

2022

Undocumented First-Generation Hispanic Adolescents, Acculturative Stressors, and Academic Performance

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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María Inez Acuña

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Walden University
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Abstract

Undocumented First-Generation Hispanic Adolescents, Acculturative Stressors, and

Academic Performance

by

María Inez Acuña

MA, Texas Southern University, 1997

BS, University of Houston, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Research on the acculturative stressors affecting the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents is very limited. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. Bandura's social learning theory and Berry's theory of acculturative stress provided theoretical foundations for the study. The study included seven participants from Mexico and Honduras who answered four questions from a semi structured interview protocol. Data analysis included Epoché bracketing, horizontalization, clustering into themes, textural description of the experience, structural experience of the experience, a textural-structural synthesis, and finally, identifying the common lived experience and essence of the phenomenon. Themes that emerged from the interviews were: limited English language skills, fear of failing in school, difficulty learning in the classroom, and two constant phrases used throughout the interviews: "I didn't understand" and "I didn't know." The findings of this study asserted that acculturative stressors do affect the academic performance of undocumented Hispanic adolescents. For further enlightenment in the positive social change process, educators, institutions, and policy makers, could become an integral part of a critical process known as social-emotional learning, an essential part of education and human development to benefit this group of students and the process needed to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making.

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Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Yoly Zentella for being a powerful guiding force, who challenged me to continue when I was at my highest and who nudged me along when I was at my lowest.

Mil gracias, Dr. Z., for always being there for me.

I also want to say thank you to my academic advisor, Cat Heck. A truly caring person. When we spoke, she sincerely listened to everything I said whether it was about school or my fur babies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I examined the effects of acculturative stressors on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school. Research on undocumented Hispanic adolescents is obtainable; however, finding qualitative research on acculturative stressors such as English language proficiency and self-efficacy affecting academic performance is scarce to nonexistent. Conducting this research resulted in a greater understanding on how to meet the social, emotional, and psychological needs for these students.

The potential social implications of this study include providing these adolescents with a voice, a voice spoken in their new adoptive language, English. But now, these adolescents have spoken of their challenges and hope to one day conquer them by obtaining a high school diploma or fighting for the opportunity to become a U.S. citizen. When they reach adulthood, these adolescents can bring about social change to their communities by becoming teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, clergy, attorneys, and psychologists—all professions that can use their experiences about acculturation and its stressors to address the effects of adapting to a new country. They can share how they overcame their fears and realized that they have the capacity and tenacity to manage challenges that come their way. As young adults they can form groups to help support each other in school and out of school. They can turn a negative experience into a positive outcome. They can bring awareness to their community as youth leaders in their church, within their families and even in a political party. They are the voice for future immigrant adolescents.

Chapter 1 presented to the reader the topic of the research, the population to be investigated, and the rationale for the research, as well as social implications of the study, and social changes that the participants could bring to their communities. Specifically, the subheadings for Chapter 1 are background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and a summary.

Background

There is limited research on the effects of acculturative stressors such as difficulty in English language proficiency and self-efficacy on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S. schools. There is, however, research on undocumented Hispanic adolescents regarding substance abuse, social and emotional well-being, gang activity, and dropping out (APA, 2012; Carhill, et al., 2008; Harrison et al., 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2013). Comparable studies to the one I undertook have focused on undocumented Hispanic first-generation adolescents who have lived in the United States for more than one year. While acculturative stressors and its influence on undocumented Hispanic adolescents have been researched, the population has been living in the United States for a while and thus continual and more research is needed (Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Living in-between, 2011).

Further study needs to be conducted to address the variables linked to these stressors and how to support the youth experiencing these stressors. Luttinger and Chen (2008) put the need for research on undocumented immigrant adolescents as follows:

Being that most undocumented youth will likely remain in the United States post high school graduation, and the repercussions of premature educational disengagement will resonate through society, we as counseling psychologist have a social responsibility to better understand the experience of being an undocumented student in the United States in order to increase support and reduce actual and perceived barriers to educational and career pursuits. (p. 2)

Two important and side by side barriers undocumented immigrant youth will experience upon entering a host country are cultural and linguistic obstacles. Chen et al. (2010) emphasized the importance the role a school counselor has is “to serve as agents of change in advocating social justice for their silent, and often invisible, undocumented immigrant students” (p. 260). For example, by facilitating a support group, school counselors can help undocumented immigrant adolescents recognize and validate their experiences that have been and maybe still are a challenge such as school, emotional well-being, and home life. Undocumented immigrants, whether they are children or adolescents arriving in the United States and enrolling in public education, often face obstacles unlike their documented peers that can impede their academic learning and future goals of attending college (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) published the results of a 5-year study, The Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) Study, of 300 children newly arrived in the United States from China, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico enrolled in more than 100 school districts in and around Boston and San Francisco. The study reported the challenges that these immigrant children students experienced in public education. One of the identified problems the

children experienced was the difficulty of learning English, which persisted for many years and could be attributed to the unfamiliar learning/teaching styles as well as the expectations of the teachers.

Abrego and Gonzales (2010) called for more research on the everyday experiences of undocumented students navigating high school to obtain a clearer portrait of their lives. The authors noted undocumented adolescents, including Hispanics, “face a complicated maze of contradictions, misinformation, and numerous roadblocks to education and prosperity” (p. 147). Harrison et al. (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study that investigated the social-emotional well-being of undocumented Hispanic middle school students. Their findings reported that in general, the participants felt happy about their current circumstances as opposed to years in the past, but the participants reported lower levels of satisfaction in their academic performance by stating they were not smart enough to be in school and felt less secure in their educational opportunities and talents. Harrison et al. gathered data from home visits paired with an individualized assessment tool created specifically for this study. The researchers suggested that data be gathered through public school settings using both qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby forming a better perspective on the lives of undocumented Hispanic children. Katsiaficas et al. (2013) found that first-generation immigrant-origin youth had higher levels of acculturative stress than the second-generation but perceptions of emotional and academic support did mediate the relation between acculturative stress and internalizing symptoms (depression and anxiety). Katsiaficas et al. (2013) chose a quantitative method for this study; however, the researchers commented using a mixed methods approach

could provide valuable insight into the less commonly researched social support networks for immigrant adolescents.

Researchers are increasingly including areas for further potential research among populations under study. Even though the literature on this topic is scant, Abrego and Gonzalez (2010) commented on the growing interest to conduct research on undocumented immigrant youth. I conducted this study to fill in a gap of the missing knowledge and general awareness in the field of psychology regarding the effects that acculturative stressors have on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school. Searching in Walden University library's Thoreau: Multiple Database Search for undocumented Hispanic adolescents, and acculturative stress, and education resulted in no articles; however, searching under other words or phrases related to Hispanic adolescents and acculturative stress resulted in more literature. It is evident that research on this population and the topic of acculturative stressors on their academic performance is necessary to make aware the social impact and influences these adolescents have in their community and their adopted homeland. As anticipated, the results of this study found that being limited in the English language could be a contributing factor to dropping out of school. The results of this study also demonstrated that the self-efficacy of these adolescents is an important factor to facing daily challenges.

The need for this study is for the benefit of people and organizations or agencies associated with undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents experiencing acculturative stressors thus impacting their academic performance. During Vasquez's

2011 tenure as president of the American Psychological Association (APA), she commissioned a comprehensive report titled the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration to address the “psychological factors related to the experience of immigration” (APA, 2012, p. 9). This report was generated to give psychological researchers, practitioners, educators, and graduate students an understanding of the psychological process of immigration, the immigrant population growth, to dispel myths about immigrants, the values immigrants bring to this country, and their contribution to their adopted country. The report discussed how acculturation can be a stressor, such as learning a new language, where “immigrants may feel a threat to their sense of self-efficacy” (APA, 2012, p. 28). The report also mentioned the unfairness and unrealistic expectations of testing newcomers designed for a mainstream population thus resulting in the underperformance of bilingual children and adolescents in school. Psychology is bringing wanted and needed attention to the immigrant population.

Problem Statement

To adequately understand the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school, and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance, research on this topic and population is needed. By understanding lived experiences of this group; the needs of this demographic can be addressed. Currently, there is limited research on this topic creating a problem of comprehension and awareness in understanding the effects of acculturative stressors such as English language proficiency and self-efficacy (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Luttinger & Chen, 2008; Pessoa, 2008; Roysircar & Maestas, 2002).

English language acquisition and self-efficacy are two contributing and vital elements to the psychological well-being of immigrant adolescents. In 2012, the American Psychological Association published a comprehensive scientific review on immigration. This report had three guiding principles: immigrants are resilient and resourceful, immigrants are influenced by their social/environmental surroundings, and their culture shapes human experience (APA, 2012). With respect to the influence of an immigrant's surrounding, my research investigated how education contributes to the welfare of these adolescents. One factor that can help assess academic performance of undocumented adolescents and help bridge the achievement gap is assessing completion of homework. Bang et al. (2011) examined individual and environmental factors associated with completion of homework among newcomer immigrant students from Central America, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, and China and the educational challenges these students faced. One result indicated that newcomer immigrant students who had better opportunities to develop academic and English proficiency skills were more likely to turn in their homework. The study also confirmed that a newcomer's quality of the home and school environment supported homework completion. Bang et al. expressed that "interrupted or limited formal schooling in their countries of origin" (p. 46) was a factor not studied but could play a significant role in the completion of homework.

Learning English is a skill, just like learning to walk: one step or word at a time until it is mastered. Hakuta et al. (2000) researched the length of time it took for English language learners to attain proficiency. After compiling data from four school districts:

two in California and two summary data reports by researchers in Canada, Hakuta et al. (2000) concluded that “oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years” (p. 13). Learning English is paramount in achieving academic success; however, impediment of language acquisition is a detriment to this achievement. Carhill et al. (2008) found, in their study of 274 first-generation immigrants schooled in the United States for almost 7 years, only 7% developed academic English skills. Carhill et al. (2008) maintained that exposure to English in informal social settings such as conversations in school hallways and the cafeteria or with friends during school offered these students the use of English rendering a stronger English proficiency; however, living in poverty and doing poorly in ELA (English Language Arts) classes resulted in acquisition of English that was less than par. Hakuta et al. (2000) and Carhill et al. (2008) provided evidence-based research on English language acquisition and its primary role in the life of an undocumented Hispanic adolescent.

Self-efficacy is having a belief in one’s ability to succeed in a given situation, or in Bandura’s (1995) own words, “Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). A person’s self-efficacy determines how a goal or a challenge will be approached: for example, someone with a strong sense of self-efficacy will tackle a problem rather than avoid it and focus on their strengths rather than on personal failures and regain confidence quickly. Research on Hispanic adolescents’ academic self-efficacy and academic performance was conducted on 478 seventh graders whose generational status was 1st generation (9%), 2nd generation (36%), and 3rd generation and higher

(54%); Only 13% were receiving ELL services (Chun & Dickson, 2011). The results indicated positive effects of parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and a sense of school belonging were connected to academic self-efficacy leading to better academic performance. The study did not state which generation was impacted.

Just like any adolescent aspiring to go to college, it becomes a greater challenge for undocumented Hispanic adolescents struggling with the English language to imagine the possibility. Middle and high school Hispanic students with a generational status of 1.5 were selected to participate in a study to answer the following questions: “How do acculturation, ethnic identity, and perceptions of barriers predict college-going self-efficacy beliefs for adolescents in an emerging Hispanic immigrant community; and how do they predict educational aspirations?” (Gonzalez et al., 2013, p. 106). Using 12 cultural identity variables (college-going efficacy, education aspiration, private ethnic identity, public ethnic identity, Anglo orientation, Hispanic orientation, personal barriers, economic barriers, resilience to barriers, age, generation, and mother’s education), findings suggested that college-going efficacy was significantly associated with educational aspirations, Anglo orientation (thinking in English), public regard (perception of others), resilience to barriers in the positive direction, and resilience regarding economic and person-based barriers in the negative direction. This study suggested that Hispanic immigrant adolescents are acculturating but also developing a sense of belief in themselves (Gonzalez et al., 2013)

It is also important to highlight studies conducted on the mental well-being of undocumented Hispanic adolescents as this serves to address how acculturative stress

affects internalizing and externalizing symptoms directly affecting the academic performance of these adolescents. Sirin et al. (2013) found that first-generation Hispanic high school age students experiencing high levels of acculturative stress experienced a negative effect on the mental well-being of these youth but most significant in the study was “the effect of acculturative stress on the developmental course of mental health symptoms” (p. 744). According to the Department of Human Services Office of Immigration Statistics (2008), 51.6% of foreign-born Hispanics in the United States did not graduate from high school, and only 10.2% had graduated from college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Hispanic youth have a higher dropout rate than their counterparts: 17.2% for Hispanics compared to 9.3% for African Americans and 5.7% White, non-Hispanics (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) was enacted to improve student progress and close the achievement gap, but the gap between non-English and English-speaking students has widened (Menken, 2010). President Obama attempted to reform the NCLB law, but Congress did not reauthorize the reform. This law affects ELL (English Language Learner) students and their academic progress. In the state of Texas, ELL students are required to take the STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) a test that measures the progress students, in Grades 3-8, make in an academic school year (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Like STAAR and all other high-stakes testing, the second language acquisition of ELLs is still developing thus making it a challenge for ELL students to pass the test (Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). This atmosphere of test taking can become

disconcerting for ELL students in 3rd grade taking the STAAR for the first time and knowing they must take it every year to pass to the next grade. Having to learn English is difficult but having to take a rigorous state-mandate test is challenging and can feel defeating regarding the ability to conquer the gaping hole in public education.

The issue that was investigated, the effects of acculturative stressors on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school, builds upon previous research which states acculturation, ethnic identity, poverty, parents' low levels of educational attainment, discrimination and racism, and other negative factors affect the educational outcome of Hispanic adolescents, both documented and undocumented (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Guyll et al., 2010; Sirin et al., 2013). Current literature addresses acculturation and its effects on the undocumented Hispanic adolescent residing in the U.S. more than one year (APA, 2012; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Sirin et al., 2013). The gap that needs to be addressed is the acculturative stressors and the effects on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S. schools. There is not enough psychological research on this topic. To understand the lived experiences and to be able to assist these adolescents is an observation worth investigating.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. The paradigm or worldview chosen for this research was social constructivism. My objective was to seek an understanding of the

lived experiences and the effects of acculturative stressors on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents by asking open-ended questions and allowing the participants to construct their meaning of the phenomenon. Interacting with these adolescents gave me an understanding of their cultural and historical background. My experiences and upbringing was drawn upon to interpret the findings to help make sense and give a value of how the participants view their world (Creswell, 2007).

This study was a psychological phenomenological investigation. The intent of the study was to describe the lived experiences by writing a textural and a structural description of the circumstances that led to their experiences, my experiences, and a composite description of the lived experiences through in-depth interviews in English and Spanish. The phenomenon of interest studied was acculturative stress and the impact it has on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance?

Theoretical Framework

Two theories that became the framework for this study were Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Berry

conceived the theory of acculturative stress to deal with the “problematic aspect of acculturation” (p. 43). He divided acculturation into “two main theoretical perspectives on how groups and individuals manage the process of acculturation” (p. 43): one is stress, coping, and adaptation and the other is the cultural learning process. Bandura developed his social learning theory because “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.” (p. 22). He wanted to expand on learning theories by incorporating behavior and cognitive elements to explain that a person’s behavior can be learned from their environment through the process of observational learning.

Acculturative stress is the stress or anxiety one experiences when moving from one’s native country to another country. The acculturative stress framework also tagged as a “stress, coping and adaption approach” (Berry, 2006, p. 43) and can occur when the acculturation process exceeds the individual’s coping ability and stress levels which vary according to the manner of acculturation, cultural values, beliefs of the adopted country, and certain demographic variables such as age and gender. To quote Berry (2006), acculturative stress “is a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation” (p. 43). According to Kuo and Roysircar (2004), first- and second-generation adolescent immigrants experience coping difficulties, depression acculturative stress, low self-esteem, and feelings of being disconnected from family and peers. Acculturative stress has been linked to depressive symptoms and suicidal behaviors in male and female Hispanic high school students. As for the academic

performance of Hispanic adolescents, Zychinski and Polo's (2012) study showed that acculturative stress was a contributing factor to high levels of depression and low academic performance.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is built upon two principals: behaviorism and cognitive theories, and environmental influences leading to a reciprocal determinism. Four components included in the framework are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. For an individual to learn, they must pay attention to modeled behavior, remember the observed behavior, reproduce the observed behavior, and motivation must be present to perform the observed behavior. Bandura's theory gives a comprehensive view of the learning process that can be applied to understand the academic performance of first-generation undocumented Hispanic adolescents.

A major theoretical proposition of Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress is the relationship between acculturation experiences and adaptation. Berry states that the acculturation experiences of these individuals and their group establishing in a new country can become a challenge thus finding resources to help cope with the challenges and utilizing the coping strategies can lead "to variable degrees of adaptation" (Berry, 2006, p. 54). The major hypothesis of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is the relationship between modeling and observation: how individuals "operate cognitively on their social experiences and with how these cognitive operations then come to influence their behavior and development" (Grusec, 1992, p. 781). A more detailed explanation of both propositions will be given in Chapter 2.

Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory are constructs developed to understand and explain the behaviors and thought processes of a person or a group of people. My study was a psychological phenomenological investigation of the acculturative stressors that affect the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. Both theories gave this study a foundation to build and shape an understanding of the effects acculturative stressors have on the lived experiences of adolescents who were recently enrolled in U.S. schools. This study had two research questions. What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? The research questions were designed to allow me to hear and bear witness to the psychological impact acculturative stressors have on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. It is good to note that acculturation, the initiator of acculturative stress, "involves the contact that takes place at both group and individual levels leading to changes which for the individual entail affective, behavioral and cognitive changes and subsequent long-term modification of psychological and sociocultural adaptation" (Sam, 2006, p. 21).

Nature of the Study

The research design for this study was a qualitative phenomenological approach which described the patterns of lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon of several people (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) defines phenomenology as "knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and

knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (p. 27). A phenomenon in a scientific world is an object of human experience (van Manen, 1990). The rationale for selecting this approach was to focus on the description of the lived experiences and less on the interpretation. Interviewing the participants about their experiences allowed me to write a detailed and accurate description of their experiences. It also allowed me to share with the public how the phenomenon was experienced and in what context the phenomenon was experienced.

The phenomenon investigated was acculturative stress and the impact it has on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school. Adolescents relocated into a new environment such as a new country will experience acculturation and its stressors, or they might make the decision to assimilate rather than experience any effects of acculturation quickly. Acculturative stressors that immigrant adolescents can experience include difficulty in learning the English language and lacking self-efficacy regarding their ability to succeed (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

Data were collected from undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. middle school. A phenomenological data analysis of this study was to build data from the research questions, filter through the data, and highlight significant statements that provide an understanding of the lived experiences by writing a textual description of their experiences, a structural description of the circumstances that led to their experiences, and then last to combine both compositions to write a composite description demonstrating the essence or fundamental nature of the phenomenon. This

was done by conducting in-depth interviews using open-ended questions in English and Spanish depending on the preference of participant (Creswell, 2007).

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout the study:

Acculturation: A bilinear process that is occurring with respect to both the new and the heritage culture (APA, 2012).

Acculturative Stress: Stressful life events thought to be associated with the acculturation process (APA, 2012).

ELL: English Language Learner (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). An ELL (English Language Learner) individual can be a child, adolescent, or adult.

First-generation: Born abroad to non-U.S. citizen parents (APA, 2012).

Hispanic: A Hispanic(a) is an individual born in the United States or born outside the United States; also, a Hispanic(a) can originate from Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Argentina, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, and Guatemala.

Immigrant: Born abroad to non-U.S. citizen parents (APA, 2012). An immigrant can be someone recently arrived or has lived in their adopted country for many years.

Lived Experiences: This term is used in phenomenological studies to emphasize the importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings (Creswell, 2007).

Newcomer: First-generation immigrant arriving within the last 4 years (APA, 2012).

Self-efficacy: Having the belief in one's ability to succeed in a given situation (Bandura, 1977).

Phenomenological Study: This type of study describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenon: This is the central concept being examined by the phenomenologist. It is the concept being experienced by subjects in a study which may include psychological concepts such as grief, anger, or love (Creswell, 2007).

Structural Description: From the first three steps in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes a description of "how" the phenomenon was experienced by individuals in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural Description: From the first three steps in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes about what was experienced, a description of the meaning individuals has experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

Undocumented: Individuals without legal authorization who reside in the country. These individuals are not U.S. citizens, do not hold current visas, and have not been permitted admission under a specific set of rules for longer-term residence and work permits (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants were truthful and forthcoming with the answers given during the interview. I assumed participants were honest and provided a detailed account of their lived experiences. It is assumed that the participants did not embellish their story just for the sake of being part of a research project. It is also assumed that the

participants are undocumented and enrolled in a U.S. school. I did not ask for proof of their resident status. I accepted their honesty and sincerity. It was assumed that the participants experienced the phenomenon studied: acculturative stress. I gathered all data based on the belief that the participants were truthful and candid during the interview.

The assumptions described were crucial elements to this study. I assumed and accepted honesty, accuracy, and genuineness on the part of all participants. Accepting the truths and going forth with them is the role of the researcher.

Scope and Delimitations

Specific aspects of the research problem addressed in the study were acculturative stress; undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents; and academic performance. In this country, undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents are a population not evaluated as much as American-born Hispanic. The impact of the acculturative stress of the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents has not been investigated much in the area of psychology. Abrego and Gonzales (2010) and Luttinger and Chen (2008) urged for the exploration into the lives of undocumented Hispanic adolescents to better understand the experience of being an undocumented student in the United States. The need to focus on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and acculturative stressors arise from the limited literature found in psychological research. The need to explore and find answers to help these adolescents be productive is evident when other scholars urge the need for this research to take place.

The population for this investigation was undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents of middle school age, 12 to 15 years old attending public schools in Texas.

The population excluded high school age undocumented Hispanic adolescents, 15 to 19 years old. This population was excluded due to the maturity level and the possibility of not attending high school for long thus dropping out and finding employment.

The theoretical concepts used were Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. A theoretical framework not included but suitable for this study is Bronfenbrenner's ecological model developed in 1979.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory analyzes the social contexts of human development through five environmental systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each system is a different interaction between a living organism, a person, and the multiple environments that person lives in ranging from direct interactions with immediate family (microsystem) to the attitudes and behaviors that person exhibits in the culture he or she lives in (macrosystem). This theory could have been applied by using the five systems to explain the experiences of the undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescent; however, Berry's theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's social learning theory gave a more essential and relevant approach to the purpose of this study. The focus of this study was not about the interaction with environments but rather the essence of the experiences, the acculturative stressors, thus making Bronfenbrenner's theory incompatible.

To enhance the potential transferability of this study I provided a thick description, a full and purposeful account of the context, participants, and the research design so the reader can decide on transferability. Also critical is selecting the appropriate participants that most represent the research design and who will enhance the likelihood

that a reader will transfer the results to their given context (Jensen, 2008). Educators working in locations with undocumented students such as Texas cities near the Hispanic border: Laredo, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Harlingen, and McAllen to name a few will be able to transfer the results of this study to their situation or settings as being a classroom teacher, school counselor, and school administrator. The findings can bring alertness that there is evidence-based research that this phenomenon is real, and these adolescents need direction and supervision to be productive in their academics.

Limitations

Limitations of the study could have included qualitative approach, population, method of data collection, the amount of time spent on participants, and researcher influence. The focus of phenomenology understands the essence of the experience by studying several individuals having shared the experience. Researching only the lived experiences and describing the essence of the experience is only a fragment of a theme that can be expanded by grounding a theory from the participants perspective, studying the interaction of these participants with family and friends, drawing from disciplines- anthropology and sociology. Phenomenology draws from philosophy, psychology, and education. The population consisted of no more than 10 undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. This number cannot accurately provide the discipline of psychology evidence to support that acculturative stress affects all undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. If time and resources permitted, I could have carried this study out of the state of Texas and interview this population from California, New York, Illinois, and other cities with a high number of Hispanics. The method of data

collection could primarily come from interviews and analysis of the data would be to look for significant statements, and textural and structural descriptors. The amount of time spent on the interviews would all depend on the availability of the participants and the number of participants needed. My influence on the investigation could have impacted the outcome, especially if transcribing verbatim and analyzing what was said and looking for the essence of the lived experiences. I could interject my take on the phenomenon or inaccurately describe the essence.

The trustworthiness of this study depends on transferability and dependability, meaning that to facilitate transferability “it is valuable to give a clear and distinct description of culture and context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 110).

Dependability in a study refers to the researcher requiring “adequate and relevant methodological information to enable others to replicate the study...the fact that the research context is open to change and variation.” (Jensen, 2008, p. 209).

Limitations of transferability would be to have an anemic description by not providing the reader with a complete account of the phenomenon, the link between the phenomenon and undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents, and the purpose for using a qualitative research design for this subject matter. All these factors could impede the reader from making a judgment whether the results can be transferred to a similar setting such as working with undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance.

A limitation of dependability would be a feeble description of the purpose of the study, deficient in the operational detail of data gathering, and a poor evaluation of the study. These inadequacies would hinder the possibility of replicating the study. A bias that could influence the outcome of the study would be to include my perceptions into the findings. To address these concerns, I would meditate and bracket my thinking to deeply reflect on the purpose of the study, who the participants are, accept at face value every word spoken, keep a reflection journal, and ask for assistance if needed. To address the limitations, I could in the future conduct a mixed methods study by conducting a two-phase project thus connecting data collection from a first phase (quantitative) and the data collection of a second phase (qualitative). For example, gather and analyze data from LISA and use it to identify participants for a qualitative data collection in a follow-up phase. The time on this project might take longer but collecting two sets of data gives the study more validity

Significance

Phenomenological research on the effects of acculturative stress on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents can potentially contribute to cross-cultural psychology. Cross-cultural psychology is defined as “a field that specializes in studying and conceptualizing the relationships between cultural factors and human behavioral, mental, and emotional functioning” and “studies the nature and scope of human diversity at the level of the individual and the reasons for that diversity, yet it also studies that which is universal in the psychology of human beings” (Wallace, 2006, p. 116). Cross-cultural research according to Ferdman and Sagiv (2012) aims at

identifying and describing in a non-judgmental way. The role of a cross-cultural researcher is “to give voice to cultural values, beliefs, and practices that they may personally disagree with...identifies cultural commonalities and differences and investigates the complex ways through which cultural dimensions affect individuals, teams, and organizations” (Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012, p. 377-378). Investigating the lived experiences of the phenomenon acculturative stress via a cross-cultural psychologist can potentially contribute much-needed literature to the topic of acculturative stressors and undocumented Hispanic adolescents. The literature on acculturation is abundant but adding literature on how the stress of acculturation can be detrimental to the academic performance of an undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescent is a much-desired component to help balance literature on acculturation and undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents.

This study brings awareness to policy makers in the state of Texas and beyond that undocumented non-English speaking Hispanic adolescents enrolled in Texas public schools as ELL students must take the STAAR, a state mandate test, to pass to the next grade. An awareness that there is no justification for an ELL students’ promotion or retention should be based on an achievement test. If this study can make its way to Texas Education Agency, headed by the Commissioner of Education and taken into consideration what this investigation entails then maybe TEA will communicate with the U.S. Department of Education that the NCLB (2002) Law is inefficient and unrealistic. A positive social change this study can contribute is to bring awareness to mental health professionals in private practice, school psychologists and school guidance counselors of

the need to assist these adolescents with the stressors associated with acculturation, and to provide updated and informed training to educators working with these students. In the community where these adolescents live, a contributing positive social change this study can achieve is making the Hispanic community aware that the acculturative stressors their children experienced are being investigated for the purpose of understanding the challenges these adolescents face.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 1 described the purpose of this phenomenological study. I described the population utilized, the significance of the study, and the meaningful gap in the current research literature. Further, I identified the theoretical frameworks and discussed limitations of the study. The following chapter will discuss the method of retrieving scholarly literature, an in-depth description of Berry's (2006) and Bandura's (1977) theories, and an intense review of current literature about the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of undocumented, first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. To effectively understand what those lived experiences are, research on this topic and population is needed to recognize the needs these adolescents have to be productive citizens in a new environment. There is limited research on this topic, thus creating a problem of comprehension and knowledge to understand the effects of acculturative stressors, such as English language proficiency and self-efficacy, on their academic performance (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Luttinger & Chen, 2008; Pessoa, 2008; Roysircar & Maestas, 2002). Because this study is unique and relatively new to social and behavioral sciences, there is limited research on the effects of acculturative stressors such as difficulty in English language proficiency and self-efficacy on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S. schools. A lack of studies researching exclusively undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents was challenging to find. Thus, I turned to research whose sample population included undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents in other topics. What little research exists I focused on a range of research topics, such as substance abuse, social and emotional well-being, gang activity, and high school dropout rates. Studies on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents focus on first-generation adolescents living in the U.S. for a longer period of time, meaning that enough time has passed to put their culture aside and accept the culture they had been transferred into (Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Living In-Between, 2011;

Perez et al., 2011; Sirin et al., 2013). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) conducted a 5-year study, a longitudinal immigrant student adaptation (LISA) study, which began in 1997 and employed a variety of cross-disciplinary and comparative data collection techniques to understand the ways in which adolescent newcomers from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico adapted to life in the United States. A major, if not the main, quandary these children experienced was learning English. Bang et al. (2011) examined individual and environmental factors associated with completion of homework among newcomer immigrant students. One of the results indicated that newcomer immigrant students who had better opportunities to develop academic skills and English proficiency skills were more likely to turn in their homework. The study confirmed that the quality of a newcomer's home and school environment supported homework completion. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as having a belief in one's ability to succeed in each situation. Suárez-Orozco et al. defined academic self-efficacy as "the belief that one is competent and in control of one's learning at least to some degree" (p. 46). Suárez-Orozco et al. found that immigrant students with high levels of academic self-efficacy were more likely to engage in meaningful relationships with teachers and peers and more likely to take on academic challenges.

Guidance counseling in schools is an integral part of education. School counselors guide and counsel students, their parents, and sometimes staff members. I am currently an elementary school counselor in the third largest school district in the state of Texas. The student population on my campus averages 950. It has the highest ELL and economically challenged student population in the district. I am counselor for students in

prekindergarten (PK) to fifth grade. My role is to systematically assist students to develop skills they need to enhance their personal, social, educational, and career development. Meeting with undocumented students and determining how to meet their needs is a challenge. Chen et al. (2010) envisioned school counselors developing support groups for undocumented immigrant students, but the authors realized that school counselors would encounter barriers. Chen et al. recommended counselors should be knowledgeable about rules and regulations, ask for support from the school staff and administration when needed, and most important, extend all facets of the counselling service to undocumented immigrant students. Allowing undocumented immigrant youth to attend public schools, prekindergarten (PK) to Grade 12, is a federal law. The United States Supreme Court held, in the case of *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), that a State may not deny access to basic public education to any child residing in the State, whether present in the United States legally or otherwise.

Luttinger and Chen (2008) wrote that the social responsibility of academicians is to “better understand the experiences of being an undocumented student in the United States” (p. 2). To do this, psychologists need to expand or magnify their role from being a traditional psychologist to finding how to assist these undocumented immigrant youth through research and reaching out. In 2012, the American Psychological Association published a comprehensive scientific review on immigration to provide researchers, practitioners, educators, graduate students, and policymakers an understanding of the psychological process of immigration. The goals of the report were to raise awareness about the increasing immigrant population in the United States to address the mental and

behavioral health needs of immigrants; and to make recommendations to improve education, research, practice, and policy for immigrants of all ages and backgrounds. Abrego and Gonzales (2010) petitioned for more research to gain a clearer picture of the experiences of undocumented students navigating through high school as well as looking at how their legal status can shape and restrict their “educational trajectories” (p. 145). The current literature addresses acculturation and its effects on the undocumented Hispanic adolescent, including Hispanics who have resided in the United States more than one year. The gaps that need to be addressed are the acculturative stressors and their effects on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S. schools. To better understand how to address this gap, Chapter 2 discussed literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation, and research findings related to key concepts in this study.

Literature Search Strategy

To manage my literature research, I used Walden University’s library as well as the University of Houston’s Main Campus library. Through Walden’s library I searched in EBSCO databases, Google Scholar, Google, Encyclopedias and Handbooks, and Test and Measures search engines. Specifically, I found articles in PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycCRITIQUE, PsycEXTRA, SAGE Premier, and SocioINDEX with Full Text, ERIC, SAGE Encyclopedias, SAGE Research Methods Online, Social Sciences Citation Index, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. However, most of the articles found came from ERIC, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and SocioINDEX with Full-Text databases. A combination of key search words used

included: *acculturative stress; acculturative stressors; undocumented immigrant adolescent; Hispanic immigrant; undocumented Hispanic adolescent; undocumented immigrant; acculturative stress and immigrant adolescent; undocumented adolescent and acculturative stressors; illegal immigrant adolescents; acculturative stressors and education; acculturative stressors and undocumented immigrants; undocumented adolescents and education; and undocumented Hispanic children and education..* Additionally, when searching for qualitative research methodological terms and definitions and Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology, I used SAGE Encyclopedias and SAGE Research Methods Online databases. A combination of key search words included *transcendental phenomenology; phenomenological research; qualitative method and transcendental phenomenology research; and qualitative research and phenomenological research.*

In addition, specific books were used as overviews that suggested areas of exploration within the literature. These books included *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation Across National Contexts* (Berry et al, 2006); *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008); *Growing Up Hispanic: Health and Development of Children of Immigrants* (Landale et al., 2010); and *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Searching for scholarly articles on acculturative stressors and undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents was challenging and discouraging because both subjects are important to anyone who works with these adolescents, but resources were

scarce. This realization was handled with much patience and an understanding that though the theme might sound like any other article on undocumented immigrants the real difference is searching with lots of fortitude through many scholarly articles, textbooks, primary source books, google scholar even Wikipedia but the most challenging was dedicating time to a topic that can potentially have a social impact.

Theoretical Foundation

The two theories used to provide the framework for this study are Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress (TAS) and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory (SLT). Berry devised TAS to deal with the "problematic aspect of acculturation" (p. 43). He divided acculturation into "two main theoretical perspectives on how groups and individuals manage the process of acculturation" (p. 43). For Berry, the first perspective is stress, coping, and adaptation and the second is the cultural learning process. Bandura developed his SLT because "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." (p. 22). He wanted to expand on learning theories by incorporating behavior and cognitive elements to explain that a person's behavior can be learned from their environment through the process of observational learning. The following is a discussion of the theories, the propositions, and the assumptions of Berry and Bandura.

A Theoretical Framework: Berry and Bandura

The theoretical framework guides the study. Two theories encompassed the framework, Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. A discussion follows.

Berry's Theoretical Propositions

Berry's (2006) theory posits that acculturative stress can occur when the acculturation process exceeds the individual's coping ability and stress levels vary according to the manner of acculturation, cultural values and beliefs of the adopted country and certain demographic variables such as age and gender. A major theoretical proposition is relationship between acculturation experiences and adaptation. Berry states that the acculturation experiences of these individuals and their families establishing in a new country can become a challenge thus finding resources to help cope with the challenges and utilizing the coping strategies can lead "to variable degrees of adaptation" (p. 54). Basically, Berry's theory describes and explains two variables that form the theory: acculturation experience and adaptation. Acculturation refers to "the process of culture contact that generally occurs through movement from a place of origin to a different place of settlement" (Donà & Ackermann, 2006, p. 218) and an experience is defined as "the process of doing and seeing things and of having things happen to you" ("Experience", n.d.). The acculturation experience is a process that a person undergoes with positive or negative results depending on the person's ecological system: "food, climate, language, financial issues, work/study problems, and loss of social network are among the concerns when one moves to a different culture" (Gardiner & Kosmitzki,

2005, p. 261) as “well as the dynamics of the ecological system into which the person enters” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2005, p. 261).

Bandura’s Theoretical Propositions

Bandura’s (1977) theory posits that behavior is learned by observation. The premise of Bandura’s SLT is the relationship between modeling and observation: how individuals “operate cognitively on their social experiences and with how these cognitive operations then come to influence their behavior and development” (Grusec, 1992, p. 781). Bandura hypothesized that a person would take or extract information from a given situation or an experience and incorporate that information to form “response-outcome experiences, perceptions of self-efficacy, and standards for evaluative self-reactions” (Grusec, 1992, p. 781) in turn influencing their way of living.

Self-efficacy is having a belief in one’s ability to succeed in a given situation, or in Bandura’s own words, “Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (1995, p. 2). Bandura believed that self-efficacy can be a motivation factor in education, for example, a student will work hard on a science project if the student believes he/she can begin and completing the project. A student, who believes he/she can tackle an advanced class or, become a lead basketball player, will demonstrate success. Students’ who believe they can reach the desired level of academic proficiency is called academic self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995). It is important to note that middle school adolescents and their self-efficacy are critical during this period of their lives (Høigaard et al., 2015). A school’s psychological climate can also influence a student’s self-efficacy—high

academic expectations from teachers and parents, mastery of advanced classes and controlling one's learning (Bandura et al., 2001).

Berry's Theoretical Assumption

Berry (2006) assumes that when an individual can no longer deal with the dramatic changes that have occurred during acculturation that person will experience negative psychological responses associated with acculturative stress which can “possibly include anxiety, depression, somatic complaints, identity confusion, and feelings of marginality” (Hernandez, 2009, p. 717).

Bandura's Theoretical Assumption

Bandura (1977) assumes an understanding and explanation of human behavior. The objective is to explain the development of a behavior, the maintenance of a behavior and the adaptation of behavior. Importantly it provides a comprehensive view in how behavior, cognition and environmental influences affect an individual.

Literature Review of the Theories of Berry and Bandura

In this section, a literature review of Berry (2006) and Bandura's (1977) theory was examined to give a more comprehensive perspective on the theme of my study. I addressed the lack of research on acculturative stress on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the impact it can have on their academic performance.

TAS

Berry's (2006) acculturative stress construct has been applied to a variety of research topics ranging from acculturation, cultural identity, depression, discrimination, immigrants, Hispanics, Asians, sojourners, refugees, and adolescents just to name a few.

A qualitative focus group exploring stressful life events of middle school and high school age Hispanic adolescents was guided by the TAS. The theory was used to design an interview guide that encompassed six stress domains: immigration, communication and language, school and academic, peer, family, and social and economic (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011). Another study using Berry's concept of acculturative stress was Castro-Olivo et al. (2014) quantitative study on validating the Coping with Acculturative Stress in American Schools-A (CASAS-A) Scale, a self-report measure attempting to gauge acculturative stress through four theorized factors that pertain to acculturative stress: perceived discrimination; familiar acculturative gaps; English Language Learner-related stress; and low sense of school and community belonging in the context of school socialization. The internal consistency and test-re-test reliability of the scale were $\alpha = .88$ and $r = .84$ suggesting that CASAS was a satisfactory measuring tool for Hispanic middle school students. Evidence for concurrent, convergent, and divergent validity was established using bivariate correlations. According to the 2010 Census, the Asian population has grown faster than any other race group in the United States between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Out of the total U.S. population, 14.7 million people, or 4.8 % were Asian alone.

A study with a sample population taken from the National Hispanic and Asian American Study (NLAAS) database wanted to investigate what social and linguistic factors predicted acculturative stress. The constructs measured were English language proficiency, native language proficiency, language preference, discrimination, family cohesion and the context of exit using the theoretical model of acculturative stress. The

study was based on the need to address social and linguistic predictors of acculturative stress because no previous research was available. The findings concluded that the constructs English and native language proficiencies and a bilingual language preference indicated high acculturative stress among Asian immigrants. Lueck and Wilson (2010) commented that “providing immigrants and ethnic minorities with bilingual options and opportunities may help them to more effectively cope with acculturative stress and to reduce stress levels” (p. 55).

The focus of my study understood the lived experiences of enrolled undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. My study used Berry’s (2006) acculturative stress theory to support the concepts of acculturation and stress, which combined affect the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. The school and academic stress domain in Cervantes and Cordova’s (2011) study named “not understanding English” and “perceived discrimination” as key stressors. The key stressors in the communication and language domain were “not knowing English,” “having to learn English,” and “serving as family translator.”

SLT

Unlike Berry’s (2006) acculturative stress theory that has been applied to a variety of topics identifying with immigrants which are not necessarily the case with Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. Searching for literature on undocumented first-generation Hispanic immigrants with Bandura’s SLT as its theoretical framework has been very difficult. However, I was fortunate to have found a limited count of articles that used a

component of the social learning theory, self-efficacy, as its theoretical framework and foreign-born students as its sample group. Fries-Britt et al. (2014) used acculturation literature and self-efficacy theory to guide their research by asking “What are the acculturation experiences of foreign-born Students of Color majoring in physics?” (p. 460). Fries-Britt et al. qualitative study found that participants used their academic knowledge as well as their social connections with peers and supportive faculty to navigate through their physics class, but their strong sense of self-efficacy helped develop a healthy belief in themselves’ to succeed. Fries-Britt et al. discussed that the self-efficacy framework puts into perspective how Bandura’s self-efficacy construct is hardly utilized in understanding how non-native students navigate public education in the U.S. Employing it as an “analytic tool to examine how students describe their ability to achieve success” (p. 461) was a compliment to Berry’s theory of acculturation which focuses on the psychosocial and sociocultural factors related to the process of intercultural contact.

Rationale of Berry’s and Bandura’s Theory

The rationale for choosing Berry’s (2006) TAS and Bandura’s (1977) SLT was that the concepts were formed to help understand and explain behaviors and thought processes of an individual or a group of individuals. Both theories gave this study a foundation to build and shape an understanding of the effects acculturative stressors have on the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school. A discussion on the theories follows.

The Theories of Berry and Bandura and the Current Study

Berry's (2006) acculturative stress theory states that acculturation is a process of psychological and social change following contact between two different cultures. These encounters can have positive as well as negative experiences for immigrants. The population of my study was undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescent immigrants. Because this population entered the U.S. illegally, they face cultural and linguistic barriers in school, their family, and local community. It can be said with confidence that these adolescents will experience acculturative stress if they remain permanently in the U.S.

Bandura's (1977) theory is comprised of behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors. This construct has a more holistic approach to understanding human behavior and understanding the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. Self-efficacy is an important mechanism of Bandura's theory. Behavior change comes when a person believes in their ability to succeed in each situation or to face a challenge head-on. Undocumented adolescent Hispanic immigrant students face many hurdles in school and often do not have a strong sense of self-efficacy.

The Relationship between Theories and Current Study

Berry's (2006) and Bandura's (1977) theories related to my study by supporting the themes of acculturative stress and low self-efficacy. Berry's theory provides a pathway of understanding the phenomenon, acculturative stress, and its negative effect on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. Bandura's theory offers an explanation on why acculturative stress can produce low self-efficacy in these

adolescents' lives. The findings did show that these two aspects can greatly impact their academic performance.

The Theories of Berry and Bandura and the Research Questions

The selected theories offered guidance and direction in finding the answers to the research questions of this study. The research questions of this study are: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? The first question addressed the lived experiences, and the second question focused on the effects of acculturative stressors. Berry's (2006) TAS supports the concepts being studied because Berry structured his theory to help understand that "acculturative stress is a response by people to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact" (Berry, 2006, p. 43). A response is a reaction to an experience. The respondents of my study reacted to the effects of acculturative stress with a weak sense of self-efficacy and low performing grades in a U.S. school. Bandura's (1977) SLT supports the concepts of this study by providing an explanation on how the effects of acculturative stress can potentially produce negative or unhealthy behaviors. In this study, negative or unhealthy behaviors could be described as unenthusiastic perceptions of U.S. schools.

My study was built on Bandura's (1977) SLT by applying Bandura's theory to a marginalized population. Bandura's theory and undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents are two concepts that may be mismatched, but the research that can be applied is limitless. Unlike Bandura, Berry's (2006) TAS has been utilized as an instrument of guidance to study undocumented immigrants, adults, and adolescents;

however, my study will build upon his theory by its application to recently arrived undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescent immigrants.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

In this section I presented and examined the literature on the constructs of interest: the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school, and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performances. The literature on phenomenology was discussed.

Concept 1: The Lived Experiences

Lad and Braganza (2013) carried out a qualitative study using a phenomenology approach that explored the “experiences of school personnel working with undocumented immigrants in public schools and the opinions and attitudes of school personnel” (p. 1). What prompted the authors to begin this investigation were two instances that occurred on a middle school campus. The first was the school personnel labeling undocumented students as “No-Good-Morning-Kids” (Lad & Braganza, 2013, p. 1) because the students never responded good morning only gave stares. The second occasion happened when the authors realized their lack of recognizing the fear of deportation in their students. Lad and Braganza’s study brought to the surface how undocumented students and their parents continuously live with a “great deal of psychological stress on a daily basis” (p. 7); how undocumented students “face multiple academic challenges” (p. 9); and how “the lack of adequate attention to the needs of undocumented students and their families is both a civil rights and human rights issue” (p. 10). The fears associated with the psychological stress were fears of school authority,

immigration authority, deportation, separation from parents and drawing attention to their undocumented status. The academic challenges faced by undocumented students were language barriers, lack of previous school documentation, increased mobility, trust issues with peers and adults, detachment from school, and lack of family support. School personnel expressed concerns that undocumented students' and their family's rights, civil and human, were at one point or another being violated. For example, multiple families living in small spaces, no access to healthcare, school staff not properly trained to work with undocumented students, and inconsistency in parent/school partnership. The results of the study demonstrate that "there is a great need for more studies of this kind simply to bring to the forefront the reality of the conditions of a significant number of people living in the United States" (Lad & Braganza, 2013, p. 13).

Life experiences of Hispanic adolescents are the subject of Cervantes and Cordova's (2011) research which examined the psychosocial and acculturative stressors of 170 adolescents (52% first-generation). Cervantes and Cordova suggest that little is known about stressors experienced by Hispanic adolescents which could, in turn, become mental health dilemmas. Using a focus group methodology to identify acculturation stressors, Cervantes and Cordova interviewed the participants in 25 separate focus groups. Stressors most likely experienced by adolescent immigrant and non-immigrant were categorized into six domains: immigration, communication and language, school and academic, peer, family, and social and economic. Immigration stress was related to the immigration process, loss and isolation and perceived discrimination. Communication and language stressors were learning a new language, translating for Spanish-speaking

family members, and feelings of isolation. Stressors related to school and academics focused on language barriers, discrimination, gang violence, no parental support, and having to work after school lending no time to studying. Identified peer stressors were substance abuse, neighborhood violence, gang activity and discrimination.

Intergenerational differences, family separations, acculturation differences between youth and their parents and beliefs were the identified family stressors. Social and economic stressors focused on paying rent, health care, financing school purchases and discrimination from the community. This study demonstrated the power that a qualitative focus group methodology has as an investigative tool “to explore stressful life events experienced by Hispanic adolescents” (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011, p. 350).

Undocumented Hispanic children and adolescents have the freedom to attend a college or university once they graduate from high school, but the tuition can be the needle that bursts their bubble of joy. Currently, 17 states allow in-state tuition rates for undocumented students who meet specific requirements (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). The remainder states charge the out-of-state tuition rate costing the student and parents more. Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) conducted a 3-year study to acknowledge and learn from “counter-stories and counter-life-histories” (p. 26) of undocumented Hispanic college graduates who migrated to the U.S. at a very young age and navigated through socioeconomic, political, and cultural barriers. The theoretical framework was the critical race theory and the methodological frame termed life history study, was a tool that was conceived to “talk with and back to the Hispanic immigrant community; and essential purpose of the research being to capture the lived experiences

of academically successful immigrants, and to incite reflection and mutual learning from their counter-narratives and sources of agency” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). The article comments that at one point during the study four of the participants from Arizona were prohibited from receiving in-state tuition rates because of their undocumented status. The snapshots of these stories become one story exposing the tragedy experienced by the individuals and families “that have been fractured socioeconomically, legally, ethnically, and culturally with and across borders” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010, p. 34).

Once immigrant children arrive and settle into a new country they may “experience a disruption in their normal developmental processes and many distinct challenges in their adjustment to their new environment” (Yakushko & Morgan, 2012, p. 483) as well as other common factors associated with this change. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) and Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) point out that children that were undergoing acculturation and experiencing a new school culture often outpace the adjustment process of their parent’s creating tensions within the family.

It is one thing to humanize research because most of the time human beings are involved, but it is another thing to humanize a phenomenon such as acculturation. Using phenomenology as a research method Skuza (2007) demonstrated in her study how it can be used to “describe and elucidate acculturation as a lived experience in the context of Latina adolescents who emigrated from Mexico to the U.S.” (p. 447). This qualitative study illustrated the “lived meaning of acculturation” (Skuza, 2007, p. 448). Skuza posits that measuring, conceptualizing, and theorizing acculturation does not provide how

acculturation is lived through the human experience. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) assert that “acculturation is most often studied as a process of adaptation in immigrants” (p. 275). To understand the true meaning of acculturation Skuza structured the phenomenon into eight constituents that were described as a bodily fatiguing experience, physically and psychologically. This included individual and familial experiences affecting each other’s acculturation differently. The findings suggested that the experience of lack of freedom or spatial confinement and parent expectations was an undiscovered or unreported aspect of acculturation. Feelings of loneliness, personal and social isolations, due to language barriers, “stigmatizing cultural generalizations” (Skuza, 2007, p. 459), erosion of self-worth after moving to the U.S., finding relief and protection in family to alleviate the pressures of acculturation and an existential experience of living bodily and relationally in U.S. and living relationally in Mexico. Skuza affirms that the constituents “need to be understood as a fluid arrangement, changing forms and intensities according to what else is happening in other parts of the structure...constituents are flexible and sensitive enough to remain faithful to the lived experience of acculturation” (p. 463). My study investigated the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and their experience with acculturative stress affecting their academic performance using a phenomenological research method. Reading a study on the lived experiences of acculturation brings a holistic awareness to the magnitude that this phenomenon has presented itself in research. Case in point, the participants were Latina adolescents from Mexico describing the composition of what acculturation looks and feels like fatigue, feelings of isolation,

spatial and emotional confinement, seeking protection, a roller coaster of emotions in completing schoolwork but more psychologically devastating is physically and emotionally living in the U.S. but only emotionally living in Mexico. These constituents or descriptors of acculturation are also significantly associated with acculturative stress just because this phenomenon is a branch of the acculturation phenomenon.

Concept 2: The Effects of Acculturative Stress on Academic Performance

Sirin et al. (2013) quantitative experimental design explored trajectories of internalizing mental health symptoms (depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms) of first- and second-generation Hispanic immigrant youth and found that the effects of acculturative stress on internalizing symptoms for first-generation was significantly higher than second-generation Hispanic youth. Continuing with internalizing symptoms Smokowski et al. (2010) quantitative study conducted longitudinal, person-centered trajectories of acculturation, internalizing symptoms, and self-esteem in 349 Hispanic adolescents, 66% were born outside the United States and 34% U.S. born. For internalizing trajectories, the study reported that immigrants displayed lower levels of self-efficacy and control when compared to later generations, however, the longer the stay in the U.S. the internalizing symptoms subsided, and the self-esteem increased. This experimental study did find parent-adolescent conflict increased internalizing symptoms and lowered self-esteem facilitating the effects of acculturation conflicts and perceived discrimination.

Can belonging to a school culture help mediate Hispanic adolescents U.S. born and non-U.S. with acculturative stressors (discrimination and immigration-related) and

academic achievements? With the immigrant Hispanic student group, Roche and Kuperminc (2012) discovered that the prescribed mechanism, school belonging, partially mediated the association between one of the acculturative stressors, discrimination, and academic grades. Roche and Kuperminc suggested that further examination utilizing a longitudinal study form could determine if school belonging can be a means to decrease discrimination stress and increase the academic performance of Hispanic immigrant youth. The authors also commented that preventive measures should be put in place in schools to reduce discrimination and to enhance the positive feeling of belonging to a school to improve the grades for Hispanic youth.

Acculturative stressors that can hinder an undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescent's academic growth are lack of communication, lack of acceptance by own peers, lack of family support, and other detrimental stressors impeding on their education. Bang et al. (2011) addressed what individual and ecological factors contributed to completing one's homework. The participants of the study were retrieved from a subtest of quantitative data from the final year of the five-year study, Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaption, LISA (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). The factors chosen to measure homework completion are academic skills, gender, classroom participation, home environment, and school environment. The study revealed that academic skills, class participation, and school violence were predictors of classroom completion. Newcomer immigrant students who had a better grasp of the English language and familial support participated more in classroom discussions and more likely to turn in homework.

Students who perceived their school to be unsafe were less likely to turn in homework assignments.

Santiago et al. (2014) used a regression analysis to examine proximal risk, protective factors, and the academic achievement of 130 Hispanic adolescents, 64.7 % native born and 35.3% foreign born (Mexico, El Salvador, and other Latin American countries). It was hypothesized that higher academic achievement would be associated with parental monitoring, immigrant status, traditional values, and English language proficiency. Lower academic achievement would be acquired through acculturative stress, U.S. born status and identification with mainstream values. Results demonstrated that the females, native and non-native exhibited better grades than their male counterparts. Parental monitoring of females and good grades was also demonstrated. Boys who identified with mainstream culture showed lower academic achievement. The authors suggested that prevention and intervention efforts should be in place for students going through the acculturation process. This helps to guide and helps to engage into being successful students.

Phenomenology

To make the reader aware a complete description of phenomenology was provided in Chapter 3. According to Converse (2012), phenomenology is characterized as “a philosophical perspective that helps researchers to explore and understand everyday experiences without presupposing knowledge of those experiences. That is, the researcher is open to what presents itself during a phenomenon” (p. 28); and Finlay (2009) states that “phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich

description of the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the research has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude” (p. 8). Phenomenology is a method employed to find the essence of a phenomenon and to describe in rich detail what that phenomenon is; however, the approach has its limitations in scientific investigations. Koehl (1989) writes that phenomenological models do not apply or are inappropriate for certain types of inquiries. He deliberates that when used in making a prediction it is simply assumed that the behavior will not change, in other words, it is best used for making short-term predictions. Another limitation is that a phenomenological method can only be applied when data are already available. In an article solely written about the foundation of phenomenology Gabriella Farina (2014) answers “what is phenomenology?” with a unique and unconventional response,

A unique and final definition of phenomenology is dangerous and perhaps even paradoxical as it lacks a thematic focus. In fact, it is not a doctrine, nor a philosophical school, but rather a style of thought, a method, an open and ever-renewed experience having different results, and this may disorient anyone wishing to define the meaning of phenomenology (p. 50).

Phenomenology does not follow any pattern, but it is an involved program influencing many fields of knowledge, from epistemology to ethics, aesthetics, anthropology, religion, and psychiatry/psychology. Just like any other research method found in a qualitative or quantitative design, phenomenology has its pros and cons. The following studies expressed to the reader the logic and intent for applying a phenomenological procedure to their research.

To continue with Lad and Braganza's (2013) study their qualitative sampling strategies were convenience and snowball. An explanation for employing these approaches was not stated. The participants were school personnel who included administrators, teachers, counselors, administrative assistants, parent liaisons, and educational tutors. The school personnel were broken into two groups: group one consisted of administrators and teachers and group number two were the remaining school staff. The third group consisted of formerly undocumented adult immigrant volunteers who were now legal US citizens. To gather data from the third group the authors designed a written questionnaire whose responses were used to develop questions to form an interview protocol. Each interview was conducted either in person or by phone lasting one to two hours. The interview protocol was designed to support retrospection (Merton, 1990), or "a participants ability to recount and self-reflect on specific experiences" (Lad & Braganza, 2013, p. 5). Groups 1 and 2 were given a separate open-ended questionnaire. Both groups were asked about their experiences with undocumented students and their families. Authors used Contact Summary Forms (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to organize data to find key themes. The collective analysis of the key themes ensued in three propositions: (1) undocumented students and their parents live with a great deal of psychological stress daily; (2) undocumented students face multiple academic challenges, and their families have difficulty maneuvering through the US education and social system to access services; and (3) the lack of adequate attention to the needs of undocumented students and their families is both a civil rights and human rights issue. The authors concluded their research by stating their study was "exploratory

and served as a gauge for issues concerning an understudied group. There is a great need for more studies of this kind” (Lad & Braganza, 2013, p. 13) because their stories bring awareness to the realities of these students.

Another investigation that resonates with my research is Malott’s (2010) qualitative study using a phenomenological method to analyze Mexican adolescents and their insight of what their strengths and challenges are concerning their ethnic heritage. Malott employed this approach because phenomenology can reach deep by exploring the lifeworld of the phenomenon being studied and bring an “understanding of how the participants make sense of a phenomenon and how their behavior is influenced by their own understanding” (p. 8). The author conducted in-depth, semi structured interviews with 20 adolescents of Mexican origin living in the U.S. a mean of 7.85 years. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and highlighted emerging thematic segments. In my study, as well as Malott’s, trustworthiness was established using bracketing, member checking, audit trail, reflexivity, and saturation. The result of Malott’s investigation yielded discrimination as a challenge. As for the strengths, the participants cited pride in their heritage, developing self-efficacy to overcome difficulties, and responding to discriminatory remarks. As a current guidance counselor, I always appreciate research that includes school counselors as facilitators or implementers in helping address further understanding of undocumented Latino youth whether they are from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and other Latin countries. Malott provides a handful of suggestions “regarding ways school counselors can apply the study’s findings in facilitating the healthy identity development of Mexican-origin youth”

(p. 21). A requirement of school counseling is to provide classroom guidance lessons throughout the school year. Incorporating strengths and challenges of being a Mexican-origin adolescent into character education topics such as self-esteem brings awareness to students of all cultures in a classroom. School guidance counselors in all three levels of public education (elementary, middle, and high) are the keystones to conveying the rights and wrongs in civilization.

As stated earlier, Skuza (2007) illustrated with clarity and precision what a phenomenological research design is. A phenomenology is an approach used by scientists to find the meaning in an individual/group's lived experiences. Skuza gives the reader comprehension and guidance to how she applied the method to her study. I say this because Moustakas (1994) writes in a poetically and philosophically induced state of mind. She presents to the audience a "different mode of understanding" (Skuza, 2007, p. 464) and invites other researchers to do follow-up studies. Skuza is direct and to the point and explains why she chose this method. She writes that the phenomenological method measures acculturation differently from a "scientific theory, perspectives, conceptualizations, or any position that prescribes prior meaning" (Skuza, 2007, p. 450). Her description of the structural foundation of acculturation is pronounced and heavy with meaning thus validating her reasoning for using a phenomenological approach. She asserts that "Acculturation is a pervasive and complex experience that accompanies all other life events, requiring tremendous amounts of energy on the part of the acculturating individual" (Skuza, 2007, p. 451). Data was collected from the informal,

interactive, and open-ended interview questions given separately to six adolescent girls. The participants have been in the United States for 3 to 11 years.

Psychology Approaches to Acculturative Stress and the Undocumented

According to Esses et al. (2015), three areas of research in psychology represent the discipline's largest contributions to the study of immigrants and immigration: the decision to migrate; the host society's attitudes and behavior toward immigrants and immigration; and acculturation seen from immigrants and host society. Acculturation Psychology is a product of cross-cultural psychology (Sam & Berry, 2006). Cross-cultural psychology asks, "How does culture influence human behavior?" (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 3) but acculturation psychology asks, "How do people born and raised in one society manage to live in another society that is culturally different from the one they are used to?" and "what happens to people when they take their behavioral repertoire to a different cultural context?" (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 3). There are three possible answers that spurred the development of the field of acculturation psychology: one is that behavior remains unchanged thus becoming maladapted; second is the behavior changes easily and learns the new culture quickly; and third are the complexity people negotiating how to live in their new environment and the psychological processes involved such as stress and coping, mental illness, resiliency, identity development and other behaviors connected to living and learning in a new society (Sam & Berry, 2006).

The TAS was developed by Berry (2006) to assist with the understanding that this phenomenon is descendent of acculturation, and it represents negative side effects of acculturation, pressure to retain culture and pressure to acquire new culture. As stated,

earlier Esses et al. (2015) declared acculturation as a leading topic of research in psychology with respect to studying immigration and immigrants. Sam and Berry (2006) contend that research in acculturation psychology was abundant in the PsycINFO website, which was excellent news to doctoral students as me, however, fishing for research on acculturative stress, and undocumented immigrant adolescents linked to acculturation psychology was a bit on the empty side. In Walden University's Thoreau Walden University Discovery Service data base psychology in general addressed acculturative stress 1,034 results, acculturation psychology addressed acculturative stress with seven results, cross-cultural psychology, and acculturative stress resulted in four articles from academic journals, and lastly cultural psychology and acculturative stress had 30 academic journal articles. The strength of research psychologists is having conducted educational trajectories of Hispanic immigrant adolescents, mental health issues experienced by Hispanic adolescents, Hispanic parent-child relationship, identity development, and the process of acculturation and its effects on Hispanic children and adolescents. More research is needed on phenomenology and acculturative stressors of Hispanic immigrant adolescents; further investigating on acculturative stressors such as self-efficacy and educational self-efficacy; Bandura's (1977) SLT and Hispanic immigrant adolescents; and a better way of announcing these results to the public.

Justification for the Selection of the Constructs of Interest

Literature on acculturation is more than abundant; however, the literature is limited to acculturative stress and the impact it has on the academic performance and self-efficacy of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S.

schools. As stated earlier, it became a challenge to find research directed towards acculturative stressors and the effect it has on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. Just like the insufficiency of research articles on acculturative stress, the same goes for books. There are many books written about immigrants and acculturation, but the subject of acculturative stress is scarcely included. For example, Nicholls (2013) discussed the interviews, news stories, and firsthand encounters with the social movement activists called DREAMers, undocumented youth crusading to have their voices heard, sans acculturative stress. A book written to “reveal how a legitimate political voice was constructed for this group of undocumented youths” (Nicholls, 2013, p. 186). Two key scholars on immigration, Portes and Rumbaut (2006), wrote a book on analyzing the identity and loyalty among newcomers and exploring the psychological consequences of migration and acculturation, again sans acculturative stress.

Leslie Abrego and Roberto Gonzalez’s (2010) research article described in rich detail how the current growth of undocumented Hispanic youth, who have legal access to public education face legal restrictions and economic barriers to higher education and the workforce, as well as an analysis of immigration and educational policies affecting undocumented youth in the U.S. They also examined potential solutions to help resolve these barriers, so the prospects for these high schoolers are positive rather than negative. After reading Abrego and Gonzalez’s article, searching with inadequate results on acculturative stress, and seeing the lack of response to acculturative stress in books written by well-known scholars versed in immigration such as Portes and Rumbaut

(2006), and Alba and Nee (2003), I investigated this growing community of youngsters in the U.S. using a phenomenological approach. I heard in detail their experiences of acculturative stress and the impact it made on their education in a U.S. school.

A Synthesis of Phenomenological Research

What is known about acculturative stress is that it is a concept or phenomenon that is studied to identify, define, describe, explain, and comprehend the mechanics of this experience. Scientists in psychology and its sub-disciplines, sociology, anthropology, social work, and other fields that investigate immigration, immigrants (documented and undocumented), Hispanics and other cultures that immigrate to the U.S. have researched and written about acculturation and its stressors but not much has been written on acculturative stress and the effects it has on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. The research that has been published has been in areas of substance abuse, gang activity, social and emotional well-being, and Hispanics (native and non-native) dropping out of school. Also, the respondents have resided in the U.S. for an extended period that they have begun to acculturate with less to no stress at all (Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Living In-Between, 2011; Perez et al., 2011; Sirin et al., 2013). Now there is no known argument amongst social and behavioral scientists only in politics which is to legalize or not to legalize undocumented immigrants, Hispanic immigrants. In 2008 at the American Psychological Association 116th Annual Convention Luttinger and Chen presented, at that time research in process, an abstract of a phenomenological study that (1) called “for counseling psychologists to expand their traditional roles” (p. 2) and (2) “to educate and offer suggestions to counseling

psychologists and educational professionals regarding the implications of undocumented status. Because little is known about the career and personal identity development of undocumented youth” (p. 2). What remains to be studied are “the implications of acculturative stress on psychological symptoms pose serious risks to healthy development for urban immigrant youth. Our results have significance both for researchers and for professionals who work with adolescents” (Sirin et al., 2013, p. 745).

Phenomenology: A Meaningful Approach

Phenomenology was an appropriate selection for this study because the phenomenon being studied is acculturative stress and its impact on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and their education. Phenomenology synthesizes the “what” and “how” descriptions of the adolescents’ lived experiences into one encapsulated description drawing out the essence of the phenomenon. It is meaningful to have personal accounts written, recorded, and documented for scientific research purpose but most meaningful to the participants that will get to have their story told for everyone to read. As stated earlier (Lad & Braganza, 2013; Malott, 2010; Skuza, 2007), phenomenology was the instrument needed for each study.

Synthesis of Literature Review and the Research Questions

The research questions of this study are: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? It is safe to say that anyone who relocates to another country must at one point acculturate or assimilate. Children who are uprooted without given a choice such as children fleeing a

country for safety or to be reunited with loved ones will experience acculturation. There is much research on all age-levels experiencing acculturation (APA, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012; Berry, 2006; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Living In-Between, 2011; Perez et al., 2011; Sam, 2006) but few phenomenological studies exploring the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents experiencing acculturative stressors affecting their academic performance. One powerful stressor is learning the country's language. In this study that language is English. Hakuta et al. (2000) studied a commonly asked question "how long does it take English learners to attain proficiency" (p. 13) and the answer is "oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years" (p. 13). Cervantes and Cordova (2011) took 170 Hispanic youth and put them into focus groups to better understand six psychosocial health factors: immigration, communication and language, school and academics, peer relations, family dynamics, and social and economic status. The results indicated that the lived experiences of these six factors became six acculturative stressors. Another factor that has been expressed in these studies is that there is little information on this population (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Chen et al., 2010; Guyll et al., 2010; Harrison et al., 2011; Katsiafika et al., 2013; Lad & Braganza, 2013; Living In-Between, 2011; Mallot, 2010) and more research should be done to inform educators and policymakers how these adolescents live.

The effects of acculturative stress on the grades of an undocumented Hispanic adolescent have been found to be damaging resulting in negative outcomes. Zychinski and Polo (2012) investigated the academic achievement and depressive symptoms among

5th to 7th grade Hispanic students living in a low-income community and found that there was a correlation between the two phenomena. Other findings implied that acculturative stress was strongly related to higher depressive symptoms and lower academic achievement. Academic self-efficacy was also found to be a mediator between achievement and depression. The academic performance of any student is a precursor to success or failure. The academic trajectory of undocumented Hispanic adolescents, including Hispanic adolescents, according to research has been tarnished with unwanted stressors such as adjusting to a new country, and all that entails with the new environment: language, education, pop culture, discrimination, and much more attributing factors (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Brown & Chu, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2015; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Bang et al., 2011). A recommendation that has been presented and discussed in almost every article (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Brown & Chu, 2012; Cervantes & Cordova, 2011; Chen et al., 2010; Chun & Dickson, 2011; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2011; Living In-Between, 2011; Katsiafika et al., 2013; Lad & Braganza, 2013; Luttinger & Chen, 2008; Malott, 2010; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Sirin et al., 2013) pleads for an intervention to help undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents, experiencing acculturative stress and its impact on their academic performance or success in school is social-emotional support in school but most importantly education is the targeted area that needs adjusting.

Summary and Conclusions

A concise summary of the major themes in the literature will be discussed here.

The literature on the present study is limited. The literature on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents experiencing acculturative stressors is close to non-existent. That is why it is viable that this data collection take place to become aware of the needs of undocumented Hispanic adolescents. Currently the studies found refer to undocumented Hispanic adolescents living in the U.S. for a longer period meaning enough time has passed to put their culture aside and accept the culture they have been transplanted into (Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Living In-Between, 2011; Perez et al., 2011; Sirin et al., 2013). One theme that surfaced was the need for educators and mental health providers to be more involved in the lives of undocumented Hispanic adolescents, Hispanics, El Salvadorians, Hondurans, and other Central American countries. Chen et al. (2010) asked that school counselors develop support groups for these adolescents. Luttinger and Chen (2008) expressed the roles and responsibilities of academicians to become acquainted with the culture of the students they serve. They also called on mental health professionals to step forward and walk away from the traditional psychologist mantra and extend a helping hand to the undocumented suffering from depression or other mental health issues. Abrego and Gonzalez (2010) pleaded for more research to gain a clearer picture of the experiences of undocumented students from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and other Latin countries steering through high school trying to understand their legal status and higher education. Another study on the educational, as well as the emotional trajectory of this youth, is Cervantes and Cordova's (2011) investigation using focus groups to explore acculturative stressors and life events.

The theoretical foundations for this study were Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Berry's theory contends that acculturative stress can occur when the acculturation process exceeds the individual's coping ability and stress levels vary according to the manner of acculturation, cultural values and beliefs of the adopted country and certain demographic variables such as age and gender. Castro-Olivo et al. (2014) used Berry's theory as its theoretical framework to validate Coping with Acculturative Stress in American Schools-A (CASA-A), a self-report measure attempting to evaluate acculturative stress. Bandura developed SLT to understand that most human behavior is learned by observation and modeling. He hypothesized that a person would take learned information and incorporates it to form perceptions of self-efficacy. He believes that self-efficacy can be a motivation factor in education. Students' who believe they can reach the desired level of academic proficiency is called academic self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995).

The key constructs of interest in this study are the lived experiences and the effects of acculturative stress. The literature found addressed the chosen methodology and methods consistent with the scope of the study. The literature used for the construct of interest, the lived experience, was qualitative while the literature for the second construct was quantitative. The literature for the first construct composed of undocumented Hispanic adolescents recounting personal stories of leaving their native home and making their way to the U.S. border by any means possible. The literature for the second construct composed of experimental design study and longitudinal studies that focused on the acculturative stress and mental health well-being.

The main themes drawn from the literature involved educators, academicians, and mental health providers; Berry's (2006) and Bandura's (1977) theory and their relationship to the current study; and the key constructs of interest that drew literature from both research designs, qualitative and quantitative.

What is known about acculturative stress is that it is a phenomenon that can have a lasting negative effect on the lives of undocumented Hispanic adolescents. The familiar stressors found in the literature were immigration, communication and language, school and academics, peer relations, family dynamics, and social and economic status (Bang et al., 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Living In-Between, 2011; Sirin et al., 2013). What is not known or what is out there is a limited number of studies utilizing a phenomenology approach to study the experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school and the effects of acculturative stressors, such as language proficiency in English and self-efficacy, on their academic performance utilizing the following theories as the theoretical framework: TAS and social learning theory (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Luttinger & Chen, 2008; Pessoa, 2008; Roysircar & Maestas, 2002). A gap filled by this study was to understand the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stress on their academic performance. Based on what is available this study provided psychology, sociology, anthropology, psychiatry, and other disciplines a documentation of the personal experiences as dictated by the participants. Chapter 3 included the introduction, research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. Research on undocumented Hispanic adolescents is abundant; however, there are few studies that have focused specifically on the effects of the acculturative stressors and the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents specifically related to academic performance in U.S. schools.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. I also explain the steps I took to secure confidentiality for the participants, who were under the age of 18 and undocumented. Finally, I discuss the strategies I used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study are the following:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school?

RQ2: What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance?

The central phenomenon of this study is the acculturative stress and the impact these stressors have on the academic performance of these adolescents. I used a qualitative method with a transcendental phenomenological design to conduct this study.

Transcendental phenomenology is a “scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). The core design of transcendental phenomenology relies on the researcher setting aside their prejudgments about the phenomena and describing the lived experiences of the participants with a fresh perspective. I chose this method to study undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents in U.S. schools and the acculturative stressors encountered because there was no other phenomenological study on this topic to date. I also chose this method because I wanted to focus on the “what” and “how” descriptions of the adolescents’ lived experiences into one encapsulated description drawing out the essence of the phenomenon. I chose phenomenology for its practical approach of focusing on the description of the lived experiences of these adolescents.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2009) defines the role of a qualitative researcher as an “inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants...inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background” (p. 177). According to Moustakas (1994) the investigator who decides to follow the transcendental phenomenological approach:

engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the Epoché process) to launch the study as far as possible free of perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies- to be completely

open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (p. 22)

As the sole researcher, my responsibilities included meeting with the participants and their families to transcribe the lived experiences of the participants. The adolescents participating in this study did not have a personal or professional connection to me.

I am a Latina born in the United States and a fourth-generation Texan. I am fluent in English and Spanish, and I am very comfortable in my culture's beliefs, values, and some traditions. I believe that being of Hispanic origin, speaking Spanish, and being comfortable with the Hispanic culture allowed me to navigate the interview process with the Hispanic adolescent participants.

Before conducting an interview, a researcher engages in the Epoch process. Epoché is a state of mind that is embraced before data collection and before any analysis of the research interviews (Bednall, 2006). Epoché is the first step in processing data analysis; however, Epoché is highly encouraged before data collection. During this process, the researcher removes all preconceived experiences of the phenomenon as a way of seeing and understanding the experiences of the participant for the first time. Epoché can aid in managing bias before and during each interview.

A researcher can develop a predisposed behavior or attitude during a study, for example, if they hear a particular phrase during the interview or the participant wears a perfume or cologne, thus triggering the subconscious of the researcher to make a hasty judgment consequently affecting the study. For example, if during an interview a female participant constantly made the comment "te pareces a una gringa" referring to the

researcher having the appearance of a White female rather than a brown skinned Latina, I could have a negative impression of the interviewee. As a fair skinned child with green eyes growing up with brown skinned brown eyed cousins and neighbors, I was always referred to as “la gringita,” the little white girl, a particularly annoying and hurtful phrase. To manage researcher biases, a researcher must be fully aware and be accepting of their own values and beliefs. They must be able to disconnect from current politics if applicable to the study, consider the implications if they learn a participant is a family friend, and mitigate bias if they are emotionally involved with a participant during or after the one-on-one interviews. The balance of power between a researcher and the participants’ can at times tip toward the side of the researcher leaving the participants feeling out of place, unaccepted, and untrustworthy. It is the responsibility of the researcher “to build a bridge to the study participants so that they will trust him or her and will reveal aspects of the issue being studied...the researcher builds this bridge by...demonstrations of empathy, nonjudgmental interest, caring, honesty, and openness” (Leckie, 2008, p.775-776). To maintain a healthy balance of power and to ensure open communication between the researcher and the participants, the researcher should remind the participants that the data gathered will be used for a scientific study and all information gathered will be kept confidential as stated at the initial phase of the study.

The participants in this study were undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents attending a middle school in the surrounding Houston area. These adolescents with their family will have arrived in the United States illegally by way of

crossing the Rio Grande River on tire tubes, walking through the desert, or smuggled in by a Coyote, a human smuggler.

In this study, I focused on the phenomenon of acculturative stressors and the effects they have on the academic performance of Hispanic adolescent students. Their residency status will have no effect or be questioned in this study. I will verbally present to the parents and the adolescent chosen for this study all aspects of this study, including: the identity of the researcher, the purpose of the study, how this study will help their child, and an assurance that they will not be reported to immigration authorities.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this study was undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school. These adolescents were male and female middle school students. I chose this population based on the premise of the study, which are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. For this study the purposeful sampling strategy most appropriate is criterion sampling. Criterion sampling, “all participants must meet one or more criteria as predetermined by the researcher” (Bloomberg, & Volpe, 2008, p. 191). According to Moustakas (1994), essential criteria include “the research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, and is willing to participate in a lengthy interview and grants the investigator the right to tape-record, possibly videotape the interview, and publish the data in a dissertation.” (p. 107).

The adolescents in this study met the requirement for phenomenological research, a lived experience which in their case is acculturative stressors and its effect on their academic performance. The participants met the criteria by having experienced acculturative stressors as adolescents', middle school age adolescents enrolled, by becoming new members of a foreign country with a foreign language thus prompting these new undocumented citizens to learn English and leap into an unfamiliar educational system and expected to quickly assimilate into the school culture. These realities are self-evident that these adolescents will experience some type of stressor and that stressor will be linked to the acculturation these adolescents will experience some time upon having entered the United States illegally and will be expected to achieve academic success at some point just like his or her native-born counterparts (Yakushko & Morgan, 2012). In selecting the number of participants, I followed Moustakas directive: "There are no in-advance criteria for locating and selecting the researcher participants. General considerations include age, race, religion, ethnic and cultural factors, gender, and political and economic factors" (p. 107). The numbers of participants were seven. Phenomenological research is best conducted using a small sample size such that the investigator will be able to examine the lived experiences in detail and depth (Mapp, 2008).

The location for the introduction, the parent/adolescent oral consent, and the data collection (interview) was a parent choice-due to the unstable immigration/deportation concerns. I audio recorded all semi structured open-ended interviews allowing the adolescents to provide me in detail their story. I followed up by transcribing the

interviews. The rationale for interviewing seven subjects' stems from having to gather enough data that will "intuitively-reflectively integrate the composite textural and composite structural descriptions to develop a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181). I stopped the interview when saturation of the data had been met with no new themes emerging. To identify and recruit participants who met the criteria: undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents between the ages of twelve and fifteen, enrolled in a public school, and experiencing difficulties in acculturating thus affecting their academic performance I distributed flyers at grocery stores, post offices and laundromats. I also posted flyers on Facebook for recruitment. Interviews were conducted through the telephone.

Saturation is the collected data in a study that has accumulated until no new information can further be obtained, in other words, the investigator has heard the same responses or stories during the interview process, redundancy (Morse, 1995). As for a relationship between saturation and sample size, Mason (2010) contends that saturation is a key decision maker when deciding on sample size in qualitative research, however, Walker (2012), asserts that "there is no consistent way across qualitative methods to use and/or determine saturation" (p. 38). Morse accepts saturation as an excellent component of qualitative research but also affirms there are no clear guidelines what sample size is needed to reach saturation. Moustakas (1994) mentions no relationship between saturation and sample size in his book. An equivalent reference to saturation is his concept of horizons or the process of horizontalization, "a never-ending process and, though we may reach a stopping point and discontinue our perception of something, the

possibility for discovery is unlimited” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95) or better understood as “the moment which approaches saturation through the act of writing the description of the phenomenon in the words of the participants” (Conklin, 2007, p. 285). The method of data collection in this study was semi structured open-ended interviews and once saturation was achieved no further data was collected. Transcribing occurred next. The sample size of seven participants provided enough critical information so a theoretical saturation could occur, meaning; no new themes or topics were introduced during the interviews.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument of choice was a researcher produced interview protocol and an audiotape. A phenomenological interview involves “an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). The open-ended questions created to bring forth the lived experiences, the memories, feelings, and thoughts of the phenomenon were used as a guide to help retrieve those experiences. Moustakas (1994) begins the phenomenological interview with a “social conversation or a brief meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere” (p. 114). However, an individualized interview protocol with a set of four open-ended interview questions with probing questions in case the participants do not fully understand what I was asking of them was produced by me. These open-ended questions were based on the research questions: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? This interview

protocol also included pertinent information such as the title of the study, time of the interview, date, place, interviewer, pseudonyms for the interviewee, and a brief description of the study. Two digital voice recorders were used during the interviews in case one recorder malfunctioned. The interview protocol sufficiently and effectively collected the data needed for this study.

Researcher-Developed Instrument

Moustakas' (1994) instrument for data collection: "long interview is the method" (p. 114). Moustakas operational focus is "the researcher to undertake the Epoché prior to the interview...mainly concerned with phenomenological theory and the analysis of data" (Bevan, 2014, p. 137). The interviewer is commonly referred to as the 'human instrument' when conducting qualitative research (Mann & Stewart, 2000). For this study, I recorded the interviews using a "predesigned form used to record information collected during an interview" (Creswell, 2007, p. 135). Creswell's interview protocol essentially is an organizer to help the researcher begin and end the interview appropriately and professionally. Memorizing the questions is another recommendation and most important is having a simple statement thanking the individual for participating and making assurances of confidentiality and possible future interviews.

Content validity is defined as "how accurately an assessment or measurement tool taps into the various aspects of the specific construct in question. In other words, do the questions really assess the construct in question..." (Clause, n.d., para. 5). Establishing content validity using this method can be difficult and challenging for the researcher to properly demonstrate authenticity of the study for reasons that the instrument used for

data collection is the researcher herself, a human being. The method of presenting the interview questions to the participants plays an important role, but the way the questions are asked during the interview can wholly affect the participants' story telling (Chen et al., 2013). The interview protocol was the appropriate instrument used to sufficiently collect the data needed to answer the research questions: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance?

During each interview I made sure that I was attentive and asked each question with a great interest in their story. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic inquiry research method had fourteen operational characteristics, and the human instrument is rated as the second most important characteristic because the researcher uses him or herself as the primary data gathering instrument; also, the human instrument is its own person. The human interviewer can be "marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding" (Seidman, 2012, p 26). Transcribing the recorded interview is the responsibility of the human interviewer meaning I transcribed verbatim the interviews. Knowing that the human interviewer was genuine and accurate can be achieved by reading the transcript and finding that the participant was engaged more, and the interviewer's responses or comments were kept at a minimum (Seidman, 2012). What is important to understand is the human interviewer/the researcher, is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research" (Chen et al., 2013, p. 3).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection

Moustakas (1994) method of data collection is simple; it involves a “long interview...through which data is collected on the topic and questions” (p. 144). For this study the procedure for accumulating data was taken from semi structured open-ended interviews with undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents having experienced the phenomenon, acculturative stressors on their academic performance. I collected all data during each interview until saturation was achieved. Duration of data collection did not last between one to two hours per participant as expected to answer the research questions: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? Two digital voice recorders were used for data collection in case one recorder malfunctioned. If this study did not reach its desired number of participants, its follow-up plan was to contact former parents whose children attended the school in which I am employed to seek assistance with recruitment. These parents were volunteers and involved in school events and in the process trusting comradery began. These parents are undocumented Hispanics and reside in a Hispanic neighborhood. I would have asked the parents to pass out flyers to families that have middle school age children enrolled in a middle school. Moustakas’ (1994) focused on the wholeness of the research process not the intricacies of a particular method of recruitment thus making no reference to recruiting participants if the first recruitment phase does not pan out accordingly.

After concluding the interview, I conducted a debriefing with each respondent. As a token of appreciation and gratitude each participant received a \$5 gift card of their choice: McDonald's, Starbucks, or Chick-fil-a regardless of completion of the interview. I reminded the participant the purpose of the study, gave information regarding expected results, and provided an opportunity to ask questions (Patterson, 2010). After I transcribed the interviews, the second member checking would review the transcripts for content accuracy using the audio-recordings.

Data Analysis Plan

This research question: what are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? was the connection between gathering data and analyzing it. I gathered the data needed to understand the lived experiences and used the most appropriate qualitative method for data collection, semi structured interview protocol. The three core elements of data analysis for qualitative research are coding (classifying) the data; combining the codes into themes; and finally representing the data in graphs, charts, or tables (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) does not use a coding system rather he analyzes data by “methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis” (p. 118). This phenomenological study used Moussakas’ modification of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (2003) method of analysis because it was the best practice for an inexperienced researcher as myself and it “follows a systemic procedure that is rigorous yet accessible to qualitative researchers.” (Moerer-Urdahl, & Creswell, 2004, p. 21). After I uncovered, set aside, and recorded my biases (Epoché), and bracketed the phenomenon, data analysis began with identifying

significant statements from each participant's transcript thus clustering them into themes or what Moustakas calls horizontalizing. The themes were synthesized: a textural description of what the participant's experienced and a structural description of how the participant's experienced the phenomenon was written. The final step was writing a "composite description of textural and structural descriptions into an exhaustive description of the essential invariant structure (or essence) of the experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 187).

NVivo 10 (<http://www.qsrinternational.com/>) is computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that could have been a useful tool for analyzing qualitative data by collecting, organizing, and analyzing content from interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, audio, social media, videos, and web pages.,

Moustakas (1994) treats discrepancies as having a low tendency of occurrences because "the interviews were conversational and open-ended, misconceptions were clarified as they occurred, open disclosures were accepted and supported" (p. 110). Shenton's (2004) "tactics" (p. 66) to maintain honesty is giving the participant the opportunity to refuse involvement as well as to encourage the participant, to be honest at the beginning of the interview which allows the researcher to establish that the questions do not have a right or wrong answer. If I suspected the participant's responses are questionable, I would probe by using "iterative questioning" (Shenton, 2004, p. 66) rephrasing the questions to extract related data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The process of developing trustworthy qualitative research begins with the researcher checking for accuracy, qualitative validity, using certain techniques and procedures “while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects.” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). Moustakas (1994) does not refer to issues of trustworthiness. He focused his attention on the construction of his concept, transcendental phenomenology, and provided guidance on conducting qualitative research using his method. Trustworthiness criteria for a qualitative study are credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

Credibility

Credibility in a qualitative study asks: “are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants’ meaning?” (Creswell, 2009, p. 206) while internal validity in quantitative studies “is relevant only in studies that try to establish a causal relationship” (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008, p. 158). Establishing credibility (internal validity) in this study depended on observing, interviewing and recording, independently every participant while staying in the bracket zone (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman a researcher that exhibits good investigative skills, knowledge of the phenomenon and its environment, and strong “multidisciplinary approach” (p. 38), is the making of a fine qualitative researcher. To ensure credibility in this study I would have used the following strategies: member checks, saturation, and reflexivity. Member checking provides the participants to review a summary of their interview and allows

them to correct inaccuracies. To reach saturation the researcher interviews the participant until the same story and events are repeated (Morse, 1995). The third strategy is reflexivity, a written account of the researcher's self-awareness and self-exposure as well as what biases, values, and experiences are brought to the qualitative study.

Transferability

The second trustworthiness criterion is transferability (external validity); the results of a study may be applicable to another similar setting or group (Toma, 2006). In a quantitative study external validity is defined as "the degree to which the conclusions in your study would hold for other persons in other places and at other times" (Trochim & Donnell, 2008, p. 34). The researcher established transferability by developing a thick description, a "narrative developed about the context to those judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere" (Schwandt et al., 2007, p. 19). The thick description allows readers to decide if transferability applies to their setting or group.

Dependability

The third criterion is dependability (reliability) which involves the researcher "accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself" (Toma, 2006 p. 416). Reliability in a quantitative study produces the same result consistently and is repeatable. Because this study changed and evolved throughout its development, an appropriate strategy would have been an audit trail, a description of the start of the investigation to reporting the findings. Shenton (2004) identified three significant phases when addressing the issue of dependability "to enable readers of the

research report to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness” (p. 71): research design and its implementation, operational detail of data gathering, and reflective appraisal of the project.

Confirmability

The fourth and final criterion is confirmability (objectivity) meaning that the findings can be confirmed by someone else besides the researcher. Objectivity is a “notion of the truth based on factual evidence obtained through scientific methods or reasoning and a belief that that truth is really the way things are” (Mathison, 2005, p. 286). Utilizing member checking, reflexivity, and audit trail to demonstrate confirmability would be three appropriate strategies. Member checking is defined as “the process of providing participants with transcripts or summaries of interviews to allow them to correct any inaccuracies.” (Simon & Goes, 2011, “What is Phenomenological Research?” para. 8). Reflexivity has the researcher reflecting on how assumptions, values, and biases influenced the study, and an audit trail is documenting and providing an in-depth coverage of the development, collection, and analysis of the study so that other researchers can duplicate it.

Intra- and inter-coder reliability was not applicable to this study. Intra-coder reliability is the process of a researcher judging the fluctuating behaviors of the participants over a period, for example, observing the participants behavior when asked the same questions during two or more interviews (Chen & Krauss, 2004). Inter-coder reliability examines the data that was used with the same instrument (open-ended

questionnaire) by two or more independent coders to get similar results. (Cho, 2008) The participants were interviewed once.

Ethical Procedures

To maintain the ethical integrity of the study, permission was sought from The Institutional Review Board. Approval number 01-28-19-0044594 was secured from Walden University IRB. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Human Subjects Protection Training Module to fulfill Walden's Human Research Protections training was taken.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to protect their participants; develop a mutual trust; demonstrate professionalism and honesty; safeguard against any transgressions and improprieties that could reflect the researcher and the institution represented; and to be able to manage challenging problems (Creswell, 2009). To gain consent from the undocumented adolescent Hispanic immigrant I first acquired oral permission from the legal guardian and second, I gained consent from the adolescent. The oral consents from the parent and adolescent were audio-recorded. The participants of this study were treated with utmost respect, acceptance, no judgment towards their illegal status, and professionalism was present at all times. To meet IRB approval and be granted permission to collect data I did not disclose the names of the participants to anyone before, during, or after the study for their safety, legal and mental well-being. However, the name of the adolescent could have been revealed accidentally by family to other family members. I was the only one managing the names of participants, who were students; however, the parents of the participants could have disclosed to family or

friends with children in the same school that their child attended. A preventive measure was getting oral consents rather than written consents from the participant and their legal guardian. Another preventive measure was echoing the importance of the study and its meaning to undocumented Hispanic adolescents enrolled in U.S. schools. If a name had been revealed and the adolescent's responses were influenced by whatever transpired before coming to the interview I would have contacted the university for further guidance.

If a respondent had refused to participate at the beginning of the interview, I would have offered solutions for different reasons provided they disclosed a reason. If the participant still refused to participate, I would have asked if I could call on them in a few days to check if all is well and ask if they would still be interested in being interviewed. During the interview if a participant became emotional and distressed, I would have stopped the interview and address the participant immediately. If needed, I would have called upon a family member to pick up the adolescent. If remembering the experiences became too difficult, I would have provided professional counseling resources to the parents and stress the importance of counseling to address the traumatic events the adolescent might have experienced with the phenomenon.

Phenomenological research entails transcribing all interviews conducted. The researcher records and transcribes verbatim the interviews, looks for similarities, writes a textural and structural description, and ultimately develops a composite of the essence of the phenomenon. An ethical concern would be not reporting relevant findings or worse being disorganized and losing valuable paperwork. A preventive measure would be to

invest in an NVivo 10(<http://www.qsrinternational.com/>) computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program. Another ethical concern would be the human interaction occurring in the study such as the interview. It is important to make the participant feel welcomed and comfortable. Going beyond a researcher/participant relationship would not be appropriate, for example, attending a participant's uncle's birthday party at a nightclub. If an invitation presented itself, the appropriate action would be to thank the participant for the invitation but kindly decline. The data collected would be audio recordings of each participant's interview, transcriptions, and researcher's notes. All data was stored in my home office in a fire- and anti-theft-proof safe for safe keeping and confidential purposes. For each interview, I would have only brought with me two audio recording devices, interview protocol, notebook, pencils, Kleenex, and two bottles of water. These materials would be carried in my messenger bag when not in use. The messenger bag would also serve as a place to hold car keys, wallet, and cell phone. As for identity protection during the interview, Moustakas (1994) does not discuss using pseudonyms when interviewing the participant but does provide a general interview guide to facilitate with uncovering the participant's phenomenon. In this study, all participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The interview protocol was printed with the participant's pseudonym. All data stored in the NVivo 10 (<http://www.qsrinternational.com/>) would be kept in a fire- and anti- theft-proof safe for a minimum of five years after publication of the research (APA, 2009). After the fifth year, I will take all data to an Office Depot store and destroy all data using the store's industrial strength shredder.

My current profession is as an elementary guidance counselor at a school with an economically challenged Hispanic ELL student population. My past guidance and counseling duties included being a middle- and high school counselor having worked with undocumented Hispanic adolescents from a variety of Latin countries. Having counseled undocumented Hispanic adolescents for many years, I could go into an interview with knowledge of the possible experiences the participants might have experienced. Ethically I am bound to be neutral and objective and not be an inside researcher with first-hand information that could taint my study. It is important I exercised Epoché before every interview for that is a requirement of conducting a transcendental phenomenological study.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 3 began with reintroducing to the reader the purpose of the study: the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. The next section discussed research design and rationale. It focused on the central phenomenon and the research tradition being a qualitative transcendental phenomenological method. The role of the researcher according to Moustakas (1994) is to set aside prejudgments of the phenomenon and engage in every interview as if the researcher was hearing the phenomenon for the first time. The methodology section discussed the population, the instrument chosen for data collection, a researcher produced interview protocol; the procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection which provides the logistics of gathering the data; and the last segment is a detailed examination of a data analysis

plan. The end of Chapter 3 communicated to the reader issues of trustworthiness and the ethical procedures that could be put in place such as protecting the participants.

Chapter 4 will begin with an introduction of the chapter followed by describing the setting; the demographics of the participants, a description of location; frequency and duration of data collection; the process used for data analysis; evidence of trustworthiness by describing the implementation of strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; the results that address the research questions, supporting data, and nonconforming data; and the summary highlighting the main points of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. Currently there is limited phenomenological research on the effects of acculturative stressors affecting the academic performance of undocumented Hispanic youth (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Luttinger & Chen, 2008; Pessoa, 2008; Roysircar & Maestas, 2002). The research questions for this study were: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance?

Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study as well as provides information about influences on results, data collection, phenomenological data analysis and the trustworthiness of the study.

Setting

The participants were middle school age adolescents. The interviews were conducted in July of 2020 over the telephone during the COVID 19 pandemic. The communication format of the interview was to have children interviewed by phone. During the interview, the participants did not express anger, frustration, or joy. A few were disappointed because their summer vacations were cancelled, and others were sad because they could not spend time with their friends.

Demographics

The study participants were undocumented Hispanic adolescents born in México and Honduras and now living in the United States. These are adolescents that crossed the border into Texas illegally. This population was chosen based on the premise of the study, the lived experiences of undocumented Hispanic adolescents. The participants met the criteria by having experienced acculturative stressors as children and adolescents, enrolled in a U.S. school, and by becoming new community members of a foreign country with a foreign language prompting them to learn English and leap into an unfamiliar educational system, expected to quickly assimilate into the school culture.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Grade	Country of Origin
# 1	Male	13	08	Mexico
# 2	Female	13	08	Mexico
# 3	Male	12	06	Mexico
# 4	Male	12	06	Mexico
# 5	Female	12	06	Honduras
# 6	Female	12	07	Mexico
# 7	Male	13	07	Honduras

Data Collection

Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach translated into a qualitative research method to identify a phenomenon, an individual's lived experiences, followed by exploring the phenomenon, and then seeking to understand the central meaning of that person's lived experience. To collect data, I employed semi structured open-ended interviews of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents having experienced the phenomenon, acculturative stressors on their academic performance. Before each interview, consent was given by the parent and the adolescent. It was my responsibility, as the interviewer, to create a climate in which the participants felt comfortable enough to tell me about their experience through the interview questions (Moustakas, 1994).

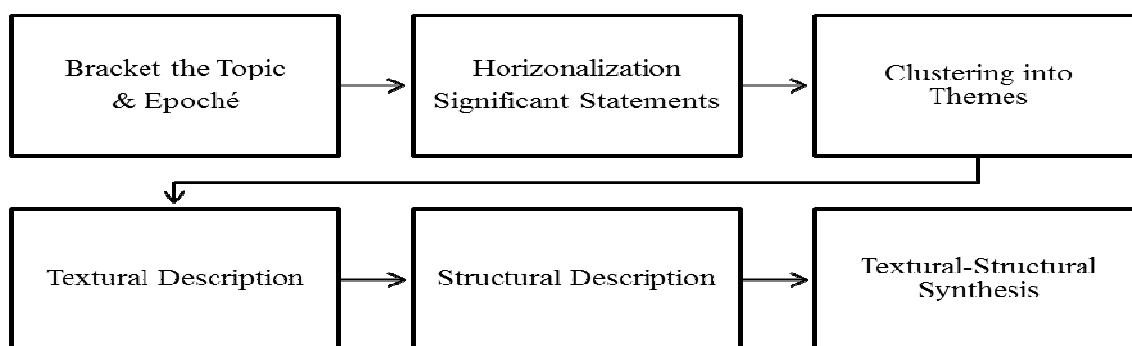
The data was collected once from seven participants. The participant and I conducted the interview at their respective homes over the telephone. The duration of each interview lasted about an average of 14 minutes. The participant was put on speaker. I used two audio recorders for each interview. The pandemic management in place during the time of this data collection resulted in telephone rather than face-to-face interviews. Originally, I had planned for the parent to determine communication format: in person or telephone. However, the parents' choice to have the interview by telephone was based on fear of the COVID19 pandemic.

Data Analysis

To organize and analyze phenomenological data Moustakas derived and modified methods of analysis from Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (2003). This modification allowed me to develop a complete narrative of the lived experiences of undocumented Hispanic adolescents. The analysis begins with bracketing the topic (the Epoché), horizontalization, clustering into themes, textural description of the experience, structural experience of the experience and a textural-structural synthesis (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Data Analysis Flowchart



Note. The figure was created to demonstrate the order of organizing and analyzing the data.

Bracketing the Topic

Bracketing is placing the research in brackets and everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is fixed on the topic and research questions (Moustakas, 1994). My role was to focus my attention on the topic of this study: the effects of acculturative stressors on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school.

Epoché is the first step in processing data analysis and highly encouraged before data collection. Epoché is a state of mind that is embraced before data collection and before any analysis of the research interviews (Bednall, 2006). I removed all preconceived experiences of the phenomenon as a way of seeing and understanding the experiences of the participant for the first time. Before I began each interview, I centered my thoughts on the well-being of each participant. The interviews were conducted by telephone. I made sure my tone of voice was neutral yet warm. When the participant was unsure of a question, I restated it for understanding.

I saw every interview as a source of information for others to read and understand their experiences. My beliefs and point of view on the current anti-immigrant movement would not hinder my scholarly responsibility of carrying out the interviews. At the end of each interview, I made notes of my feelings, my actions, and my overall experience.

Horizontalization

I transcribed all interviews verbatim, examined the responses multiple times and looked for significant statements. I used the four interview questions from the interview protocol as a guide to extract non repetitive, non-overlapping statements. Significant statements emerging included (a) “not understand teachers,” (b) “being lost,” (c) “its hard living in America,” and (d) “I have to talk to my mom.” The significant statements told a story of stress, isolation, the unknown, yet determined, and resilient. A female participant said to me that she received support from her mother and sister during times of stress and sadness. She continued to say she “started being happy, like being a new student” as the school year progressed.

Themes

Transcriptions were analyzed for significant statements and clusters of meaning were developed. The following themes emerged: concern about speaking the English language, the fear of failing, and learning in general. The key stressor for these participants was the absence of the English language. Two other themes that transpired were “I didn’t know” and “I didn’t understand”.

At the beginning of every interview, all seven participants started their interview in a low soft voice. This could have been attributed to shyness or uneasiness. As the interviews progressed, the participants began to answer the questions with comfort and ease; however, their responses were minimal. An important factor to consider was their limited English language acquisition. I asked each participant what language they preferred I conduct the interview, English or Spanish. Six of the seven participants requested the interview be in English. Some participants struggled with pronunciation and sentence structures, while others meshed both languages.

English

The inability to understand English was an acculturative stressor that impacted the participants’ academic performance. Participant 1 had the desire “to be able to speak English”, however, “not understand teacher” was added stresses to his desire to learn a new language. Participant 4 stated, “I couldn’t do anything because I didn’t understand it” referencing the new language required to learn. Participant 2 included in her responses that her mother was experiencing stress just as she was, “and my mom was

openly like stressed and like me and my older sister used to practice English at home so I wouldn't get my stress at school."

I Didn't Know

The phrase *I didn't know* was used by all the participants. During the interview some of the participants would articulate the phrase clearly and others would say it a bit louder. Participant 3 clearly stated, "Reading is the most challenging since I didn't know any English. I don't know. I didn't know how to read or answer questions correctly." The daily challenge of listening to English being spoken from the moment school day began to moment the school day ended participant 6 thought, "I didn't know the language in school" and the reflection of participant 7 was, "I didn't know how to talk in English"

I Didn't Understand

The phrase *I didn't understand* was said by several of the participants. With sadness in his voice participant 5 stated, "I didn't understand it very well. To learn English, unable to speak my language and unable to talk with my father. When I didn't understand the teachers, I would get very sad because I didn't know the language." Participant 3 would repeat "I really couldn't understand what the teacher was saying."

The three themes taken from the significant statements were short but the meaning behind them was solid and sound.

Textural Description

The textural descriptions of the data focus on describing *the what* of the phenomenon, being the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. The significant statements and the themes revealed the participants struggled in their academics due to lack of the English language. Examples of statements are “to be able to speak English, being lost, I was going to fail, it’s hard living in America, my vocabulary wasn’t really good, and people used to laugh at me.” When asked what their stressors were or worries, they reported “I don’t understand” or “I didn’t know” both phrases referencing the lack of understanding the English language. All participants were very respectful and responded softly during their interview but expressed distress in their voice being a new student in a new country. The participants experienced a lack of understanding of a language that was being taught at a school they had been resettled into.

Structural Description

A structural description of an experience focuses on the background and how the participants experienced the phenomenon in terms of the conditions, situations, or context (Creswell, 2007). All the participants’ were undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents. The acculturative stressors these adolescents experienced occurred in a school classroom.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

In this final step of data analysis, the essence of the phenomenon is presented. It is a culmination of what the participants experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2007). All participants in this study experienced the lack of knowing or understanding the English language in their classroom. These participants are Spanish speaking undocumented Hispanic adolescents and are currently enrolled in an American public middle school where one of the requirements is to learn English. Analysis indicated that, the participants experienced stress, isolation, and sadness and yet some were determined to learn the language, resiliency. The participants experienced the phenomenon in their respective schools. Some participants were not able to communicate with their teacher and some did not know what their teacher was asking of them. The essence of the phenomenon represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study. The participants experienced negative emotions because they did not know how to communicate in the English language.

Discrepancies

A thorough analysis of the phenomenon was carried out, from participant selection to data analysis. The number of participants was small enough to control and organize the data collection. Interviews were conducted once. Member checking was not practiced. There was one discrepancy that was noted. While the other participants answered the questions and spoke in a mild voice, one female participant was enthusiastic and cheery throughout the interview. She responded to each question with as much detail as she could remember.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Moustakas (1994) does not refer to issues of trustworthiness. He focused his attention on the construction of his concept, transcendental phenomenology, and provided guidance on conducting qualitative research using his method. A qualitative research study must have a truth value which is to establish confidence in the findings of an analysis. It is a concept used in qualitative research that conveys to the reader that the procedure used by the researcher ensures that the study has worth, consistency and integrity (Frey, 2018).

Trustworthiness was achieved by bracketing my attention and concentration throughout data collection and analysis. I conducted a semi structured four-question interview protocol giving me control over data collection. Trustworthiness criteria for a qualitative study are credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

Credibility

Credibility in a qualitative study is parallel to internal validity in a quantitative study (Creswell, 2007). To ensure credibility, I used saturation and reflexivity. The interview protocol had four questions and each interview averaged at fourteen minutes. All seven interviews provided enough data to extract sufficient information to reach saturation.

To ensure credibility, I engaged in reflexivity by journaling my thoughts and feelings. Before and after each interview I meditated about my experience and my feelings. I then wrote what I felt before and how I felt afterwards. After each interview I

felt disheartened because of the struggles these undocumented adolescents experienced in a learning environment. I also noted the importance and the value this study brings to undocumented students struggling with their academic performance.

In Chapter 3 I stated I would use member checking to ensure credibility, however, due to the COVID 19 pandemic I was not able to engage in member checking. This change was approved by the IRB.

Transferability

The second trustworthiness criterion is transferability. The results of this study may be applicable to another similar setting or group. The textural description, structural description, and textural-structural synthesis qualifies as having developed a thick description that will allow the reader to more fully and clearly understand the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The description of the phenomenon was written to describe what the participants experienced and how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context. Afterwards a synthesis or a combination of textural and structural descriptions culminated into the essence of the phenomenon, that all experiences have an underlying structure, negative emotions for the participants. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss that a reader can assess the transferability of the study and the study can resonate with the reader. This study can be further explored by examining in more detail one or all the identified themes. A doctoral student interested in conducting a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of undocumented Hispanic high school students could use the same interview protocol and compare the identified themes

from this study to the identified themes from high school students to determine if the experienced acculturative stressors are the same or different.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability involves accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself (Toma, 2006). For the study to be reliable and dependable it is important to record the procedures enabling future researchers to repeat the work to gain the same results. This study changed and evolved throughout its development. It followed Shenton's (2004) three phases: research design and its implementation, operational detail of data gathering, and reflective appraisal of the project. To ensure dependability I described in detail the research design, the rationale behind the method, and exactly what my role as the researcher would be. To execute this plan, I described the logic of selecting the participants, the location of the interview, the interview protocol and the procedures for recruitment and data collection. The procedures for recruitment were modified three times with the consent of the IRB. The first request for change was presented to the IRB in September 2019 and the last request was submitted July 2020. The COVID 19 pandemic crisis was a contributing factor for the last two changes. These changes were implemented in Chapter 3. Regarding data gathering and analysis, I practiced Epoché. At the end of each interview, I made notes of what I felt and did before, during and after the interview and the overall experience of engaging with the participant.

Confirmability

In Chapter 3, I stated that member checking, reflexivity and audit trail would be used to demonstrate confirmability, however, due to COVID 19 pandemic I was unable to conduct member checking. This was approved by the IRB. To ensure confirmability I reflected before and after my experience interviewing each participant. Before each interview I cleared my mind of any preconceptions I had of their residency status and my thoughts on how they perceived the American public-school system. I also meditated on how I would react to their story of confusion, fear and perhaps distrust in their teachers because of their absence of the English language. These thoughts and beliefs I had to put aside to be able to listen to each participant's story with an open and unhampered state of mind. As a school counselor working with undocumented students for many years, I was privy to the sad stories of being a new student in a new country and having to learn a new language with little support at home. According to Carcary (2009) an audit trail documents the progress of the completed analysis. The researcher provides an account of the decisions and activities throughout the study. From the process of participant selection to the end of data analysis I documented by keeping notes then transferring the detailed information to Chapter 4.

Results

In this section, the themes that emerged from the interviews and linked to the research questions were discussed

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school? According to the seven transcribed interviews that I read and re-read, the participants lived experiences was of isolation, sadness, unsureness, the unknown, and yet, I heard in their voices hope. The one challenge these participants' experienced was being a non to limited English speaking student attending an American public school. Two 3-word phrases I heard repeated throughout the interviews were, "I didn't know" and "I don't understand." The phases referenced the English language.

A female participant kept stating she was always stressed out that her mother had to take her to someone who could help her. She never stated who. She also said her mother was a big supporter of her education. She did say her friends supported her, "and I had friends and everything that everyone supports me." Of all the participants, her vocabulary was extensive, and she could hold a conversation. Another female participant wanted the interview conducted in Spanish. She expressed nervousness at not being able to write in English and the teachers not understanding her. This participant described her stress as trying to adjust to the American culture and how that stress affected her learning, "entering a school and without even knowing if the teachers would understand me" and "if other students would even talk to me." A male participant kept the responses at a minimum. He could be naturally shy, unsure of me or the interview, or a young man that spoke briefly and softly. His stresses stemmed from failing and "being lost." The

pervading them was the lack of the English language causing the participants experience emotional stress over their academic performances.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance? The acculturative stressors making an impact on their academic performance were reading, writing, listening, and speaking English every day in their classroom. For these participants not having the command of the English language was a challenge. These participants expressed their concern for their education by stating “I don’t understand.”

The participant who asked that the interview be in Spanish had sadness in her voice when she responded to how she saw herself coping with acculturative stressors. When I asked a male participant his major worry in school, he stated “I really couldn’t understand what the teacher was saying and like, I feel that in my grade.” He continued with, “I had an, I had a teacher. I kind of understand it a bit, but I wasn’t, like most of my teachers were talking to me, so I kinda didn’t understand a lot.” Another participant said, “I didn’t understand any questions, so I failed a lot of tests” when asked about being a new student in an American public school. What the participants reported to be the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance was lack of comprehension from the English language. The interview questions, significant statements and the themes can be found in Table 2.

Table 2*Significant Statements and Themes*

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Significant Statements	Cluster of Themes
RQ 1: What are the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school?	Q1. Can you describe to me what kind of stressors or worries you have experienced while trying to adjust to the American culture and how those stressors or worries have affected your learning in school?	To be able to speak English. Not understand teachers. Well, I nervous because I didn't know the language that much. I really couldn't understand what the teacher was saying. I couldn't do anything because I didn't understand it. I wasn't going to pass. Because I didn't learn English. I felt alone.	English I didn't understand.
RQ 2: What are the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance?	Q2. 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?	Being lost. Not speaking English. I was going to fail. The most one that was most worried about was no learning English. So, I was trying, I wasn't able to do my best every time I read a question or like they would call me to speak. I didn't want to mess up. My vocabulary wasn't really good, and people used to laugh at me.	English Fail Learning
	Q3. 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?	It's hard living in America. Reading is the most challenging since I didn't know any English. I didn't know how to read or answer questions correctly. That's why. I felt like everyone was staring at me because I didn't know how to speak the language. New country, new life, new things. Leaving my family and friends. Being able to speak English and talk to people. Being able to make friends. Being able to talk to teachers.	I didn't know. English
	Q4. How do you see yourself coping with the stressors or worries and its effect on your learning in an American school?	I told her (mom) privately that I wasn't going to learn anything. I have to talk to mom. Like me and my older sister used to practice English at home so I wouldn't get stressed at school. When I didn't understand the teachers, I would get very sad because I didn't know the language.	English I didn't understand I didn't know.

Note. The table was created to organize the research questions, interview questions, significant phrases, and themes.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to report the data analysis of this phenomenological study. The findings suggested the adolescents reported experiencing fear, isolation, stress, and sadness during class. Additionally, the participants described a stressor as having limited English skills causing their academic performance to suffer.

Chapter 5 will encompass an interpretation of the findings by describing whether the findings confirm, disconfirm, or broaden the knowledge of the topic. Also, the findings will be analyzed in the context of Berry's theory of acculturative stress and Bandura's social learning theory. Recommendations for further research based on the strengths and limitations will be described.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents and the effects of acculturative stressors on their academic performance. The rationale for selecting this approach was to focus less on the interpretations and more on the description of the lived experiences. Interviewing the participants allowed me to write in detail a description of their experiences. Research on undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents is obtainable; however, finding qualitative research on acculturative stressors such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening in a foreign language impacting their academic performance is limited. This study was a means to understand what and how these adolescents experienced learning a new language.

Key Findings

Data analysis indicated five patterns or themes: two phrases, “I didn’t understand” and “I didn’t know,” the word English in context of language usage, afraid of failing school, and difficulty in learning. The findings suggested undocumented Hispanic adolescents experienced frustration and stress due to their limited English language skills; a constant worry of failing the school year; and facing the daily challenges of trying to learn a second language. Throughout the interviews the phrases “I didn’t understand” and “I didn’t know” was said many times. All participants did not understand the language, did not understand class assignments, did not understand the teachers who only spoke in English, and did not understand homework. All participants expressed that they did not know what was expected of them, did not know when to ask for teacher assistance, and

did not know basic classroom rules or school rules in general. Establishing peer support was challenging. This study brings awareness that undocumented Hispanic adolescents need to be heard by every educator responsible for their education.

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirmation of Literature

Luttenger and Chen (2008) recognized the importance of understanding the experience of being an undocumented student in the U.S. to increase collaborations and reduce barriers to educational and career pursuits. In Cervantes and Cordova's (2011) study, they examined the psychosocial and acculturative stressors of Hispanic youth. Two of the six stressors identified as common themes were school and academic stress, and communication and language stress. For school and academic stress, middle school-aged Hispanic participants experienced discrimination, failing classes due to difficulty understanding English, no parental support for academic success, frequently relocating, and leaving school to work. Under communication and language stress, participant stressors included difficulties not knowing the English language, learning a new language, and feeling isolated. Another study that confirms my findings is Lad and Braganza's (2013) investigation of undocumented immigrants in public schools and the experiences of school personnel working with them. An emerging theme shared by immigrant participants and school personnel was academic challenges. Both perceived that language was a barrier. Katsiastica et al. (2013) presented evidence that social support networks and psychological and academic adjustments are important for first- and second-generation immigrant adolescents. According to Yakushko and Morgan (2012),

immigrant children experienced distinct challenges and patterns of adjustment that differed not only from their native-born peers but also from their own families and communities. Skuza's (2007) phenomenological study sought to find the meaning of the phenomenon acculturation by way of interviewing adolescent Latinas who experienced acculturation. Malott (2010) used a phenomenological approach to explore the lifeworld of Mexican-origin adolescents and their insight of what their strengths and challenges concerning their ethnic heritage. I, too, sought to find the meaning of the lived experiences of undocumented Hispanic adolescents experiencing acculturative stressors using a phenomenological method. Phenomenology humanizes the participants by recording the experiences of a phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to show how a research methodology based on phenomenological epistemology can humanize the understanding of the acculturation experience. A common theme among the adolescents was the inability to effectively communicate in English. The participants reported feeling stressed because they did not understand the teacher and the assignments given.

Disconfirmation of Literature

The peer-reviewed literature from Chapter 2 supported rather than discredited the findings that undocumented Latino adolescents are struggling academically due to limited English language skills.

Extensions of the Literature

To extend or expand the knowledge obtained from the findings; this study amplifies awareness of acculturative stress on undocumented Hispanic adolescents to disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other branches of learning.

Like studies discussed in Chapter 2, I assert that more research should be done on this population.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Findings through Berry's Theory

Berry's (2006) theory of acculturative stress is the inability to deal with a life event because the experience becomes too difficult or too great due to stressful experiences between cultural interactions. The significant statements extracted from the interviews described the difficulty the participants were experiencing in school causing stress and worry about their education. After analyzing and interpreting the transcripts five themes emerged: limited English language skills, fear of failing in school, difficulty learning in the classroom, and two constant phrases said throughout the interviews, "I didn't understand" and "I didn't know". This demonstrates that the themes generated from the data coincide with Berry's theory because it accurately described the participants' process of acculturation which had exceeded their coping skills resulting in a negative experience of being enrolled in a U. S. school

Analyzing and Interpreting the Findings through Bandura's Theory

The social learning theory is the relationship between modeling and observation creating a behavior. Bandura (1977) hypothesized that a person will take or extract information from an experience and incorporate that information to cultivate a belief in one's ability to succeed in each situation also known as self-efficacy. Bandura believed that self-efficacy can be a motivating factor in education.

The findings of my study demonstrated that the participants experienced acculturative stressors with an outcome of low self-esteem, sadness, unsure of their future

and aloneness. The participants did not express a sense of succeeding in their descriptions of U.S. schooling, and that their emotional presentation indicated discomfort through voice tone. The male subjects spoke in a low voice indicating they were either uncomfortable with the process of being interviewed or being asked about their experiences in school. It was evident by the male subjects' responses that self-efficacy or confidence in themselves was not present. The female subjects spoke with a higher voice than the males but also did not show evidence of confidence. One female subject did enjoy talking and responding to the questions and her voice would grow louder with every question. She was the only one that stated she had familial support. All responses indicated the experiences in the classroom were challenging and demanding. She did express a positive outlook for herself and exuded a level of empowerment.

Limitations of the Study

The trustworthiness of this study rested on transferability and dependability. Transferability provides a clear and concise description of a study, has usable knowledge, and it's applicable to another situation or population. If the researcher presents clear descriptive data to allow comparison, transferability becomes applicable. As a phenomenological study a textural-structural synthesis was used to create a thorough and detailed account of the lived experience to extract the essence of the phenomenon because this method of research is to identify, explore and seek understanding through description the fundamental nature of the lived experience.

Dependability involves accommodating and recording any change that occurs through observation and data collect. To account for the changes, I described in detail the

research design, the rationale behind the method, and my role as the researcher. These changes or limitations of dependability began with the operational detail of data gathering. The recruitment procedure was not a stable protocol. The path to finding participants was not smooth only complicated. The procedures for recruitment were modified three times with the consent of the IRB. The reliability of this study was marred by the problematic strategies which were discussed in Chapter 4.

Recommendations

Like any study there are strengths to be saluted and there are limitations that need further investigation. The one strong character point of the study was the topic, to examine the effects of acculturative stressors on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school. The limitations were found in the recruitment process. The anticipated help proved undependable. Further explanations will be offered below.

Strength of Study

The one strength of this research was the topic. It speaks to a wide audience about the education of undocumented Hispanic adolescents attending U.S. schools. Abrego and Gonzales (2010) asked for more research on educational barriers such as experiencing a lack of a school-based support system of undocumented Hispanic youth. Rodriguez et al., (2020) identified the need to help teachers with undocumented students increase their knowledge on multicultural education and to help strengthen teacher empathy. The topic is relevant to the current cultural climate of undocumented Latinos entering public schools.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study include procedures for recruitment, data collection, and qualitative approach as explained below.

Recruitment

The procedure for recruitment was changed due to unpredictable support and the COVID 19 pandemic. The original method was to have college students deliver flyers to families in Hispanic neighborhoods. However, the help needed to distribute the flyers became unavailable. Recruitment was done by posting the flyer on Facebook as well as distributing flyers in grocery stores. The plan to have college students assist was a strategic move, however, communication with the college students was not effective for gaining the necessary support when it was needed. Communication is always the key when more than one individual takes a role in any type of research.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted by telephone using a four-question interview protocol. The original method was to hold the interviews by telephone, or at a location designated by the parent. The interviews were concluded in 15 minutes or less. I expected the interviews to last at least one hour. If the interview had taken place in person, it was possible that the participant and I, after introductions, could have felt more relaxed and at ease with each other during the interview. Another possibility during the interview was that the participant could have felt more at ease and responded to each question with greater detail of their experiences.

Qualitative Approach

The focus of phenomenology is to understand the essence of an experience by studying several individuals having shared that same experience. The essence or the fundamental nature of the phenomenon is then described in detail what was experienced and how the phenomenon was experienced. It is a research model that supplies a wealth of information of a phenomenon from a group of individuals having been identified sharing the same experience. However, researching only the lived experiences and describing the essence of the experience is only a fragment of a topic that can be expanded by grounding a theory from the participants perspective, studying the interaction of these participants with family and friends, drawing from disciplines- anthropology and sociology. Phenomenology draws from philosophy, psychology, and education. The design of my study could have been more robust. If time and resources permitted, I would have carried this study out of the state of Texas and interview this population from California, New York, Illinois, and other cities like Miami with a high number of Hispanics.

A mixed-methods exploratory design would have used qualitative analysis to shape the quantitative phase by specifying research questions and variables and developing an instrument. For example, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008) mixed methods research design included qualitative interviews, participant observations, and quantitative assessments. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) conducted a 5-year longitudinal interdisciplinary and comparative study (L.I.S.A.) of recently arrived foreign-born children and their families to gain a more complete understanding of the experiences of

immigration. The study would not be a replication of the L.I.S.A. but to consider the mixed methods approach of using qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The potential impact for positive social change following this study is bringing to light that the educational needs of undocumented Hispanic adolescents are not being met. Immigrant youth are best supported when schools foster bicultural identities, enabling them to navigate multiple cultural worlds effectively the demands of standardized testing often force schools instead to emphasize rote learning in English, neglecting the incredible asset of children's native languages and much of what researchers have discovered about how children learn second languages (Tamer, 2014).

Family

When an undocumented Hispanic adolescent crosses the Mexican border most of the time these adolescents have traveled as a family unit. Even with deportation always a possibility the decision to migrate outweighs the risk of being deported. Undocumented families desire to live in a country that will allow them to sow the seeds of their culture and have their children take part in the American dream. One of the female participants in my study answered each interview question with lots of thought and enthusiasm. She knew she struggled with the English language, but she wanted to continue to learn English to become a better student.

Organizational

Anyone associated with undocumented Hispanic adolescents understands the challenges these youngsters face daily. Whether it's a school, church, university, Hispanic organizations such as League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Hispanic Federation, Hispanic Immigrant Integration Project (HIIP), Friends of Immigrant Refugee Minors (FIRM), and other organizations working with undocumented Hispanic adolescents has a responsibility to help shape the minds of these youth to value themselves to make a difference. These organizations who work with the undocumented population would greatly benefit from the findings of this study. With the information they could implement an intervention and prevention program targeting the academic struggles as well as to acknowledge the stress of acculturating into a new school culture.

Societal/Policy

Society and politics are two entities most difficult to see the potential these undocumented adolescents bring to the U.S., however, the individual or the groups behind them can bring to light that this specific group of adolescents is just like any other group of adolescents. The only difference is their culture, native country, and illegal status. Politics, especially, can make positive changes happen if the drive and initiative is alive and ready. When enrolled in a U.S. school, undocumented adolescents are taught about their adoptive countries federal, state, and local governments. In middle school social norms and politics are learned through family, friends, and society. The findings of my study exclude societal and political vernacular. Educators, politicians, media, law

enforcement, medical personnel and YouTube influencers are people who would gain an inside look into the education of undocumented Hispanic middle school adolescents.

Methodological

Methodical type of research used was qualitative and the approach was phenomenological. To encourage positive social change other appropriate approaches used that are under the qualitative umbrella are narrative, grounded theory, and case study. A biographical study is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. A researcher studying the lived experience of an undocumented high school or college Hispanic student could result in getting detailed information from the student during the interview. It is important to relate to the participant that their experiences would be part of a study to bring a voice of their shared experiences.

Grounded theory is to discover or generate a theory through the data from participants who have experienced a process, action or interaction. Research based on grounded theory generates a theory for social changes in restructuring of bilingual education and acculturative stress for undocumented adolescents, counseling for undocumented adolescents with acculturative stressors, and advocacy for undocumented adolescents and education.

A case study is developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or cases such as studying an event, an activity, a program and more than individual. The findings of a case study on crisis counseling for undocumented Hispanic adolescents in middle

schools could direct educators into making positive social changes towards developing guidance counseling lessons for middle school students.

Practice

A societal impact this study could have in the school guidance and counseling profession would be to have developed an accepting and tolerant view of the experiences of non-English speaking students. Not only would it benefit middle school counselors, but elementary counselors could develop a plan or strategy to work with students recently enrolled whose first language is Spanish. The beginning of the plan would be to meet with the student one on one and allow the student to talk freely. During these sessions the counselor would take detailed notes to refer to when meeting with student again. A first step in developing a strategy or strategies would be to support counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents. The benefit of this study to incorporate the findings into a school counseling program to addressing the challenges undocumented adolescents in middle school experience would be a grand success for all serving the students and a beautiful connection between student and school.

This study can be a steppingstone to bring an awareness that the current pedagogic program to educate ELL students' needs to be reevaluated to include social and emotional learning which is an integral part of education and human development. The benefits of SEL would increase student's cognitive abilities, an application of new knowledge, and an increased motivation to learn, commit to school, efforts towards schoolwork, and improved schoolwork (Davis et al., 2021).

Conclusion

After analyzing the interviews, the essence that emerged was that all participants had experienced stress due to the inability to understand or comprehend the English language and the classroom teacher's vernacular. These participants were Spanish speaking undocumented Hispanic adolescents and were enrolled in an American public middle school where one of the academic requirements is to learn English language.

Part of a participant's story explored his feelings of being ridiculed by his English speaking classmates because he didn't understand what the class discussion was about. A female participant highlighted with reverence the importance it was to her mother and sister that she was learning the English language in an American school. Each participant experienced acculturative stressors and hinted, some more than others, a determination to keep going to school to learn speak, write, read, and listen in English.

In 1982, 30 years ago, education became free for all students from anywhere in the world entering an American public school. Undocumented adolescents may have the right to free public schooling but servicing the socio-emotional element of their being is still not a concern in a system that offers free public schooling. It is the right of all undocumented adolescents receiving a learning support system in the U.S. system of education to include social and learning components to what is currently the case.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Project: Undocumented First-Generation Hispanic Adolescents, Acculturative Stressors & Academic Performance: A Phenomenological Study

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place of Interview: _____

Research: A study on the effects of acculturative stressors worries about the process of adjusting to the American culture, on the academic performance of undocumented first-generation Hispanic adolescents enrolled in a U.S. school.

Questions:

1. Can you describe to me what kind of stressors or worries you have experienced while trying to adjust to the American culture and how those stressors or worries have affected your learning in school? *Probing question:* What else can you remember about learning in a classroom here in the U.S.? Can you tell me more?
2. 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? *Probing question:* Can you tell me how your worries, concerns affected your learning?
3. What has been the most difficult or most challenging thing about the stressors or worries or learning a new culture and being a new student in an American school? *Probing question:* What was the hardest part of learning a new culture and being a new student? Can you tell me more?
4. How do you see yourself coping with the stressors or worries and its effect on your learning in an American school? *Probing question:* How do you feel about learning in an American school? Can you tell me more?

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

Appendix B: Protocolo de la entrevista

Proyecto protocolar de la entrevista: Adolescentes Hispánicos indocumentados de primera generación estresores aculturativos y desempeño académico: Estudio fenomenológico

Entrevistador: _____

Entrevistado: _____

Fecha: _____

Hora de la entrevista: _____

Lugar de la entrevista: _____

Investigación: Estudio de los efectos de los estresores aculturativos, se preocupa por el proceso de adaptación a la cultura estadounidense, en el desempeño académico de adolescents Hispánicos indocumentados de primera generación inscrita recientemente en una escuela de Estados Unidos.

Preguntas:

1. ¿Puede describirme qué tipo de factores de estrés o preocupaciones ha experimentado al intentar adaptarse a la cultura estadounidense y cómo esos factores de estrés o preocupaciones han afectado su aprendizaje en la escuela?
Pregunta de prueba: ¿Qué más puedes recordar sobre aprender en un salón de clases aquí en los Estados Unidos? ¿Me puedes contar más?
2. ¿Puede describirme cómo su experiencia con los factores estresantes o las preocupaciones de adaptarse a un nuevo país ha afectado sus calificaciones en la escuela?
Pregunta de prueba: ¿Puedes decirme cómo tus preocupaciones afectaron tu aprendizaje?
3. ¿Cuál ha sido el reto o los retos más difíciles de tu experiencia como estudiante recientemente inscrito en una escuela de Estados Unidos?
Pregunta de prueba: ¿Cuál fue la parte más difícil de aprender una nueva cultura y ser un nuevo estudiante? ¿Me puedes contar más?
4. ¿Cuál ha sido lo más difícil o lo más desafiante de los factores estresantes o las preocupaciones de aprender una nueva cultura y ser un nuevo estudiante en una escuela estadounidense?
Pregunta de prueba: ¿Cómo te sientes al aprender en una escuela estadounidense? ¿Me puedes contar más?

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