mexico, women, and being a minor. Potential participants who currently had a thought disorder were not considered for study. Prospective participants who reported being diagnosed with any mental disorder were excluded from participating in the study. Participants were interviewed until ten males were selected but two withdrew from study before interview was performed. The participation was voluntary and the right to withdraw anytime from the study was made clear. No compensation were provided.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through a face-to-face interview and participants provided historical information about their experience of immigration and allowed the researcher to have control over the line of functioning (Creswell, 2009). The participants chose the interview location that was convenient and comfortable for them. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews lasting from 60-90 minutes; they were audiotaped and transcribed into Spanish by using a professional transcription service. After the interviews were transcribed, they were analyzed in Spanish and only the data needed to be included in the final document was translated.

### **Procedures**

Participants were conveniently chosen by accessibility and verbal invitations. Invitations were offered until the ten males met the criteria. The sample gathered represented the counties of San Luis Obispo and Kern. The average length of time participants have resided in the United States was noted.

The participants met the criteria for the study received a letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the research and the procedures that were going to be used in gathering data. The participants were given an informed consent form to sign agreeing to their participation and recording of the project. The researcher explained the purpose of the study verbally to the key participants to ensure that everything was understood. The participants were informed and assured that they could withdraw from the study at anytime and for any reason without questions being asked. Once the informed consent was understood and signed, the participants were given a brief demographic questionnaire to gather background information.

Interviews were conducted to describe and record the stories of immigration, which included losses, grief, and the ways they coped. They were also informed that to protect their identity, they were provided a pseudonym in the written descriptions. The interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes with each participant answering a series of questions related to the research study beforehand. The interview questions explored what it was like migrating to the United States, adjustment to living in a new country, and how they coped with challenges pertaining to loss and grief.

An audio recorder was used to capture the voices of the participants during the interview process. The researcher took notes during the interview process to complement the information given by the participant. Participants' awareness was directed towards their own experience if they became distracted during the interview. The participants' verbal material provides the content from the interviews.

By using unstructured, open-ended interviews, the researcher protected the participants' viewpoints and responses from leading them to his preexisting understanding of their immigration experience. This research assessed the lived experience of immigration loss and

grief based on analysis of the participants' responses to open-ended questions seeking to understand their descriptions of experience and personal ways of coping.

### **Ethical Assurances**

Ethical standardized procedures published by the APA will be used to ensure that all participants are kept safe as well as the information gathered through recorded interviews. The potential to experience emotional distress during the process of interviewing participants such as emotional disturbance by possible traumatic immigration memories could be unintentionally activated. Careful consideration of the interview process was sensitive to protect the participant.

All the demographics and personal information provided by the participants were protected. Each participant was assigned an alias letter code for identification purposes. There was a signed informed consent by the participants and the researcher to protect the rights of the participants and had the option to withdraw from the research at any time. The possible risk of the study were addressed with all participants and discussed the probable discomfort they might have experienced during the interview process where they disclosed personal experiences. The participants were informed about the possible benefits of participating such as gaining a new insight into their immigration experience, feeling part of shared experiences by other interviewees, and the possibility to reflect on unresolved themes in their lives as male immigrants. The researcher monitored for signs of distress and remained available to debrief participants if needed. There was a list of professional mental health community referral services if any participant felt the need to process their unsettled emotions after the interview process was finished.

### **Data Analysis**

In the fidelity of phenomenological data analysis, Creswell (1998) stated that the researcher needs to proceed through the methodology of reduction, then analyze specific statements and themes, and finally search for all possible meanings. He highlighted the importance for the researcher to set aside all prejudgments and bracket his own experiences. The researcher found the meaning units by reviewing each of the participant's transcribed interviews. Themes were eventually extracted and presented among all participants' descriptions and experiences. Additionally, themes were identified and interrelated across the interviews (Creswell, 2009). The information that was important but not related to the focus of the study was noted but set aside.

### **Research Questions**

This study is consistent with the methodology of qualitative phenomenological research with two central questions and four sub-questions. The two central questions are:

1. How would an immigrant describe his experience in a new country?
2. How would an immigrant identify contexts or situations that influenced their experience of immigration?

Related to the two main research questions were four follow-up sub-questions that helped narrow the focus of this study and at the same time left the questioning open:

1. Could you describe what it was like for you immigrating to the United States?
2. How would you describe the adjustment to living in a new country?
3. Can you describe any losses and ways you coped after arriving at a new country?
4. Can you describe if you lived experiences of grief or mourning as a result of living in a new country?

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Interviews were transcribed and then reviewed. Participant's responses to the research questions were utilized and analyzed. Their experiences and responses were separated and considered. There was some information that was important but not relevant to this study and was discarded to allow for greater focus on the most relevant experiences of grief, loss, and coping. The experiences, which were more relevant, were contrasted and distinguished between them. The most salient information from the transcripts was grouped as follows: 1) Relevant responses to each question, and 2) Main Dimensions. Finally, the interviews were summarized and presented with the researcher's understanding of the meaning of their responses. The researcher's familiarity with the participants and having shared similar immigration experiences helped him in capturing the participant's lived experiences.

#### **Participant Demographics**

Two of the ten participants withdrew from the study and their decision was respected and no questions were asked. Seven of the participants were between thirty and thirty-six and one participant was sixty-six years old. Four of them had some high school education, three had some college education, and one had completed a degree in business administration. Seven considered themselves Catholic and one participant considered himself Christian. Five were currently married, two were living with another, and one was single. All participants were employed full-time. Four immigrated as teenagers, three as adults, and one as a toddler. Three of them immigrated with their parents, two of them by themselves, and two with strangers.

#### **Data from Research Interview**

Research Question #1: *Can you describe what was it like for you immigrating to the United States?*

Subject A said:

- *“At the age of ten, I didn’t think much of it, but I started to realize that some day I could travel to the north as well and work to help out my parents and my siblings. It’s what is expected of young boys. And for the economic hardship, there are no jobs and it’s hard being successful. The expectation is to come here to the United States and work.”*
- *“I remember the smuggler saying to all of us, ‘we are leaving after it gets dark and follow me, whoever stays behind, forget them’, I remember getting off the bus and there was the desert, cacti, snakes and more cacti. And that night, I remember it as one of the darkest nights in my life, there were no lights, it was an abandoned house, I just remember being really cold and the darkness for the first night.”*
- *“I remember I felt as if it was a dream, where we walked there was snow in the desert. It was really cold and I wasn’t used to the cold weather and I said to myself, ‘you wanted to go north, now I have to follow through. After five days waiting inside a tunnel, the smuggler did not return, we had run out of food as well. Somehow immigration official found the 25 people and me but we ran and escaped, luckily we found another safe house and they helped us get to our destination.”*

Subject B said:

- *“The news of immigrating to the United States brought me some sense of fear because I was going to leave behind my studies, my friends and my older sister.”*
- *“I was also excited, my father said that on the other side, it’s prettier, people ride their bikes and run on the streets, and there is space for everything, even bikes have a lane to ride.”*
- *“The day we had to depart, I didn’t want to come anymore, I didn’t want to stop playing Monopoly with my friends, I dreaded having to start all over again in a new place, I was nervous.”*

Subject C said:

- *“My dad had already been here for some while, working, saving money, and then he sent for her, and my sister, and myself. I was younger, about one, and she was about two years old. I just remember the stories my parents tell me, crossing the river.”*

Subject D said:

- *“It was a drastic decision. Everything was set up for my step dad to come here, but my uncle in the U.S. asked me if I wanted to take his place, and I said yes. It was less than a week and I had traveled from Mexico City to Tijuana. We left around 4 a.m. the smugglers had made a hole in the fence, some other guys would distract the immigration patrol and we crossed and ran to a safe house where they kept the two of us on big tool boxes for hours, they locked them on the outside, they didn’t want us to run away since we were on the other side.”*
- *“The smugglers would feed us, then move us to different safe houses, each time I believe going inside the U.S. At some point, there were about 30-40 people in a room and there was always someone watching us.”*

- *"We were delivered to our family friends in Los Angeles. It was all confusion; I didn't know where I was, or whom I had to meet. I didn't know anything, and I was in a defensive mode, alert and thinking about my safety."*

Subject E said:

- *"My father arranged for my brother and I to come live with him, then the whole family. We were documented and we were excited to come, it was the place we had heard about and became a fantasy in our minds. I wasn't afraid, but I felt I left a piece of me back in Mexico with the family."*
- *"I couldn't wait to tell my family about the new country, I was very excited, I really loved the weather, it was kind of foggy and it helped me because I worked from sunrise to sunset in the fields, this way I wouldn't get sunburn. It was a delight to get to know different people, I have always had curiosity to know different places and learn other people's styles of working, how they think, I am very curious that way."*

Subject F said:

- *"That day we crossed the fence, they had made an opening underneath it. Suddenly, a helicopter came near us with its lights, it was right above us, and they didn't arrest us, for some reason. We waited for about five hours underneath some bushes and waited for their shift change. It was too cold and I started to feel ill, I had to hug others and get inside the group circle. Then we kept going, later the hardest thing was walking all night, dogs would chase us, we jumped house fences, and kept walking."*
- *"The second stretch was trying to get from San Diego to Los Angeles, they put about six of us in a car trunk, it was about 15 minutes, I was then very scared, full of uncertainty because it was very risky and we could have been caught."*

Subject G said:

- *"I was lucky to only have waited about two days in a house, I didn't know if they were good or bad people, I had to trust in my luck and in God, if you believe in God, then you have to trust him right? We then walked all day long, it was very hot, you had to bring lots of water, without water you won't survive, and we kept walking two full days and two nights. At night the cold hurt and what we did was get close to each other, and give each other some warmth to stay alive."*
- *"I feared the desert animals, snakes, spiders, even of people walking with me, there was the possibility they could rape you, assault you, rob you, we were easy targets. I remember then being placed on a small car, there were about nine of us, and apparently, the border patrol saw us inside and made a turn to follow us. We all ran out of the car and scrambled to get away and find a house to hide from them. I was very lucky and finally made it with some of my friends."*

Subject H said:

- *"To say the truth, I was really prepared to cross. I bought hiking boots, a backpack with canned food, water, and change of clothes. I had played soccer and worked in the fields, always running, exercising; it was the best timing for me to cross. We walked through rivers, sand dunes, and our first night it rained on us. We had to walk four days and four nights."*

- *“While crossing the desert and mountains, I saw human bones, body parts, clothes, there were vultures around us, snakes, scorpions, and we saw it all.”*
- *“I never was hungry, or thirsty, and did not get blisters as other who came with me. The last day we all ran out of water and food. I decided to share my electrolyte serum packets for emergencies and we all gathered to pray to God for extra strength to make it. After we prayed, about 100 meters ahead and we found several water bottles under some bushes. The Red Cross probably left them for us and that was pure fuel to help us make it.”*

Research Question #1a: *How did your life change as an immigrant?*

Subject A said:

- *“At first, after being here about one month, two months, I realized that it was another world, I had come from a small town.” “It seemed that people were living in a hurry.”*
- *“I felt somewhat traumatized, to tell you the truth. With the experience crossing the border, to have a job for five days and then lose it. And all of the sudden I have the opportunity to go study.”*
- *“There was a change here. I felt as if I was a prisoner. Yes since then, you get me? From that age (14) and for the same reason and with time I started to realize that a person who is an immigrant, coming to this country and you are undocumented, you have to always be very cautious.”*

Subject B said:

- *“I was 15 years old and my life gave an 180-degree turn. It was very hard because I arrived without knowing any English. Another language, another culture and you arrive at a town not so big, but everyone speaks English.”*
- *“We couldn’t find people who spoke Spanish. It was very hard, it was very hard to adapt to the language because none of us understood anything. Zero. We came without having a word of English on us.”*
- *“In my town, everyone knows each other. That made it very hard to start over because of the language; I didn’t speak it at all. I didn’t have any friends here either, and my first day in school I remember, I was very nervous and any changes made me very nervous. Even when I lived in Mexico, the new school year made me very nervous. Can you imagine my first day in school here in the U.S?”*

Subject C said:

- *“Well, when I came I was practically an infant. I guess my mom was carrying me and both her and my dad crossed the river. I just remember my parents telling me that they crossed at night and that she had to carry me with a dirty diaper for a day or two.”*
- *“Well I mean, once you get older you understand that you look different, you speak a different language, you’re darker skinned, darker hair, but at first when you’re young you don’t notice those differences until you get older.”*
- *“I can’t say it was hard for me, it was probably hard for my parents and not myself because I was slowly being raised in this country, and going to school here, and English. I didn’t find it much difficult at first.”*

Subject D said:

- *"It was a complete radical life change. Everything changed in my life, everything. I had a very different way of living in Mexico. I did not expect everything that I am living now, but I believe that everything changed for good."*
- *"I've never thought about the meaning of being an immigrant. I saw this as a different opportunity, an opportunity to have a different life, due to the previous lifestyle that had. That's what I had in mind, change my lifestyle."*
- *"Removed myself of legal problems, and have a normal life in this society, I wanted out of having legal problems, that's the main reason. I wanted to work, to be able to go out anywhere without problems, without being worried if I had problems with others and worrying something might happen."*

Subject E said:

- *"Well our family was in doing good in Mexico, we were all working, but my dad was alone on this side of the border in the United States and we wanted to give him company because we rarely saw him. I was very glad to come live with him, learn from him in how to live in the United States, and learn what I needed to overcome difficult challenges."*
- *"We worked on the fields, seasonal work in different cities. My father took us to the movies; we went to the Laundromat and to eat out. But he enjoyed making us handmade flour tortillas because there weren't any Mexican grocery stores, there wasn't any Mexican music on the radio those years (the 1960's). I yearned for these things, and the first thing I bought was a radio, I tried to find a signal on Sundays where I could listen to the only Spanish programming, it was for a few minutes but I enjoyed it."*

Subject F said:

- *"I always wanted to cross the border as other immigrants did walking the desert. I left after finishing 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I came without a visa, everything that I had dreamed, and how they show it on the movies and everything, and it turned out to be a reality. I always said to myself, I will cross the border for the first time, I was 100% sure I would do it."*
- *"Once we made it to the other side, I saw everything was so new to all of us, in San Diego, all the houses looked very different, everything, a different world. Before we were delivered to our families, they took us to eat and my first meal was at McDonald's, a burger had never tasted so good in my life."*

Subject G said:

- *"When we were on the last stretch, one of the guys next to me said, 'we arrived, we made it to the United States' I had an enormous joy, and my heart was going so fast. I was so happy that even though what I went through was so hard, it was worth it. One is Mexican and everything, but when you know that now you are in another country with another flag, our fears and suffering changed to joy and our lives were about to change."*
- *"First, you have to adapt to the new traditions and ways of living from this side. Life changes for you, for example, if I was somewhat not so good in Mexico, and if I am on this side, things are more strict, and I have to do things right, or else, what is the reason I came for right? Why would I leave my family and everything behind if I were still going to behave the same? I had to change my ways."*

Subject H said:

- *"I wanted to migrate to set roots, to get established and grow."*
- *"When I get a place to live, I am going to behave, and I am going to work."*
- *"When I found a place to live, and not knowing the town, I would not go out. I wouldn't go out to avoid being at risk of being picked up. When I arrived, I had fear. I said to myself, I am not going to go out, I am not going to drink, I am not going to do certain things that can place me at risk to be caught by immigration officials."*

Research Question #2: *How would you describe the adjustment to living in a new country?*

Subject A said:

- *"I remember going to high school, it was frustrating, very frustrating at first. As time passed, I thought, I will never learn it, it is very difficult."*
- *"Eventually, there was some support from teacher aides who would help foreign students like me, but there were some teachers that would get frustrated with me. One time, in a math class, my teacher was trying to explain how to work out a problem and she became very frustrated that I didn't get her explanation. I remember that she said that I was stupid; I was upset, I felt bad, but at I felt the problem was the language, not me. I told myself, this is going to be my motivation; I will show her that I am not stupid that it was the language. I can't deny it, learning was very difficult."*

Subject B said:

- *"I was very nervous on my first day of high school, and not knowing the language increased my nervousness. There was a guy giving us a tour, I didn't understand anything. Just imagine, it felt as if I was in another world. Imagine if I go from Earth to Jupiter and even though they might look like me, I would look at them as Martians because I didn't get anything, I just heard gibberish. Everything started to spin and they started laughing at me, I became very nervous and I ran away, I was angry."*
- *"All my classes were entirely in English except the one for learning English as a second language. Basically, I felt as if I was born again. As a child who can't speak, and doesn't know how to communicate. When you come as I did, you don't get anything. I realized that they were going to teach me how to speak, like a child. I started with the vowels and the alphabet. I felt as if everything I had learned in Mexico, it was all finished, my schooling was over, and I had to start from zero."*

Subject C said:

- *"Spanish is my primary language, but when I went to kindergarten, I remember already understanding and speaking English, I think it's due to my sister going to school first and sharing her school work with me. Also, watching cartoons in English, I think T.V. is what taught me English because my parents didn't speak it. Sometimes I think back and I'm like, wow, how did that happen?"*
- *"We did move back to Mexico for a couple of years. I attended fourth and fifth grade over there. Then we re-immigrated back to the States and I did find it a bit more difficult to go to school because of the language."*
- *"Actually, it was kind of weird. It's kind of ironic that I felt somewhat discriminated in Mexico coming from the United States, everybody looked at me and they had the belief that I thought I was better than them just because I lived in the States and I spoke English."*

Subject D said:

- *"I started from zero. It was hard to learn, I spent some time learning English and I tend to practice it while I work."*
- *"Having a stable job. I became more responsible and was more careful with my things. Yes, I was very responsible at work, something that I had never done in Mexico."*
- *"At the house that I arrived it was hard because they had a curfew, I wasn't able to go inside the kitchen, eat as I wished anymore because it was not my home. I started to pay rent, something I had never done either and I had to follow rules established by the people I lived with, it was hard because I wasn't used to it."*

Subject E said:

- *"My father retired due to being disabled from a back injury and I took his job, I was in charge of the strawberry field's irrigation duties. I really missed having my father to develop his craft, as he knew how to do it. I had a difficult time learning how to work heavy machinery. I was offered other jobs and kept moving and learning new skills."*
- *"It was also hard to adapt living with my father. He was very strict with everything and he learned it from this country, to be precise with his things, he was serious and we had come from Mexico where we didn't have lots of responsibilities and we usually never took things seriously. I had a hard time adapting to his ways, to respect people at work, to be punctual, to have a work schedule, I never had a work schedule."*

Subject F said:

- *"I worked full-time and went to high school full-time as well. I was 14 years old and I never felt as a victim or anything, I was grateful to God because I learned to value all the hard work I put in, anything that I learned I appreciated it. It was good to have worked and studied at the same time."*
- *"My first day in school, ninth grade, we were placed in a physical education class, the teacher didn't know a word in Spanish except, 'hey friends!' All of the kids would laugh because we didn't know any English. At first, I felt really embarrassed for not being able to respond and I felt it was a totally different world that I was used to in Mexico. I had my language, my people, I was very comfortable there, and I arrived here and I felt I was nothing. Here in the U.S., I had to start from zero."*
- *"After I graduated from high school, I had learned English somewhat and it helped me to communicate with contractors and found better opportunities to work. At the same time, I also learned that when you come to the U.S., you start to pay rent even if you live with family. Family interactions change too. Here everyone is focused on their own world, making money for their personal goals and that is something that we lost when we arrived in the States."*

Subject G said:

- *"When you arrive, you understand that you have to start from zero. The language was hard to learn so I looked for jobs where it is not necessary to work such as gardening. I was supposed to stay with my brother at his home but there were already two families living in one apartment, I was left out and I slept inside the trunk of a car for several days. I felt sad for sleeping in a car's trunk but I had faith that things could get better."*
- *"I used to get lost going home after work, it took me hours of walking to find my way."*

Subject H said:

- *“When I found work, it was on a small farm, I had experience working in the fields in Mexico, I worked growing tomatoes, strawberries, habanero chili, picking grapes and bell peppers too. It wasn’t hard for me, on the contrary, I shared with the owner different ways of improving his farming and helped him save time and money.”*
- *“When I arrived I bought a book to learn English, it had vocabulary, quizzes and explained how to put phrases together. I used to read it after work.”*
- *“The way I found friends and job opportunities was through playing soccer, this sport has been very giving and I feel grateful to God for the doors the sport opened up for me.”*

Research Questions #3: *Can you describe if you had any losses and ways you coped after arriving at a new country?*

Subject A said:

- *“I missed my parents, my siblings and what helped me so much is my faith in God.”*
- *“When I spoke with my mother over the phone, she reminded me that she would pray to God to take care of me and she trusted in that. It was hard to keep attending mass every week as I used to do it in Mexico, here we have different routines and things are different but I still developed a relationship with God.”*

Subject B said:

- *“What hurt the most was leaving my friends, my brother, and my sister behind. I was really close to my brother and we would go everywhere together, it was very painful having to split. I keep wondering what life would have been if I had stayed.”*
- *“My first year in school was really hard, I would isolate, I would eat my homemade lunch by the parking lot because I barely knew anybody. I would sit under a tree, I was frustrated and I felt alone.”*
- *“Within a few months in school, new immigrant students started going to school and I started meeting them and we related because they knew what I also was going through and I knew what they were going through, we became good friends.”*

Subject C said:

- *“In Mexico, my family was really close. We were always with my grandparents, and cousins, and uncles, and aunts. Leaving them behind, it was hard. I did miss my grandparents, not being able to see them often. What I miss is my family getting together all the time. My parents would try to take us to visit them every two years.”*

Subject D said:

- *“I had a couple of family members die in Mexico when I was here, they were very close to me and I wasn’t able to be with them. It was hard to not see my family, my mom, and my siblings for years. It’s not the same calling them on the phone than being with them, see them.”*

- *"I think what helps me cope is my family here, my wife, my children, they are the ones who help me move forward. I also think that one of my qualities is that I like challenges and I enjoy learning new things and I enjoy figuring it out in my mind, thinking that I can be successful."*

Subject E said:

- *"After we immigrated, we lost business contacts and friends who we worked with."*
- *"I think I matured at an early age, I saw what needed to be taken care of, and value what we had lost, like our family business, and I tried not to put blame on anybody. It was a step taken to improve our living, we took on the adventure."*
- *"I had a hard time becoming a citizen of the United States, it took me years to make my decision it felt as if I was being crucified." Back then, in the 1990's, becoming a U.S. citizen meant that I no longer would be a Mexican citizen. I chose to do it because the need to have my family here with me was greater than my nationality status."*
- *"The main way that I have coped with losing my Mexican citizenship is by being grateful for opportunities in this country, in here my son was able to get medical services, and my children were able to get an education, I am very grateful."*

Subject F said:

- *"It is true that one suffers and all of that, it does affect you, but when you are here, and you are enjoying, knowing a little bit of English, when you have a good job, you say, it was worth everything that you had to go through. You know crossing the border, new friends, all of that."*
- *"For me, leaving friends back in Mexico was something that in reality did not hurt that much because it was planned. I always had in my mind that I would go to the United States. When I left, I close it all up and left it, and those friends I never saw them again. That world was over for me."*

Subject G said:

- *"I left a younger brother and he was 5 years old. It's been 15 years since I don't see him and it hurts. I still call him 'hey kid, hey son,' but now he is about 20 years old, it's hard to assimilate."*
- *"What comforts me is that I have helped my family financially, they have fixed up their house, they have better clothes and don't worry too much about having something to eat, that gives me satisfaction and motivates me to keep working hard."*

Subject H said:

- *"It really hurts being away from my children, it hurts every day. It's not the same when I used to wake up and I would hear them call my name, daddy, when they are just giving you a hard time, I would wake up and I was all alone, I looked around and there was nothing."*
- *"At some point, I became very nostalgic, I thought about going back because I missed them. I would spend hours on the phone with them, just listening. When Christmas or the New Year arrives I spoke with them, but I couldn't give them a hug, it's not the same."*

Research Question #4: *Can you describe if your lived experiences of grief or mourning as a result of living in a new country?*

Subject A said:

- *“Yes, many days, months, years, many times I felt alone. I would think about my parents, my siblings, or my extended family that passed away. I am away from my country, my traditions, and the festivities in my hometown in Mexico. So many things, so many sacrifices and I miss that, the food, the people, the Christmas gatherings.”*
- *“I didn’t feel happy, but I was still focused on the idea of finishing college, I have to graduate at all cost.”*
- *“We used to communicate by writing letters to each other. I still have many of them because they have something special. Even after all these years, I still read them, almost as if I wish I could gain back some of those years I lost, those years I was not with them.”*

Subject B said:

- *“Everything happened so fast. Once we were on this side of the border, we wondered why we left my brother all by himself in Mexico. He went into some sort of depression. The first months were really hard. Separated. It was really tough for our family.”*
- *“One starts from zero and with nothing to start up. Basically, when we arrived we had nothing, no car to move around, we went to the store using our dad’s bike and when we were going home from the grocery store, it looked like a Christmas tree, full of bags hanging everywhere.”*

Subject C said:

- *“There is always difficulty when you leave a relationship behind. You don’t know if you’re going to or when you will see them again. I mean you just remember why you are here, and you just put that aside. You don’t forget them but it’s not an obstacle to try to get ahead and what you should do here in this country.”*

Subject D said:

- *“At first it was like loneliness because I had nothing, I had nobody. I was with no one. Before I was married, it was very lonely. Sometimes one takes refuge in things such as drinking all the time, you get in trouble for those things, not being aware of course.”*
- *“I feel that one of the biggest obstacles that I experienced and was difficult to deal with was feeling lonely.”*

Subject E said:

- *“We were working on this side, and my mom became ill, the family was split, some here and some in Mexico. Once that disease (cancer) arrived, we lost her. We left suddenly, it was an emergency, and we hoped to see her before she passed. I was able to be next to her in her last days. I was somewhat relieved that I was able to be with her and tried to make her comfortable.”*

Subject F said:

- *“I remember when I started on my first job, a Chinese Buffet, I was the dishwasher and didn’t know how to use the machines. My boss would get really mad, he would break a lot of dishes, and he would grab trays of dishes and threw them on the floor. It was very humiliating. When I see that something like that happens, I have always tried to get the positive out of it. If*

*somebody scolds you is for a reason, it might be for your benefit. I overcame bad experiences this way."*

Subject G said:

- *"My parents, it's been so long that I have not given them a hug, it's not the same when I call them, and it hurts all the time. I remember the last hug I gave my dad, I said to him, 'I don't know if it's the last hug I will give you, I kissed his hand and said, I am leaving now' and he gave me his blessing."*
- *"It's also painful to have left my younger brother behind, it still hurts."*

Subject H said:

- *"One of the things that still hurts a lot is the fact that five years went by and those years are lost. I lived with them until they were about five, then I crossed, and not having them next to me all those years, it's a void. How many things did I miss not being with them? Now that they are older and I brought two of them with me, at first I didn't know them in depth, the way they thought, their styles, their hobbies. All of those things get cut off."*

### ***Main Dimensions Catalog***

Main Dimension: *Experience of Immigration*

- Fearless of the unknown before crossing the border
- Excitement about immigrating
- Experienced physical pain while crossing the desert's cold nights and hot days
- Feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and confusion at school and work
- The need of group reliance was necessary to survive
- Feeling crowded, being watched, and feeling as a prisoner during the crossing
- Living in fear of being caught and deported

Main Dimension: *Life Change as an Immigrant*

- Culture shock because functioning in school and work felt like new world
- Being an immigrant meant having to be vigilant all the time
- Many changes in a short period of time and the only option was to keep trying
- Life changed for good
- Learned to follow rules and have work schedule

Main Dimension: *Adjustment to a New Country*

- Having to start from zero, having nothing in this country
- Learning the new language took years of struggle
- Working and studying during adolescence
- Not knowing the language led to being judged, bullied, and feeling worthless
- Learned new ways, became responsible, followed rules, and respected everyone
- Feelings of gratitude for new opportunities in life
- Work opportunities were highly valued

Main Dimension: *Experiencing Losses and Ways Immigrants Coped*

- Family separation
- Coped by having faith in God
- Befriended other immigrants to feel understood
- Comforted by supporting family financially
- Calling or writing letters to family in Mexico

Main Dimension: *Experiences of Grief*

- Feeling lonely
- Irreparable relationship time loss
- Grief was used as motivation
- Feeling humiliated and bullied at work and at school
- Not been able to see parents or children for years

The differences of the eight participants' responses were analyzed to understand their lived experiences after immigration. The participants responded to the Main Dimension of *Experience of Immigration* as follows: five said they were fearless of the unknown; seven of them felt an initial excitement about immigrating to the United States; four felt doubtful, anxious, and confused at work or in school; four experienced physical pain while crossing the cold/hot desert; four to rely on the group to survive the crossing; four felt crowded, being watched and felt as an object being delivered; and five felt that they were living in constant fear of being caught and deported.

For the first Dimension, it appeared that most of the participants expected life to be similar to that of their experience in Mexico and did not consider how difficult it would be to learn a new language. They appeared to be culturally shocked by their inability to function normally. There was no mention of how they intended to communicate with English-speaking school classmates, teachers, or bosses. The majority who crossed the desert did not prepare themselves physically or with supplies except for Participant H, who planned and prepared himself for several years. Most of the participants who crossed the desert or the fence did not have a clear plan or directions in how to go about crossing; they trusted the smuggler with their

lives. For the two participants who migrated legally, they had family members explain what it would be like and were both in the company of their fathers during their migration. For five of them, living in fear of being caught and deported was not in their plans because they had dreamed of exciting new adventures and opportunities without considering the risks and dangers those dreams exposed them to.

The participants responded to the Second Dimension of *Life Change as an Immigrant* as follows: five said they experienced the U.S. as a different world when they attempted to function normally in school and work; five of them had to live cautiously as an immigrant; five said they experienced many changes in a short period of time and felt they had to keep on trying to succeed, all of them said their lives changed for good; and five of them said they had to learn to follow society's rules and have a work schedule they never needed before. For five of them, the U.S. was literally another world mostly due to not understanding the language. The same number of participants experienced rapid life changes including their living conditions (crowded rooms, no privacy, living in a car's trunk), having to work at an early age, and signing up for school within the first few weeks. All of them at this time reported their lives have turned out to be prosperous and they have gained stability for themselves and their families. For 5 of the participants, they needed to learn to follow rules of their adoptive families and those of society. Two of them had a radical life change and transformed their troublesome behaviors for positive ones the moment they arrived.

The participants responded to the Third Dimension of *Adjustment to New Country* as follows: six said they had to start from zero and had nothing to start with; seven felt they had to adapt to another world and not being able to communicate; three of them had to work and study during adolescence; four felt judged, bullied, and felt worthless for not knowing the language, all

of them learned new ways of living, became more responsible, and respected others, all of them felt gratitude for new life and work opportunities, and all of them highly valued work opportunities despite their age.

Adjustment to a new country is an extraordinary quest that takes great deal of internal resources. Most of these immigrants are a clear example of what resilience is all about; they continue to excel despite all the challenges along the way. The majority decided to adapt and work out a way to communicate during their first years. They took school seriously, others taught themselves by reading books or practicing at work. Only one of them reported learning both languages as a child. Three of them worked after school full-time because they had to pay the rent, help with bills, and send money back to their families in Mexico. It is admirable the amount of internal strength they showed to do both difficult activities right after crossing the cold and dark desert. All of them adjusted to new ways of living and felt grateful for the life and work opportunities they dreamed of having the day they conceived of the idea of immigrating.

The participants responded to the Fourth Dimension of *Losses and Coping Mechanisms* as follows: six said they left their family behind; six said they lost friends, their country, traditions, festivities, and food; five said they were unable to care for sick family members or respond to the death of loved ones as they wished; four said they coped through their faith in God; five befriended other immigrants to feel understood; six were comforted by supporting their family financially; and seven coped by writing letters or calling their families often.

On the fourth Dimension, there was not anything else that mattered more than their families left in Mexico. Some of their family members died and they were unable to attend their funeral. The only way they were able to help was financially for the expenses of a funeral. Half

of them fully trusted God would help them on their journey and it was shared that their families would pray for their safety and health.

The highlight of this dimension was the coping mechanisms they used to reduce their insecurity, loneliness, and humiliation. They found other immigrants, they kept focused on sending money to their families, and maintained a line of communication by writing or calling them over the phone as often as they could.

The participants responded to the Fifth Dimension of *Experiences of Grief* as follows: five felt painful loneliness; five grieved the irreparable loss of time spent with their parents, siblings, or children; six used grief as their motivator to succeed; four felt humiliated and bullied in school or work; and seven grieved not seeing or touching their parents, siblings, or children for years. On the last Dimension of grief, suffering and emotional pain were presented daily. Five of them continue to grieve the lost time with their loved ones and wondered what it would have been like if they had never come to the U.S. Six of them transformed the pain to motivate themselves to succeed in their goals. Currently, none of them are in school anymore and the humiliation and bullying are not present anymore. Some of them have brought most of their family to the U.S., while others use smartphone technology to be able to see them on video chat.

Overall, most participants reported on the research questions a combination of grief and losses and the ability to cope through feelings of gratitude and by communicating with their loved ones by writing letters or by phone. There were new life opportunities they gained by sacrificing family time, family proximity, physical comfort, and being judged for their lack of English proficiency. There was an overwhelming sense of not giving up and working hard for their families; living a new life in a different world that included respecting and adapting to other ways of living and hoping for family reunification.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

All of the participants in this study expressed feelings of gratitude for having the opportunity to share their personal stories of immigration. The immigration experience is a complex phenomenon and this study shows the human experience by collaborating with the eight participants. The majority of the participants expressed a sense of relief after sharing their immigration stories. They created new meanings about their experiences crossing the border, remembering their family members, and also sharing their ability to succeed and strive despite multiple environmental and emotional challenges. Most of them shared a very strong desire and satisfaction for helping their families live a more pleasant life in Mexico and some expressed great joy for having their families close to them after several years. None of the participants expressed the need for further counseling after the interview.

Each of the participants approached the interview differently. In the following section, the researcher will be sharing what new knowledge was constructed after meeting with each participant. Participant A shared a very personal new meaning that originated from the interview. He shared that he realized he has a conflicting desire after all these years living in the United States where he thinks of the following, *“you know how some people say if they had a chance to be born again, they would like to be born as a lion or an eagle, for me, if I were to be born again and live again, I would choose to live out my life in Mexico to grow old with my family and feel all those moments I missed by immigrating.”* He appeared to be talking about the irreparable time loss that originated by living away from his family due to his immigration to the United States. The loss will always remain a loss and the grief may be a reminder of what could have been if he had not taken the decision to migrate at such an early age.

Participant B asked to review the questions a second time to make sure he was being helpful in the study. He shared that his wife helped him go through the questions and his responses before meeting with the researcher. An unexpected finding was shared when his wife said she had no idea what experiences he had gone through including painful family separation and the language difficulties during high school and some of his jobs. He shared that being interviewed allowed him to share with this researcher and his wife the many immigration experiences he had lived. It also made him realize how much more he appreciates his experience as an immigrant starting with nothing in this country and having a gratifying feeling that he and his family have progressed significantly and continue to work hard each day.

Participant C expressed concern that his immigration experience would not be rich enough in content due to being 1-year-old when he migrated. He shared that all he remembers nowadays is the stories his parents shared about his immigration journey as a toddler. The richness of his experience came out during his lived experiences of reversed migration. He and his family migrated back to Mexico for two years during 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade and he had to adjust to learning Spanish (reading and writing) and the shock of being discriminated in his native country by his fellow classmates. *“I felt more discriminated in Mexico than I have ever been discriminated in the United States in my whole life.”* He and his family experienced a second migration to the United States as a 12-year-old boy. This time he crossed legally by plane and most of his adjustment was focused on catching up with other classmates’ English proficiency. He shared that by participating in this study, he realized that he had not paid attention to the discrimination he felt as a boy when he had to go back to his native country.

Participant D distinguished himself for his particular perception of not considering himself an immigrant but rather considered himself a Mexican citizen and the radical need to

change his ways of living after immigrating to the United States. He shared that his adjustment was difficult as he was not used to following rules such as having a curfew and limited access to a kitchen or other amenities where he was housed. He also experienced having positive outcomes such as having a stable job where he was expected to be on time, have a work schedule, and provide good customer service to grow in his line of work. His immigration experience was reported to have given him a sense of belonging, stability, and success that did not seem to be likely if he had stayed in Mexico. One of his new acquired meanings is that he had not considered looking at the meaning of being an immigrant and all this time he had only considered changing his lifestyle for good and being able to work and care for his new family in the United States and his family in Mexico.

Participant E was the oldest of the participants and brought an exceptional view of his experience during the late 1960's and early 1970's. He has lived in the United States since he was 18 and has recently retired at the age of 67. His particular descriptions of how he communicated with the family by writing letters were full of nostalgia. He remembers buying his personal radio to hear "*at least the Mexican National Anthem because I felt proud of being Mexican.*" He longed to go back most of the years he worked as a seasonal worker and was full of excitement to tell stories about the places he visited and the people he met. His immigration experience appeared to be fairly clear and vivid that it almost felt as if he had just arrived a few months ago. His description of a personal conflict in choosing between becoming a U.S. citizen and abandoning his Mexican nationality was notable in the way his voice transformed to a more soft and contemplative tone. And not of least importance were the two times he became emotionally touched when he described himself as a helpful guide but absent father for his children and the painful loss of his mother to cancer while she lived in Mexico and he was

working in the U.S. He shared that he has not had a chance to share the painful and gratifying immigration experiences with anyone until today. He appeared to have experienced a moment of relief and release of accumulated grief and joy.

Participant F was the only one who decided to immigrate by walking through the desert even when having the opportunity to apply for a visa and cross legally. *“I always wanted to cross as most immigrants do have done it.”* His confidence and self-efficacy were admirable to witness. Of his many adventures and stories, the one that impressed this writer the most was the tenacity to work full-time and study throughout his three years of high school at the young age of 14. During the day, he would attend school and right after he worked at a restaurant until 11 p.m. After work, he would go out with co-workers to eat and drink and would typically get home around 2 to 3 a.m. He would then sleep for a few hours and head back to school. He graduated with excellent grades and felt proud of his accomplishment at such a young age. He shared that one of the new realizations he gathered after the interview is that his principal dream of working and saving money to live a pleasant life in Mexico had changed now that there is an increased wave of violence in his home state. For now, he noted that a new dream started to develop recently and it would be to afford to buy a house in the United States and live here for now.

Participant G realized his family placed all their hopes on him, who was one of the youngest of seven brothers and sisters. He was the only one in his family who finished middle school and was able to migrate and help the entire family financially. He shares that he has been able to afford to buy them clothes, fix the main house, and eat out more often. It was impressive of how mature he became at the age of 15. The reason he decided to adapt to the new ways and *“do things right”* was for all the suffering and family separation he experienced to not be in vain. *“If I continued to misbehave as I did in Mexico, then I should have stayed there and avoided all*

*the trouble in getting here.*” His unbreakable faith in God was remarkable as well as this family-oriented vision that motivated him during immigration hardships.

Lastly, participant H shared how planning and preparing himself for the most difficult journey of his life was accomplished. He shared that working on tomato fields and playing competitive soccer from the age of 11 until he was 23 gave him the strength and tenacity to walk four days and four nights through the desert without getting a blister on his feet, without getting thirsty or hungry, and prepared him to withstand the cold nights and venomous animals of the desert. He thought about the crossing quite well. He had hiking boots to prevent snake bites, double-layered pants, canned food, plenty of water, and a backpack full of supplies and changes of clothes and emergency serum to stay hydrated during the last days. His faith in God and the desire to provide a better future for his children gave him the spiritual strength to reach the United States. He shared that even though he has one more child to bring to the U.S., he considers his current stability a blessing.

Based on the participants’ immigration experiences of grief and personal and meaningful losses, it seems that their families were the one main factor that strengthened their inner drive to withstand all types of challenges. These eight immigrants reminded the researcher of his own immigration struggles and successes. He related to their first day of high school, the language barriers, the difficulty making friends and adapting to new ways of living. His work experiences were similar in that he looked for jobs that had Spanish-speaking crews and worked two to three jobs while going to school. He also related to the excitement of those who immigrated legally. The fantasy and the tales people told his family before coming to this country became a reality. The green pastures, the bike lanes, garage sales, the newer cars people drove, the clean streets,

plenty of work, and educational opportunities were part of many tales and stories other immigrants told them when they traveled back to Mexico.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Eight of a total of ten participants finished the process of interviewing for this study. For the two participants who declined to participate, no questions were asked as promised in the informed consent form. It was assumed they declined to participate and practiced their right to withdraw at any moment and for any reason from the study. It is understandable that these two non-participants might have had a change of heart in sharing their intimate immigration story and might have decided to keep it private at the last minute. For the other eight participants, they reported the experience was a respectful and professional platform to share their immigration experiences. All the participants made an effort to find time in their busy schedules to share their stories and contribute in building the psychology literature on immigration and the impact it has on people living in this country.

Future studies can ask Mexican-born women about their experience and compare the results with this study, particularly by a Mexican-born immigrant woman. An alternative study might include a mixture of different Latin American countries and look at the different ways they experienced immigrating to the United States. An important discovery was found when one participant stated he had crossed the border as a toddler and did not remember much of his experience except through the story telling of his parents. For future studies, there might be something to say about children who immigrated as toddlers and focus on how their non-verbal physical expressions of grief and loss are related to their adult relationships and identification as immigrants.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The strengths of this study include having multiple truths from the participants; people are experts about their experience, meaning changes as new information becomes available, and knowledge can be constructed by listening to people describe their experiences. An additional strength of this study is the presentation of real-life stories describing the dreams, the challenges, and ways participants managed to survive one of the most difficult and courageous life changes anybody can do, migration to another country. Based on the researcher's observations during this project, sharing their immigration stories was of great value to the participants. They stated that they gained valuable insights and awareness of their immigration experiences such as increasing gratitude for achieving their dreams and living in a land of opportunities despite all the suffering and challenges along the way. Some of them valued the support of other immigrants greatly and have been friends ever since. For others, it was a relief to have shared the unique circumstances and reasons they immigrated and the reason they exchanged everything they had for the opportunity to find work opportunities and feel proud they helped their families financially. None of the participants shared they would explore their experiences through further counseling but the referral form (Appendix E) was given as a resource for future needs.

Additional strengths include the possibility to use the results and themes as prevention and supportive strategies for agencies that assist immigrants after their arrival in the United States. Some of the clinical implications might be to educate school counselors with typical immigration challenges that their students might be experiencing during their 1<sup>st</sup> year in school and how to recognize they have specific needs to socialize in their own language. This study also suggests schools need to have a tutoring program with experienced migrants that dominate both languages and who have graduated from higher education universities.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the experiences of immigration that were analyzed were representative of a small number of participants. Due to the specific demographic of this study, the results should not be generalized as it only pertains to a unique group of participants who were mostly on their 30's, were employed, Catholic, and educated. This study is limited due to the restricted sampling of Mexican-born males that only captured the male experience. Second, the meanings derived from the analyses are likely to change over time. Therefore, what was meaningful for the eight participants during this research experience may not have the same meaning in the future. Third, the sampling was conveniently chosen and may have influenced positively or negatively the types of responses provided by the participants, as they were familiar with the researcher from previous social interactions in religious and educational activities.

## **Conclusion**

### Organization of the Study

*What has been done?* This study based on phenomenology emphasized the subjective experience of eight Mexican-born male immigrants who participated in individual interviews. The main study questions of this study were: A) How would an immigrant describe his experience in a new country? B) How would an immigrant identify contexts or situations that influenced his experience of immigration? The data gathered in this research was organized by making use of the phenomenological research interview.

### *What has been found?*

Main Themes in all participants on Question A:

*How would an immigrant describe his experience in a new country?*

- Excitement
- Life changed for good

- Struggled to learn a new language
- adapted to new ways of living
- Feelings of gratitude for new opportunities in life
- Work opportunities were highly valued

Main Themes on Question B:

*How would an immigrant identify and describe any losses, grief or ways he coped after immigrating to a new country?*

- Family separation
- Comforted by supporting my family financially
- Calling or writing letters
- Feelings of loneliness
- Irreparable relationship time loss
- Grief was used as motivation
- Not been able to see parents or children for years

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## *Appendices*

Appendix A1: Interview Questions

Apéndice A2: Preguntas Para La Entrevista (Spanish Translation)

Appendix B1: Informed Consent

Apéndice B2: Consentimiento Informado Para ser Entrevistado (Spanish Translation)

Appendix C1: Letter of Introduction

Apéndice C2: Carta de Introducción para Entrevista del Proyecto (Spanish Translation)

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Apéndice D2: Cuestionario Demográfico (Spanish Translation)

Appendix E: Community References for Mental Health Support

### **Appendix A1: Interview Questions**

How would an immigrant describe his experience in a new country?

- A. Could you describe what it was like for you immigrating to the United States?
  - a. How did your life change as an immigrant?
  - b. How did your interpersonal relationships change if at all?
- B. How would you describe the adjustment to living in a new country?
  - a. What was your experience in learning the new language?
  - b. What daily challenges did you encounter in school/work/home?
  - c. What was it like to find new friends whom you can trust?

How would an immigrant identify and describe contexts or situations that influenced their experience of immigration?

- A. Can you describe any losses and ways you coped after arriving at a new country?
  - a. Can you describe your strengths and ways you have dealt with loss in your life?
- B. Can you describe if you lived experiences of grief or mourning as a result of living in a new country?
  - a. Can you describe what it felt like to be away from family/friends/country?
  - b. Can you describe any difficulty letting go of past relationships in Mexico?

## Apéndice A2: Preguntas Para La Entrevista

- 1) ¿Cómo describiría un emigrante su experiencia en un nuevo país?
  - a. ¿Podrías describir cómo fue para ti emigrar a los Estados Unidos?
    - i. ¿Cómo cambio tu vida como emigrante?
    - ii. ¿Cómo cambiaron tus relaciones con otras personas?
  - b. ¿Cómo describirías como fue el ajuste en vivir en un nuevo país?
    - i. ¿Cómo fue to experiencia en aprender otro lenguaje?
    - ii. ¿Qué tipo de obstáculos te encontraste con la escuela/trabajo/ y en casa?
    - iii. ¿Cómo fue para ti encontrar nuevos amigos en quien pudieras confiar?
- 2) ¿Cómo identificaría y describiría un emigrante el contexto o situaciones que influenciaron su experiencia de inmigracion?
  - a. ¿podrías describir si tuviste perdidas y las maneras afrontarlas después de tu llegada a el nuevo país?
    - i. ¿Podrías describir tus cualidades y maneras en que has podido lidiar con las perdidas en tu vida?
  - b. ¿Podrías describir si tuviste experiencias donde hayas experimentado dolor como resultado de vivir en un nuevo país?
    - i. ¿Podrías describir que sentiste al estar lejos de tu familia/amigos/país?
    - ii. ¿Podrías describir algunas dificultades al tener que dejar atrás tus relaciones familiares o amistades en México?

## Appendix B1: Informed Consent for an Interview Project

Title of Study: Understanding the experience of immigration among adult Mexican-born males living in the United States: an exploration of grief, loss, and adjustment

I agree to have Mauricio Ortiz, M.A. (doctoral candidate and principal investigator) give me questionnaires and ask me a series of questions about my experiences as an immigrant. These questions will be asked in a private setting or in my home and will take approximately 60 minutes.

The series of questions will be audio recorded for the purposes of the research accuracy and to protect my confidentiality, my name will not be used during the recording.

Mr. Ortiz has explained that my name will not be recorded anywhere in the project and that my answers will be used only by the principal investigator in the final analysis of the data. I understand that I can refuse to answer any question and withdraw from this study at any time without any consequence. I am not receiving any compensation for participating in Mr. Ortiz's study.

Information about this study and the place of my interviews for this study has been given to me by Mr. Ortiz. If I have any questions about this study I can contact Mr. Ortiz at (xxx)-xxx-xxxx or Salvador D. Treviño, Ph.D., the dissertation chair for Mr. Ortiz. Dr. Treviño can be reached at (xxx)-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxx.

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Signature

Date

Time

## Apéndice B2: Consentimiento Informado Para ser Entrevistado

Título del Estudio: Entendimiento de las experiencias de inmigración entre varones nacidos en México que viven en los Estados Unidos: una exploración de el dolor, las pérdidas y su manera de afrontarlos.

Estoy de acuerdo en que Mauricio Ortiz, M.A. (Candidato a Doctor e Investigador Principal) me de unos cuestionarios y me pregunte una serie de preguntas acerca de mis experiencias como emigrante. Estas preguntas serán echas en privado o en mi casa y tomarán aproximadamente 60 minutos. Como resultado, participar en este estudio podría activar memorias que pudieron haber sido traumáticas sin la intención de hacerlo. Puede que yo llegue a tener sentimientos de soledad, vergüenza, o incomodidad después de haber compartido información personal acerca de mi experiencia migratoria.

La serie de preguntas serán grabadas en audio para el propósito de obtener la información certera y para proteger mi confidencialidad, mi nombre no será usado durante la grabación. El señor Ortiz me ha explicado que mi nombre no será grabado en ninguna parte del proyecto y que mis respuestas serán únicamente utilizadas por el investigador principal en la parte final donde se analiza la información. Yo entiendo que me podre declinar a responder cualquier pregunta y retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento sin ninguna consecuencia. Por último, yo no recibiré ninguna compensación por participar en el estudio del señor Ortiz.

La información y el lugar de la entrevista se me dio a conocer por el señor Ortiz. Si tengo alguna pregunta acerca de este estudio, Yo podre contactar a el señor Ortiz al (xxx) xxx-xxxx o a el Doctor Salvador D. Treviño, PhD, el supervisor del señor Ortiz. El Doctor Treviño puede ser contactado al (xxx) xxx-xxxx, extensión xxxx.

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Firma

Fecha

Hora

### **Appendix C: Letter of Introduction for Interview Project**

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Program at Antioch University Santa Barbara. I am in the process of writing my dissertation and collecting personal experiences of adult males who are immigrants born in Mexico. For my dissertation, I am interested in discovering individual stories of immigration loss, grief and ways they coped after their immigration to the United States.

My project is the discovery of individual immigration stories of loss, grief, and ways they coped after immigrating to the United States. These personal stories will be collected through questionnaires and the interview process. Once the informed consent is signed, giving permission to conduct the interview, the participant and I will meet for an interview and discuss the topic through a list of questions. The information discussed with me will remain confidential when it is used for the dissertation.

Please ask any questions that you have about participating in this project at any time. I want to ensure that you have the information that you need to make the decision to conduct an interview. Thank you for the time and assistance in completing my project. I am grateful that you are willing to engage in this meaningful exploration.

Respectfully,

Mauricio Ortiz, M.A.  
Doctoral Candidate  
Antioch University Santa Barbara  
[xxxxx@antioch.edu](mailto:xxxxx@antioch.edu)  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

## Apéndice C2: Carta de Introducción para Entrevista del Proyecto

Queridos Participantes,

Soy un candidato a Doctor en el programa de Psicología Clínica en la Universidad de Antioch en Santa Bárbara. Estoy en el proceso de escribir mi disertación y coleccionar experiencias personales de varones adultos que emigraron de México. Para mi disertación, estoy interesado en descubrir las historias individuales de pérdidas o dolor y como las afronto después de haber emigrado a los Estados Unidos.

Estas historias personales serán coleccionadas a través de cuestionarios y una entrevista. Ya que el consentimiento para participar sea firmado, se dará permiso para continuar con la entrevista y nos juntaremos el participante y yo para una entrevista y discutir el tema con una lista de preguntas. La información que se discuta conmigo quedará en una manera confidencial para ser utilizada en el estudio. La entrevista tomará de 60 a 90 minutos y juntos podemos escoger donde se haga la entrevista.

Por favor preguntar cualquier pregunta que tenga acerca de participar en este proyecto. Me gustaría asegurarme de que tenga toda la información que necesite para hacer la decisión de participar en la entrevista. Gracias por su tiempo y asistencia en terminar con mi proyecto. Estoy muy agradecido que pudiera participar en esta exploración tan significativa.

Respetuosamente,  
Mauricio Ortiz, M.A.  
Candidato a Doctor  
Antioch University Santa Barbara  
[xxxxxx@antioch.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@antioch.edu)  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

**Appendix D1: Demographic Questionnaire**

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What is your religious preference? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your current marital status? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Employment Status: \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. At what age did you immigrate to the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. With whom did you immigrate? \_\_\_\_\_

**Apéndice D2: Cuestionario Demográfico**

1. ¿Cual es su edad? \_\_\_\_\_
2. ¿Que grado educativo completo en la escuela? \_\_\_\_\_
3. ¿Cual es su preferencia religiosa? \_\_\_\_\_
4. ¿Cual es su estado marital? \_\_\_\_\_
5. ¿Esta empleado? \_\_\_\_\_
6. ¿A que edad emigro? \_\_\_\_\_
7. ¿Con quien emigro? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E: Community Referrals**

### **KERN COUNTY ACCESS AND ASSESSMENT CENTER**

- For non-crisis situations, the Access and Assessment Center serves as the central point of contact for the KCMH System of Care. Please call (661) 868-8123 (Bilingual Services Available)
- Crisis Hotline at 1-800-991-5272 (Bilingual Services Available)
- Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-8255 (Bilingual Services Available)

### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

- Assessment Center located at 2178 Johnson Avenue in San Luis Obispo, CA (805) 781-4700
- **Latino Outreach Program: Counseling in Spanish**
  - The Latino Outreach Program provides counseling in Spanish for adults and for children ages 5 and up, with no residency requirements.
  - There are currently 3.5 full-time bilingual, bicultural mental health therapists working through Latino Outreach.
  - They are based at family resource centers around the county.
  - Referrals can be made by calling Dr. Silvia Ortiz at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.