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Prejudice of Mexican American Students Toward Recently Immigrated Mexican Students

Peter Valle
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Peter Valle

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Prejudice of Mexican American Students Toward Recently Immigrated Mexican
Students

by

Peter Valle

MA, University of Oklahoma, 2005

BS, University of Phoenix, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Prejudice against people of Mexican descent has been a pernicious social problem in the United States. A gap in the literature exists concerning racial and or cultural biases that may exist between Mexican immigrant students and U.S.-born Mexican American students. The purpose of this qualitative and phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Interviews were conducted with five immigrant college students from Mexico living in Texas, recruited through social media and snowballing. The theoretical foundation was Tajfel's social identity theory and in-group versus out-group dynamics. Phenomenology was the research method used to capture the depth and meaning of participants' experiences and NVivo 12 Pro software was used in the thematic analysis. Four out of five participants described facing prejudice from Mexican American classmates. Other findings included participants' sense of having to overachieve to make their parents' sacrifices worthwhile, difficulties with self-advocating in English, a sense of attributed shame, and the experience of positive regard and assistance from teachers. Findings may impact positive social change by providing information that can be used to improve the quality of education for Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants by addressing issues of prejudice and racial and ethnic discrimination. The results of this research may be useful in creating an environment that will allow more significant opportunities for the academic success of Mexican immigrant students.

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Dedication

Many people in my life have made this accomplishment possible. First and foremost, to my Lord and personal Savior Jesus Christ who watches over me always and who found me when I was lost. To my madre in heaven, who always believed in me and would often tell me “esto y mas te mereces”; without her, none of this would have even been dreamed. To my wife, my friend, and most fervent cheerleader always daring me to dream big and providing me with a firm hand and a loving encouraging push as needed to continue with the process. To my beautiful daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth—both infinitely smarter than me and who are my motivation for my drive. You too can accomplish your dreams! To my brothers and sisters who supported me unconditionally. To my Church of the Nazarene family, who have prayed for me and encouraged me along the way: Thank you.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Question	9
Theoretical Foundation	10
Nature of the Study.....	12
Definitions of Key Terms	13
Assumptions.....	14
Scope and Delimitations	14
Limitations	15
Significance of the Study	17
Summary	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Literature Search Strategy.....	23
Theoretical Foundation	23
Theoretical Application	25
Literature Review.....	28

Prejudice	29
Within-Group Prejudice.....	33
Phenomenology.....	37
Summary and Conclusions	40
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	43
Introduction.....	43
Research Design and Rationale	44
Role of the Researcher	45
Methodology.....	46
Instrumentation	48
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	50
Data Analysis Plan.....	51
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	53
Credibility	54
Transferability.....	55
Dependability.....	55
Confirmability.....	56
Ethical Procedures	56
Summary.....	58
Chapter 4: Results.....	60
Introduction.....	60
Changes to Original Data Collection Plan.....	60

Research Setting.....	62
Demographics	62
Data Collection	64
Data Analysis	65
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	68
Credibility	68
Transferability.....	69
Dependability	70
Confirmability.....	70
Results.....	71
Overachievement in Repayment of Sacrifice	72
Inability to Self-Advocate in English	74
Attributed Shame	75
From a Known Culture to a Brand-New World.....	76
Teacher Unconditional Positive Regard	77
Summary	78
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	80
Introduction.....	80
Interpretation of the Findings.....	80
Relationship of Findings to Theoretical Foundation	81
Key Findings in Relation to Literature	84
Limitations of the Study.....	87

Recommendations.....	89
Implications.....	89
Positive Social Change	90
Conclusion	90
References.....	92
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	107
Appendix B: Protocolo de Entrevista en Español.....	108
Appendix C: Participant Demographics Form.....	109
Appendix D: Formulario Demográfico Del Participante En Español	110
Appendix E: Social Media Posting.....	111
Appendix F: Publicación en Redes Sociales en Español.....	112

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants 63

Table 2. City of Birth and High School Characteristics of Study Participants..... 63

Table 3. College Attended and Grade Level of Participants 64

Table 4. Themes and Participant Endorsement..... 71

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice and discrimination from Mexican American students in the classroom setting. In the context of this study, *Mexican American* pertains to those perceived to be Mexican Americans by Mexican immigrants. This topic is pertinent because there is a need for an increased understanding of the problems encountered by Mexican immigrant students in the classroom setting. Findings from this study may encourage initiatives designed to address racism or discrimination in the education setting and promote academic achievement and economic progress among the Mexican immigrant population. The promotion of academic success can aid in future economic outcomes. Researchers have shown the importance of academic success and future positive outcomes in health, secondary education, and general social functioning, often noting the importance of the classroom environment in shaping these experiences (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015; Piña-Watson et al., 2015). Findings may contribute to positive social change within this community by aiding in the understanding of how intragroup prejudices perpetuate structural racism. The results of this study will also increase the knowledge of intergroup prejudice and bigotry and how it shapes the school experience.

During adolescence, students do not realize the importance of embracing people from across the racial and ethnic divide (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015). Researchers have suggested that student racial attitudes develop based on socialization among peers and

family and may exhibit both internalized and externalized prejudice (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015). Johnson (2016) argued that structural racism—a system in a society in which people of color are disadvantaged to the benefit of White people—may serve as an obstacle to learning in the classroom. Research into intragroup racism and prejudice in the school setting may help students and teachers better understand classroom dynamics by providing context related to how structural racism manifests in the school setting. Such an outcome could positively impact the learning environment for all students.

Because most Mexican Americans descended from immigrants themselves, by committing acts of discrimination against Mexican immigrants, they may be actively preserving a system that directly hurts all people of Mexican descent as it hurt their immigrant forbearers (Martinez, 2015). The findings of this study may help initiatives promoting increased awareness among Mexican Americans of perceived racism within the Mexican American community and make it possible to provide a more welcoming attitude toward Mexican immigrants. Chapter 1 will include a discussion of the background of the issue, problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, the significance of the study, and a summary.

Background

Mexican Americans and newly arrived Mexican migrants have considerably different experiences of racism, which shape their views on the world (Bean et al., 2015). There are various potential approaches to solving the problem of prejudice experienced by Mexican immigrants, many supported by data and real-world experiences. In addition

to facing prejudices from White people and other races in U.S. society, immigrants from Mexico often face discrimination from other Mexicans due to their status as immigrants. Mexican Americans have developed an identity and pride that is disparate from traditional Mexican identities, which causes them to clash with Mexicans who have only just arrived in the United States (Gonzales et al., 2014). Alba et al. (2014) explored intragroup racism and prejudice among Mexicans and other minority groups, affecting performance and other aspects of the victims' lives. The researchers found that prejudice and discrimination within communities of the same ethnicity or race are prevalent and negatively affect the rate of school attendance and lack of higher educational achievement within this community (Alba et al., 2014).

According to Frey (2015) and Gonzales et al. (2014), prejudicial treatment has parallels in the ways that members of assimilated immigrant groups have treated newfound immigrants of that group. The prejudice that Mexicans experience in the United States is compounded further by their legal status, with undocumented immigrants singled out for scrutiny (Epstein & Gist, 2013). These aspects of interracial prejudice have endured since before the United States' founding and have left long and painful effects on the affected minority groups, including Mexicans.

Phenomenological study results have shown that prejudice, regardless of its origins, hurts the academic performance of adolescent students of Mexican descent Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014). Mexican immigrant students were more likely to smoke and drink underage, become single parents, and receive lower grades (Fraser & Henseler, 2014; Romero et al., 2015). Additionally, Mexican American prejudice toward Mexican

immigrants has deleterious effects on all aspects of Mexican immigrants' lives. Mexican immigrant children tend to have lower test scores and educational achievement than Mexican Americans and are less likely to become high earners as adults (Fiske, 2014; Martinez, 2015). The compounded prejudice that Mexicans suffer compared to their Mexican American counterparts gives them additional hurdles they must overcome to succeed in school and their careers (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014; Delgado, 2016; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

Scholars have addressed the issue of prejudice at length and presented Mexican and Latino discrimination by other racial and ethnic groups (Romero et al., 2015). Nonetheless, there is insufficient literature on intra-Mexican discrimination based on immigration status. In this study, I explored a dimension of prejudice that has not been sufficiently explored in the literature (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Recommendations for further work have included emphasizing the school setting environment to fully grasp the extent of the problem of prejudice within the Mexican American community and to develop and implement future strategies that may mitigate discrimination in this community (Romero et al., 2015). Other researchers focused on the current anti-immigrant climate that drives ethnocentrism in the United States and informs prejudice (Fussell, 2014). The in-group–out-group dynamics between and within different races and ethnicities are enhanced by the perception of threat and conflict-driven by political rhetoric pitting one group against another. Fussell (2014) argued that prejudice within and between groups depends on support from local, state, and federal

laws and recommended continuing studies focusing on intragroup relationships because attitudes change over time and region. Hopkins (2015) explored the effect of language, or accented English, as a factor in anti-immigrant feelings by Mexican Americans born in the United States. Hopkins posited that in future studies researchers should explore the experiences of immigrants focusing on a specific country of origin. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) explored the experiences of school-aged students based on their parents' perceived ethnic identity, finding that parents who adjust and assimilate to the society where they live proportionally affect their children's socialization, adjustment, and ethnic identity. Umaña-Taylor et al. recommended future researchers examine the psychological impact of their Mexican origin ethnic identity within the school setting.

Identifying instances of prejudice and discrimination within the Mexican American community is an essential first step in implementing educational strategies or programs that can help improve the academic experiences of Mexican immigrants. These strategies and programs can target individual Mexican American immigrants who may be experiencing anxiety, depression, or other negative stressors due to experienced discrimination and provide resources to address these issues. Due to increases in the Mexican American population in the United States, improving the academic development and economic potential of Mexican immigrant students is critical to national economic growth.

Problem Statement

Prejudice, discrimination, and racism have been pernicious social problems in the United States (Augoustinos & Every, 2015). Americans of Mexican origin have

experienced prejudice in the United States in part because they are the fastest-growing demographic in the United States (Johnston et al., 2013). Largely due to increases in the number of people immigrating from Mexico, this growth has resulted in the need to rework classroom teaching methods and content to address the needs of this demographic (Frey, 2015).

Changes in the classroom setting prompted by Mexican immigrant demographic shifts have resulted in increased levels of ignorance or erroneous negative assumptions about a group of people. For example, Mexican Americans born in the United States may believe that newly immigrated Mexicans may not be as smart because they do not speak fluent English. Additionally, Mexican Americans born in the United States may also believe that because Mexican immigrants usually work in menial labor-intensive jobs, they are of less value. These beliefs add to a feeling of superiority from Mexican Americans born in the United States toward Mexican immigrants (Casella, 2014; Fussell, 2014; Godlewska et al., 2013; Hopkins 2015; Strayhorn, 2014). These changes can create problems of prejudice, discrimination, and resentment within the school setting between Mexican American and Mexican immigrant student populations (Casella, 2014; Godlewska et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2014).

Ethnocentrism within the Mexican American population results in the formation of stereotypes based on skin tone and accents that augment U.S.-born Mexican Americans' concerns that Mexican immigrants are not blending into the dominant U.S. culture. Hopkins (2015) found that problems associated with intragroup discrimination and prejudice in the Mexican American community arise from such ethnocentrism. The

findings of this study can be used to improve the quality of education for Mexican American and Mexican immigrants by addressing issues of prejudice and racial and ethnic discrimination, thereby creating an environment with decreased conflict and a more significant opportunity for academic success in Mexican immigrant and Mexican American students (Casella, 2014; Godlewska et al., 2013). School administrators and educators will also benefit from increasing their knowledge regarding racial discrimination and prejudice in the school setting. Previous research has indicated that increased awareness is a critical step in identifying strategies toward reducing the impact of discrimination in schools and more effectively meeting the educational needs of Mexican ethnic students (Augoustinos & Every, 2015; Strayhorn, 2014).

In determining the impact of student immigrant perception within the classroom setting, it is critical to study prejudice within groups or *intragroup prejudice*. The focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Currently, much of the research available on immigrants from Mexico has focused on identifying Hispanic as a term beyond the federal definition to include a qualitative analysis of Mexican American populations (Fraser & Henseler, 2014; Martinez, 2016; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014; Valles, 2016).

While research has indicated that racial or ethnic discrimination is a risk factor for the development of posttraumatic stress disorder in Hispanic and Latino/a students, there have been efforts to explore the groups that have participated in such discriminatory activities (Cheng & Mallinckrodt, 2015). Likewise, researchers have sought to explore

how to decrease instances of racism and discrimination within the classroom setting, but such exploration concentrates on significant steps toward generalized resolution rather than examining the specificity of such events (Epstein & Gist, 2013).

According to Fussell (2014) and Hopkins (2015), a gap in the literature exists concerning racial and or cultural biases that may exist between Mexican immigrant students and U.S.-born Mexican American students. This study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom setting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican high school students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Because the study intended to find out how Mexican immigrants experience their world, the research paradigm was qualitative and phenomenological (Husserl, 2012; Eichelberger, 1989). This paradigm allows researchers to understand participants' experiences in the participants' natural settings (Creswell, 2009).

Prejudice toward newly arrived immigrant students is a common occurrence in the United States mainly to the perceived negative impact of the immigrants on the local communities (Benner & Graham, 2011; Hopkins, 2015). According to Benner and Graham (2011), there have always been tensions, conflicts, and uncertainties among U.S.-born and newly arrived immigrants, stemming from adaptation, assimilation, and accommodation issues. However, these justifications are not always clear because the

immigrant students belong to the same country of origin, and Mexican American and Mexican immigrants are expected to accept each other without prejudice once in the destination country (Benner & Graham, 2011).

Understanding experiences of prejudice and discrimination within this ethnic group will increase awareness of the problem by students, parents, teachers, and school administrator officials in the educational system. This increased awareness may help Mexican immigrants live positively with one another by helping to decrease intragroup discrimination and prejudice. Such an impact is beneficial because it can allow for the sharing of ideas and knowledge regarding things learned in class and students' everyday experiences within the group, which may improve integration and general well-being among students. Additionally, in the current social environment atmosphere where there is advocacy against bullying, this study will impact social change by helping to increase awareness regarding a type of bullying that may not be readily visible.

Research Question

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by Mexican American students in the classroom setting. In this regard, it was essential to identify the forms of discrimination the group is experiencing and the extent to which this discrimination affects the immigrants. Therefore, guiding the study was the following research question: What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study was social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974). Within the Mexican immigrant population, recent immigrant students constitute the out-group while students whose families immigrated previously are the in-group. Tajfel (1974) argued that people have a natural tendency to categorize themselves in ways that will enhance their self-image. Given the inherent need individuals have for self-regard and social acceptance, individuals will usually seek to become part of the in-group. Thus, organically belonging to an in-group creates out-groups. People who perceive themselves to be part of the in-group behave in a manner that allows them to remain in the in-group, and by doing so, they invariably develop prejudices against the out-groups to protect themselves from becoming part of the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory relates to this study in that Mexican American prejudice against Mexican immigrant students is based on the principles of in-grouping and out-grouping. In the context of this study, recent Mexican immigrant students are representative of the out-group compared to other Mexican students who constitute the in-group. The premise of this study is that new Mexican immigrant students will face prejudice and discrimination from other Mexican students due to their perceived out-group status. This research is important in the context of the adolescent experience. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) indicated that adolescence is a crucial time in the development of identity, ethnic identity, and a general sense of belonging. Further, discrimination within this population correlates to adverse outcomes in the Mexican American community.

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) found that the development of racial and ethnic identity during childhood and adolescence is shaped by social context, including experiences within and out-group discrimination and socialization processes within an ethnic group. Therefore, this study was conducted on an underlying assumption that there is a pronounced experience of discrimination and prejudice due to issues associated with the usual course of adolescent development.

Finch et al. (2001) found a strong correlation between perceived discrimination and adverse physical health conditions in individuals of Mexican descent. Social scientists have found that people innately want to be included in social groups and want to avoid social rejection (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1968; Rosenberg, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Further, Edwards and Romero (2008) suggested that perceived prejudice and discrimination are endemic in school-aged children in Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant communities. A social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974) base is useful in addressing the research question regarding the lived experiences faced by newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. This framework supports the idea that group discrimination ties into social identity formation and exclusion (Serrano-Villar, & Calzada, 2016).

Tajfel (1974) notes that in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination are not solely based on the groups' ethnic likeness. Thus, intragroup social identity discrimination may develop even within the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant populations. In this study, Mexican immigrants, as the out-group, were asked to share

their lived experiences within the classroom setting and share how they may have been discriminated against by Mexican Americans, the in-group. Chapter 2 will provide a further discussion of relevant research relating to social identity and phenomenology.

Nature of the Study

The study was qualitative and personal interviews were conducted with students to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by Mexican American students in the classroom setting. For qualitative phenomenological studies, Creswell (2009) recommended between five and 25 participants to reach saturation. Personal interviews can provide a wealth of information from the participants through face-to-face contact or by telephone (Creswell, 2009). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I planned to interview between five and 10 Mexican immigrants from a nearby community college through web-based meeting applications (WebEx, Zoom, MS teams) or via telephone. All participants for this study were at least 18 years old, the age of consent for the state of Texas. Participants selected had graduated high school no more than 2 years before this study to ensure that memory recall had not been eroded by time (Loftus & Hoffman, 1989).

Qualitative research is the preferred means to investigate phenomena as opposed to quantitative analysis, which is conducted to examine already predetermined conditions by employing different variables (Patton, 2002). The research method was phenomenology (Giorgi, 2009). This method is used to explore the experiences of a small number of participants by engaging with them on a prolonged basis and capturing the meaning of their experiences (Giorgi, 2009). Selection for participants and data analysis

were based within the context of Giorgi's (2009) phenomenological method via dialogue and open-ended questions. Data were analyzed using a modified version of the van Kamm method for analyzing phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994) and thematic analysis using NVivo (2018) software to examine the data and identify patterns, or themes (van Manen, 2007).

Definitions of Key Terms

Discrimination: The unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2012).

Hispanic: Of or about Spain or Spanish-speaking countries (Waterston, 2008).

In-group and *out-group*: In the context of this study, recent Mexican immigrant students represent the out-group, and U.S.-born Mexican American students whose parents immigrated from Mexico constitute the in-group.

Latino/a: Any person whose language descends from Latin (Waterston, 2008).

Mexican American: Any person born in the United States whose ancestors in the past generation were born in the country of Mexico. However, in the context of this study *Mexican American* pertains to those perceived to be Mexican Americans by Mexican immigrants.

Mexican immigrant: Any person who was born in Mexico to non-U.S. citizen parents and subsequently moved to the United States (American Psychological Association, 2012). In the context of this study, *Mexican immigrant* pertains to self-identified recent immigrants from Mexico.

Prejudice: Refers to an opinion, not based on fact, but in a preconceived negative conception about an individual or group (Allport, 1958). In the context of this study, prejudice pertains to prejudice experienced by Mexican immigrants from perceived Mexican Americans.

Racism: Relates to an ethnic group that believes it should exclude and dominate other ethnic groups solely based on race or ethnicity and that differences between the two groups cannot be changed or altered (Fredrickson & Camarillo, 2015).

Assumptions

The most basic assumption was that the participants in the study would be open and honest about their experiences while in high school and would volunteer their participation. I also assumed that participants would not add to or embellish their experiences and would not relate someone else's experiences to their own. Also, I assumed that all participants would be truthful about their status as a Mexican immigrant and would fit the description as defined in the definitions section of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. As stated in the problem statement, there is a need for an increased understanding of the problems of prejudice and discrimination encountered by Mexican immigrant students in the classroom setting. Researchers believe these experiences affect students' academic performance and students' ultimate success (Alba et al., 2014; Cargile & Bolkan, 2013). This dimension of prejudice is seldom explored in the literature

(Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015; Umaña-Taylor, 2014); therefore, this study helped fill a gap by exploring the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom setting.

Critical race theory (CRT) was considered and could have been used as a theoretical framework for this study because CRT concerns itself with the theory that racism is enmeshed at all levels of U.S. society and was developed from a legal perspective to examine race relations in the United States in the early 1970s (Sleeter & Grant, 2014). However, CRT was not used because it focuses on racial dominance from a White supremacy perspective over non-White minorities. Because this study is concerned with only the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population, social identity theory was a better framework for discussing in-group/out-group relationships within this one racial group rather than among races (Tajfel, 1979).

The boundaries of this study were limited to the recruitment of individuals from colleges located in the state of Texas. This study was limited to exploring the lived experiences of five student immigrants born in Mexico who had graduated from a U.S. high school after 2016. Perspectives from Mexican American students born in the United States, their parents, or their teachers were excluded from this study. Consequently, the findings of this study may not be transferable or be applied to other settings.

Limitations

A qualitative inquiry was best suited for this study because I wanted to explore the Mexican immigrant students' world view about perceived prejudice. One of the characteristics of qualitative inquiry and phenomenology research design is its

nonrestrictive nature that allows a researcher to reach the humanness of the participants' experiences (Jacobs & Furgerson, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). However, this same freedom that allows participants to share their experiences may result in inaccurate responses due to the presence of the interviewer. For example, a participant may be inclined to try to please the interviewer by responding in a way the participant believes the interviewer wants. Indeed, the human aspect is the greatest and the weakest element of this type of research design (Patton, 2002, p. 433).

Another limitation is that the findings of this qualitative study are not intended to be extended or transferred beyond the Mexican immigrant students attending college in Texas, a self-selected participant population. Also, phenomenological qualitative studies are, by nature, time-consuming and require a copious amount of labor to analyze all the collected data (Creswell, 2009). Lastly, unlike quantitative studies, qualitative inquiry does not have inherent tests that measure reliability and validity; thus, it is incumbent on the researcher to ensure a study is credible and reliable (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Researcher bias is a real possibility in any study because a researcher may have prior experiences that may affect the data collection and analysis process of the study (Creswell, 2009). Consequently, a researcher's views and not those of the participants may tarnish the results of the study. For example, as a Mexican immigrant, I have experiences that may be similar to those of the participants. Janesick (2001) recommended that researchers recognize potential biases and acknowledge them in the initial stages of a study.

Tufford and Newman (2012) suggested that researchers use bracketing to lessen the impact of research bias. Bracketing is when a researcher sets aside presuppositions and views each phenomenon as a new experience regardless of the researcher's own emotional or cultural experiences (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I used reflexive journaling and memo writing to address any potential instances of personal bias from the initial stages of the study through data analysis. I mitigated the potential for researcher bias by being aware of the issue, identifying instances of bias, and constantly evaluating the data. I also requested feedback from Walden faculty to help me mitigate the issue of researcher bias.

Significance of the Study

Most studies of prejudice experienced by Mexicans and Latinos focus on discrimination by White people and White supremacy, with little dedicated to discrimination from other Latinos (Romero et al., 2015). There is almost no literature on intra-Mexican discrimination based on immigration status. This study will help fill the gap in the literature concerning prejudice against Mexican immigrants by exploring within-group prejudice, a form of prejudice that few researchers have considered.

The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by helping to develop support for initiatives to promote increased awareness of perceived prejudice within the Mexican American community, perhaps making it possible to provide a more welcoming attitude to Mexican immigrants. Educators and school administrators may gain a better perspective of what immigrant students from Mexico are experiencing and how it may be negatively impacting their academic achievement. As part of anti-bullying

initiatives, implementing programs that identify instances of prejudice and discrimination toward Mexican immigrants may improve the overall learning climate for all students (Kohli, 2008).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented an overview of the study and justification for choosing the qualitative phenomenological method of inquiry to answer the research question, and I described how social identity theory was chosen as the most appropriate framework for this study. Additionally, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study were explored. In Chapter 2, I provide an exhaustive literature review of the concepts being studied, the theory that forms the theoretical framework, and the methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Prejudice, discrimination, and racism have been a pernicious social problem in the United States (Augoustinos & Every, 2015). Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans have experienced prejudice in the United States in part because Mexican people are the fastest-growing demographic in the United States (Johnston et al., 2013). Largely due to increases in the number of people immigrating from Mexico, this growth has resulted in the need to rework classroom teaching methods and content to address the needs of this demographic (Frey, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice and discrimination from Mexican American students in the classroom setting. A need exists for an increased understanding of the problems encountered by Mexican immigrant students within the classroom setting (Serrano-Villar & Calzada, 2016).

Findings from this study may encourage initiatives to address racism or discrimination in the education setting and promote academic achievement and economic progress among the Mexican immigrant population. Particular to this study is the ever-increasing demographic of the Hispanic population and its integration into U.S. society. Passel (2011) predicted that Hispanics will comprise most of the growth of the population in the United States in the future and encouraged policy makers and social researchers to pay attention to this. Immigration from Mexico continues to grow at a rapid pace and

newly arrived immigrants are faced with the reality of prejudice when arriving in the United States (Hanna & Ortega, 2016).

Although prejudice was a common occurrence in daily life for many Americans (Brenner & Graham, 2011; Demitri, 2009), most of the literature on prejudice has focused on prejudice between groups or *intergroup prejudice* (Kumar et al., 2011; Nier & Gaertner, 2012; Rodenborg & Boisen, 2013; Waters & Kasinitz, 2010). Bean and Lee (2009) discussed conflicts due to discrimination and prejudice between peoples of different races in the United States and argued that although slavery ended over a century ago, it remains part of modern life. Moreover, Castle-Bell (2019) argued that racism, fear, and prejudice present roadblocks to interracial communication and that cultural worldviews need to change to improve the social construct among races.

Prejudice has also been studied from other vantage points. For instance, Yancey and Yancy (2010) studied anti-religious prejudice by political progressives. Colorism, discriminating against people with darker skin, has been placed in a historical context by many researchers (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014; Hall & Crutchfield, 2018; Waters & Kasinitz, 2010). Becker et al. (2012) researched nationalistic prejudice and the impact that symbols, such as national flags, have on reducing prejudice against the out-group in the United States while having the opposite effect on native Germans. The authors demonstrated that the display of the U.S. flag is viewed as synonymous with equality, empathy, and tolerance of others, which are believed to be at the core of the American belief system.

López-Rubio and Arias (2019) explored the effect of prejudice and discrimination in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community in Mexico and the lack of safety protocols within the school setting. Currently, in the United States, there is a push to reduce discrimination and prejudice against the LGBTQ community. Hatzenbuehler et al. (2014) concluded that people who harbor prejudice against people of different sexual orientations have higher mortality rates. Chae and Ayala (2010) argued that Asian and Latino/a LGBTQ communities in the United States suffered psychological distress due to prejudice and discrimination. In the context of this study, harboring prejudice may lead to higher mortality rates and psychological distress, which is why the exploration of within-group prejudice in the Mexican American population is salient.

Another debated issue in the United States is that of immigration (Murray & Marx, 2013). Literature in this subject area is ample and mostly focused on illegal immigration from Mexico and its effects on prejudicial feelings against these immigrants by people born in the United States of any ethnicity. Murray and Marx (2013) studied the impact of attitudes in young people toward legal and illegal immigrants from Mexico and found that the more recent the immigrant arrival to the United States, the less anxiety they felt about symbolic threats. Schnieders and Gore (2011) found that a person's personality type—namely, narcissism—impacted their frustration and negative feelings toward immigrants. Gulbas et al. (2016) studied psychological stressors, such as depression, anxiety, and trauma, experienced by children of undocumented parents. The authors found that children who are U.S. citizens were significantly negatively impacted by their parents' undocumented status for fear of deportation (Gulbas et al., 2016).

While the literature relating to intergroup prejudice is prevalent, studies regarding prejudice within groups, or intragroup prejudice, are only beginning to emerge in recent years. To explain prejudice within groups, Chavez-Dueñas et al. (2014) and Marira and Mitra (2013) argued that one of the major factors of prejudice is skin color. In both these studies, researchers found that lighter-skinned individuals faced significantly less prejudicial feelings than their darker-skinned counterparts (Chavez- Dueñas et al., 2014).

Marira and Mitra (2013) and Adames et al. (2016) also studied more in-depth the concept of colorism within the Latino/a community and how to best prepare mental health providers to address the negative issues of prejudice toward dark-skinned Latino/a communities. Dovidio et al. (2009) studied how cooperation despite prejudice and conflict due to prejudice within groups in the United States had progressively become the norm in a multicultural society. Undoubtedly, intergroup and intragroup prejudice will continue to be studied as the United States continues its march toward multiculturalism. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in the literature about prejudice within groups and, more specifically, within the Mexican American community. Because there is a shortage of literature on this subject, this study will help fill the gap in identifying intragroup prejudice in one specific ethnicity, Mexican Americans, as opposed to the myriad of intergroup studies that have already been conducted among other ethnicities.

This chapter will consist of an introduction, literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation of phenomenology for the study, a scholarly review related to key concepts, an exhaustive review of current literature on this topic, and a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

The bulk of my research strategy consisted of using the Walden University library, which grants me access to multiple databases at once, including Thoreau, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsycArticles, PsycBooks, Medline, Academic Search Premier, and Google Scholar. I searched the Walden University library in general, the Thoreau database specifically, and the internet extensively to find general information related to the following: *prejudice, Mexican American, Mexican immigrant, discrimination, intragroup and intergroup prejudice, Latina, or Latino, Hispanic, racism, social identity theory, phenomenology, and qualitative*. When information was needed but could not be found, assistance was requested and received from the Walden librarian. For example, I requested information on the books *Pure Phenomenology* and *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*, and the Walden librarian provided me with links to excerpts of these books and others. Overall, I found Thoreau to be the most useful tool in finding most of the sources used in the study.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study was social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974). Within the Mexican immigrant population, recent student immigrants constitute the out-group while students whose families immigrated previously are the in-group. Tajfel (1974) argued that people have a natural tendency to categorize themselves in ways that will enhance their self-image. Further, Tajfel and Turner (1979) theorized that people are prone to want to belong to a social group, such as a socioeconomic class, sports team, culture, or political party, and derive a sense of pride and self-esteem within their groups.

This deep sense of belonging to a group develops into an us versus them worldview that glorifies and stereotypes people by exaggerating differences in the other group members and similarities in their group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) provided stages of social identity theory. In the first stage, categorization, group members assign themselves to a particular group. In this manner, group members identify themselves as part of a group to make sense of their social environment. The second stage of social identity theory is social identification. This stage follows categorization as group members start to identify within their category and start to behave like other members of the same category. For example, if a person identifies as a student at a particular school, they start to behave the way they believe students at that particular school should behave. The third stage of social identity theory is social comparison. In this final stage, group members who have categorized and identified themselves within a particular group start to compare their group with other groups. To maintain positive self-esteem, group members must compare favorably against the other groups. Thus, rivalry, discrimination, and prejudice develop against the other groups due, in part, to competing for resources, but also due to competing against other identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Given the inherent need individuals have for self-regard and social acceptance, individuals will usually seek to become part of the in-group. Thus, organically, belonging to an in-group creates out-groups. By being part of the in-group and wanting to stay out of the out-groups, people in the in-group start to develop prejudices against the out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory relates to this study in that Mexican American prejudice against Mexican immigrant students is based on the principles of in-grouping and out-grouping. In the context of this study, recent Mexican immigrant students represent the out-group compared to other Mexican American students who constitute the in-group. The main perspective of this study is that new Mexican immigrant students will face prejudice and discrimination from other Mexican students due to their perceived out-group status. Conducting this research through the lens of social identity theory will help answer the proposed research question: What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice and discrimination from other Mexican American students in the classroom setting?

Theoretical Application

In recent studies, researchers have explored how social identity theory has been applied to studies similar to this research. Lozano-Verduzco (2016) applied Tajfel's theory in a qualitative study concerning relationships and identity in gay men in Mexico. Lozano-Verduzco (2016) argued that, through social identity theory, individuals try to understand their social environment and social realities. Further, the author argued that people develop a particular identity based on their social life, relationships, family history, and political contexts (Lozano-Verduzco, 2016). According to Lozano-Verduzco, gay men view their homosexuality and gay identity as the most important aspect of themselves. By viewing themselves through the lens of their gay identity in-group, gay men found themselves invariably at odds with the heterosexual out-group, which most of the time comprised of their family and friends, and their negative view of the gay

identity. Lozano-Verduzco (2016) found that negative stereotypes within the heterosexual world with their gender binary values produced negative emotions in gay men such as guilt and shame. The author recommended continuing the trend of driving policy changes to mitigate negative stereotypes of gay men and other sexual orientation minorities through education and social media and through relationships with the heterosexual community.

Another interesting study that applies social identity theory was conducted by Pérez-Manjarrez (2019). Pérez-Manjarrez argued that social identity processes are at work even when participants describe historical events. The author interviewed two 16-year-old students, one from Mexico and the other from Spain, and asked them to explain in their own words the Spanish conquest of Mexico in the 16th century. Pérez-Manjarrez (2019) focused his analysis on how people place their identities within the context of how they perceive their history. Social identity was also at play in descriptions of historical events and vice versa—that is, historical events also influence a groups' social identity (Pérez-Manjarrez, 2019).

Wang et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of Muslim Americans. The authors found that Muslim American youth try to make sense of their own identity against the backdrop of Islamophobia, xenophobia, racism, and religious discrimination against their community. Through the prism of social identity theory, Wang et al. (2019) identified descriptors of what is important to the Muslim community: having a community of their own, being ethnically diverse, being able to practice their religion, and most of all, group cohesion. Due to

heterogeneity within the Muslim community in conjunction with Islamophobia, Muslim American youth are finding it difficult to adapt a social identity within their Muslim community, specifically, and within their own country, the United States, in general (Wang et al., 2019).

Adolescence has been identified as a crucial time in the development of identity, ethnic identity, and a general sense of belonging (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Discrimination among adolescent populations correlates to adverse outcomes in the Mexican American community. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) found that the development of racial and ethnic identity during childhood and adolescence was shaped by social context, including experiences with inner- and outer-group discrimination and socialization processes within an ethnic group. Therefore, this study had an underlying assumption that there was pronounced experience of discrimination and prejudice due to issues associated with the usual course of adolescent development.

Social scientists have found that people innately want to be included in social groups and want to avoid social rejection (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1968; Rosenberg, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Further, Edwards and Romero (2008) suggested that perceived prejudice and discrimination are endemic in school-aged children in Mexican American and Mexican immigrant communities. A social identity theory framework was useful in answering the research question in this study regarding the lived experiences faced by newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. This framework

supported the idea that group discrimination ties into social identity formation and exclusion (Serrano-Villar & Calzada, 2016).

Tajfel (1974) noted that in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination are not solely based on the group's ethnic likeness. Thus, intragroup social identity discrimination may develop even within the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant populations. The desire to belong to the perceived dominant group is a driving factor in the self-identification of group formation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, a Mexican American may believe that denying their ethnic background may improve their status amongst the preferred group, which in the United States, the most dominant group are people who are White. Thus, this self-identification may, in turn, develop into hostility toward those who appear to evoke negative stereotypes of the entire group—people of Mexican descent. That is, Mexican Americans may not want to be looked upon as being similar to recent immigrants from Mexico who are not yet assimilated to what Mexican Americans consider the American way of life. Mexican Americans want to be part of the in-group to the detriment of recent immigrants from Mexico. In the proposed study, Mexican immigrants, as the out-group shared their lived experiences within the classroom setting and shared in what way they may have been discriminated against by Mexican Americans which in this case was the in-group.

Literature Review

In this section, I review the concepts of prejudice and within-group prejudice. I also explained how phenomenology provides insight into answering the research

question: What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting.

Prejudice

It is important to define what is meant by the word *prejudice* as distinct from *within-group prejudice* in the context of this proposed research in this section. The section below focuses on *prejudice*, and *within-group prejudice* follows in a separate section. In Chapter 1 of this study, *prejudice* was defined as:

an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization directed towards a group as a whole or an individual because he is a member of a group. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group, or an individual because he is a member of that group (Allport, 1958, p. 9).

Prejudice in the United States has a controversial history which resulted in a civil war and the death of many thousands of Americans. Slavery was a product of one group believing that they were superior to another group solely based on the color of their skin (Brenner & Graham, 2011; Demitri, 2009). Pearson (2010) further described prejudice in the context of various social theory models as emotional prejudice; prejudice affects the emotional well-being of a specific group or members thereof.

Pearson (2010) discussed how referring to immigrants from Mexico as illegal aliens rather than undocumented workers resulted in more incidents of prejudice against that group. This researcher assigned 269 undergraduate students to evaluate how these students perceived Mexican immigrants in the context of illegal alien or undocumented immigrant identifications. He found that even Mexican citizens were impacted negatively

by people referring to immigrants from Mexico as illegal aliens rather than undocumented workers. Other conclusions of his study revealed that immigrants from Mexico, whom he referred to as the out-group, were perceived as a threat to U.S. citizens, referred to as the in-group, thereby increasing prejudiced acts against these immigrants to minimize the perceived threat.

Hanna and Ortega (2016) provided a qualitative study concerning the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants who were living in Denver, Colorado. The authors interviewed seven immigrants, with three of them being legal immigrants and four who entered illegally or who had overstayed their visas. In their findings, they discovered that Mexican immigrants faced daily acts of discrimination and prejudice in work and school settings. They further described the stressors that undocumented Mexican immigrants faced due to having relatives or friends deported, not being able to find a job, language barriers, and overall discrimination. They also discovered that Mexican immigrants were very resilient and that they had a strong work ethic and are resilient even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles (Hanna & Ortega, 2016).

Espinoza et al. (2016) explored how parent discrimination predicted Mexican American adolescent psychological adjustment. The authors posited that prejudice and discrimination are detrimental to the overall well-being of ethnic minority adolescents in Los Angeles, California. In this 2-year longitudinal study, the authors examined the correlation between the level of discrimination experienced by Mexican American parents and the psychological effect it had on their children. Their study revealed that low self-esteem was significant in children whose parents reported experiencing

discrimination. Other revelations from this study included that parents' negative experiences with how discrimination impacted their children's self-esteem but were not predictors of negative behavioral problems in adolescence, such as substance abuse, one year later.

Romero et al. (2015) conducted a study exploring the experiences of Mexican American parents and Mexican American teens. In this study, they investigated the experiences of the teens and the response to these experiences in teens and parents alike. Parents in this study described the extent of prejudice and discrimination in the school setting and how confronting discrimination led to physical altercations or other negative outcomes. Adolescents in this study also reported that prejudice and discrimination were widespread and shared experiences consisting of being faced with ethnic derogatory and bullying comments from their classmates. The authors revealed that there was a lack of a consistent strategy in combatting instances of prejudice and discrimination within the Mexican immigrant, Mexican American population.

The studies listed in this literature review are pertinent to this study in that they offer a glimpse of the experiences from a Mexican immigrant and Mexican American perspective. Most of these studies found that there is a growing need for more exploration of this issue of prejudice because it is negatively affecting Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. Furthermore, it is also affecting teachers and school administrators attempting to maintain a school setting that is free from bullying and fear which ultimately affects all students' academic outcomes.

Though the overall need to address prejudice is developed in the research presented in this section, this study focused on specific categories of prejudice. Within-group prejudice may potentially be even more difficult for students to manage and will be further presented in the following section. The section that follows presents critical thinking regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the literature in the preceding section.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Reviewed Literature on Prejudice

These studies are pertinent to be included in this dissertation because they all invariably address similar themes and topics related to this research. The Hanna and Ortega (2016) study dealt with Mexican immigrants and found that prejudice and discrimination were prevalent in a Denver, Colorado, school setting. However, a weakness the authors caution about is that their study is not generalizable to other settings and other Mexican immigrant experiences in other parts of the United States. This is an important limitation since results from a school setting in Colorado may not necessarily be the same experiences in a Texas school setting.

The Espinoza et al. (2016) study is also appropriate for this dissertation because it is based on adolescent participants in that its participants are also based in a school setting and it also discusses issues of discrimination in the Mexican American community. However, its main weakness, as it relates to this study, is that it reflects discrimination as a byproduct of the participant parents' experiences and not the participants' own lived experiences. Since this study focuses only on the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants, limiting the study to the parents' experiences does not fully encapsulate how the students experience discrimination and prejudice.

The Romero et al. (2015) study is also relevant because similar to the Espinoza et al. (2016) study, it is also based in a school setting and its main topic is prejudice and discrimination against the Mexican American community. However, the Romero et al. (2015) study concentrates on how parents and teens react to prejudice and discrimination and how it often leads to a physical altercation between races and ethnicities.

Within-Group Prejudice

There is limited research concerning prejudice within the Mexican American community, thus, the impetus for this study. This section lists the most recent studies found by this researcher pertaining to the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population. Velazquez (2013) discussed the stigma of being an immigrant from Mexico. The author designed a qualitative phenomenological study intended to investigate the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants in the United States. The author interviewed thirty Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans and concluded that the media described immigrants from Mexico as illegal aliens who sneak across the border, who are criminals, and creators of havoc. The stigma created by these descriptions caused resentment toward all immigrants from Mexico to the extent that it produced prejudice toward the Mexican immigrant population regardless of legal status (Velasquez, 2013).

However, the author was surprised to find that Mexican immigrants stated that Mexican Americans were more antagonistic toward them than other ethnicities. (Velasquez, 2013). Velasquez (2013) further described a phenomenon where Mexican immigrants felt more welcomed by non-Mexican Americans than their fellow Mexicans who had lived in the United States for a while. Respondents to the author's study-related

instances where Mexican immigrants were helped to get ahead in America by White Americans and that their fellow Mexican Americans were more prone to try to derail their success.

Mendez et al. (2012) discussed the plight of Mexican immigrants in a school setting. In this study, the authors used qualitative methods to investigate intercultural bullying between Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant high school students. They interviewed twelve students: six Mexican immigrants and six Mexican Americans in a predominately Hispanic public school in Washington state. They found that, in their limited sample size, Mexican immigrants felt bullied by Mexican Americans. They discovered that the cause of the bullying was mainly due to issues of acculturation. In their study, the author argued that because Mexican immigrants were viewed as different due to language issues or the way they dressed, they were more susceptible to bullying by Mexican Americans. According to Mendez et al. (2012), another reason for the bullying of Mexican immigrants was because Mexican Americans were once bullied themselves. The adage of hurt people hurt people seemed to apply in their study.

Chavez-Dueñas et al. (2015) argued that one of the major factors of experienced prejudice was skin color. In their study, they placed colorism in a historical context and found that within the Latino/a community, lighter-skinned individuals faced significantly less prejudicial experiences than their darker-skinned counterparts. The authors also studied more in-depth the concept of colorism within the Latino/a community and how to best prepare mental health providers to address the negative issues of prejudice toward dark-skinned Latinos. Further, the authors found that Latinos' experiencing prejudice due

to being darker-skinned directly and negatively affected their socioeconomic and health status. They also found that participants in their study who were darker complexioned reported higher levels of discrimination and had lower levels of socioeconomic attainment than lighter complexioned participants (Chavez-Dueñas et al. 2015).

Massey and Bitterman, (1985) sought to explain the paradox of Puerto Rican segregation in their study set in New York City and Los Angeles. Though not recent, this was an interestingly similar study based on Puerto Ricans being highly segregated from non-Hispanic Whites and moderately segregated from Blacks, which was opposite to the segregation patterns of other Hispanics. The authors posited that this was due to their Black ancestry and low socioeconomic status in general. Puerto Ricans had a high number of Blacks, which led them to gravitate towards non-Hispanic Blacks instead of other Hispanics. The authors theorized that Whites who already tended to not want to live near Blacks also avoided Puerto Rican Blacks which, to them, were indistinguishable from non-Hispanic Blacks and led to further segregation (Massey & Bitterman, 1985). The authors found that the reason Puerto Ricans differed from other Hispanics in how they were segregated was that they were poor, and they were darker (Massey & Bitterman, 1985).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Reviewed Within-Group Prejudice Literature

As previously stated, there is scant literature on prejudice within ethnicities in general and even less on prejudice within the Mexican American population. However, the studies listed above all have discussions that relate to this current study and are appropriate to be listed in this section. For example, the Velasquez (2013) study on the

stigmatization of Mexican immigrants discussed the plight of immigrants from Mexico and their lived experiences. Velasquez, through phenomenology, researched the experiences of immigrants who crossed the border illegally and thus, were seen as criminals or bad people thereby creating a hostile environment, not only for undocumented immigrants from Mexico but invariably, legal immigrants from Mexico who were also discriminated against because they were seen as *illegales* (illegals). One weakness of this study, compared to the present study, is that the authors recruited participants who were undocumented which is different than the present study where immigration status will not be asked.

The Mendez et al. (2012) study strongly correlated to the present study because it addressed bullying within the Mexican American community. It emphasized that Mexican Americans bully Mexican immigrants based on their dress, their language, and their culture. Where the Mendez et al. (2012) study is dissimilar to the present study is that it was mainly based in the State of Washington whereas the proposed study will be based in the State of Texas.

The Chavez-Dueñas et al. (2015) study is important to be included in this section because it is based on within-group prejudice in the Mexican American community. Although this study does find that there is prejudice within the Mexican American community, a weakness of this study is that it was mostly based on the pigment of their skin; the darker the skin the more prejudice the participant reported. This is different than this present study which investigated the lived experiences of immigrants from Mexico in general and not only based on colorism.

The Massey and Bitterman (1985) study focused on the experiences of Puerto Ricans living in New York City and Los Angeles and how they seemingly self-segregated based on their skin color. The darker complexed Puerto Ricans seemed to gravitate toward Black Americans rather than ethnic Puerto Ricans with lighter-colored skin. While this study was focused on prejudice within a group, it was again based on colorism, not the population's ethnicity. Another weakness was that its participants were Puerto Ricans and not the Mexican American community.

Phenomenology

This is a brief discussion on literature regarding the qualitative methodology of phenomenology and how it pertains to this study. A more in-depth analysis of phenomenology will be provided in Chapter 3 of this study. Phenomenological research related to the subject of within-group prejudice is also limited. An extensive review resulted in the following studies which are contextually relevant to my present study. Lara Herrera (2015) investigated how Mexican students experienced learning English at the same time they were learning history. The author used a qualitative phenomenological research approach believed to be best suited to understand the social reality of the students' experience and interviewed a total of 11 students from a Mexican secondary school. It was important for Lara Herrera (2015) to implement the phenomenological approach mainly because it provided a vehicle from which to explore in detail the lived experiences of the participants. By doing so, the author discovered a more in-depth understanding of what the students were conveying. This study is

important to this researcher because it was phenomenological, and participants were also students as is my present study.

Duran and Pérez, (2017) conducted a phenomenological study reconceptualizing familial capital for queer Latino men. In their study, using a phenomenological approach, they investigated how queer Latino students decided whether to disclose their sexual orientation to family. Their sample consisted of 15 Latino students who self-identified as queer and they found that seven of the participants negotiated to disclose their sexual identity to their family before they went to college. The other eight participants were not comfortable coming out to their families because they (participants) were not financially or emotionally stable. The authors' choice of phenomenology as their approach, was mainly because it was best suited to understand the lived experiences of the queer Latino. In this respect, this study is appropriate to be included in the present literature review in that it also describes a phenomenological approach for successfully gaining an understanding of the identities of Mexican immigrants in the context of prejudice from the Mexican immigrant perspective.

Synthesis of Literature Reviewed on Phenomenology

Phenomenology, as stated above, provides a construct from which researchers can explore a participant's lived experience. For this reason, phenomenology is an appropriate design to answer the research question of what are the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants in a classroom setting. The Lara Herrera (2015) study concentrated on the question of whether 8th graders in Leon Guanajuato, Mexico, were able to learn content at the same time they learn English. What is known, is that the author

appropriately implemented the phenomenological tradition as parameters for his study to investigate the lived experiences of the participants. However, the study assumes that teachers who were instructing these 11 students had the necessary English language and had the same level of proficiency in the content matter the children were studying.

However, the author readily admits that the process of finding teachers who had equal level skills in both English language, and material content, was difficult and may not have been adequate. In reading this study, I found that students were very apprehensive about having to learn English at the same time they studied the content of the subject they were studying. Additionally, the authors described that students and teachers had to adjust and develop strategies to help students succeed outside of the scope of the study. For example, when it became clear that students were not able to learn English and learn content at the same time, teachers and students helped each other to reach a positive conclusion.

The study conducted by Duran and Perez (2017) adequately captured the lived experiences of queer Latino men coming out to their families through phenomenology. The study's strength is that through the lens of phenomenology they gathered rich and informative information which helped the authors better understand their participants' experiences. This is specifically the reason this study was included in the present research. Additionally, the participants in this study were also college-aged adults describing experiences that occurred growing up. However, a weakness of this study is that there was no current age limit, and they were also recounting their experiences throughout their lifetime and not only in their high school years. The results of the Duran

and Perez (2017) study may be used to help administrators better attend to the needs of gay Latino men in college. However, it is controversial because the authors posit that to be understood as a queer Latino male, programs or clubs specifically tailored to each type of queer Latino men are necessary. For example, these authors believed that a queer Latino man who was thinking about transitioning has to have a different support program than a queer Latino man who was not transitioning.

Summary and Conclusions

The studies mentioned in this section illustrate that there is prejudice and discrimination in the United States and that it has been in place since the birth of this nation (Augoustinos & Every, 2015; Brenner & Graham, 2011; Demitri, 2009). Also known, is that Mexican Americans are the fastest-growing demographic in the United States which has caused conflicts and resentment within the classroom as teachers and students have grappled to adjust to the increases in the number of people immigrating from Mexico (Frey, 2015; Hanna & Ortega, 2016; Johnston et al., 2013; Passel, 2011).

Moreover, literature is replete on the subject of between-group prejudice and discrimination based on race or ethnicity (Bean & Lee, 2009; Castle-Bell, 2019; Kumar et al., 2011; Nier, & Gaertner, 2012; Rodenborg, & Boisen, 2013; Waters, & Kasinitz, 2010). However, this chapter also elucidated that prejudice based on other differences between groups is also prevalent. These include, for example, prejudice based on religious beliefs (Wang et al., 2019; Yancy & Yancy, 2010); the color of one's skin, or colorism (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014; Hall, & Crutchfield, 2018; Waters, & Kasinitz, 2010); political affiliation or level of patriotism (Becker et al. 2012); and sexual identity

(Chae & Ayala, 2010; Hatzenbuehler et al. 2014; López-Rubio, & Arias, 2019; Lozano-Verduzco, 2016), to mention a few.

Evidenced in this chapter is that the subject of immigration was also a deeply dividing issue in this country from Americans towards any race or ethnicity (Espinoza et al., 2016; Gulbas et al., 2016; Hanna & Ortega, 2016; Murray, & Marx, 2013; Schnieders, & Gore, 2011). However, this chapter also showed that literature was sparse concerning within-group prejudice, and especially group prejudice within the Mexican American community. Studies like those presented by Chavez-Dueñas et al. (2015); Espinoza et al. (2016); Massey, and Bitterman, (1985), and Mendez et al. (2012) are a few exceptions attempting to understand and explain within-group prejudice in the context of the Mexican American population. This present study adds to the scant existing literature on the issue of prejudice within the Mexican American community.

There is limited research on the subject of within-group prejudice and more research on this subject is necessary. Some of the major themes in this chapter are evident, including the need for more current literature on prejudice within the Mexican American community, how to mitigate it, and the role school administrators play in helping to educate both, Mexican Americans, and Mexican immigrants on this issue. The most current studies were from over seven years ago (Mendez et al., 2012; and, Velasquez, 2013). Based on these studies, it is established that there are aspects of prejudice and discrimination based on the Mexican American population in some parts of the United States; mainly Washington state, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Jose, California. However, little is known about other areas of the United States. This present study

intends to fill the gap in investigating whether prejudice and discrimination exist in the Mexican American community in the state of Texas in a High School setting. Also, based on the findings, this study may share new light in demonstrating that prejudice may be more prevalent than previously known.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 connects to the methodology and design presented in the following chapter. Through a phenomenological approach, the problem described in the reviewed literature brings forth the experiences of the sample, adding to existing literature. Additionally, viewing this issue through the lens of phenomenology helped answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants in a classroom setting. Chapter 3 will include the introduction, research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and conclude with a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Understanding experiences of prejudice and discrimination within this ethnic group will increase awareness of the problem in the educational system. Because acknowledging a problem is the first step in finding a solution, this increased awareness may help Mexican immigrants live positively with Mexican Americans by helping to decrease intragroup discrimination and prejudice. Contributing to the limited literature concerning intragroup prejudice within the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant community and identifying instances of prejudice within this population may result in more positive academic and socioeconomic outcome within the Mexican American population once positive interventions are formulated and implemented (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015; Umaña-Taylor, 2014).

In Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, I described how changes within the classroom setting prompted by Mexican immigrant demographic shifts have resulted in increased levels of prejudice from U.S.-born Mexican Americans toward Mexican immigrants (Casella, 2014; Fussell, 2014; Godlewska et al., 2013; Hopkins 2015; Strayhorn, 2014). These changes can create problems within the school setting between Mexican American and Mexican immigrant student populations (Casella, 2014; Godlewska et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2014). Chapter 3 contains an introduction, the purpose of this research, the

research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the chosen methodology, issues of trustworthiness of the research, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. The central phenomenon of this study was intragroup prejudice displayed by Mexican Americans toward recently immigrated Mexicans and the impacts these recent Mexican immigrants describe experiencing.

The research tradition of this qualitative study was the phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is used to explore the experiences of a small number of participants by engaging with them and capturing the meaning of their experiences from their worldview (Giorgi, 2009). Selection for participants and data analysis were based within the context of Giorgi's phenomenological method via dialogue and open-ended questions (Giorgi, 2009). Additionally, Patton (2002) suggested that, through in-depth interviews, a researcher can grasp the essence of participants' lived experiences. Phenomenology, espoused by Edmund Husserl, is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness (Eichelberger, 1989; Husserl, 2012). To understand the phenomenon of the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants, it was imperative to follow a set of guidelines to maintain control and limit bias when collecting data. In the context of this study, and as a Mexican immigrant myself, I must not taint the results of the data. I had to place myself as only an observer and refrain from imposing preconceived notions or inferring meanings to participants' questions or answers.

Consequently, I had to ensure that I recorded just the facts and not bringing any personal experiences from my past. I stuck with the data that were presented to firmly adhere to the results even when they might have indicated a different outcome than I had anticipated.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was that of an observer-participant. As a researcher, I met with participants, determining eligibility for the study, and interviewed the respondents. In general, researchers have various roles in qualitative inquiry. Researchers are charged with collecting data through interviews, observations, or focus groups (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Data collected using qualitative studies are generally richer and provide an in-depth insight into the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative studies are also expensive because they are by nature time-consuming. However, smaller sample sizes are generally employed, as the most important factor when weighing sample size is the saturation of data received from participants. Quantitative studies generally use a larger sample size than qualitative studies. Ritchie et al. (2003) argued that in qualitative studies more data does not necessarily mean more information is gathered. Qualitative studies are more concerned about understanding the meaning of the data rather than establishing statistical significance.

Qualitative researchers need to be consciously aware of personal biases that may impact the study. Creswell (2009) suggested that researchers reflect on their biases and values and identify where their background may impact their study. Therefore, researchers must not prejudge their investigation by having preconceived notions about

the phenomenon being studied. Moustakas (1994) called this process the *epoche*, which is to block assumptions when explaining a phenomenon or experience.

Researchers must also be cognizant that the participants selected for the study will not have any mutual relationships other than that of interviewer-interviewee to alleviate any issues of having power over the participants. I was keenly aware of my personal biases because I am an immigrant born in Mexico who may have had similar experiences to the participants. As stated in the limitations section of Chapter 1, I used the bracketing technique to set aside prior presuppositions and viewed each phenomenon as a new experience regardless of my own emotional or cultural experiences (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Methodology

Phenomenology was selected to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Creswell (2009) argued that phenomenology is used to examine the how and what of experience. For this reason, phenomenology is best used to describe and give meaning to the lived experiences of participants in a research study. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative researchers purposively select the participants of a study. In this study, purposive sampling was selected for gaining participants who met a specific or narrow criterion and who provided a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Polkinghorne, 2005). Specifically, the rationale for using purposive sampling was to find participants who were immigrants to America, who were born in Mexico, and who had recently graduated from a nearby Texas high school.

The ideal number of participants in a phenomenological study is between five and 25 to reach saturation (Creswell, 2009). To this end, the goal of this study was to conduct individual semi structured interviews with 5-10 participants identified as Mexican immigrant students who were over the age of 18. The protocols were available in English (Appendix A) and Spanish (Appendix B). However, the actual number of interviews conducted was guided by saturation of the data collected, as well as the availability of volunteers. In a semi structured interview, the interviewer may have some preplanned questions to ask before the interview, but the interviewer does not use a fixed format and has more freedom to ask follow-up in-depth questions. Conversely, a structured interview has a set of questions predetermined by the interviewer. In this study, I used a semi structured approach to glean the most input from participants, following their lead in the planned conversation.

After receiving permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), students were recruited from colleges in the state of Texas through social media platforms. Due to the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, all federal, state, and local social distancing and safety guidelines were followed rigorously.

The process of identifying potential participants for this study was as follows:

1. A social media announcement in English and Spanish was posted in various Facebook groups using key words, Mexican American, high school alumni associations, or other college groups in the state of Texas (Appendix E and F).

2. Potential students who identified themselves as being of Mexican descent were provided an initial demographic questionnaire in English and Spanish to ascertain their appropriateness for the study (Appendix C and D).
3. Once participants were identified and contacted, an interview setting or platform was agreed to by the researcher and participant.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation consisted of an interview protocol I developed. In addition, and with the permission of the interviewee, the session was recorded on two personal tape recorders, the installed web teleconferencing application and an RCA brand recorder, to ensure backup in case one recorder malfunctioned. Based on the research question, a sample of interview questions included in Appendix A were as follows: How would you say you get along with other students of Mexican descent? Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice by Mexican Americans? If yes, how would you describe the discrimination or prejudice? These questions were also available in Spanish if needed (Appendix B).

According to Moustakas (1994), a researcher must be able to engage the respondent and pay attention to body language and other nonverbal clues. A distinct advantage of phenomenological interviews is a deeper understanding of the phenomenon using open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are used to bring about the respondents' memories of their lived experiences, such as feelings and thoughts (Moustakas, 1994). The interviewer becomes the data collection tool or the instrument of the research process (Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative research studies rely on the human element when interviewing respondents. Mann and Stewart (2000) described it as the human instrument, and Moustakas (1994) added that a researcher must be free of preconceived notions of the answers provided by the respondent using epoche. In this manner, a researcher can analyze the data without injecting their thoughts and feelings into the results.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

Moustakas (1994) argued that a long interview is the best method to collect data. In phenomenological interview protocols, it is recommended that open-ended questions be presented informally and interactively (Moustakas, 1994). Although the researcher may have a predetermined set of questions to ask the participant of the study, the interviewer must remain flexible and be prepared to alter the protocol once the participant is sharing their experience (Moustakas, 1994). Considering Moustakas's recommendations, I developed the protocol in both English (Appendix A) and Spanish (Appendix B) to conduct semi structured interviews most comfortable for participants to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting.

Content validity in phenomenological research is an important aspect of qualitative research studies. Validity is how qualitative researchers establish procedures in their study to convince the reader their results are accurate (Creswell, 2009). For this study, content validity refers to establishing that the questions asked using the interview protocol (Appendix A and Appendix B) accurately answered the research question.

By nature, phenomenological studies are fraught with issues of content validity because of the human element in collecting, coding, analyzing, and interpreting data (Giorgi, 2002). For this reason, it is of paramount importance that a researcher is clear and intentionally detailed when collecting data without influencing a participant's story and without infusing the researcher's own experiences into the study. Interviewers must enable participants to feel comfortable by promoting a safe climate to provide honest and comprehensive feedback during the interview (Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was required to implement social distancing as directed by local and national authorities. To this end, the recruitment strategy for this study consisted of recruiting participants through social media. Interviews were conducted via a social network teleconferencing app (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, etc.) or telephone. Data were planned to be collected from 5-10 students recruited from Texas until saturation was achieved. Interviews were conducted until a minimum of five participants who qualified for this study were interviewed or no new information was gleaned from further data. To ensure trustworthiness in the study, I conducted the initial interview and a follow-up interview with participants after the transcription of the interview was completed for clarification as needed. The duration of the interviews was approximately 60–90 minutes depending on how descriptive the respondents were while answering questions and how many follow-up probing questions were necessary to fully grasp the breadth of their experiences.

I took notes while simultaneously recording the interviews using the installed web teleconferencing application. An RCA brand personal tape recorder was also used to record audio in case the web teleconferencing application failed. After the interview was completed, I debriefed the participants of the study. During the debrief, I thanked the respondent and conducted member checking by providing them with a summary of their responses and asking them to please review the summary for accuracy. I provided my contact information to share the findings with participants if they so desired.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of all research is to answer the research question. To this end, a data analysis plan was used to organize and interpret all the collected data through the interviews and develop themes that shed light on the lived experiences of immigrant Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. Creswell (2009) argued that the purpose of data analysis is to make sense of all the information gathered during the interview process by shedding back layers similar to peeling an onion. Further, Creswell (2009) added that phenomenological research is conducted to analyze meaningful statements, categorize them, give them codes, and describe the essence of what it all means (Moustakas, 1994).

Researchers must consider on an ongoing basis the themes being created while gathering data. Therefore, data analysis and interpretation were conducted by first organizing and preparing data; second, reading through all the data; and third, analyzing the data with a coding process (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell (2009), coding is gathering data and organizing it in such a way that it is easier to make sense of the

material collected. Coding consists of labeling categories identified during the data gathering process and assigning terms that come from the language respondents provided (Creswell, 2009).

For this study, I used Tesch's (1990) eight-step guide as a blueprint to conduct the coding process.

1. Get a sense of the whole: I initially read through all of the collected data to gain a sense of the whole.
2. Pick one document: I then reviewed 2-3 individual data sets in more depth.
3. Upon completion of this task for several informants, make a list of all topics: I organized all topics after I reviewed several participant transcripts.
4. Take this list and go back to the data: I then coded the different topics or themes and categorized them as needed to make new codes.
5. Find the most descriptive wording for topics and turn them into categories: I reduced the number of categories by grouping similar topics.
6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes: I arranged and organized all categories that emerged and decided on what codes to use for each.
7. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis: I reviewed my work and decided whether any changes needed to be made.

8. If necessary, recode your existing data: Finally, I decided whether new codes needed to be made and made final decisions on the codes selected.

Additionally, the phenomenological reduction model was used to reduce large amounts of data into smaller more manageable themes by removing all extra and meaningless words (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2009) recommends the use of computer programs to locate and store qualitative data. Data were analyzed using the modified version of the van Kamm method for analyzing phenomenological data (van Kamm, 1959), and thematic analysis using NVivo (2018) software was used to analyze the data and identify patterns, or themes, in the data collected (Van Manen, 2007).

Creswell (2009) argued that researchers should be open to provide any information that does not seem to follow the researcher's intended hypothesis. Including discrepant information in qualitative studies adds validity and credibility to the study (Creswell, 2009). For this study, if any discrepant information was found, it was included in the results section of the study, and discrepancies or their absence were explained.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies, by definition, are held to different standards than quantitative studies regarding validity and reliability. (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative studies offer validation throughout all the steps to ensure there is trust in the information gathered, the process of the research, and the results. Validity in qualitative studies means that the researcher is constantly checking for accuracy by applying well-documented procedures to the findings, while reliability in qualitative studies means that the approach is consistent regardless of the researcher and regardless of the project (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative researchers must include credibility, transferability, and dependability in their work.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative studies measures the confidence researchers have in finding the truth in their conclusions (Williams & Hill, 2012). In other words, how does the researcher know that whatever was found through interviewing of participants is true and accurate? To ensure that qualitative research is trustworthy, investigators must rigorously document all procedures and follow those procedures consistently.

Researchers are encouraged to maintain a reflexive journal during the research process to identify any biases, values, or other issues that may impact the results of the study (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) recommended several strategies to maximize validity in qualitative research. One of these strategies is that of triangulation or the examination of different data sources of information and if themes are formed then it will add to the validity of the research.

The second strategy is to have the results of the study examined by the participants of the study via follow-up interviews and allowing participants to comment. The third strategy is for the researcher to be up-front and reflective about their own biases toward the topic of the study. In this way, the researcher can be found to be trustworthy to readers of their study, minimizing potential conflicts of interest. Including negative information or information from the data set which was not what a researcher would suspect adds validity to the study and increases trust in the findings.

I followed Creswell's recommendations by keeping copious notes before, during, and after the interviews to ensure that themes were readily identified. I also employed member checking with the participants after interviews were completed and transcription was provided to the participants to check that they agreed with what was said and the context of how it was said during the interviews. I was cognizant of my own preconceived biases by being open to identifying information that might have been conflicting with what I would suspect.

Transferability

Another issue concerning trustworthiness in qualitative studies is that of external validity or transferability. External validity is defined as the transferability of the findings of a study. For example, will the conclusions found in this study be similar if applied to other settings, with other participants, and at other times (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Creswell (2009) argued that adding a rich, thick description to report the findings paints a picture of shared experiences with the reader. This will, in turn, add to the validity of the study by making it easier for future researchers to view their similar investigations through the prism of this study. To enhance the validity of the study I was meticulous with the information that I provided to enhance the possibility of future researchers using my study as the basis for their research.

Dependability

Dependability is salient to research studies because it measures how the findings of one study are consistent with the data collected (Creswell, 2009). Dependability also describes the process of ensuring that future researchers reviewing the raw data of this

study come to the same conclusions as the author of the study and that the original researcher did not miss any crucial information. In this manner, the researcher can be found to be trustworthy to readers of their study, minimizing potential conflicts of interest. Adding negative information or information which is not what a researcher would suspect adds validity to the study and increases trust in the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to ensuring that the results of the research can be confirmed by other people besides the researcher (Given, 2008). Researchers are cautioned to set parameters by which the participant's responses are not clouded over by the researcher's own bias. This is accomplished by providing an audit trail to show the reader the clear steps taken about how the data was analyzed and the rationale for the results. Thus, the reader is provided an accurate account of the interviewee's responses without the researcher's influencing the results to fit the researcher's narrative (Given, 2008). I documented all my steps from the beginning of recruitment to data collection and results

Ethical Procedures

Ethical issues are always addressed in research studies because, in essence, real people are involved who are dealing with real human issues (Creswell, 2009). The protection of the participant's anonymity is paramount, and it is an important element in eliciting honesty by the participants by developing their trust in the researcher and the institution. Ensuring that participant's personal identifying information and confidentiality are also important ethical issues and participants will be informed that their information will be kept confidential by the researcher. The Ethical Principles of

Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2017) was a valuable tool that was adhered to in this research to ensure that research participants were protected by keeping their data anonymous and confidential. Creswell's (2009) recommendations of using pseudonyms during the coding process to protect individual identities were also implemented. Participants must know who will have access to the data, and I informed them that only the researcher would have access to their data. It is also important to protect the privacy of participants while ensuring that the study does not reflect poorly on the institutions involved. To this end, the researcher requested and received approval from the IRB to collect data.

In case a participant refused to participate in this research after initially volunteering, it would have been appropriate to ask the reasons why and if there may be a solution that would be beneficial to both the research and participant. If the participant still refused to participate, then I would have thanked them for their time and effort and provided them the option to return to the research if they changed their mind. If a participant started to process difficult feelings, this writer would have validated participants' feelings and ensured that participants were informed of the value of seeking mental health services and encourage them to seek help when experiencing difficult emotions. However, all patients who volunteered initially chose to continue to be part of this research to completion.

All participants of this study were treated with respect and their information was safeguarded and their ultimate wishes whether to participate were honored. All participants for this study were over the age of consent for the state of Texas which is 18

years of age. Creswell (2009) recommends having participants sign an informed consent form. This form was signed by both participants and this researcher before beginning the interview. The informed consent form allowed the participants to choose to terminate their involvement in the study upon request. Participants were informed that they were not obligated to disclose any information they were uncomfortable sharing and that all information gathered would be destroyed using a shredder.

All collected data were digitized immediately and stored on a secure network folder to which only the researcher had access. Once digitized, all collected data on paper was destroyed. Only the researcher of this study has access to this data. After 5 years all electronic data will be erased.

Researchers need to address the issues of power balances between the researcher and participants. It is the responsibility of the researcher to assure the participants that they have the overall authority to overrule how their statements are written and how they are interpreted (Creswell, 2009). Participants also need to be informed that they have a final say on how they are questioned during the interviews and the consequences of the interview for themselves and the school. I did not have any involvement with the prospective participants or any schools in Texas and did not identify any conflicts of interest arising.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 3 explained why phenomenology was selected to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Additionally, Chapter 3 offered an

exploration of the methodology involved in addressing the research question, instrumentation used, validity of the study and ethical issues to be addressed. Chapter 4 will provide the reader with the analysis and results of this study with the ultimate goal of discussing the findings of the study. It will consist of the introduction, setting, demographics, location description, frequency and duration of data collection, the process used for data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Additionally, it will examine the results that address the research question, supporting and non-conforming data, and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice by U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom. Understanding experiences of prejudice and discrimination within this ethnic group will increase awareness of the problem in the educational system. I used a qualitative phenomenological approach to conduct semi structured interviews and address the following research question:

What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting?

Because the study intended to determine how Mexican immigrants experience their world, the research paradigm was qualitative and phenomenological (Husserl, 2012; Eichelberger, 1989). This paradigm allows researchers to understand participants' experiences in the participants' natural settings (Creswell, 2009). This chapter consists of a brief introduction, research setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Changes to Original Data Collection Plan

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to data collection were made with the approval of my dissertation committee, URR, and the IRB. Instead of a face-to-face interview with participants, as was originally planned, I completed semi structured interviews using the Zoom teleconferencing app. Unfortunately, the original plan of recruiting participants attending a local college in southeast Texas was not approved by

the college's IRB. Thereby I was unable to post flyers on campus and use their Facebook website to post a social media flyer.

Walden IRB approved my change of recruitment procedures and allowed me to recruit students using general social media postings. Additionally, I found it difficult to recruit participants who met all original criteria for inclusion for this study via canvassing social media websites. For this reason, I again sought and received approval to change recruitment procedures from my dissertation committee, URR, and the IRB to include students who had graduated high school no more than 5 years prior instead of 2 years.

Another change was requested to permit the recruitment of participants using the snowball sampling method, which ultimately proved effective. After approval was granted to proceed, I completed a search for participants who met all inclusion criteria via a Facebook posting and through the snowball sampling method. Additionally, I decided against using a peer debriefer due to difficulties in finding a willing peer debriefer and time constraints for completion of this study. To mitigate the possibility of researcher bias, I kept in mind the potential for bias as part of the process at every step of data collection. I also used reflexive journaling and memo writing to address any instances of personal bias I became aware of. Also, as Polit and Beck (2014) suggested, I reflected critically on any preconceptions and viewed all data as a specific data set without adding my values or my anticipated outcome based on my own prior experiences. Other mitigation techniques for researcher bias are also described in Chapter 1 of this study.

Research Setting

The research setting was my office in my home residence where I conducted five interviews; interviews occurred between March 10, 2021, and April 3, 2021. Participants received a consent form via my Walden email and all five replied with the phrase “I consent” to the interview after reading the consent form. I used my home computer to interview all participants using Zoom video conference software. I was able to record all interviews using this same software, and I used my tape recorder as a backup in case Zoom recording had any issues. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a summary of the transcript was emailed back to the participants to ensure member checking for accuracy. No changes were made to the transcripts after member checking; all participants agreed the transcripts were correct. The participants were all in their residences when the interviews took place, and interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each. There were no issues noted or reported that impacted the participants’ experience or the interpretation of the data at the time of the interviews.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of participants were as follows: Three participants were female and two were male with ages ranging from 19 to 22 years of age, and the range of age at immigration was 3–13 years of age (Table 1). All the participants were born in Mexico; two were born in Mexico City; one was born in Poza Rica, Veracruz; one in Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas; and one was born in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon. Four of the five participants were fluent in English and preferred the interviews be

conducted in English, and one participant preferred to be interviewed in Spanish and I translated the transcript to English.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Code name	Gender	Age	Age immigrated
PM1	Male	20	11
PF2	Female	19	13
PF3	Female	22	10
PF4	Female	20	3
PM5	Male	20	6

Four of the participants graduated from a high school in and around the Houston, Texas, area, and one attended high school in the southeast valley of Texas (Table 2).

Table 2

City of Birth and High School Characteristics of Study Participants

Code name	Birthplace	High school location	High school Hispanic population
PM1	Mexico City	Houston area	47%
PF2	Mexico City	Houston area	47%
PF3	Monterrey	Houston area	69%
PF4	Ciudad Hidalgo	Houston area	71%
PM5	Poza Rica	McAllen SE Texas	93%

All participants were attending college in Texas; the year of college at the time of the interview is recorded in Table 3.

Table 3*College Attended and Grade Level of Participants*

Code name	Location	Grade level
PM1	Houston	2nd year
PF2	Houston	1st year
PF3	Houston	1st year
PF4	Houston	3rd year
PM5	San Marcos	2nd year

Data Collection

After making necessary changes in recruitment procedures, I received permission to begin data collection from Walden University IRB (approval # 11-30-20-0183218). I posted a social media flyer in English and Spanish (Appendix E and Appendix F) on Facebook and several groups that cater to the Mexican community, such as (a) Mexican American Community, (b) Proud Mexican American, (c) Mexican friendship, (d) Mexican American & Raza Studies, (e) AMAS (Association of Mexican American studies), (f) Mexican American Studies Baytown/San Jacinto, and (g) Jacinto City Community College 411.

After receiving mostly spam-type responses from posting the flyers, I received my first participant who met all inclusion criteria after about a month of posting. The first participant had a sister who also met inclusion criteria who agreed to participate in the study. She was the second participant. I immediately requested and received permission from the Walden University IRB to change recruitment procedures to incorporate snowball sampling.

An alternate method of recruiting participants, other than social media postings, began to develop after the first two interviews. From information received from these

first two interviews, I discovered numerous churches that catered to Spanish speakers with a population that might meet my study's inclusion criteria. After searching the internet for Spanish-speaking churches, I contacted several church pastors, either through emails or phone calls and using their websites' contact information. I spoke to several pastors who were gracious in canvassing their congregations for potential participants. The other three participants were recruited through these means, and all being college students who were either attending a local Spanish-speaking church or who were known to congregants or pastors of a Spanish-speaking church.

I was able to interview all my participants within 1 month between March 10, 2021, through April 3, 2021. I believe saturation was reached after five interviews because data from the interviews revealed similar themes after the first and second interviews, and after five interviews no new data or new coding seemed to emerge. All interviews were completed within 24 days from the first interview and lasted about 45 to 60 minutes each. Interviews were recorded with the permission of participants, using Zoom recording features and an RCA portable recording device as a backup. The only variation in data collection were those concerning the recruitment process. The only unusual circumstance was a potential participant who seemed to have ulterior motives and was not believable on his inclusion criteria for this study and, thus, was not included in the study.

Data Analysis

In Chapter 3, I outlined my plan to analyze the data I collected via semi structured interviews. I implemented the data analysis plan to organize and interpret all the collected

data from the interviews to develop themes and shed light on the lived experiences of immigrant Mexican students in a classroom setting. The purpose of data analysis, according to Creswell (2009), is to make sense of the information gathered during the interview process by shedding layers, similar to peeling an onion. Moustakas (1994) also added that phenomenology research is used to analyze meaning statements, categorize them, give them codes, and describe the essence of what it all means.

To this end, after completion of each interview, I transcribed each interview verbatim by hand and double-checked for accuracy by rewinding the video until I was certain the words, I had written were the exact words being uttered. I coded the names of the participants to protect their anonymity in the transcribed interviews as follows: (a) PM1, participant male first interview; (b) PF2, participant female second interview; (c) PF3, participant female third interview; (d) PF4, participant female fourth interview; and (e) PM5, participant male fifth interview.

I sent the completed transcripts to the participants for member checking accuracy. Researchers must start to be aware of the themes being created as the data are being gathered (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, I first organized and prepared the data, then I read and reread through all the transcripts, and then I analyzed the data and began the coding process. I used the NVivo 12 Pro software to upload all transcribed interviews to facilitate data analysis and coding. NVivo 12 Pro software program makes it easier to find similar words or phrases throughout all transcripts and helps a user develop themes and relationships between participant statements. I implemented an inductive coding system to help me interpret the raw data from the transcripts using Tesch's (1990) eight-

step guide as a blueprint. First, I read through all the collected data to gain a sense of the whole. Second, I reviewed one individual data set in more depth. Third, I organized topics after I reviewed several participant transcripts. Fourth, I coded the different topics or themes and instances where they needed to be in a different category or, if I needed, to make new codes. Fifth, I reduced the number of categories if they appeared to have similar topics. Sixth, I arranged and organized all categories that emerged and decided on what codes to use for each. Seventh, I reviewed my work to that point and decided whether any changes needed to be made. Finally, eighth, I decided whether new codes needed to be made and made a final decision on the codes selected.

After I reviewed and analyzed the data, the following specific themes emerged, which established a relationship with Tajfel's social identity theory delineated in Chapter 2: (a) overachievement in repayment of sacrifice, participants shared that they did not want to not let their parents' sacrifices be in vain and how their status as immigrants motivated them to do well in school;(b) inability to self-advocate in English, participants shared that their Mexican accent was detrimental and that at times they could not defend themselves due to language barriers or intimidation; (c) attributed shame, participants shared that some other Hispanics who were not of Mexican descent felt disrespected if they were perceived as Mexican;(d) from a known culture to a brand-new world, participants shared that the transition between Mexico and the United States was difficult and expressed a sense of grief/loss when they had to leave family behind in Mexico and when their own parents left them in Mexico to come live in the United States without them at first; and (e) teacher unconditional positive regard, participants shared that there

were times when school teachers went above and beyond to help them succeed. There was discrepant information found in that some respondents reported that they did not experience prejudice from other Mexican Americans. In the results section of this chapter, I further describe each of these themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In Chapter 3, I laid out a blueprint in addressing the issue of trustworthiness. In this section, I address how I implemented this plan. Qualitative studies, by definition, are held to different standards than quantitative studies regarding validity and reliability. (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative studies offer validation throughout all the steps to ensure there is trust in the information gathered, the process of the research, and the results. Validity in qualitative studies means that a researcher is constantly checking for accuracy by employing well-documented procedures to the findings, while reliability in qualitative studies means the approach is consistent regardless of the researcher and regardless of the project (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers must ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability to their work. This study demonstrated evidence of trustworthiness ensuring credibility, transferability, and dependability, as described below.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative studies measures the confidence researchers have in finding the truth in their conclusions (Williams & Hill, 2012). To ensure credibility for this study, I transcribed verbatim each interview and emailed the copies of the transcriptions to each participant as part of member-checking. After emailing the transcribed interviews, participants were provided an opportunity to give feedback or

make any changes they desired. However, all participants were satisfied with the transcribed text and stated that they concurred by replying “I concur” when I sent them the transcript.

Another way to ensure validity is to be cognizant of the fact that I may have preconceived notions or inherent bias about the study. To mitigate this issue, I remained open to identifying information that is conflicting with what I would suspect and using reflexive journaling. For instance, some participants felt that for the most part, their interactions with Mexican Americans were positive.

Transferability

Another issue concerning trustworthiness in qualitative studies is that of external validity or transferability. External validity is defined as the transferability of the findings of a study. In other words, will the conclusions found in this study be similar if applied to other settings, with other participants, and at other times (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Creswell (2009) argues that adding a rich, thick description to report the findings paints a picture of shared experiences with the reader. This will, in turn, add to the validity of the study by making it easier for future researchers to view their similar investigations through the prism of this study.

It is difficult for qualitative researchers to generalize the findings and conclusions of their particular research. However, the information originated by these interviews was rich in raw data that could be used in future research. Additionally, the conclusions and concepts derived from the present research could be a catalyst to conduct similar research in other settings. While the experiences elucidated in these five participants’ interviews

may not be generalized to other populations, in other settings, they may be used to compare the findings with experiences from different populations or in different settings. Participants for this study were predominantly living in and around the Houston, Texas area except for the 5th participant who was from a community near the Texas-Mexico border. The experiences of these five participants will be difficult to apply to other locations in the United States or ethnic groups other than people of Mexican descent.

Dependability

Dependability describes the process of ensuring that future researchers reviewing the raw data of this study come to the same conclusions as the author of the study and that the original researcher did not miss any crucial information. In this manner, the researcher can be found to be trustworthy to readers of their study, minimizing potential conflicts of interest (Creswell, 2009).

For this study, the dissertation chair and methodology expert were provided recruitment logs and transcripts of the participant interviews to review and provide feedback throughout the recruitment and interview process. All changes in data collection were documented (see changes to data collection plan at beginning of this chapter). However, the implementation of the research strategy plan was unchanged, and the setting also remained the same throughout the research.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to ensuring that the results of the research can be confirmed by other people besides the researcher (Given, 2008). Researchers are cautioned to set parameters by which the participant's responses are not clouded over by the researcher's

own bias. This is accomplished by providing an audit trail to show the reader the clear steps taken for how the data was analyzed and the rationale for the results. Thus, the reader is provided an accurate account of the interviewee's responses without the researcher's influencing the results to fit the researcher's narrative (Given, 2008). As an immigrant from Mexico who attended a high school in Texas, I am aware of the potential for bias in this current research. To this end, I documented all my steps from the beginning of recruitment to data collection and results to mitigate any inherent biases

Results

The purpose of the results section of this chapter is to identify findings that are relevant to the research question; What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans in the classroom setting. To answer this research question, five themes were developed from five participant interviews with immigrants from Mexico. The five themes identified by this researcher were (1) overachievement in repayment of sacrifice, (2) inability to self-advocate in English, (3) attributed shame, (4) from a known culture to a brand-new world, and (5) teacher unconditional positive regard. Table 4 presents the five themes along with the participant number endorsing each.

Table 4

Themes and Participant Endorsement

Theme	Participant endorsement
Overachievement in repayment of sacrifice	PM1, PF2, PF3, PF4, PM5
Inability to self-advocate in English	PM1, PF2, PF3, PF4, PM5
Attributed shame	PM1, PF2, PM5
From a known culture to a brand-new world	PM1, PF2, PF3, PF4, PM5
Teacher unconditional positive regard	PM1, PF2, PF3, PF4, PM5

A more detailed description of each theme is provided below:

Overachievement in Repayment of Sacrifice

All participants in this study shared that they want to do well in school because they do not want their parent's sacrifice to be in vain. Participants shared a belief that their parents did not make the long and dangerous journey to come into a new land and *desperdicar* (waste) this enormous opportunity to succeed. PM1 shared that he "wants to be successful because my parents especially my father sacrificed too much for me to be lazy and not want to get ahead in life." PM1 also shared that his mother, even though she does not speak English, makes an effort to be involved in the school for him to be successful. Similarly, PM5 stated that he heard stories about "the struggles my parents went through, I understand. But when I was a kid, I was like, yeah, still can't believe it." PM5 also shared that he finds it disrespectful when some of his friends are not putting forth their best effort in school and "they be like skipping, using drugs or whatever in school...I'd say why don't you focus; you see your parents struggling...they did not come all the way over here, so doesn't make any sense." Others offered sentiments similar to the ones stated above in that they are working hard in school to make a better life for themselves and their family who sacrificed so much to give them this opportunity.

Participants also shared how their status as immigrants motivated them to overachieve in school. For example, all the participants were currently in college even though they had limited resources vis-à-vis financial assistance. Two participants were enrolled in a 4-year college while the other three were planning to transfer from their community college to a 4-year college. Additionally, PF2 shared that even though the

teachers placed her in English-only classes sooner than she anticipated, she liked it because she “wanted to push ahead and so I learn better” and that she is “putting forth the best effort because, like my dad would tell me, that’s why we are here to make a better life and better future.” Another participant, PF3, was placed in the prestigious International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which is available to high GPA average students, and was able to graduate with a high school diploma and an International Baccalaureate diploma. She also said that she wanted to prove that she belonged in this country and to counter the “stereotypes like you know Mexicans are like lazy or Americans are like way smarter and I’m like no, I can do anything you can do.” PF4 was accepted to the University of Houston and she shared that she remembers her struggles of learning a new language and looks back at her “little second or third-grade self and I’m like wow I really-I really was able to make it you know.” PM1 believes that he needs to work harder than people who were born here because he has to

Not only translate it in my head or whatever they’re saying in English to Spanish and then back to English so I can reply to the people that are talking to me so it’s kind of hard, but you know I think I’m pretty smart.

He declined placement in ESL classes when he had learned English, and he told them that he did not need any more ESL classes even when it would have been easier for him to attend ESL classes than regular classes. PM1 describes himself as a leader and related that he was elected class robotics president in high school and is vice president of the Communities in School Club in his college that helps other students succeed. PM5

was also very active in extra-curricular activities in his high school and now at the university level and is concentrating in college to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Inability to Self-Advocate in English

All participants believed they spoke with an accent which at times is a barrier to communicating their needs and a source of embarrassment. PF2 reported that she doesn't "...like to speak because I get nervous when I speak. I don't know how to describe it but up to now it's been very difficult for me to speak English." PF2 also shared a story where she got on the wrong school bus and could not tell the driver where she lived or where she was going because she did not understand him. PF4 shared an experience in 6th grade when she was yelled at by one of her friends for a misunderstanding in communication, and she could not defend herself. She stated "I felt really intimidated and I feel like you know...I was like did she understand what I said? Was it my accent? Asking like, what is it?" PF3 also reports that it was very difficult to make friends because "I am very self-conscious about my accent even to today I still have very subconscious of my accent" and that she has to preemptively let new friends know that she has an accent so they would not be surprised. Another problem for participants regarding their accents was that others would make fun of them. For instance, PM1 stated, "...I started to notice it sometimes they will make fun of me because I couldn't speak English right...and sometimes they will make fun of me as I was embarrassed." Even some teachers unknowingly embarrassed participants. For example, PF3 shared that one of her teachers stopped her reading out loud in class to emphasize how she pronounced the word

“smaller” because the teacher thought it “was kinda cute the way you say it”. However, PF3 was very embarrassed to be singled out like that.

Additionally, all participants shared that due to language problems they felt powerless to defend themselves when an injustice was done to themselves or their friends. For example, PF2 shared that there were instances where students were talking “bad about my friends” but “I couldn’t say anything because I didn’t know what to say, even though I understood them” and “I wanted to know what to say so I could defend that person”. PF3 related a story about being blamed by a teacher for being disruptive in class because she was laughing but that she could not tell her teacher that she was not the instigator and was just snickering because it was funny. Others were laughing as well but did not get punished. PF4 also shared that due to language barriers her mother kept placing her in ESL classes even though she was already fluent in English, but her mother did not know that PF4 was supposed to have already transitioned to English-only classes. PM1 and PM5 both had similar experiences in that even though they experienced injustices they did not want to cause any problems at school because they did not want to cause problems for their parents.

Attributed Shame

Three participants were surprised that other Hispanics were ashamed to be thought of as being “Mexican”. One of the participants (PF2) was accidentally mistaken for Honduran by her Honduran friends and when she clarified that she was actually from Mexico they told her “I hate Mexicans”. She found it troubling that she had to explain to Hondurans that it is ok to be from Mexico. Another participant mistook another Hispanic

for Mexican when in reality that another person was Salvadorean, and the Salvadorean got upset and stated “No, I’m Salvadorean” like there was something wrong with being from Mexico. Additionally, participants shared that some Mexican Americans are ashamed to have been born in Mexico. PM1 shared that one Mexican American who thought he was born in the U.S. was finally told he was born in Mexico by his parents and was very sad. PM5 stated that “sometimes people would look down” on him “because I didn’t have good clothes and my shoes had holes in the bottom.”

From a Known Culture to a Brand-New World

All participants found it very difficult to navigate coming to a new country with new friends and new school to the extent that it was almost traumatic. PM5 said he was “really confused about what was going on and then come here, people speaking English, and I didn’t I didn’t know what was going on.” And PM1 shared that “some of my teachers you know were African American or White and I could not understand what they were saying and so it was hard for me to get along in the beginning.” PF4 found it very difficult to “adjust and understand and speak and write English”, and that she was “also confused and lost and it was overwhelming.” PF3 explained that she “didn’t know anyone there and it was like a little more culture shock ‘cause it was more like kind out of my comfort zone.” PF2 found it very difficult because she is still more comfortable to this day speaking Spanish. She said that “it was also difficult, and I got very nervous because I knew nothing about English didn’t learn almost nothing in Mexico almost never taught us English classes then and so I had no English in my head.” PF2 also did not like the overall atmosphere in the U.S. and that she missed her friends and the food

she ate in Mexico because “it was not the same here”. She also shared that she still gets “depressed and get down because I miss my family in Mexico...I can’t assimilate here”.

Participants also expressed a sense of grief and loss when they had to leave family behind in Mexico and when their parents left them in Mexico to come to live in the United States without them at first. Participant PF2 shared that when her parents were in the U.S. and she was living with her grandparents in Mexico, she would see other kids with their parents and she would ask herself “y los mios, donde (where are mine)?” She would talk with her parents on the phone and would ask them “when are you coming? Or when can I see you? This presented a conundrum to the participants because on the one hand they wanted to go with their parents but also, they did not want to leave their caretakers who in some instances had raised them in place of their parents. For example, PF2 shared that she “also did not want to leave my family from Mexico.” PM1 also shared that it was difficult for him because he “wanted to see them for like Christmas and any Holidays and stuff like that and it was very hard for us. it was hard for me.”

Teacher Unconditional Positive Regard

All participants shared that there were times when schoolteachers performed above and beyond to help them succeed. All participants had stories where there was a specific teacher or teachers who took time out to ensure they had the tools to succeed. For instance, PF2 shared that one of her teachers “helped me a lot, you know helped me move ahead” and PF5 stated that some teachers, who did not normally speak Spanish, tried to say, “a little Spanish word here or there” to help her understand “you know they made an effort”. PF3 believes that one of her teachers filled out all the applications for her to

enroll in high school because she knew her parents did not know how. PF4 shared that she had a great teacher in English class who gave her advice on how best to learn English

he said you know all-around your house; surround yourself with English um news uh, if you were gonna read a book make sure it's in English. If you're speaking with your sisters try to speak in English. Stuff like that. Just so you know, make yourself more comfortable around the language.”

PM1 shared that “all through school I've had some good professors that will try to understand me and try to help”, and even in college he stated he had a teacher who counsels him to become a better student and leader. Creswell (2009) argues that researchers should be open to provide any information in the research report that does not seem to follow the researcher's intended hypothesis. Including discrepant information in qualitative studies adds validity and credibility to the study (Creswell, 2009). For this study, discrepant information was found in that some respondents reported that they did not experience prejudice from Mexican Americans. However, some participants stated that even though they have experienced instances when they were made to feel inferior, they excused it by saying “they were joking”, or that they “said it in a joking manner”. Only one respondent, PF4, stated that she has not experienced any prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans and that most of her interactions with Mexican Americans were positive.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of this qualitative research study to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants facing

prejudice and discrimination from Mexican Americans in a classroom setting. After conducting five semi structured interviews, several categories emerged and were condensed into five themes: (1) overachievement in repayment of sacrifice, (2) inability to self-advocate in English, (3) attributed shame, (4) from a known culture to a brand-new world, and (5) teacher unconditional positive regard. These themes were essential in answering the research question by describing in rich detail their personal experiences when interacting with Mexican Americans and others in a classroom setting. Most participants described some prejudice and discrimination at times and only one of the five participants denied ever feeling prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans.

More details on understanding the significance of these findings will be provided in Chapter 5 of this study. Chapter 5 will also discuss how Tajfel's social identity theory is linked to the themes found in Chapter 4, the relationship to the findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative and phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from Mexican Americans in a classroom setting. To this end, five semi structured interviews with Mexican immigrant students were conducted to elicit valuable insight into the thoughts and feelings of Mexican immigrants in a classroom setting as they experienced it.

There is a need for an increased understanding of the problems encountered by Mexican immigrant students in the classroom setting. Key findings from this study revealed that (a) four out of the five participants experienced prejudice and discrimination from Mexican Americans in a classroom setting, (b) Mexican immigrants face culture shock when moving to the United States, (c) some participants were surprised that some other Hispanic ethnicities made them feel ashamed to be born in Mexico, and (d) speaking with an accent was a barrier to self-efficacy in the Mexican immigrant community. Other important findings from this study were (e) the majority of the participants were overachievers despite obstacles, and (f) all the participants described teachers who were integral in fostering a climate of inclusion and positive regard for the participants.

Interpretation of the Findings

Results from this qualitative phenomenological study revealed there were instances in which participants, immigrants from Mexico, experienced feeling inferior or looked down on by perceived Mexican Americans. Only one participant felt that she did

not or had not yet experienced prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans. Other findings revealed that there was plenty of stressors for new immigrants from Mexico in school settings, including the culture shock of moving to a new country. For example, some participants were torn between leaving behind their extended family in Mexico when they emigrated to the United States and living without their parents who had already moved to the United States. Additionally, language was a major barrier for some of these participants even when they lived and attended schools with a majority Spanish-speaking population. Indeed, several participants reported being made fun of or embarrassed for their Mexican accent by non-Spanish speakers and Mexican Americans alike. Most participants felt powerless when they encountered injustices toward them or their friends due to a lack of English language skills or fear of getting into trouble which could impact their families. Overall, the majority of the participants felt confused and shared that they did not understand why their fellow Mexicans would feel the need to look down on them because they are also of Mexican descent.

The Mexican immigrants interviewed for this study were mostly overachievers and felt an obligation to ensure they succeeded in life through education. Another important positive finding was that throughout the participants' school journeys there were teachers of all races and ethnicities who helped these immigrant Mexican students survive and thrive in their new country.

Relationship of Findings to Theoretical Foundation

Key findings from this study aligned with Tajfel's social identity theory as described in Chapter 2. Within the Mexican immigrant population, recent student

immigrants constitute the out-group while students whose families immigrated previously are the in-group. Tajfel (1974) argued that people have a natural tendency to categorize themselves in ways that will enhance their self-image. Further, Tajfel and Turner (1979) theorized that people are prone to want to belong to a particular social group, such as a socioeconomic class, sports team, culture, or political party, and derive a sense of pride and self-esteem within their groups. This deep sense of belonging to a group develops into an us-versus-them worldview that glorifies and stereotypes people by exaggerating differences in the other group members and similarities in their group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In this study, all participants felt there was an us-versus-them mentality in the classroom setting, especially regarding the language of the participants' Mexican accents. Participants reported feeling left out or unwanted when asked why they did not like to interact with other Mexicans who were born in the United States or Chicanos. PF2 stated,

Oh, because since I don't speak English sometimes, they said well since we speak a lot of English and I don't know much Spanish and all that. And I kind of like, that ok don't worry, I would say to them because I felt bad because I can't speak English. Sometimes they would mock me, and they would say just speak English and we won't laugh at you and then I would speak it and they would make fun of the way I spoke or pronounce the words ...and sometimes they would talk about you behind your back and I didn't like that and that's why I didn't like to hang out with them.

Another participant, PM1, related a story where he found it very difficult to understand why other Mexican people would want to ridicule him for the way he spoke English:

Well, I kind of feel bad because you know they're Mexican just like me so why are they making fun of me when they can't even speak English correctly but because they are born here, they think that they're better than me. So, I didn't care too much in the beginning. It bothered me but later on, as I started learning more English it didn't bother me as much, even though I still have a little bit of an accent.

Another participant, PF4, reported experiencing animosity from others and felt intimidated by White students. She shared a story in which she interacted with a White female student and was taken aback by the White student's rude reaction when PF4 asked her for a favor:

...and that was my first like interaction I guess, speaking with someone that's White. So, you I know I feel really, I felt really intimidated and I feel like you know, I was like did she understand what I said? Was it my accent? Asking like what is it?

Participant PM5 was more succinct in his description regarding prejudice within the Mexican American community. He stated,

I feel like also it's not but especially there where I lived. It's not the White people that are kind of racist to you or discriminate you. It's kind of more like your own

people that were born here. You hear me? Yeah, like there's a saying in Mexico...Like Mexicans' worst enemy is other Mexicans with papers here.

Social identity theory relates to this study in that Mexican American prejudice against Mexican immigrant students is based on the principles of in-grouping and out-grouping. In the context of this study, recent Mexican immigrant students represent the out-group compared to Mexican American students who constitute the in-group. The basic premise of this study was that Mexican immigrant students experience prejudice and discrimination from other Mexican students due to their perceived out-group status.

Key Findings in Relation to Literature

The results of this research confirm and extend knowledge on Velazquez's (2013) qualitative phenomenological study intended to investigate the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants in the United States. Velazquez (2013) found that Mexican Americans were more antagonistic toward Mexican immigrants than other ethnicities. Participants PM1 and PM5 in this study related similar experiences within the Mexican American community. Velazquez (2013) also found that other ethnicities, like White or African American people, were more likely to help Mexican immigrants succeed than their Mexican counterparts who seemed to want to derail their success.

Mendez et al. (2012) discussed the plight of Mexican immigrants in a school setting. The authors used qualitative methods to investigate intercultural bullying among Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant high school students. In this study, I found similar characteristics of bullying from the perspective of Mexican immigrants. All participants reported experiencing others making fun of their accents to the extent that

they did not want to speak English for fear of being embarrassed. Additionally, PM5 reported feeling “looked down on” for not having “good clothes, or good shoes” when he first arrived in the United States.

Marira and Mitra (2013) and Adames et al. (2016), Hall and Crutchfield, (2018), and Waters and Kasinitz (2010) also studied more in-depth the concept of colorism in general and within the Latino/a community in particular. This research confirmed and extended knowledge of how lighter-skinned Mexican immigrants experience less prejudice than their more darker-skinned counterparts. In this study, PF3 confirmed the premise that light-skinned people were treated better than darker-skinned people. She related a story in which a recent Mexican immigrant who had wealthy parents and came from a light-skinned family was able to fit in better because “like he was passing like he was light-skinned like he passed like a Caucasian person so...I guess it was different.”

Massey and Bitterman (1985) sought to explain the paradox of Puerto Rican segregation in a study set in New York City and Los Angeles. Puerto Ricans in these cities were segregated not by ethnicity but by skin complexion (Massey & Bitterman, 1985). The darker-skinned Puerto Ricans would fit in better with Black Americans rather than with other Puerto Ricans who were lighter-skinned. Although Massey and Bitterman (1985) investigated an ethnicity other than the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant population, I believe it is important because it extends knowledge on the similarities within the Hispanic community. For example, some participants were surprised that other Hispanic communities, like Hondurans or Salvadoreans, did not particularly like being mistaken for Mexican. Participant PF2 shared:

Some Hondurans they tell me “ay I hate Mexicans” so they would tell me in front of me! I was telling them that there are a lot of Mexicans who are good like that, but some [Hondurans] are very rude as well Hondurans always told me or told me, “some friends told me I’m Mexican but I’m not Mexican why I’m going to be Mexican? I don’t like that! they tell me that...” that they tell me they don’t want to be confused as a Mexican.

Although the setting for this research was in Texas, my findings confirm and extend knowledge of Hanna and Ortega’s (2016) qualitative study concerning the lived experiences of Mexican immigrants living in Denver, Colorado. Hanna and Ortega discovered that Mexican immigrants face daily acts of discrimination and prejudice in school settings. All participants in this study described stressors that Mexican immigrants face due to language barriers and overall discrimination. Additionally, in this study, like that of Hanna and Ortega (2016), I found that most participating Mexican immigrants were resilient and had a strong work ethic, and overachieved even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Other researchers mentioned in Chapter 2 focused on the experiences of the LGBTQ community and psychological distress felt when faced with prejudice and discrimination (Chae & Ayala, 2010; Hatzenbuehler, Bellatorre, & Muennig, 2014; López-Rubio & Arias, 2019). In this study, I did not seek to identify any participants who were LGBTQ, but the findings extend the knowledge that harboring prejudice is psychologically distressing, as indicated by PM1, PM5, and PF2. This is another reason the exploration of within-group prejudice in the Mexican American population is salient.

The issue of immigration was discussed by Murray and Marx (2013), who studied the impact of attitudes in young people toward legal and illegal immigrants from Mexico and found that the more recent the immigrant arrival to the United States, the fewer anxiety respondents felt about symbolic threats. This research is differentiated from Murray and Marx's (2013) study because their study delved into the perspectives of Mexican Americans born in the United States and not the immigrants. Nevertheless, it is a salient study that provides a viewpoint in explaining the attitudes of Mexican Americans toward Mexican immigrants in the context of their legal status.

Similarly, Gulbas et al. (2016) studied psychological stressors such as depression, anxiety, and trauma experienced by children of undocumented parents. The authors found that children who are U.S. citizens were significantly negatively impacted by their parents' undocumented status for fear of deportation. The current research supports the results of Gulbas et al. (2016) in that all participants felt intimidated to voice their opinions or defend themselves against injustices for fear of being found to be illegal. For example, PF3 shared that her father made it a point of emphasis to not disclose to anyone that they are "not from here" for fear of deportation.

Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of this study is that of only having a small sample size. Originally, this study was designed to be comprised of 5–10 participants, I found it difficult to recruit more than the minimum number of participants. Creswell (2009) explained that five is an adequate number if saturation is reached. I believe saturation was reached after five interviews because data from the interviews revealed similar themes

after the first and second interviews, and after five interviews no new data or new coding seemed to emerge. Changes to recruitment procedures were made as noted in Chapter 4 with the approval of the dissertation chair, IRB, and committee members.

Another obvious limitation is that the participants were all from colleges from the south and southeast Texas and their views may not be generalizable to other parts of the country or even other parts of Texas. In addition, the participants were a self-selected group, each of whom had demonstrated academic initiative and success in achieving college enrollment.

A limitation described in Chapter 1 that may impact trustworthiness is my biases as the researcher. As with any other research study, researcher bias is a real possibility because a researcher may have prior experiences that may affect the data collection and analysis process of the study (Creswell, 2009). Consequently, the researchers' views may tarnish the results of the study. For example, as a Mexican immigrant, I have experiences that may be similar to those of the participants. Janesick (2001) recommended that researchers recognize potential biases and acknowledge them in the initial stages of the study. For this study, I was cognizant of personal researcher bias at all times and used bracketing to set aside presuppositions and view each participant interview as independent of my own experiences. I also requested constant feedback from Walden faculty to help me mitigate the issue of researcher bias. I did find discrepant information to add to the trustworthiness of this study when I found that PF4 had not experienced any prejudice or discrimination from Mexican Americans.

Recommendations

This study comprised of exploring the lived experiences of five participants who were immigrants from Mexico in a classroom setting. This study provided a wealth of rich data in that it increased knowledge of the insights, thoughts, feelings, and overall experiences of five immigrant students from Mexico which may be built upon in future research. For example, a more robust study with more participants would greatly add to the literature on this subject from other geographical areas of the United States. Future research should also include exploring the lived experiences of first-generation Mexican immigrants (born in the United States of parents who were born in Mexico), and their interactions with newly arrived immigrants from Mexico. Further research may also concentrate on the experiences of light-skinned Mexicans vs. dark-skinned Mexicans. This present study consisted of two male and three female participants. Future qualitative case studies may explore the lived experiences of only female or only male participants. All the participants were currently attending college, but future research may recruit participants who did not, or were not able to attend college due to problems of prejudice or discrimination or even bullying in school.

Implications

A qualitative phenomenological approach to this study was appropriate because it was fundamental in answering the research question; What are the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice and discrimination from other Mexican American students in the classroom setting. This type of inquiry is best suited to understand the social reality of the students' experience from their perspective.

Positive Social Change

The findings may contribute to positive social change by developing support for implementing initiatives to promote increased awareness of perceived prejudice within the Mexican American community, perhaps making it possible to provide a more welcoming attitude to Mexican immigrants. Educators and school administrators may gain a better perspective of what immigrant students from Mexico are experiencing and how it may be negatively impacting their academic achievement. College professors teaching courses dedicated to Mexican American, or Chicano studies, may benefit by discussing the findings within their classroom in an open and honest forum. Thereby, the likelihood of increasing mutual understandings of the perspectives of both Mexican Americans, and Mexican immigrants living in the United States may be supported. As part of anti-bullying initiatives, this study may help to inform implementing programs that identify instances of prejudice and discrimination towards Mexican immigrants which may improve the overall learning climate for all students (Kohli, 2008).

Conclusion

This study was important because there is a need for an increased understanding of the problems of prejudice and discrimination encountered by Mexican immigrant students within the classroom setting. It is also important because researchers believe discrimination and prejudice affect students' academic performance, and ultimately students' economic success (Alba et al., 2014; Cargile & Bolkan, 2013). This dimension of prejudice is seldom explored in the literature (Fussell, 2014; Hopkins, 2015; Umaña-Taylor, 2014).

Therefore, this research helps fill a gap by exploring the lived experiences of newly immigrated Mexican students facing prejudice from U.S.-born students of Mexican descent in the classroom setting. I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the resilience of these Mexican immigrant students and their desire to succeed even when they are faced with a myriad of obstacles stemming from their early language barriers to their limited sources of support due to their immigration status. Invariably, the desire to improve upon their parents' circumstances is a source of motivation, to not allow their parents' sacrifices to be in vain. The participants also wanted to share how many teachers helped them achieve success regardless of their lack of English-speaking skills and many were surprised that there were people who were good to them when they did not have to be. It is hoped that through studies such as this one, more help may be provided to all immigrants from any country.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research: Qualitative Exploration of Intragroup Prejudice of Mexican American Students Toward Recently Immigrated Students from Mexico

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Time of interview: _____

Place of interview: _____

Questions:

1. How would you say you get along with other students of Mexican descent?
2. Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice by Mexican Americans?
 - a. If yes, how would you describe the discrimination or prejudice you experienced?
 - b. Can you describe to me how your experience with the stressors or worries of adjusting to a new country has affected your grades in school?
 - c. What has been the most difficult or most challenging thing about the stressors or worries of learning a new culture and being a new student in an American school?
 - d. How do you see yourself coping with the stressors or worries and their effect on your learning in an American school?

“Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses to the questions are confidential. Do you have any questions?”

Appendix B: Protocolo de Entrevista en Español

Investigación: Exploración Cualitativa del Prejuicio Intragrupo de Estudiantes Mexicanoamericano Hacia Estudiantes Recientemente Emigrados de México

Entrevistador: _____

Entrevistado: _____

Fecha: _____

Hora de la Entrevista: _____

Lugar de la Entrevista: _____

Preguntas:

1. ¿Cómo dirías que te llevas bien con otros estudiantes de ascendencia Mexicana?
2. ¿Ha experimentado alguna discriminación o prejuicio por parte de los Mexico-Americanos?
 - a. En caso afirmativo, ¿cómo describiría la discriminación o los prejuicios que experimentó?
 - b. ¿Puede describirme cómo fue su experiencia con los factores estresantes o preocupaciones de adaptarse a un nuevo país ha afectado sus calificaciones en la escuela?
 - c. ¿Qué ha sido lo más difícil acerca de los factores estresantes o preocupaciones de aprender una nueva cultura y ser un nuevo estudiante en una escuela Estadounidense?
 - d. ¿Cómo te ves a ti mismo lidiando con los factores estresantes o preocupaciones y su efecto en tu aprendizaje en una escuela Estadounidense?

“Gracias por participar en esta entrevista. Sus respuestas a las preguntas son confidenciales. ¿Tienes alguna pregunta?”

Appendix E: Social Media Posting

Hello,

I am a student at Walden University, and I am looking for students who are interested in participating in an exciting study concerning prejudice from Mexican Americans towards Mexican immigrants in a school setting. Your information will be protected and known only to the researcher. You will have the right to withdraw at any time. Your participation will help me complete my dissertation and you will receive a \$25.00 gift card to use at the college bookstore of your choice upon completion of the interview as a thank you for participating.

To participate in this research, you must:

- Be a College student in Texas.
- Be 18 years old or older.
- Be an American immigrant who was born in Mexico.
- Have graduated from an American high school in Texas in the last 2 years.

Participation in this study involves:

- A time commitment of 60-90 minutes.
- Meeting with the researcher at a mutually agreed date/time via Teleconference, Zoom, or equivalent video conference application.
- Receiving a \$25.00 gift card to the College bookstore of your choice for participation.

**To find out more information about this study,
please contact Peter Valle, MA at:**

- Phone:
- Email:

Appendix F: Publicación en Redes Sociales en Español

Hola,

Soy estudiante en la Universidad Walden y estoy buscando estudiantes que estén interesados en participar en un emocionante estudio sobre los prejuicios de los mexicano-estadounidenses hacia los inmigrantes mexicanos en un entorno escolar. Su información será protegida, y solamente conocida por el investigador. Usted tendrá derecho a retirarse en cualquier momento. Su participación me ayudará a completar mi disertación y usted recibirá una tarjeta de regalo de \$25.00 para usar en la librería de la universidad al completar la entrevista como agradecimiento por participar.

Para participar en esta investigación, debe:

- Ser un estudiante de Colegio en Texas
- Tener 18 años o más
- Ser un inmigrante estadounidense que nació en México
- Se a graduado de una escuela secundaria estadounidense en Texas en los últimos 2 años.

La participación en este estudio implica:

- Un compromiso de tiempo de 60 a 90 minutos.
- Reunión con el investigador a un tiempo mutuamente acordado vía teleconferencia o Zoom o una aplicación de videoconferencia equivalente.
- Recibir una tarjeta de regalo de \$25.00 a la librería de su Colegio preferido para participar.

Para obtener más información sobre este estudio, comuníquese con Peter Valle, MA al:

- Teléfono:
- Correo electrónico: