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Lived Experiences Regarding Family Relations of Latina Undocumented Immigrants

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Boston College, 1996

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Familismo is a complex multidimensional core cultural value in Latinx culture. But there is a lack of information related to Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and their experiences of familismo and family relations after the immigration experience. In the present study, a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to examine these lived experiences. The purpose of study was to explore family relations as a core value in the lived experiences of Latina undocumented immigrants. The participants consisted of Latina immigrants over 18 years old who immigrated from Central America and who were living in a state from the Northeast without authorization, visa, or other immigration documents. The research questions examined (a) the lived experiences in relation to familismo and family relations for Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States and (b) how Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States experience familismo and family relations. The results were three core themes that encompass the phenomenon of familismo and family relations: (a) love and connection, (b) safety and support, and (c) loss and separation. Gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants can provide further details that may assist in the development of programs, services, or systems that can incorporate key cultural information to effectively meet Latinx's needs leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, Rita Castillo Colon and Jorge Andres Colon who always encouraged and motivated me to achieve great things. To my husband, Joel Perez and our sons, Julio J. Perez, Christopher A. Perez, and Steven A. Perez for their endless support and patience during this long journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Latinx population in the United States grew by 52% between the 2010 and 2019 census (Krogstad, 2021), with an estimated 60.6 million individuals of Latinx origin living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau Vintage, 2019). The term *Latinx* is used throughout this dissertation to describe individuals of Latino origin; Latinx refers to inclusive, gender-neutral language instead of Latina, Latino, and Latin@ (Salinas & Lozano, 2021). Approximately 11 million Latinx individuals living in the United States are undocumented immigrants because they could not obtain a visa, residency, or other immigration documents (Negy et al., 2009; Passel & Cohn, 2011, 2018). Further, researchers have reported an increase in the number of Latina women entering the United States as undocumented immigrants (Mahalingam et al., 2009; Molina & Alcantara, 2013; Page & Flores-Miller, 2021; Pessar, 2005).

The essence of human experiences and emotional understanding of undocumented immigrants can get lost in the rhetoric of undocumented status (Cobb et al., 2017; Mantilla, 2014). I conducted this research to understand the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Specifically, familismo is a core cultural value in Latinx culture that encompasses the focus on the collective needs of the family versus individual needs (K. Corona et al., 2017; Falicov, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith-Morris et al., 2012). Familismo incorporates the concepts of collaboration and inter-dependence among family members (Losada et al., 2008; Rojas et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith-Morris et al., 2012). Latinxs adherence to the value of familismo may have an impact on help-seeking behaviors (R. Corona et al., 2017; Losada et al., 2006;

Ruiz, 2007; Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016). Moreover, researchers have reported that familismo may be linked to poor mental health outcomes (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012; Losada et al., 2006; Losada et al., 2008). This may be due to feelings of obligation to family and the impact on the individual's level of stress (Losada et al., 2008; Rojas et al., 2016). Other researchers have found that familismo can serve as a protective factor for health in general (K. Corona et al., 2017). In traditional Latinx culture, the woman is often the identified caretaker in the home (Falicov, 2007, 2016). As Latinas immigrate to the United States, they have increasing demands outside the home while having limited access to resources and extended family (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Understanding how Latinas conceptualize and incorporate familismo may help guide the development of culturally competent mental health service options.

In this chapter, I provide the background for the study. In addition, I discuss the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. I also introduce the theoretical foundation of the study, the nature of the study, and some key terms and definitions. Lastly, I address the assumptions, the scope and delimitations, the limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

Familismo refers to a multidimensional value concept that emphasizes the importance of family over individual needs (K. Corona et al., 2017; R. Corona et al., 2017; Miranda et al., 2006; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). In addition, familismo represents a cultural value of interconnectedness versus independence such as family centeredness, the role of mealtime, and nostalgia for immigrants (Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith-Morris

et al., 2012). Familismo is a complex value system that may not determine actual behavior (Smith-Morris et al., 2012), with multidimensions including (a) supportive familism, (b) obligation familism, and (c) referent familism (Zeiders et al., 2013). Further research should aim to better understand the complexity of familismo as a value system, as supportive familismo has had the highest impact on anxiety, depression, and psychological stress (R. Corona et al., 2017).

Research has identified multiple issues surrounding mental health, immigration, and family ties. For instance, impacts on the mental health of undocumented Latinx immigrants and their mental health can include (a) intragroup stigmatization of mental health problems within the community, (b) constant fear due to institutionalized racism, (c) limited options as a result of intersectionality, (d) counter-narratives of mental health stigma offered by support system, and (e) marginalization coped with through self-advocacy (Gonzalez, 2018). Additionally, immigrants may face deportation raids, which leads to loss of communication and separation of families (Abrams, 2009; Abrego, 2011b; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). In the context of Latino culture, the experience of loss and the experience of crisis impact the cultural value of familismo (Abrams, 2009). The rupture in family ties can lead to emotional and financial difficulties for children and adults (Abrams, 2009). Thus, undocumented immigrants have problems most frequently in the areas of family and social environments (Pérez & Fortuna, 2005).

Deteriorated family ties are better predictors of past-month psychological distress than family resources (Molina & Alcantara, 2013). A multidimensional understanding of Latinx adults who are undocumented immigrants is vital due to the intense psychosocial

needs of this population (Ornelas et al., 2020; Perez & Fortuna, 2005). But Latinas who are undocumented immigrants are under-represented in the current literature (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Silva & Galvez, 2010). Scholarly articles have emphasized the importance of reducing health care disparity, including equitable access to mental health services (Ayon et al., 2010; Ornelas et al., 2020; Perez & Fortuna, 2005). The current gap in the literature is the lack of information about Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and their experiences of familismo and family relations. Research is needed to understand how Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, negotiate the core cultural value of familismo after the immigration experience.

Problem Statement

Latinxs who are undocumented immigrants have intense psychosocial needs but may have limited social supports (Aggarwal, 2017; Ayon, 2017; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Garcini et al., 2016; Molina & Alcántara, 2013; Perez & Fortuna, 2005; Waters et al., 2017). For Latinxs who are undocumented immigrants, mental health is a family issue (Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Garcini et al., 2017; Waters et al., 2017). Without social supports and the appropriate mental health services, Latinas who are undocumented immigrants are at risk for increased emotional distress (Ayon, 2017; Bridges & Anastasia, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2010; Gonzalez, 2018; Fortuna & Porche, 2014). Latinx participants' fear of deportation also impacts access to needed health services (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2007).

The lack of culturally competent interventions and resources may also impact the utilization of mental health services by Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Further research is necessary to develop effective resources and programs as the number of undocumented immigrants continues to grow (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). It is necessary to understand the multidimensional needs and contexts of this population, including experiences of family relations, to develop and provide effective interventions that demonstrate multicultural competence and impact utilization of services (Ayon, 2017; Bustamante et al., 2012; Constantine et al., 2007; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Gonzalez, 2018; Ibañez et al., 2015; Perez & Fortuna, 2005).

Researchers have considered several topics that are important to the Latinx population. Researchers have examined the role of familismo (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009; Ibañez et al., 2015; Leidy et al., 2010; Rojas et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2010), the immigration experiences of Latinxs (Chung et al., 2011; DeLuca et al., 2010), as well as the complex context of undocumented immigration status for Latinx immigrants (Abrego, 2011a; Bustamante et al., 2012; Casas & Cabrera, 2011; Fortuna & Porche, 2014). However, after an exhaustive literature search, I did not find scholarly literature that identifies how Latinx individuals who are undocumented immigrants perceive and negotiate the core value of familismo after the immigration experience. Gaining an understanding of these lived experiences of Latinas can assist in the development of programs, services, or systems that can incorporate key cultural information to meet Latinx's needs effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore family relations and familismo as a core value in the lived experiences of Latinas who are

undocumented immigrants. Although Latina immigrants experience multiple risk factors, they present with limited access to services (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2007; Gonzalez, 2018; Pessar, 2005; Moore et al., 2020). My study explored the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants as they relate to the essence of familismo and family relations post immigration experience. Gaining an understanding of the complex concept of family relations and familismo facilitates the development of culturally relevant interventions, resources, and treatments.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences in relation to familismo and family relations for Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States?

Research Question 2: How do Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States experience familismo and family relations?

Theoretical Foundation

I developed this research project from a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Heidegger described phenomenology as understanding by looking at the experiences of a phenomenon and allowing them to "show themselves as they really are" (Wrathall, 2014, p. 8). Fore-conception was incorporated as part of the understanding gained about the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Fore-conception is described as the knowledge already known about the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1975/1989). Additionally, the hermeneutic circle describes the process of understanding the lived experiences and revising the fore-conception (Gadamer,

1975/1989). The hermeneutic circle is a core concept that illustrates a continuous flow of interactive understanding that began with examining the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Then, I analyzed the data that led to identifying meaningful units. I synthesized the meaningful units and the cycle began again. Hermeneutic phenomenology allowed me to incorporate other theoretical perspectives and study the phenomenon through various lenses with the use of the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975/1989).

My study incorporated the social justice and feminist theoretical perspectives. The philosopher John Rawls inspired social justice theory (Rawls, 1971). Social justice theory focuses on equality; it is related to equal access and rights to all individuals. Social justice can be conceptualized in a context of fairness and equality for those who are not in a position of power (Constantine et al., 2007). Adult Latina women who are undocumented immigrants are a marginalized population who deserve access to research on topics important to their lives (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018).

The feminist theory began with the influence of the women's movement in the 1960s (Evans et al., 2011). The feminist theory explores the role of gender, promotes a value of collectivism, and explores the social and political context. Feminist theory and multicultural theory provide a context for exploring individual needs as they relate to multiple contexts including gender roles and power relationships in society. Most counseling theories are based on Western thought with inherent culture and gender biases (Halbur, 2011; Sue et al., 1996). The multicultural theory examines and understands an individual's worldview and current concerns within the cultural context (Halbur, 2011).

Feminist and multicultural theories provided an opportunity to intervene within the individual and family context related to the concept of familismo that represents Latinx's connection to family. Four components of familismo are (a) familial support, (b) familial interconnectedness, (c) familial honor, and (d) the subjugation of self for family (Steidel & Contreras, 2003). I provide a more in-depth discussion of the conceptual and theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

For my study, I used a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach that draws from the philosophy of Heidegger (Harper & Thompson, 2011; Vagle, 2014). This was a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study because it focused on the participants' experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Vagle, 2014). Phenomenological research is appropriate when a qualitative researcher wants to learn more about "how a particular phenomenon manifests and appears in the lifeworld" (Vagle, 2014, p. 23). A feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach also incorporates the researcher's experiences and interpretation related to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014). Feminist hermeneutic phenomenology asserts that bracketing and reduction is not possible, and that interpretation is a part of narrative descriptions (Kafle, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012). The feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was best suited for my study because it focuses on participants' subjective experiences and insights (Kafle, 2013). This approach allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

I used individual, semistructured, in-depth interviews as the main source of data for my qualitative study. My data collection process included audio recording and transcription of the in-depth interviews. I conducted follow-up interviews with the participants to review transcripts of interviews. In addition, I used journal writing. Researchers can use journal writing before conducting interviews to document researchers' experiences and as a reflection of the current methods (Harrison et al., 2001; Janesick, 2011). I used journaling to explore reciprocity and trustworthiness throughout the research process (Etherington, 2004; Harrison et al., 2001).

Definitions

Familismo: Familisimo is a multidimensional construct that represents a collectivist value system with a preference for interconnectedness and interdependence (R. Corona et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith-Morris et al., 2012; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). R. Corona et al. (2017) described three dimensions of familismo: (a) family obligations, which relates to helping family and family value of family comes first; (b) family as referents, which relates to seeking family input for decisions and everyday events; and (c) perceived support from family, which relates to the belief that the family has a duty to support one another.

Family relations: Family relations refers to connections and relationship with other individuals from immediate (nuclear) or extended family. Family relations may also include connections and relationships with other individuals not always related by blood, such as neighbors and godparents (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018; Falicov, 2007, 2016).

Feminist hermeneutic phenomenology: Feminist hermeneutic phenomenology is a blend of feminist theory and hermeneutic phenomenology used as a framework for qualitative research.

Feminist theory: Feminist theory explores the role of gender, promotes a value of collectivism, and explores the social and political context (Díaz-Lázaro et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2011).

Hermeneutic phenomenology: Hermeneutic phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that focuses on the subjective description of the essence of a construct and emphasizes that interpretation is part of the narrative descriptions (Gadamer 1975/1989; Wrathall, 2014).

Immigration: Immigration includes the experience and journey of individuals who leave their country of origin to live in another country (Alvarado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 2020).

Interdependence: Interdependence refers to the mutually interactive process of support and dependence between individuals (R. Corona et al., 2017; Falicov, 2007, 2016; Steidel & Contreras, 2003).

Latinx: Latinx was used throughout this document instead of the terms Latino, Latina, Hispanic, LatinUs, and Latin@. Scholars frequently used Latino and Hispanic interchangeably (Taylor et al., 2012; Torres, 2018). Advocates introduced Latinx to account for intersectionality and inclusive gender-neutral language (Salinas & Lozano, 2021; Torres, 2018). Choosing a term that emphasizes inclusion is congruent with the

feminist and social justice theories that were the foundation of this study. Latinx refers to individuals who have cultural ties to Latin America.

Social justice: Social justice includes the concepts of fairness and equality for all individuals (Constantine et al., 2007; Rawls, 1971).

Undocumented immigrants: Undocumented immigrants include individuals residing in the United States without any authorization, visa, or legal documentation (Alvarado, 2007; Passel & Cohn, 2012, 2018). The literature may also refer to undocumented immigrants as unauthorized immigrants (Alvarado, 2007).

Visa: A visa is a legal document that authorizes an immigrant to reside in the United States for a specific period. There are several types of visas, including student and employment visas (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2013). The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services department is part of the Department of Homeland Security and is the agency that grants visas.

Assumptions

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of Latinas from Central America who are undocumented immigrants in relation to family relations. My first assumption was that the participants were open and truthful about their experiences related to family relations, the concept of familismo, and their immigration experience. My second assumption was that participants were truthful about their immigration status. I was not able to verify if the participants have any documents that granted them permission to remain in the United States. If I included a verification process, this could have resulted

in elevated risk for the participants' identities to be compromised, and I may not have obtained the number of participants needed for my study.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I focused on the lived experiences of Latinas who were at least 18 years old and immigrated to the United States from Central America. The study participants only included adult women, which excluded any men and women under 18 years old. With the feminization of migration, it is important to develop research that focused on the Latinas' experiences (Eisenstein, 2015; Pessar, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2010). The study excluded participants from Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean. Most of the current literature available about Latinas focused on Mexican participants (Campbell, 2008; Ocana, 2014). The current immigration statistics indicated a significant increase in immigration from Central America (Passel & Cohn, 2012). Additionally, few researchers focused on conducting studies that involve individuals who are undocumented immigrants (Becerra et al., 2013; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Silva & Galvez, 2010). Thus, I sought participants who were from Central America and are undocumented immigrants to create research that is relevant for a vulnerable population that is under-represented in the current research (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Perez & Cruess, 2014). The sample location was not representative of the entire United States. The sample focused on participants from a state in the Northeast.

Limitations

All studies should include a clear understanding of the limitations (Peoples, 2020). This qualitative study had a small sample size, which does not yield any findings

of causality. As a Latina, my own experiences and interactions also represent a personal bias. I grew up listening to my family's immigration stories that included experiences of hope, resilience, loss, and separation. I also developed perceptions of family relations and familismo as I experienced them in my family system. I used a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological research approach. I examined and revised my pre-conceptions (Gadamer, 1975/1989). I used journal writing to document my personal experiences and thoughts prior to conducting the interviews with participants as well as documenting my observations during the semistructured interviews and follow-up interviews. Other limitations could have included Latinas who are undocumented immigrants lacking trust in me and the research process. As a Latina who was born in the United States, there was also an inherent power differential between the participants and the researcher.

Significance

The purpose of this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants in relation to familismo and family relations. The significance of potential research findings may assist in expanding multicultural competence for mental health service providers and knowledge about values of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants (Cervantes et al., 2010; Constantine et al., 2007). This was significant because Latinas who are undocumented immigrants are a vulnerable and underserved population with significant mental health needs (Ayon et al., 2010; Doran et al., 2018),

With this study, I may facilitate and promote social change by increasing knowledge of family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented

immigrants. The complex emotional experiences of undocumented Latina immigrants are under-represented in the mental health treatment literature (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Pérez & Fortuna, 2005). With the results of this study, I may contribute to the development of culturally sensitive interventions to increase access to mental health services for Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Researchers may use the results from this study to develop interventions that facilitate growth within the context of family relations for this population.

In addition, exploring the lived experiences of the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants may help develop questions for future quantitative and qualitative studies that examine other aspects and areas of Latinas' lived experiences. With this study, I may contribute to other studies on the construction of the Latinx family in the United States (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018; Rojas et al., 2016).

Further, through this study, I may help give a voice to Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. This is particularly important since they are a vulnerable population (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). Advocacy and empowerment were central to the social justice context of this study (Constantine et al., 2007). Understanding the view of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants is relevant given the rise in immigration by women (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Additionally, this study provides a women's perspective on the value of familismo and contributed to the professional research on Latinx family structure.

Summary

Within this chapter, I provided an overview of my research study. Within the introduction to the study, I included information about the Latinx population in the United States. The Background section contained information about relevant research studies related to undocumented Latinas. In my problem statement, I presented a gap in current literature related to the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and their experiences of family relations after the immigration experience. I addressed the purpose of the study and the research questions. I conceptualized this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study from the social justice and feminist theoretical perspectives. Within this chapter, I also introduced important terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, I include the literature review and provide an in-depth analysis of research studies to establish a foundation for the current research project. In Chapter 3, I present the details of the qualitative methodology in relation to this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study. In Chapter 4, I introduce information about the data collection process and the results. Finally, in Chapter 5, I explore the interpretation of the findings and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Familismo is a core cultural value in the Latinx culture that exemplifies the importance of family and collectivism (Falicov, 2007, 2016; Mahalingam et al., 2009; Miranda et al., 2006; Rojas et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2010). Scholars identified familismo in the literature as a complex construct that can present as both a protective and risk factor in Latinx families (Perez & Fortuna, 2005; Rojas et al., 2016; Smith-Morris et al., 2013). Researchers found that familismo influenced the help-seeking behaviors of Latinxs (Villatoro et al., 2014). Latinxs who endorsed the cultural value of familismo are more likely to seek informal or religious services than formal mental health services (Gonzalez, 2018; Paat & Green, 2017; Villatoro et al., 2014). When Latinxs do not access mental health services, their symptoms may worsen, and they do not attain the treatment they need (Dinwiddie et al., 2013; Villatoro et al., 2014). However, scholar-practitioners are not fully aware of how Latinas who are undocumented immigrants perceive the impact of the immigration experience on familismo and how they negotiate family relations after the immigration experience.

The problem is when familismo becomes a risk factor for Latinas who immigrate to the United States without their families (DeLuca et al., 2010; Rojas, 2016). The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants must learn to navigate and develop strategies to fulfill their need for family connectedness in an unfamiliar context and culture (Bridges & Anastasia, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2010; Ibañez, 2015; Rojas et al., 2016). According to Migration Policy Institute (2017), Latinas account for 46% of the undocumented immigrants from Latin American countries. Latinas who are

undocumented immigrants are a vulnerable population who have limited access to information and resources, including mental health services, health care, and education (Ayon, 2014; Lauricella et al., 2021; Ornelas et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2020). But undocumented Latinas are under-represented in the mental health research (Aponte-Rivera et al., 2014; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Silva & Galvez, 2010).

The purpose of this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of family relations in the lived experiences of Latina undocumented immigrants after immigration. These findings may assist in expanding the multicultural competence of mental health professionals and knowledge about the values of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants (Casas et al., 2020; Constantine et al., 2007). In this chapter, I provide information about the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and an exhaustive review of the current literature related to the study. In my literature review, I include the current research on the lived experiences of undocumented Latinx immigrants. In this chapter, I also explore relevant research related to immigration and family relations.

Literature Search Strategy

The existing literature related to Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and their family relations is limited. Undocumented Latinx immigrants have beene under-represented in mental health research (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fortuna & Porche, 2014). The literature search strategy I used for this study included single search terms and combination searches. I conducted searches using the Walden Library databases and Google Scholar. In addition, I used several databases to conduct literature review

searches including Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX. The keywords I used in searches for this study included *undocumented Latino/Latina*, *unauthorized Latino/Latina*, *Latino/a and family relations*, *familismo*, *family relations*, *Latino/a immigration*, *unauthorized immigrants*, *illegal immigration*, *immigration policy*, *Latinx*, *Latinas*, *Latinx and feminist theory*, and *Latinx and social justice theory*. In addition, reference pages of articles helped identify other resources.

Theoretical Foundation

Within the following section, I discuss the theoretical foundation for this study. I grounded this research in a feminist hermeneutic phenomenology, and I used the lenses of social justice and feminist theoretical perspectives (Gadamer, 1975/1989). I describe the origin of each social justice theory and feminist theory, followed by a discussion of the significant theoretical propositions that inform the current study. In addition, I discuss how other researchers have used these theories to study Latina undocumented immigrants and the concept of familismo or other closely related topics.

Social Justice Theory

The philosopher John Rawls influenced social justice theory (Rawls, 1971). Social justice theory incorporates four key principles: (a) equity, (b) access, (c) participation, and (d) harmony (Crethar et al., 2008). Equity refers to "the fair distribution of resources, rights, and responsibilities to all members of society" (Crethar et al., 2008, p. 270). The concept of equitable is essential when conducting research with marginalized populations, such as Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Access

refers to access to knowledge and resources as well as power (Crethar et al., 2008, p. 271). Participation refers to people's right to participate in decisions that can affect their lives (Crethar et al., 2008, p. 271). Overall, social justice theory incorporates the concepts of fairness and equal access for all. Social justice is related to empowering those who are not in a position of power (Constantine et al., 2007). For instance, Latinas who are undocumented immigrants are a marginalized population that experiences many barriers that impact their access to information and resources and limit their access to family resources (Ayon, 2014; Garcini et al., 2016; Hurtado et al., 2020). Social justice theory emphasizes the elimination of barriers that promote access to equal resources (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Social justice research is grounded in understanding individual experiences within the cultural context (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Social justice research can be used to gain insight into cultural constructs such as familismo to increase the inclusion of disenfranchised populations (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The social justice perspective may help improve understanding of how separation from family affects the overall well-being of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Counselors in collaboration with others may use advocacy to create changes in available resources and supports for Latinas who are undocumented immigrants (Ornelas et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2008). There is a need for social advocacy in counseling to address injustices faced by marginalized populations (Ayón, 2014; Imber-Black, 2011). For example, the anti-immigration laws like Arizona's SB 1070 may significantly impact the availability and accessibility of mental health services and resources for Latinx families (Ayón, 2014).

Additionally, many Latinx families have suffered separation from loved ones due to the incarceration and deportation of Latinxs who are undocumented immigrants (Ayón, 2014; Landale et al., 2011; Ornelas, 2020), which may impact how Latinxs experience the core value of familismo. The participation of mental health professionals and undocumented Latina immigrants in their advocacy struggles are important factors in the creation of social change (Becerra et al., 2013; Chung et al., 2011; Lauricella et al., 2021; Ornelas, 2020).

Feminist Theory

In the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, feminist theory was developed from the women's movement in the mid-19th and 20th century, primarily through the efforts and work of Betty Friedan, Margaret Fuller, Simone de Beauvoir, and Gloria Steinem (Evans et al., 2011; McCann & Kim, 2017). Feminist theory provides an opportunity to research within the context of the individual, family, and community. The available literature detailing the history and contribution of feminist theory encompasses a larger scope that I did not fully address in this study. I focused on presenting literature pertaining to feminist theory that was relevant to my study of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and their experiences of familismo and family relations.

Cultural context is essential to feminist theory (Landrine, 1995), and empowerment is a central concept in the application of feminist theory (Crethar et al., 2008). When examined through a Western feminist lens, some of the values of Latinas conflict with core feminist concepts of liberation (Armijo, 2009). The current discourse on multiracial and transnational feminism emphasizes a focus on the lived experiences of

women versus pre-determined concepts that were conceptualized from a Western focused context (McCann & Kim, 2017). However, feminist theory also values collectivity and recognizes the sociocultural and political context. This perspective is compatible with the values of Latinas, who usually seek collaboration and a relational approach (Díaz-Lázaro et al., 2012; Falicov, 2016).

At this time, feminist theory has increased focus on cultural context and has incorporated concepts of multicultural theory (Díaz-Lázaro et al., 2012). McCann and Kim (2017) identified five concepts that are present in contemporary feminist theory: (a) gender, (b) difference, (c) women's experiences, (d) the personal is political, and (e) intersectionality. Gender includes cultural norms and values that are linked to those identities (McCann & Kim, 2017). Differences refer to categories such as, races, classes, ethnicities, and sexualities. Lived experiences provided a way to expand the context and allow individual perspectives. The personal is political recognizes change is needed not only in the "private world" but also in the "public world" (McCann & Kim, 2017, p. 27). Intersectionality can refer to the influence of both race and gender on views (Hamidullah & Riccucci, 2017), which can influence society (McCann & Kim, 2017). The current feminist theory has been used to expand the context of feminist knowledge through exposure to transnational conversations about core concepts and incorporates knowledge and ideas from multiple cultures (McCann & Kim, 2017).

In addition, feminist theory emphasizes the need to create social change (McCann & Kim, 2017). This component of feminist theory is important as individuals manage the current struggles present in relation to immigration policy. Further, four core principles of

feminist theory applied to the current study: "(a) the personal is political, (b) egalitarian relationships, (c) privileging of women's experiences, and (d) empowerment" (Evans et al., 2011, p. 17). The concept of the personal is political focuses on the impact of social context on individuals; the way to impact individual change is through social action (Evans et al., 2011). When discussing egalitarian relationships, I addressed any power differential inherent in the relationship between the counselor and client or between the researcher and participants. The emphasis of egalitarian relationships is on a collaborative process. When I examined the privileging of women's experiences, I looked at incorporating all perspectives instead of adhering to the male experience as the norm (see Evans et al, 2011). Finally, the goal of empowerment is to emphasize the strengths of individuals instead of focusing on deficits to promote change. Campbell (2008) provided a framework of strength when analyzing the experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants that I incorporated into the conceptualization of my study.

The feminist and social justice perspectives encourage a collaborative process in which the participants are active in the research process. The feminist and social justice perspectives blend to create a clear pathway and context for this research project. These theories emphasize that development is impacted by an individual's culture, environment, context, and experiences (Crethar et al., 2008). Thus, the lives of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants were impacted by their culture (Latina), their environment (current residence and their native country of origin), context (work, family, individual, community), and experiences (pre-immigration and post immigration). An understanding

of family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants can help to facilitate rich data collection about familismo in the context of a new culture.

Literature Review

In this section, I present relevant literature related to my population and topic. I describe, discuss, and critique current studies on pertinent topics. The first topic I discuss is immigration, in general, to set the stage for a more specific discussion about undocumented immigration. Next, I discuss the topic of undocumented immigrants, with an emphasis on research related to undocumented Latina immigrants. Finally, I discuss family relations, which includes a discussion of familismo. The available research specifically related to undocumented Latinx immigrants is limited (Ayón, 2014; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Page & Flores-Miller, 2021). The studies I evaluate in this chapter helped to shape the development of my research topic.

Immigration

Historically, immigrants have been perceived as a threat, and they are often dehumanized (Esses, 2012), which denies the complexity of the immigrant experience and creates a platform for increased victimization of immigrants. This strong fear and dehumanization of immigrants have resulted in social and legal implications (Esses et al., 2013). Distrust and fear of undocumented and documented immigrants continues to grow in the United States (Bender, 2010; Furman et al., 2012; Garcini et al., 2019).

U.S. citizen's mainstream attitudes toward documented and undocumented immigration negatively shifted after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Esses et al., 2002). In 2001, President Bush signed The Patriot Act (Furman et al., 2012). This Act

provided law enforcement and immigration authorities the right to detain and deport any suspected terrorists. Although the Patriot Act was intended to keep the United States safe from terrorism, it has also contributed to the current negative perception and skepticism toward immigrants (Furman et al., 2012). Individual states followed with the creation of similar laws (Bender, 2010). Laws such as the Arizona SB 1070 resulted in much controversy and reflected a growing anti-immigration movement in the nation (Bender, 2010; Furman et al., 2012). The message presented to U.S. citizens is that undocumented immigrants are responsible for much of the crime present in this country (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017b). A study was conducted on U.S. citizens' attitudes toward Arab and Mexican immigrants pre- and post- September 11, with data collected before September 11, 1 month after, and 1 year after from 84 participants, 140 participants, and 180 participants, respectively (Hitlan et al., 2007).The results confirmed that U.S. citizens perceived Arab immigrants as more of a symbolic threat than Mexican immigrants, and they perceived Mexican immigrants as a stronger economic threat (Hitlan et al., 2007).

On January 27, 2017, President Donald Trump signed Executive order 13769, which included suspension of visas for individuals from several countries that were identified as presenting a potential risk (Gostin, 2017; White House, 2017). However, it was not clear how this executive order would be implemented, nor how it would be operationalized to address the undocumented status of Latinxs (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017a; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017b). Although President Donald Trump's executive order signed on June 20, 2018 ended the separation

of undocumented families when they seek asylum in the United States, it did not attempt to shift the negative perception of undocumented immigrants (Levin, 2017). Latinxs' may still experience feelings of fear and concerns about their future in the United States, and the increasing fear of Latinxs to seek support from law enforcement appears to have affected the filing of police reports and may result in the victimization of immigrants (Levin, 2017).

Immigrating to another country is a complex, multidimensional experience that impacts the immigrant in multiple contexts, including individual, family, work, education, and community (Landale et al., 2011; Mahalingam et al., 2009; Nathan, 2006; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Quiroga et al., 2014). In my study, I explored Latinas' experiences after the immigration experience. The status of immigration reform and immigration policy may have an impact on my potential participants and their experiences (Doran et al., 2018).

Undocumented Immigrants

The terrorist attacks resulted in many changes related to policy and government oversight, as well as, increased fear of undocumented immigrants in the United States (Brook & King, 2007; Furman et al., 2012). In 2002, The Homeland Security Act was passed which resulted in the restructuring of twenty-two federal agencies and the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Brook & King, 2007). The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice. With the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, INS functions were assigned to the following agencies: (a) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

(USCIS), (b) U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and (c) U.S. Custom and Border Protection (CBP) (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2015). The Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson issued a memorandum on November 20, 2014, detailing the policies for apprehension, detention, and removal of undocumented immigrants. The memorandum described the priority levels and criteria to determine removal and returns for each of the levels. The top priority of removals relates to individuals who pose threats to national security, border security, and public safety (Johnson, 2014). The next priority level includes individuals with misdemeanors and new immigration violators (Johnson, 2014). The third priority level includes other immigration violators (Johnson, 2014).

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2015a), in the 2015 fiscal year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) handled 462,463 removals and returns. ICE handled 235,413 removals or returns, and the U.S. Custom and Border Protection (CBP) detained 337,117 undocumented immigrants. 85% of the removals or returns fall under the top priority category. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines removals as formal cases that require court proceedings while a return is an informal process without court involvement. The individuals removed or returned were identified as meeting necessary criteria as detailed in the November 2014 memorandum. These conditions have promoted an impending fear of incarceration and deportation for undocumented immigrants (Abrego, 2011a; Arbona et al., 2010; Ayon, 2014; Quiroga et al., 2014).

Immigrating to another country may or may not result in a traumatic experience for undocumented immigrants. At times, there are traumatic experiences during their journey to enter the United States. Many adults are victimized during their travels to the United States (Abrego, 2011b; Berman, 2016). Families may be separated due to deportation or incarceration (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Furman et al., 2012). Individuals respond to situations and experience trauma in diverse ways. Some individuals have vivid memories of their travels to the United States, including experiences of sexual assault (Abrego, 2011b; Berman, 2016). Casas and Cabrera (2011) discussed the trauma families experienced because of prejudice and ethnic profiling. In addition to the psychological impact of negative stereotypes, undocumented Latinx immigrants experience poor housing options, lack of economic assistance, and lack of health care benefits (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010).

Abrams (2009) explored the impact of deportation raids on families by examining residential and workplace raids. Abrams detailed the changes of the Department of Homeland Security in handling arrests of undocumented immigrants. Abrams introduced information about the National Fugitive Operations program, including the Operation Return to Sender. Forty percent of the apprehensions resulting from Operation Return to Sender included undocumented immigrants with no existing deportation order (Abrams, 2009). Abrams incorporated results from the exploratory study conducted by Capps et al. (2007).

Capps et al. (2007) conducted an exploratory study to explore the impact of worksite raids on the children of individuals, who are undocumented immigrants. The

researchers also wanted to understand the experiences of immigrant families and communities following the raids. The researchers included three sites: (a) Greeley, Colorado, (b) Grand Island, Nebraska, and (c) New Bedford, Massachusetts. The researchers collected the study data in these communities after worksite raids occurred. The site visits were two to six months after the raids. The researchers used snowball sampling at each site. The participants included individuals directly impacted by the raid, as well as individuals who provided support after the raids. The researchers interviewed thirty caregivers. Twenty-eight of the caregiver interviews were face-to-face and two were telephone interviews. The researchers conducted interviews with ninety-one community respondents. The researcher conducted semistructured interviews using an interview guide. The interviews were 60–90 minutes. The researchers reported that participants felt safe and participated in the interviews at their homes and churches (Capps et al., 2007). In my study, I identified safe locations, such as homes or religious institutions to conduct my face-to-face interviews. Capps et al. (2007) reported limitations about their study, including a sample that is not representative of all immigrants involved in raids. The study also did not provide clear demographics about the participants. The researchers identified that many of the participants were from Mexico, some from Guatemala, and others from Central America, but they did not provide exact numbers in the report.

Capps et al. (2007) identified the following dimensions of familismo: (a) family-level decision-making, (b) family members as reliable providers of basic needs, (c) family members as providers of emotional support, and (d) family members as problem

solvers. Capps et al. (2007) described the impact that raids and arrests had on families, including loss of communication without any chance to plan. In the context of Latinx culture and the cultural value of familismo, the experience of loss and a crisis have an impact on the Latinx family's mental health (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012; Berman, 2016; Dreby & Schmalzbauer, 2013). Capps et al. (2007) found familismo was an effective response to the raids. In addition, the churches emerged with a key role in the lives of immigrant populations (Capps et al., 2007). The researchers reported that immigrants first sought support from their families and then from religious institutions. Since churches are not required to gather demographic data or immigration status on those seeking assistance, immigrants felt comfortable and safe seeking assistance (Capps et al., 2007; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 2020). In my study, I worked with local religious institutions to present my study and seek participants.

Undocumented immigrants account for 3.7% of the overall population of the United States (Taylor et al., 2011). According to the DHS end of year statistics (2014), immigrants from Central America account for most of the 68% increase in immigration from countries other than Mexico. There are multidimensional and complex issues related to unauthorized immigration status for Latinx immigrants (Baumann et al., 2011; Furman et al., 2012). Undocumented Latinx immigrants may experience separation from family, fear of deportation, stigma, language barriers, unprotected work environments, and limited knowledge of the social, cultural, and economic functioning of U.S. culture when they "cross the border" in search of "a better life" (Garcini et al., 2019; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Smart & Smart, 1995; Torres et al., 2012). Casas and Cabrera (2011)

discussed the trauma families experience because of prejudice and ethnic profiling. The individuals experience intense fear and negative cognitions about who they are as individuals and within their family culture. The stereotypes and negative views of immigrants influence the mental health of the Latinx families (Ayon, 2014; Waters et al., 2017).

Abrego (2011a) conducted qualitative studies that yielded pertinent information about the impact of legal status on undocumented immigrants. Abrego (2011a) defined 1st generation undocumented immigrants as individuals who immigrated as adults. 1.5 generation refers to individuals who immigrated as children and may have limited or no ties to their country of birth. Data and results for two qualitative studies were included. Abrego (2011a) acknowledged differences between the objectives of both studies and identified how the studies were comparable.

The first study was a longitudinal study 2001–2006, which included ethnographic interviews and observations of 27 participants to examine the role of undocumented status. Abrego (2011a) explored the effects of immigration and educational laws during interviews with 1.5 generation students. The participants were undocumented high school and college students 17–24 years old from Guatemala, Mexico, and El Salvador.

The longitudinal study included three phases. The first phase of the longitudinal study (2001) included interviews with twelve undocumented youth. The second phase of the longitudinal study (2002–2003) included interviews with eight of the original 12 participants who participated in the first phase. The third phase of the longitudinal study (2005–2006) included interviews with the eight participants again who participated in the

first and second phase. During the third phase, Abrego (2011a) interviewed an additional fifteen participants to increase the trustworthiness of the results. One participant immigrated at the age of fourteen. The other twenty-six participants immigrated by the age of eight. The interviews with the 1.5 generation participants were conducted in English, recorded, and transcribed.

The second study (2004–2006) included 28 participants who were 1st generation Latinx immigrants 25–55 years old from El Salvador. The participants immigrated to the United States as adults (average age of 29). During these interviews, Abrego did not directly ask about legal status, but participants provided information about their legal status during the interviews. When participants were interviewed, five participants had legal permanent residency, fourteen participants were undocumented immigrants, and nine participants had Temporary Protected Status. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, were recorded, translated, and transcribed. Participant observations were also included in the data collection.

Abrego (2011a) found that undocumented immigrants presented with generational differences. He found that 1st generation undocumented immigrants experienced fear related to deportation and loss of freedom. His results indicated that the 1.5 generation were impacted by stigma. The narratives of 1st generation and 1.5 generation participants revealed how undocumented status had an impact on the participant's self-view; the participants internalized negative messages and experiences related to their undocumented status and identified the belief that they did not matter (Abrego, 2011a).

Participants' perception of legal rights often resulted in under-reporting or lack of reporting when they were victimized (Abrego, 2011a).

However, undocumented immigrants presented as a diverse group and their experiences result from an intersection of legal status (undocumented) with other contexts: (a) opportunities (school, work, social network), (b) interpretations (i.e., how they perceive and understand experiences), and (c) behaviors (i.e., whether they are engaged in healthy or unhealthy activities and interpersonal relationships). Abrego (2011a) recommended that future research explore how other factors impact undocumented immigrants' integration experiences. Abrego (2011a) did not provide a detailed description of his data analysis procedures that affected the trustworthiness of this study. Unclear procedures compromised the transferability of the study. However, Abrego (2011a) used data from multiple sources that increased diversity of data and increased rigor of the study (Creswell, 2012).

In my study, I developed clear procedures for data collection and analysis that increased transferability and trustworthiness. In addition, I incorporated data from multiple sources to increase the rigor of my results. I wanted to learn about the role of family relations and familismo after immigrating to the United States and how they intersect with undocumented immigrant status.

Gonzalez and Chavez (2012) conducted a mixed method study. The quantitative portion of the study examined data from a random-sample telephone survey from January 2006. The study included 1201 participants from Orange County, California. The participants included 805 Latinxs and 396 Caucasian participants. The qualitative portion

of this research included 80 in-depth interviews. The participants were 20–34 years old and interviews were collected in three phases. The first group of interviews were completed (2002–2003) at community-based organizations. The second group of interviews were completed (2004 to 2007) at participants' workplaces, schools, homes, and in community settings. The third group of interviews were completed (2009) like the second group. These included additional interviews and follow-ups with past participants. All of the interviews were conducted in English.

Gonzalez and Chavez (2012) reported that analyzing the survey data of 1.5 generation Latinxs within the context of their immigration status revealed significant differences. 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, were less likely to own their own home than 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (13% compared to 70%; p <.001). 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, identified less positive beliefs about their quality of life compared to 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (13% compared to 35%; p <.05). 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, were less satisfied with their neighborhoods than 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (36% compared to 64%; p <.05). 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, were forced to move because of money problems than 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (15% compared to 2%; p <.01). 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, were more likely to believe they had been treated unfairly by police than 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (18% compared to 6%; p <.05). 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, were less likely to seek medical care in the last 12 months

than 1.5 generation Latinxs, who had legal status (51% compared to 78%; $p < .01$). The legal status of 1.5 generation Latinxs influenced multiple contexts of their lives (Gonzalez & Chavez, 2012).

Gonzalez and Chavez (2012) also explored general themes from the interviews with the 1.5-generation Latinx immigrants. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data were: (a) problems of everyday living, (b) living on hold, (c) wasted lives, and (d) identity. They also discussed patterns that distinguish 1.5-generation Latinx immigrants from first-generation Latinx immigrants. Both 1.0 and 1.5 generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants experienced feelings of fear that significantly impacted their lives. These feelings of fear could either immobilize or motivate the Latinxs to create change.

The data collected from 1st generation Latinxs, who are undocumented immigrants, was limited to survey data that limits the accessibility to in depth knowledge of their experiences. In my study, I explored the essence of familismo and family relations within the context of undocumented status. As I developed the procedures for my study, I incorporated suggestions presented by Gonzalez and Chavez (2012) related to participant selection. I focused on recruiting participants who included Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants. I conducted a qualitative study and my primary source of data was semistructured interviews. Like Gonzalez and Chavez (2012), I included follow-up interviews with participants to increase trustworthiness of my data.

Perez and Fortuna (2005) discussed the utilization of outpatient mental health services by Latinx adults who are undocumented immigrants. They examined the clinical

charts of 197 outpatient adult psychiatric clients who received services in a Latinx mental health outpatient treatment program within an urban hospital system. The study participants were composed of undocumented Latinx immigrants (15%), documented Latinx immigrants (73%), and Latinxs born in the United States (12%). The researchers compared the diagnoses and use of mental health services by the three groups. The researchers identified briefer and less often use of services by undocumented immigrants when compared to Latinx adults who had legal documents and Latinx adults born in the United States (Perez & Fortuna, 2005).

Ramos-Sanchez (2009) explored the current literature on the emotional experiences of undocumented immigrants. Ramos-Sanchez discussed four domains of stressors. The four domain of stressors for undocumented Latinx immigrants included: (a) intrafamilial conflict, (b) fear of discovery, (c) limited access to services, and (d) public policy and sentiment toward undocumented immigrants. Ramos-Sanchez suggested further research was needed to gain a greater understanding of how to address the needs of undocumented Latinx immigrants.

Undocumented status has been identified as a social determinant of health (Ayon, 2017; Mantilla, 2014). Fear and isolation can make it difficult to assess the mental health needs of undocumented immigrants (Ayon, 2017; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Page & Flores-Miller, 2021). Gender roles established within the Latinx culture place significant demands on Latinas (Guyll et al., 2010). The experiences of undocumented immigrants can result in internalized fears that can either create barriers or inspire the individuals to create change (Gonzalez & Chavez, 2012). Undocumented status intersects with other

aspects of immigrants' lives that can influence how they perceive and interact with the multiple contexts of their lives (Abrego, 2011a; Gonzalez & Chavez, 2012; Guyll et al., 2010).

Family Relations

Undocumented immigrant experiences can present with a large amount of variance. Individuals who immigrate to the United States may have experienced oppression and other incidents of trauma in their country of origin (Fortuna et al., 2008). In addition to the immigration experience and experiences in their country of origin, there are factors of life in the United States that impact the experiences of undocumented immigrants. Leidy et al. (2010) conducted a mixed methods study that included pre-test and post-test survey nine months apart along with the use of focus groups.

The quantitative component of the study included 282 parents (ages 19–60 years old) and 282 children (9–12 years old); Leidy et al. (2010) assigned 140 participants to the intervention condition and 142 participants to the control group. The researchers hypothesized that family functioning impacted child outcomes. The results of correlation analysis indicated that family cohesion positively correlated with child self-esteem at pre-test ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) and follow-up ($r = .19$, $p < .05$); child social problem-solving skills at follow-up ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), and child social self-efficacy at pre-test ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) and follow-up ($r = .23$, $p < .01$).

Leidy et al. (2010) conducted a regression analysis and hypothesized family cohesion would influence self-esteem, self-control, social problem-solving skills, and social self-efficacy from pre-test to follow-up. The results of the regression analysis

identified that family cohesion predicted child social problem-solving skills at follow-up F (5,178) = 9.17, $p < .01$). Family cohesion also predicted child social self-efficacy at follow-up F (5, 181) = 5.52, $p < .01$). Leidy et al. (2010) recognized the importance of understanding family cohesion in Latinx families. These results influenced my decisions for my study that explored family cohesion as it relates to the concepts of familismo and family relations in the context of the immigration experience.

The qualitative component of the study included 12 mothers who participated in the focus group. The focus groups used snowball sampling from the same community as the participants who participated in the quantitative study. The focus groups only included participants who did not participate in the quantitative portion of the study. The results may be impacted by selection bias since the participants of the focus group consisted of individuals who did not want to participate in the survey research.

The results of this study illustrated important concepts that influence the conceptualization of my study. The focus group explored barriers to positive parenting and family cohesion. Leidy et al. (2010) included four themes that negatively impacted parenting and family cohesion. First, parents and children have different acculturation levels. For example, this can create a power imbalance if the children speak English and must serve as translators for parents (Leidy et al., 2010). This can also create dissonance in the family structure of the traditional Latinx family where the hierarchy illustrates parents in control (Falicov, 2014). Second, parents' may have limited participation in the education of their children (Leidy et al., 2010). Without community support and advocacy, the undocumented Latinx families may be fearful of attending school functions

(Falicov, 2014; Leidy et al., 2010). Third, the families have limited access to extended family. In their country of origin, the extended family and community are a support system (Falicov, 2014).

In my study, I looked to increase the understanding of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, in relation to family relations and the concept of familismo after immigration. In a foreign country with limited if any family, the Latinx families often do not have extended support (Abrego, 2011b). Lastly, the families' experiences of discrimination may leave them feeling helpless and powerless (Gonzalez & Chavez, 2012; Leidy et al, 2010).

DeLuca et al. (2010) conducted a study using a qualitative descriptive method to learn about adult Mexican males who attempted to cross the border, but were unsuccessful, and were therefore still living in Mexico. The study used purposive sampling and included eight participants, ages 20 to 40 years old. The researchers used pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants. Seven men identified Mexico as their country of origin and one man identified Honduras as country of origin.

DeLuca et al. (2010) conducted semistructured interviews to gain knowledge of the men's experiences and perceptions related to risk associated with crossing United States-Mexican border without authorization. The study used a qualitative research method to access the experiences of participants from their perspectives versus that of researchers. The researchers used an audit trail to address trustworthiness of the study.

DeLuca et al. (2010) reported that the Mexican males were willing to take the risks of crossing the border to increase economic opportunities. In addition, Mexican

males revealed a concern for family as inspiration and motivation for trying to cross the border. The hope that a new life would help their family was greater than the fear of what could go wrong (DeLuca et al., 2010). They conceptualized the family as a risk factor since it served as a motivator for individuals to cross the border regardless of the dangers ahead. Mexican males in this study reported that family relations were a substantial source of influence for them. They focused on male participants. I wonder if women would report similar results. In my study, I also used semistructured interviews to explore the role of family relations from the perspective of women who are undocumented immigrants. Did Latinas who are undocumented immigrants present similar narratives than those presented by these Mexican men?

Dillon et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative retrospective cohort study, using data from a longitudinal study. The researchers identified participants using respondent driven sampling. The study included 527 Latinx adults with a 79% retention rate. Analysis included data for 405 Latinx adults. The participants were 51% female and 49% male. The participants' age ranged between 19 and 36 (M = 28.53). The Latinx immigrants included individuals from Cuba (50%), Colombia (19%), Honduras (8%), Nicaragua (7%) and Venezuelan (3%). The participants included 77% that legally immigrated and 23% who arrived without documentation.

The researchers assessed sampling bias and found that participants who dropped out of the study were mostly Latinx adults who are undocumented immigrants (42.5%). Measures used at baseline and follow up included a demographic questionnaire and questions to collect information about the sociocultural variables. They assessed family

cohesion pre and post immigration using the family cohesion and disengagement subscales from the Family Functioning scale. They assessed acculturative stress at the follow-up assessment using the immigration stress subscale of the Hispanic Stress Inventory Scale–Immigrant Version.

Dillon et al. (2013) hypothesized that higher acculturative stress correlated with greater decline in family cohesion. Results confirmed the hypothesis and indicated family cohesion and adherence to traditional values declined when comparing pre-immigration (baseline assessment) and post immigration (12 months after baseline) ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .01$). The decline in feelings of family cohesion was also linked with acculturative stress ($b = -.01$, $SE = < .01$, $p = .03$). The results indicated a correlation between variables and did not imply causation. There were limits to the generalizability of the results. The use of a respondent driven sampling strategy allowed access to a difficult to reach population, like undocumented immigrants, but does not ensure a representative sample (Dillon et al., 2013).

In my study, I recruited participants who are undocumented immigrants. Latinx adults without documentation were the highest non-retained portion of participants for this study (Dillon et al., 2013). In my study, I focused on learning about the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants in relation to family relations post immigration. I was able to gather in depth interviews about their understanding of familismo after their immigration experience.

Molina and Alcantara (2013) conducted a quantitative study that used data from a cross-sectional, national probability survey; the National Latino and Asian American

Study (NLAAS). The 2,554 participants included Latinxs 18 years of age and older who lived in the U.S. This study only used the Latina sub-sample that consisted of 1,427 participants. The Latina sub-sample included 521 Latina individuals born in the U.S. and 906 Latina individuals who were immigrants. The Latinas born in the U.S. (n = 521) included Cubans (2.61%), Puerto Rican (14.2%), Mexican (58.62%), and other Latina (24.49%). Most of the Latinas born in the U.S. completed the interviews in English (M = 83.97, SE = .03) instead of Spanish (M = 16.03, SE = .03). Most of the Latinas born in the U.S. were under the age of 55. The Latinas born in the U.S. included individuals in the following age groups: (a) 18–24 (M = 26.06, SE = .03), (b) 25–34 (M = 23.48, SE =.02), (c) 35–44 (M = 19.46, SE =.02), (d) 45–54 (M = 15.98, SE = .01), (e) 55–64 (M = 5.57, SE =.01), and (d) 65 and over (M = 9.44, SE = .02).

The immigrant Latinas (n = 906) included Cubans (6.14%), Puerto Rican (6.88%), Mexican (55.14%), and other Latina (31.84%). Most of the Latinas, who were immigrants, completed the interviews in Spanish (M = 82.53, SE = .02) instead of English (M = 17.47, SE = .02). Like the Latinas, who were born in the U.S., most of the Latinas, who were immigrants, were under 55. The Latinas, who were immigrants, included individuals in the following age groups: (a) 18–24 (M = 14.18, SE = .01), (b) 25–34 (M = 29.78, SE = .02), (c) 35–44 (M = 23.78, SE = .01), (d) 45–54 (M = 15.26, SE =.02), (e) 55–64 (M = 8.26 SE = .01), and (d) 65 and over (M = 8.74, SE = .01).

Molina and Alcantara (2013) hypothesized that marriage, employment, and high household income correlated with lower levels of psychological distress. They presented two hypotheses: (a) if participants had minor children, they would report higher levels of

psychological distress and (b) family cultural conflict and family burden would have a positive correlation with psychological distress, while, family cohesion and family support would have a negative correlation with psychological distress. Molina and Alcantara (2013) also explored participant's place of birth as a moderator for reports of psychological distress.

Molina and Alcantara (2013) used several measures to collect data about family cohesion, family support, family cultural conflict, family burden and psychological distress. They assessed negative feelings, which they labeled psychological distress, using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Molina & Alcantara, 2013). The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale is a 10-item inventory that measures negative feelings (Kessler et al., 2002). They assessed family cultural conflict from five items included in a subscale of Hispanic Stress Inventory (Cervantes et al., 1991). Molina and Alcantara (2013) coded higher scores as family burden. They measured family cohesion with three items that assessed family closeness, from the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (Olson, 1986). Molina and Alcantara (2013) coded higher scores as family support.

Molina and Alcantara (2013) identified Nativity (U.S. born versus immigrant) as a moderator. They reported significant interactions between Nativity and two variables (number of children in the household and household income). Molina and Alcantara (2013) created three multivariable linear regression models. Model 1 consisted of household structure, including marital status, number of children under 17, work status, and income. Model 2 consisted of household structure and family risk factors, including

family cultural conflict, and family burden. Model 3 consisted of household structure, family risk factors, and family resources, including family cohesion and family support.

Molina and Alcantara (2013) found that Latinas born in the U.S. reported lower levels of psychological distress when they had three or more children instead of none (β = -2.41, $p < .01$). On the other hand, Latinas, who were immigrants, reported lower levels of psychological distress when they did not have children in the home ($\beta = 2.18$, $p < .05$). Molina and Alcantara (2013) presented results that indicated parenthood was protective for Latinas born in the U.S., but not for immigrant Latinas.

In addition, family ties including family cultural conflict and family burden were better predictors of past-month psychological distress for both Latinas who were born in the United States and Latinas who were immigrants. Molina and Alcantara (2013) found that greater cultural conflict had a positive relationship with higher levels of psychological distress for Latinas born in the U.S. ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < .01$). Similarly, they found that greater family burden had a positive relationship with higher levels of psychological distress for Latinas born in the U.S. ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < .01$). They found higher levels of family cultural conflict for Latinas, who were immigrants, was also associated with greater levels of psychological distress ($\beta = .69$, $p < .001$). Molina and Alcantara (2013) did not find any significant relationship between family resources and level of psychological distress for both groups of participants. This is an important finding since family support and family cohesion were identified as protective factors in much of the literature (Leidy et al., 2010; Smith-Morris et al., 2013).

Molina and Alcantara (2013) used measures that had been researched and were proven to be valid. The use of these measures with established validity strengthens the results of the study (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the methods and data analysis plans for the study provided clear procedures that support the credibility of the results. However, this was a quantitative study and did not gather participants' perceptions or in depth experiences related to these variables. The authors recommended further qualitative research to gain deeper understanding of the experiences of Latinas' lives. My study allowed me the opportunity to gain in depth understanding of Latina's lived experiences and the complex construct of familismo and family relations. My study examined family relations as a multidimensional construct that includes perceptions about family conflict, burden, and cohesion.

Campbell (2008) conducted a qualitative study using a grounded theory approach. The study included 20 participants who were Mexican women (18–45 years old). The Mexican women were undocumented immigrants living in South Carolina. About half of the participants (eleven women) entered the United States without documents with the help of a coyote. A coyote is a person who helps immigrants cross the Mexico-United States border (Scarpellino, 2007). The other nine women entered the United States with tourist visas, but they expired and they did not have valid authorization to remain in the United States. The participants were interviewed in Spanish in their homes and the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed using the Atlas-Ti software. The researcher supported trustworthiness of the study and verified findings after analysis with the participants.

The findings presented an overarching construct of resilience with common themes that emerged included feelings of isolation, desire for independence, pride in employment, and self-determination to make a better life for themselves. The participants reported satisfaction with life in the United States, but expressed feeling disconnected from others and their community. The participants had to adapt to a new environment and culture without the support of their family and larger community that they were accustomed to back home.

The family context continues to be a central force in the available research related to Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Campbell (2008) suggested that future research explore the impact of resilience in the lives of undocumented immigrants. In addition, Campbell (2008) cautioned social service about bias related to quality of life and experiences of undocumented immigrants in the United States. She encouraged providers to pay attention to undocumented immigrants' perspectives.

Viruell-Fuentes and Schulz (2009) conducted a qualitative study, using a grounded theory approach to explore social relationships and social context with 1st and 2nd generation Mexican women. The researchers included 40 participants (20 were 1st generation Mexican immigrant women and 20 were 2nd generation). Second generation refers to individuals who were the first to be born in the United States after their parent(s) immigrated. The researchers used snowball sampling and identified potential participants with assistance from the community. The researchers used semistructured interviews to collect data.

The researchers did not develop a specific hypothesis. They were interested in

developing an understanding through a grounded theory approach of the contexts of social ties, social relationships, and their interaction with health. Viruell-Fuentes and Schulz (2009) found the importance of social ties in both 1st generation and 2nd generation Latina immigrants. The researchers conducted the social ties analysis and discovered that 1st generation Mexican women were more restricted to the family system. In addition, for 1st generation Mexican women, the family support often strained the family system. Furthermore, 1st generation Latina immigrants maintained greater transnational contact and offered support to family back in Mexico. These results supported further exploration of the impact of family relations, social ties, and community support as ways to increase resilience and positive health outcomes for Latinxs (Miranda et al., 2006).

The concept of intersectionality was important to my study as I explored the experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, in relation to family relations after they immigrated to the United States. My research study incorporated key findings related to family relations highlighted in this section. The available research consistently recommended further qualitative research that focuses on the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants (Campbell, 2008; Dillon et al., 2013; Mahalingam et al., 2009; Molina & Alcantara, 2013). The impact of family relations on the present functioning of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants suggested family could present as a motivator and risk factor (DeLuca et al., 2010).

Summary

Within this chapter, I explored the current literature related to undocumented

Latina immigrants and their experiences related to family relations. Social justice and feminist theory provided researchers the opportunity to explore the cultural context of vulnerable populations and engage in social action (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013; Imber-Black, 2011; Ladrine, 1995; McCann & Kim, 2017). As a social justice advocate, I play a critical role in changing public perception of this marginalized group. The change in perception about undocumented Latina immigrants is possible through collaborative advocacy efforts involving this population. Multiracial and transnational feminism encourages understanding of women by focusing on their lived experiences instead of preconceived roles developed from the western worldview (McCann & Kim, 2017).

In this chapter, I illustrated major themes in the literature that impact Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, and family relations. Undocumented immigrants are a diverse group with experiences that are impacted by intersectionality of multiple contexts (Abrego, 2011a, 2011b; Lauricella et al., 2021). The Patriot Act (2001), The Homeland Security Act (2002), and Presidential Executive Order 13769 (2017) changed the landscape of immigration in the United States (Brook & King, 2007; Furman et al., 2012; Gostin, 2017; White House, 2017). Many individuals living in the United States have become skeptical about undocumented immigrants. Stereotypes and the negative perception of immigrants affect the mental health of Latinx families (Ayon, 2014; Becerra et al., 2013). The migration patterns have also shifted and there has been an increase in women immigrating to the United States (Mahalingam et al., 2009; Molina & Alcantara, 2013; Pessar, 2005). With the increase in women immigrating to the United States, came new challenges (Eisenstein, 2015; Pessar, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2010).

In my study, I presented family relations as a complex and multidimensional concept. Researchers have examined family relations as a risk factor (DeLuca et al., 2010), while they also identified family cohesion linked to lower levels of acculturative stress (Dillon et al., 2013). The complexity of family relations may be best understood when examined through various lenses, including family conflict, family burden, and family cohesion (Molina & Alcantara, 2013). When family relations are predominantly transnational, after immigration to the United States, the undocumented immigrants may develop other supports to negotiate the core value of familismo (Campbell, 2008; Mahalingam et al., 2009; Miranda et al., 2006). My study focused on Latinas experiences of family relations to gain an understanding of the multifaceted construct of familismo.

At this time, limited research was available related to undocumented Latina immigrants and their experiences of family relations. Gaining additional knowledge of family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, added to the existing knowledge of the counseling profession. The data gathered through this proposed study may influence the development of culturally informed mental health resources and treatment. Providing Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, access to research topics important to their lives and the opportunity to actively express their perspective promotes equality and positive social action.

Furthermore, I may use results from this study to inform future qualitative and quantitative research. I might be able to use the results from this study to develop interventions that facilitate growth within the context of family relations for Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants. In this chapter, I presented the literature review strategy,

theoretical foundation, conceptual framework, and current research for the study. In Chapter 3, I address the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

My purpose for this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore family relations as a core value in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants as they relate to the essence of familismo and family relations post-immigration experience. In this chapter, I describe the research methods for my study. First, I identify the research design and rationale for my study. Next, I explain the methodology of my study. I also present the details of accessing the population and sampling. Furthermore, I describe the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, I address trustworthiness as well as ethical challenges related to studying a vulnerable population, such as Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Research Design and Rationale

In this qualitative research study, I used a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach that draws from the philosophy of Heidegger (Harper & Thompson, 2011; Wrathall, 2014). This method helped to capture the essence of familismo and family relations after immigration to the United States through the direct experience of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. I intended to answer the following research questions:

- What are the lived experiences in relation to familismo and family relations for Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States?
- How do Latinas who are undocumented immigrants living in the United States experience familismo and family relations?

Familismo is a multidimensional construct that represents a collectivist value system with a preference for interconnectedness and interdependence (Corona et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2010; Smith-Morris et al., 2012; Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Zeiders et al., 2013). The construct of familismo has frequently been cited as a core value of Latinx culture (Corona et al., 2017; Falicov, 2007; Smith-Morris et al., 2012; Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Zeiders et al., 2013). Family relations refer to connections and relationship with other individuals from immediate (nuclear) or extended family. Family relations may also include connections and relationships with other individuals not always related by blood, such as neighbors and godparents (R. Corona et al., 2017; Falicov, 2007).

I chose a qualitative research approach for this study to focus on the experiences of the participants (Gadamer, 1975/1989; Groenewald, 2004). By conducting a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study, I also had greater flexibility in design and access to the full experiences of the participants (Van Manen, 2016). Heidegger's hermeneutic circle, which describes a circular process of understanding, is also congruent with the feminist and social justice theoretical orientations (McCann & Kim, 2017). The feminist and social justice perspectives emphasize collaboration and incorporation of the individual's perspective (McCann & Kim, 2017). Through a phenomenological approach, I gained an in-depth understanding of how Latinas who are undocumented immigrants experience familismo and family relations. Because it was important that I was aware of my pre-conceptions and biases (Gadamer et al, 2004), I revised my biases through the implementation of the hermeneutic circle: (a) reading, (b) reflecting, and (c) interpreting (Gadamer et al., 2004; Kafle, 2013; Van Manen, 2016).

Role of Researcher

In this study, my role was that of an observer–participant. In addition, my study incorporated self-reflection in relation to previous experiences, assumptions, and beliefs about undocumented immigrants (Furman et al., 2012). As the researcher, I reflected and revised my biases (Gadamer et al., 2004; Kafle, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). Further, as a Latina who was born in the United States, there was an inherent power differential between me and the participants. I addressed the power differential by providing options that can help participants feel more comfortable with the research process. I also did not have any personal or professional relationships with the participants. This helped address a lack of trust in the research process and me as the researcher (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; DeLuca et al., 2010; Flores et al., 2011). Additionally, I followed previous research guidance on how to address ethical dilemmas that arise when working with undocumented Latino immigrants such as not having an obligation to report them based on immigration laws (Baumann et al., 2011).

In this study, I also focused on alignment with Section G, Research and Publication of the American Counseling Association (2014) *Code of Ethics*. My study will contribute to the counseling profession and may reduce bias. I aimed to increase diversity in research with my study that examines the lived experiences of a vulnerable population that is under-represented in current research.

Methodology

In this section, I discuss the specific details of my study so that other researchers can replicate it. First, I introduce the participant selection logic. Next, I discuss

instrumentation for my study. The main source of data for this study was semistructured interviews. I also used journaling to document observations throughout the study. Finally, I discuss the data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

In this study, I focused on the lived experiences of Latinas who are at least 18 years old and immigrated to the United States from Central America. The study participants included adult women, which excluded any men and women under 18 years old. It was also critical for the participants to have directly experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). With the feminization of migration, it was important to develop research that specifically focuses on the Latinas' experiences (Migration Policy Institute, 2017; Pessar, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2010). The study participants included women from Central America, which excluded participants from Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean. Most of the current literature available about Latinas focused on Mexican participants (Ocana, 2014). The current immigration statistics indicate a significant increase in immigration from Central America (Cohn et al., 2017; Passel & Cohn, 2012). Thus, I looked to expand available research by focusing on the lived experiences of participants from Central America.

The sample location was not representative of the entire United States. The sample focused on participants from a state in the Northeast. Transferability of this research study can help to extend the findings to other Midwestern and Northeastern locations in the United States. Including other research settings could provide different interpretations as the diversity of environments provide alternative contexts for research. Transferability

of this study could be addressed in future studies by exploring the lived experiences of Latinas who were born in the United States. Future studies could also explore the lived experiences of Latino men who are undocumented immigrants and those born in the United States, which may provide and expanded view of the lived experiences related to familismo and family relations.

I used a non-probability sample for this qualitative study. The sampling strategy was a purposeful and snowball sample. At times, the snowball sampling strategy can also be considered a convenience sample (Creswell, 2014). I used the snowball strategy to identify eligible participants. I placed flyers in both English and Spanish at community gatherings and religious activities. Flyers were available at the community sites and religious sites with my contact information. If the participants did not have access to a phone to make initial contact or did not feel comfortable making phone contact, they attended one of the face-to-face opportunities to determine study eligibility. I attended monthly events at the community sites to introduce my study. At these events, I would give a short summary of my study and the eligibility requirements. I explained that I would be available to discuss the study further if they were interested in participating. I protected the participants' identity by using pseudonyms. The participants picked a name to use as a pseudonym. If the participant wanted suggestions for a pseudonym, I provided some options.

In qualitative research, a small sample allows researchers to collect in-depth knowledge (Van Manen, 2016). Using a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological research design provided me the opportunity to collect detailed interviews. The sample

size was established when I achieved saturation, though the suggested sample size for a phenomenological study is 5–25 (Flick, 2014). Data saturation is achieved when analysis of the interview data does not yield any new themes or information about the phenomenon (Flick, 2014). I focused on achieving saturation of data instead of a specific number of participants. I determined that data saturation was achieved when participant interviews did not generate any new information.

Instrumentation

The qualitative study consisted of individual semistructured in-depth interviews with an interview protocol. The interview protocol consisted of an English language version and a Spanish version of the interview questions. To ensure trustworthiness of the data, I was engaged and avoided leading the participants during the interview (Englander, 2012). During the interview process, I documented my thoughts and observations (Smith et al., 2009). During the semistructured interviews and follow-up interviews, I wrote in the journal about my experiences related to the participant's responses and nonverbal communication. I included any pre-conceptions that become present during the interviews. Thus, I incorporated reflexivity to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and facilitated the interpretive process that results from a co-created data gathered during the interviews (Shaw, 2010; Watt, 2007).

I also audio recorded the semistructured interviews and follow-up meeting. These interviews were transcribed and translated. I conducted follow-up interviews with the participants to clarify and collect missing data from the interviews. The follow-up interviews addressed any gaps in data, addressing misunderstandings, missing

information, and unclear information. The follow-up interview protocol included the format and structure that was used for the follow-up interview.

In addition, I used journal writing to document observations of non-verbal communication of the participants during the interview process. The documentation of non-verbal communication was critical since it was not captured in the audio recordings (Paulus et al., 2014). Incorporating reflexivity in my data interpretation and analysis allowed clarity and openness in the research process that increases trustworthiness (Etherington, 2004; Harrison et al., 2001; Shaw, 2010). Reciprocity involved an interactive and collaborative process between the researcher and the participant that is important to feminist research (Harrison et al., 2001). In my study, I used my journal entries related to the interviews and transcriptions of the interviews as part of the member check with participants to clarify or confirm participant responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants' fear of immigration officials and detention can impact their willingness to answer phone calls and agree to meet (Baumann et al., 2011). Participants may feel safe with meetings at churches and private homes instead of community sites (Baumann et al., 2011). In my study, I used this information and identified the religious institutions as the primary sites for face-to-face meetings. In addition, the participants may express fear that the audio recordings that could compromise their safety and result in deportation or incarceration (Baumann et al., 2011). In my study, I had a clear and detailed description for participants of how I maintained confidentiality of their records. For example, I kept audio recordings saved with encrypted password. I labeled and

identified the audio recordings with their pseudonyms. Pseudonyms and corresponding participant names were kept with an encrypted password in a separate location than the audio files. These important topics were incorporated into the development of the methodology for my dissertation research.

To recruit participants, I explored available resources in the community for Latinx families. I contacted local community agencies and religious centers to gain access to participants. I identified local agencies and religious centers that offer services to Latinx families. The religious centers I identified were local parishes, churches, and community aid programs for Latinx families. I also identified local agencies who offer services to Latinx families, including individuals who are undocumented immigrants. These community centers provide food assistance, free ESL classes, financial planning, and job training. Finding participants who were willing to participate in the study was difficult due to increasing fear of arrest and deportation (Doran et al., 2018; Mendez-Shannon, 2010). I contacted at least five sites to ensure that enough participants were available to obtain the necessary number of participants to achieve saturation of data.

Flyers were available at the community sites and religious sites with my contact information. Undocumented immigrants experience fear of deportation and may have concerns about making phone contact with someone they do not know (Doran et al., 2018). In order to provide participants with options, I provided opportunity for a face-to-face meeting to determine eligibility for the study at the community and religious sites. In addition, the participants were able to choose the location of the interviews to ensure that they felt comfortable and safe (DeLuca et al., 2010). I also protected the participants'

identity using pseudonyms. To limit the extent of demographic information, participants were asked for a zip code instead of full address and their year of birth instead of their full date of birth (see Doran et al., 2018).

The first contact with the potential participants was a phone call lasting approximately 10–15 minutes. During this call, I confirmed that the potential participant meets the criteria for inclusion in my study. I explained the study and explained informed consent. If the participant met the criteria to be included, I scheduled a face-to-face meeting to obtain informed consent and conduct the semistructured interview. I created a flyer that I posted at community and religious sites with options for in person eligibility screening. Any participants who do not have access to a phone or preferred a face-to-face meeting were able to meet with me at the times indicated on the flyer for the initial screening and eligibility check. During the first contact with potential participants, I asked if they knew of any other individuals who may meet the inclusion criteria. When I was unable to obtain potential participants from other participants, I searched for participants from one of the five identified community or religious entities.

The participants were able to choose the date and time as well as the location of the face-to-face meeting to reduce participant fear and increase participation. If the participant chose a location that I felt was unsafe, I offered an alternative meeting location. At the face-to-face meeting, I explained and obtained informed consent. I provided the participants verbal and written explanation of informed consent in preferred language (English or Spanish). I made the participants aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Participants did not

receive any monetary reward for their participation in the study. All written material for my study was available in English and Spanish.

I conducted the semistructured interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes, with all study participants. I followed the interview protocol included in the appendix. Having the same person conducting all study participant interviews ensured that I did not have to account for differences between interviewer behavior and characteristics (Englander, 2012). The participants had the option of conducting the interview in either Spanish or English. I am bilingual and was able to conduct the interviews in either language.

I audio recorded the interviews. I used audio recording instead of video recording to help protect participant identities. I paid a transcription and translating service to transcribe and translate all the audio-recorded interviews. The individual assigned to translate and transcribe was bilingual in Spanish and English. I documented observations about non-verbal communication during the interview since I could not capture them on the audio recording. I analyzed the data by searching and naming themes.

I conducted the follow-up and debriefing interviews with participants if needed to clarify information or obtain missing data. I reviewed transcriptions and conducted member check with participants. The member check allowed the participants to provide missing information. The follow-up and debrief meeting were approximately 15–20 minutes and were conducted on the phone. During the follow-up debrief meeting, I confirmed accuracy of the interview transcripts and sought clarification for missing information and unclear meaning from the interviews.

I had information available for mental health resources if participation in the study led to any feelings of discomfort. I included resources that can help without cost to the participants. If participants were interested in seeking services, I assisted them in making an appointment with a provider. Participants could contact me if they had any questions after they completed their participation. I offered to send a copy of the results of my study to any participant who expressed interest in obtaining the results. None of the participants requested a copy of the results.

Data Analysis Plan

Phenomenological research focuses on describing the meaning of participants' experience of the phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011). I examined the data from a feminist hermeneutic phenomenological perspective looking for the essence of lived experiences (Giorgi, 2006). Hermeneutic phenomenology originated as a philosophical perspective and does not have one method of practice (Van Manen, 2014). According to hermeneutic phenomenology, experiences have meaning prior to interpretations (Van Manen, 2016). The phenomenon is experience before it is interpreted in language, but it can only be accessed through language (Suddick et al., 2020). The Hermeneutic circle represents the co-construction of experience (Laverty, 2003). Similarly, Gadamer believed that "all human understanding occurs as a dialogue" (Van Manen, 2016, p. 133). Heidegger's concept of the Hermeneutic circle as explained by Wrathall (2014); "all understanding moves in circles" (p. 8). The Hermeneutic circle involve the understanding of the phenomena as a collaborative cyclical process; the interaction between the observer and what is being observed. In this study, I was the observer and the observed

phenomena was the lived experiences of Latina participants who are undocumented immigrants. More recently, Peoples (2020) described the Hermeneutic Circle as a process of understanding that is a spiral into deeper levels of understanding.

The Hermeneutic circle of understanding was implemented as the researcher listens and reads the transcripts of the participants' interview. Van Manen (2016) described three types of theme analysis: (a) holistic reading approach that interprets the whole text, (b) selective reading approach, which focuses on certain statements that describe the experience of the phenomenon, and (c) detailed reading approach, with interprets line by line. The Latina participants, who are undocumented immigrants described their lived experiences related to familismo and family relations. I listened to their descriptions as I interviewed them and revised my biases. I read the transcripts and searched for themes.

In my study, I used the selective reading approach to analyze the data. The selective reading approach involved listening and reading the text multiple times (Van Manen, 2016). I used the selective reading approach to identify selections from the interviews that capture the lived experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants related to family relations and familismo. I hand coded to complete the data analysis. I searched for significant statements, meanings, descriptions of family relations and the core value of familismo (Gadamer, 1975/1989).

Transcription and translation of the interviews was completed prior to commencing data analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the data analysis flow chart. The individual, who was responsible for transcribing and translating the participants'

interviews signed a confidentiality agreement. The interviews were first transcribed. If the interview was conducted in Spanish, the transcription of the interview was translated. Accurate translation of the transcripts was critical to the integrity of this qualitative research (Lopez et al., 2008). At times, a literal translation does not exist or does not communicate the intended meaning by participants in the target language and the contextual meaning is needed (Lopez et al., 2008). I confirmed the translation by translating it back into Spanish (Regmi et al., 2010).

Figure 1

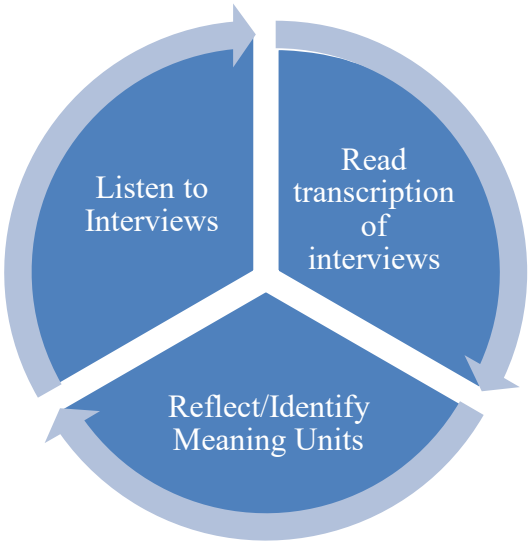
Data Analysis Flow Chart

In the selective reading approach (Van Manen, 2016), themes refer to overarching concepts or interpretations of the lived experience related to the phenomenon. Figure 2 illustrates the selective reading approach. I listened to the audio recordings and read the transcripts searching for themes that were revealed through the statements and phrases of the participants (Van Manen, 2016). I developed codes for the themes that evolve from the data and connected to the research questions. Figure 3 illustrates the steps of the data analysis plan. Feminist hermeneutic phenomenology supports the concept that there are multiple interpretations to an experience (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). I included the information about any discrepant cases in the data analysis section. I did not have to

resolve any disagreements about the development of themes. If necessary, I would present multiple versions of the data analysis (Rodham et al., 2015). I would include both the areas of agreement and disagreement in the data analysis.

Figure 2

Data Analysis Selective Reading Approach

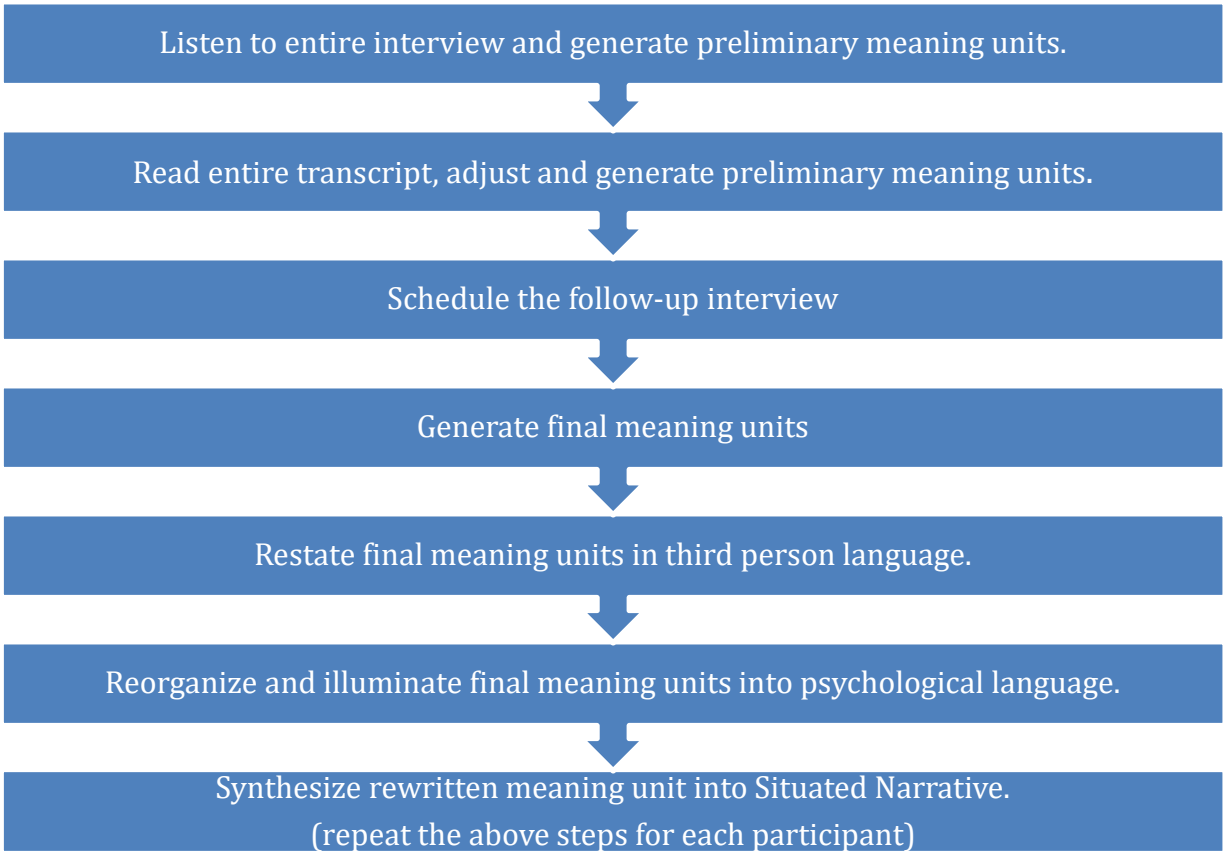


Illustrated Steps from Figure 3 below describes how data was analyzed. The first step was to listen to the entire interview in Spanish. After listening to the entire interview in Spanish, I broke down the elements into preliminary meaning units. Then, I read the entire transcript of the individual interview translated to English to get a sense of the entire description. After reading the entire transcript, I broke down the elements into preliminary meaning units. Next, additional data was obtained through follow-up individual interviews. I identified any gaps in the data (missing information or unclear statements) given from the original transcript. I read the transcript to the participant and stopped to obtain clarifying or missing information. The individual follow-up interview

was audio recorded, transcribed, translated to English, transcript read, and integrated into the original analysis of meaning units. I generated final meaning units that were informed by my deepened sense of the entire description. The final meaning units were restated in third person language and reorganized to illuminate final meaning units into psychological language. The final step was to synthesize rewritten meaning unit into situated narrative. I repeated these steps for each participant.

Figure 3

Data Analysis Illustrated Steps



Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study is amplified when the researcher follows certain guidelines that demonstrate integrity and rigor of the research study (Creswell, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). Trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Flick, 2014). Credibility refers to the authenticity of the qualitative results for my study (Patton, 2002). In a feminist hermeneutic phenomenology both participants and the researcher bring their interpretations to the study. According to Rodham et al. (2015), the participants are the ones that can attest to the credibility of the study. Amankwaa (2016) created a protocol for trustworthiness in qualitative research and included member check as a critical component. I reviewed transcripts with participants during the follow-up and debrief meeting. I confirmed accuracy of the interview transcripts and sought clarification for missing information and unclear meaning from the interviews. A criticism of member check has been that participants may not understand or feel comfortable clarifying or correcting information during member checks (Kornbluh, 2015). I was aware of possible barriers to participants' openness during member check. I provided a clear description and explanation of the member check process for participants (Kornbluh, 2015).

Transferability refers to the ability of qualitative data results extending to other research conditions (Patton, 2002). I audio recorded the participant interviews which allowed for accurate and detailed data collection. I also collected enough data by interviewing participants until data saturation was achieved. I developed clear and detailed research methods to facilitate the transfer of this information to other research

conditions. This was important because transferability is an important element of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

Dependability refers to the ability of the qualitative data to be replicated (Peoples, 2020). Dependability of the study results were strengthened using member check to verify that the researcher has accurately transcribed the participant interviews (Given, 2008). I also checked the translation for accuracy and meaning. I read the translation of the transcription while listening to the original Spanish audio to ensure the meaning was captured accurately in the translation.

Confirmability refers to protecting the research from personal bias (Peoples, 2020). I used journaling to reveal personal bias and revise bias as I focused on the lived experiences of the participants. If I was unclear about what participants said after I analyzed the interviews, I conducted a follow-up interview (Given, 2008). In the follow-up debrief meeting, I confirmed accuracy of the interview transcripts and sought clarification for missing information and unclear meaning from the interviews.

Ethical Procedures

The participants for this study were Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants; they are a vulnerable population. Latinas deserve to have access to research on topics important to their lives. The special considerations I explored was to protect the rights of a vulnerable population when conducting research (Creswell, 2014; Doran et al., 2018). When conducting a study with a vulnerable population, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) wanted to ensure that these standards were met: (a) risks were minimized, (b) risks were reasonable, (c) equitable selection, (d) informed consent, and (e) perceived coercion

to participate was minimized (Endicott, 2010). In this chapter, I discuss ways in which I implemented these standards.

Risks Were Minimized

In this chapter, I describe ways in which the study minimized risk to the participants. I used pseudonyms for each of the participants. I kept the information about the participant names and assigned participant code in a separate location than the interview data and analysis. I collected a zip code instead of full address and year of birth instead of full date of birth to confirm age of the participant (Doran et al., 2018). I stored all study related materials in a locked cabinet. Any data or information that was included or collected on the computer was password protected.

Risks Were Reasonable

Participants may have experienced some emotional discomfort during the semistructured interview. I discussed with participants the reasonable risks associated with participation in the study. I informed participants that individuals may experience discomfort when discussing their lived experiences. I also identified resources available for participants if they have any feelings of distress due to the research participation. I created a list of local resources that provide community support and mental health services to Latinxs. I focused on locations that are not required to report the immigration status of individuals. Several researchers have reported that immigrants identify religious institutions as safe locations (Baumann et al., 2011; Torres et al., 2016). Many faith organizations became sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants (Kerwin & Nicholson,

2019). Thus, I focused on local resources linked to religious entities to encourage access to the services without fear of mandated reporting to the immigration authorities.

Equitable Selection

I developed a participant selection process that was founded on the theoretical principles of social justice and feminist perspectives (Knight, 2000). Participant selection was also based on the phenomenon and research questions studied (Patton, 2002). I identified a community liaison who assisted in access to participants. I provided information about the study to the participants who met the eligibility criteria.

Informed Consent

The Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, may not have understood the process of a research study. I explained the informed consent process in Spanish or English based on their preference. I provided verbal and written information that described the study and the research questions. All the information and written materials were available in English and Spanish. In addition, I presented the participants with this information and answered questions about the process at multiple points throughout the study. I presented the information about the study, obtained informed consent, and presented participants with the information regarding their right to terminate participation at any time without any consequences. This information was provided during the initial call to determine if the participant met the eligibility criteria. This information was reviewed again during the semistructured interview. Finally, this information was reviewed a third time when I met with the participant for the follow-up and debrief meeting.

Minimize Perceived Coercion to Participants

A potential ethical concern was related to the inherent power that the researcher had as a citizen of the United States. The researcher's position of power may influence the participants. Other researchers have documented that the researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the fear many undocumented immigrants experience related to any possible involvement with the legal system that could result in deportation (Furman et al., 2012). I ensured that the participants were treated with respect and were free of any coercion. I provided the participants with information about the study in their language of choice (Spanish or English) and I explained all information. I gave the participants information detailing their right to withdraw at any time from the study.

I am bilingual and I am fluent in both Spanish and English. I was responsible for creating all the documents for the study in both languages. All verbal and written communication about the study was available in English and Spanish. I created recruitment materials in English and Spanish. The informed consent material was also available in English and Spanish. Some participants were not comfortable or were unable to access written material. I presented the information verbally using the written documents I created in English and Spanish. I submitted the English and Spanish versions of the documents to a bilingual reviewer to confirm the accuracy of these documents.

If participants decided to terminate participation in the study, I would have processed the decision with the participant. I would have reassured the participant who withdrew from the study that is one of her rights as a participant. I would have documented any factors that contributed to the withdrawal of the participant. This

information would also have been included in the final document. In addition, I would have provided the participant with a referral list of local resources that could have provide support and mental health services. No participants withdrew from the study.

The Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, may have been concerned about their identities being revealed and risk of legal repercussions (Nguyen et al., 2013). While the data was not anonymous, it was confidential. The participants picked their pseudonyms to protect their identities. The participants' names and corresponding pseudonyms were stored in a separate location from the data. All study information was kept in a locked cabinet. Any information kept on the computer was password protected. The dissertation committee had access to the data, but did not have any identifying information that could jeopardize the participants' safety. All the individuals who had access to the data signed a confidentiality agreement. I will store the data for five years and then I will destroy it (Englander, 2012).

One important consideration when conducting research with a vulnerable population is how does the population benefit from the study. I did not use any incentives for participants. The participants' involvement in the study will help Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants have a voice about their lived experiences. I would like to share my findings to help shape how services are offered and accessed by Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided details about the key elements needed to develop this study. First, I discussed the research design and rationale. My discussion included

information about why the qualitative feminist hermeneutic phenomenological method was the best fit for my research questions. I used the feminist hermeneutic phenomenological approach to study the phenomenon of family relations and familismo after the immigration experience from the perspective of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants.

Next, I included in the methodology section detailed information about the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and data analysis plan. I conducted semistructured interviews using a general script with questions related to the phenomenon and the research questions. I used prompts and follow-up questions to gather data relevant to the research questions. I recruited 6–10 participants from local community agencies or religious centers.

Within this chapter, I presented issues of trustworthiness and addressed ethical procedures. I hand coded for the data analysis. Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, are a vulnerable population and I have detailed the steps that I took to maintain ethical standards throughout the study. In Chapter 4, I introduce information about the data collection process and the results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this feminist hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore family relations and familismo as a core value in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. The results of this study allowed participants a way to communicate their experiences and gain knowledge about family relations and familismo. In this chapter, I discuss the setting and participant demographics. I also address data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Lastly, I present the results of the study.

Setting

I found my participants at both community and religious sites. The community sites included non-profit agencies that provided the Latinx community with educational, vocational, and advocacy resources as well as resources to access free food and other essentials. The religious sites included non-denominational Christian churches, Catholic churches, and community ministries. I attended events offered to assist Latinx individuals with resources at these community and religious sites to present the study. The events were sponsored to provide Latinx individuals information and access to other community resources, including locations to obtain food and essential items, educational opportunities, employment opportunities, legal guidance, and assistance for immigration. The community events included free English language classes and resource fairs with special guests and representatives from local agencies and immigration experts. At these events, I explained the purpose of the study and provided flyers in English and Spanish to the prospective participants. The perspective participants who attended these events

sought guidance about available community resources, legal advice, and information from immigration experts. I went to these sites because I thought the women present at these community events may be more open to accessing resources, seeking help, and may engage in the study despite feelings of fear. This was an example of my fore-conception as a researcher that includes preconceived knowledge. I revised my biases as I understand and interpret the data (Peoples, 2020). I considered this context as I completed the data analysis of the participants' narratives.

The increase in detention of undocumented immigrants at the border and increase in publicized ICE raids led to increased fear in the community (Wong et al., 2019). Increased concern about safety and fear of deportation had an impact on access to women who are undocumented immigrants. Women who may have been eligible to participate did not want to participate in the eligibility screening. I conducted 43 eligibility screenings. After the eligibility screening, 13 women met the criteria to participate in the study. Seven of the thirteen women who met the criteria to participate did not want to be interviewed and did not participate in the study. I was able to collect all my data for the six participants before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in my area.

Demographics

In this section, I briefly described the six women who participated in the study. All the participants expressed a desire to improve their English language skills. I considered this context as I examined the narratives of these women. The six women who participated in the study were between the ages of 33 and 53 years old (see Table 1). The participants had an average age of 42 years at the time of the interview. Two participants

were born in Honduras, one was born in El Salvador, one was born in Nicaragua, and two were born in Guatemala. None of the participants lived in an assisted living or a nursing home facility. All six women lived in an urban area. In the following sections, I provide a summary of each participant's lived experience. I eliminated any identifying information that may jeopardize their identity. Each of the women picked a pseudonym.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Country of Origin	Years in the U.S.
Isabel	49	El Salvador	15
Laura	36	Honduras	7
Lucy	34	Guatemala	7
Mayra	45	Guatemala	9
Olga	33	Honduras	8
Sophia	53	Nicaragua	27

Isabel

Isabel is 49 years old and is from El Salvador. She asked that I interview her in English so that she could practice communicating in English. She switched to Spanish a few times throughout the interview when she was having difficulty finding the words to express herself. She immigrated to the United States at the age of 34 years old to help her younger sister who was already living in the United States. She helped her sister raise two kids (i.e., her niece and nephew). She never married and discussed her experience living in the United States without her own family unit.

Laura

Laura is 36 years old and is from Honduras. She completed the interview in Spanish. She came in the United States at the age of 29. At that time, she was married

with two children under the age of 5 years old. She divorced 6 months ago and does not have any other family in the United States. She is currently living with her boyfriend, her daughter who is 11 years old, and her son who is 9 years old.

Lucy

Lucy is 34 years old and was born in Guatemala. She completed the interview in Spanish. She came to the United States when she was 27 years old. She spent a year in transit before arriving to the United States. Her brother had been living in the United States for a few years. She met her partner, and they have a daughter who is 2 years old.

Mayra

Mayra is 45 years old and is from Guatemala. She completed the interview in Spanish. She came to the United States alone in search of work to send money back to her family in Guatemala. She was 36 years old when she left her home. Her three daughters stayed in Guatemala with her mother and their aunt. She returned to Guatemala to see her family a few times, but it has become too difficult to travel with recent immigration difficulties.

Olga

Olga is 33 years old and is from Honduras. She asked to be interviewed in Spanish. She left home alone at the age of 25 years old. She traveled to the United States in search of work and the opportunity to create a new life and help her family back home. She did not tell her family in Honduras that she was planning on immigrating to the United States. Olga is currently married and has a daughter who is 3 years old.

Sofia

Sofia is 53 years old and from Nicaragua. She asked for her interview in English. She immigrated to the United States at the age of 26 years old when she was granted an opportunity to travel to the United States. While in the United States, she fell in love and decided to stay. She is married and has two adult children.

Data Collection

I left flyers and I scheduled times to present information about my study at the community and religious sites. I conducted all eligibility screenings face-to-face. I conducted 43 eligibility screenings. During the eligibility screening, I discussed the purpose of the research, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms to protect their identity. I also discussed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Thirteen women who completed the eligibility screening were eligible to participate in the study, and six women agreed to participate in the study. I communicated with all six participants face-to-face and via phone to confirm the appointments and the location. I established the interview date, time, and location with the participant after the eligibility screening was completed. Four of the participants communicated with me via phone to reschedule their interview date and time. I asked the eligible participants if they knew any other interested individuals to participate in the study.

I interviewed the six participants at one of the community sites. Two of the participants signed their informed consent and picked a pseudonym on the day of the eligibility screening. The other four women signed consent and picked a pseudonym on the day of the interview. I gave participants a copy of the informed consent at the time of

the interview. I reminded them of their option to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

I met with the participants in the conference room or in a classroom at one of the non-profit community agencies. After the participant selected their pseudonym, I confirmed their zip code and year of birth. Then I started to record the interview using an Apple iPhone 6s. I conducted my semistructured interviews in English or Spanish based on the preference of the participant. The interviews ranged between 45–60 minutes long. I took notes while interviewing to journal about any nonverbal cues that were not captured in the audio recordings. I also noted any of my thoughts that may have surfaced during the interview. I was mindful throughout the interviews to stay focused on the interview protocol. I avoided pursuing other information that was not related to the interview questions and protocol. I conducted follow-up and debrief meetings to clarify information and gather any missing information. I completed all the follow-up and debrief meetings via phone. The follow-up and debrief meetings ranged between 15–20 minutes long. I did not have any variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. I did not encounter any unusual circumstances in data collection.

Data Analysis

Van Manen (2016) identified three approaches that researchers can use to identify themes: (a) holistic approach, (b) selective approach, and (c) detailed approach. I used the selective reading approach. The selective reading approach allows the researcher to identify selections of the text that highlight the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). The paid transcriber translated and transcribed the audio recordings. I listened to the audio

recordings and read the transcripts searching for preliminary meaning units. I identified meaning units that were revealed through the statements and phrases of the participants. A meaning unit is a phrase or word that illustrates the phenomenon (Peoples, 2020). I developed final meaning codes for the information that evolved from the data and connected them to the research questions.

I used the hermeneutic circle to understand the narratives of each individual participant, which is a process of understanding that Peoples (2020) described as a spiral. I first read the entire transcript and then derived meaning units. I gained perspective through the meaning units that gave new understanding to the whole transcript. I gained a deeper understanding of the core value of familismo through the experiences described by participants. For example, in reading the transcripts I read participants description of experiences of cleaning together, eating together, talking with each other, and dancing with each other that led to deeper understanding of connection as a final meaning unit. I repeated this process for each of the six participants.

I conducted follow-up and debriefing meetings with the participants via phone to clarify any unclear content and gather any missing information. During the follow-up interviews, I asked questions guided by fore-conceptions and obtained clarification of the participants' context and experiences. For example, Isabel described her experience as "Ellos confían y me dieron una llave de la casa. Yo puedo entrar y salir cuando quiero [They trust and gave me a key to the house. I can go in and out when I want]." As I read the transcript, I wrote about my understanding, and during the debrief meeting I asked Isabel to clarify this experience. She said,

> Nos tenemos confianza y nos apoyamos en todo lo posible. Yo ayudo a cuidar la casa y mis sobrinos. Nos gusta pasar tiempo cenando juntos en familia. Hablamos mucho. Yo les cuento como fue mi niñez en mi país. [We trust each other and we support each other as much as possible. I help take care of the house and my niece and nephews. We like to spend time eating together as a family. We talk a lot. I tell them how my childhood was in my country].

In this way, I gained a deeper understanding of her experience as I identified support for the final meaning units. Final meaning units reflect the consistent themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. These differ from meaning units that were initially explored, but not supported by the participant experiences. After the follow-up and debrief meetings, I reviewed the final meaning units: connection, emotional support, financial support, loss, love, safety, and separation. All participants described familismo and family relations in their lived experiences with these final meaning units. Most participants identified additional final meaning units of loss and separation to describe familsmo and family relations. I found three discrepant cases who endorsed the final meaning units duty and responsibility. I also found two discrepant cases who described the final meaning unit of independence. I combined the final meaning units into the synthesized themes: (a) love and connection, (b) support and safety, and (c) loss and separation.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To amplify the trustworthiness of this study, I followed guidelines to demonstrate integrity and rigor (Creswell, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). I included the perspective and

interpretation of the participants by clarifying any information during the follow-up and debrief meeting using feminist hermeneutic phenomenology. I conducted the follow-up and debrief meeting via phone with the six participants. I thanked them for their participation and sought clarification of any missing information and unclear meaning from the interviews. For example, during my follow up call with Laura, I clarified her experience of going to her parents' home daily. I wanted to check my preconception that it was related to an underlying expectation. She responded,

> Ellos no exigieron. Yo lo debía hacer. Hablaba con ellos y podia tomar una merienda o café. Es costumbre una rutina que formaba parte de mi vida diaria. [They did not demand it. I needed to do it. Talked to them and I could have a snack or coffee. It was customary a routine that was a part of my daily life].

I used the hermaneutic circle and revised my preconception. The participant's experience linked to a sense of duty and to emotional support.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the authenticity of the qualitative results for my study (Patton, 2002). I used an interview protocol for the eligibility screening and the semistructured interviews. I refrained from asking other questions that were unrelated to the interview protocol. I used a journal to document nonverbal cues from participants since these would not be captured in the audio recordings. I included information about participant eye contact, tone of voice, hesitation to discuss an experience. For example, during Mayra's interview, I noted that she entered the interview space slowly, looking around the room and sat across from me with the wall behind her. She was wearing a skirt below her knee

and a blouse. She looked at me and scanned the room as I explained her right to end participation at any time. I also included my experiences during the interviews in the journal. During Lucy's interview, I observed that she was restless and was tapping a pen on the table during the interview. I experienced that slowing down my speech and speaking softly appeared to help Lucy remain engaged and less concerned about her surroundings.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of qualitative data results extending to other research conditions (Patton, 2002). The results of this study may give guidance to other researchers conducting similar research. I developed clear and detailed research methods as described in Chapter 3 to facilitate the replication of the study. Other researchers will need to examine the results of this study in the context of the settings, demographics, and experiences. These results are limited to the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants from Central America. Although some similarities may be found between men and women who immigrated from Central America, these results were not confirmed to transfer to men.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the ability of the qualitative data to be replicated (Peoples, 2020). A transcription and translation service transcribed and translated the audio recordings. I read the transcriptions while listening to the audio to verify the accuracy of the transcription. I am bilingual and therefore, I checked the translation for accuracy and meaning. I read the translation of the transcription while listening to the original Spanish

audio to ensure the meaning was accurately captured in the translation. I conducted the follow-up and debriefing meetings to clarify unclear meaning or to gather missing information from the interviews.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the qualitative data being unbiased (Peoples, 2020). While conducting this study, I examined and revised my personal bias (Gadamero, 1975, 1989). One way that I examined my perceptions and personal bias was when I conducted follow-up interviews to clarify or gather missing data. For example, Laura described her experience "Cuando pequeña me protegieron de la necesidad [When I was little they protected me from need]." As I reviewed the transcript, I examined my preconceptions that the participant may have lived in a home with some economic needs. I also noted that perhaps she also experienced some emotional distance from family since they were focused on meeting basic needs for the family. During the follow up interview I was able to clarify more of Laura's experience. Laura described her experience of nurturing siblings who would give her their toys and food off their plate. This information helped me to revise my bias. Laura experienced her siblings as providing Love. I used journal writing to document my personal experiences and thoughts prior to conducting the interviews with participants. I also documented my observations during the semistructured interviews and after the follow-up interviews. I discussed with participants any questions related to the research process and answered questions about my role as a researcher.

Results

As described by the six participants' lived experiences, Familismo and Family Relations encompasses several final meaning units. The final meaning units I identified were: Connection, Emotional Support, Financial Support, Loss, Love, Safety, and Separation. The final meaning units (Connection, Emotional Support, Financial Support, Love, and Safety) were present for all the participants before and after immigration to the United States. I also identified the final meaning units of Loss and Separation were present for most participants after they immigrated to the United States. I combined the final meaning units to create the following themes to describe the phenomenon (familismo and family relations): (a) Love and Connection; (b) Safety and Support; and (c) Loss and Separation.

I reached saturation with six participants. The six participants did not share a unique path of immigration to the United States. However, there were similarities in their experiences in their country of origin that influenced their immigration journey to the United States. All six participants remained in contact with their family in their country of origin and been involved with making phone calls and sending monetary aid to their families. Only one of the six participants was interested in resources available to help manage some of the stressors currently present in their lives. All participants shared concerns about the status of immigration policies and feared that they might be involved in future raids that could result in detention or deportation. The participants experienced fear related to their undocumented status and this was evident throughout the interview process.

Final Meaning Units

In this section, I summarize the final meaning units. The final meaning units were: Connection, Emotional Support, Financial Support, Loss, Love, Safety, and Separation (see Table 2).

Table 2

Final Meaning Units

Final Meaning Units	Isabel	Laura	Lucy	Mayra	Olga	Sophia
Connection	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emotional Support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial Support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Loss	X	X	X		X	
Love	X	X	X	X	X	X
Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X
Separation	X	X	X		X	

Connection

All participants identified being connected, or having connections, as important elements of familismo and family relations. The participants discussed connection to their loved ones. The participants discussed connection to their culture, including their country, language, music, and their way of life.

"Nosotros cenamos juntos. Todas las semanas solíamos tener una gran cena juntos, éramos mis hermanos, hermanas, tías, tíos y primos. No podemos cenar juntos viviendo en distintos países. Tengo fotos recientes y recuerdos del tiempo pasado. Cuando puedo miro las fotos y es como volver a esos tiempos. En casa me gusta cocinar

y una vez al mes invito a los más cercano a cenar [We ate together. Every week we would have dinner together, brother, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. We cannot eat together living in different countries. I have recent picture and memories of the past. When I can, I look at the pictures and it is like going back to those times. I like to cook and once a month I invite those close to me for dinner].” (Isabel)

“La vida en Honduras fue lo que me formo como persona y madre. Mi casa estaba cerca de mis padres. Yo hacía manualidades y concia con primas y otras señoras del pueblo. También me gustaba cantar con ellas cuando estábamos trabajando [Life in Honduras was what formed me as a person and as a mother. My house was close to my parents. I did crafts and sewed with cousins and other ladies of the town. I also liked to sing with them when we were working]." (Laura)

“Ese año que estuve en camino a una nueva vida fue solitario. Yo tengo la foto que guardaba cerca para los momentos difícil. En la foto estaba con mi hermano celebrando el ultimo cumpleaños que él estuvo en casa [That year that I was on my way to a new life was lonely. I have the photo that I kept close by for difficult moments. In the photo I was with my brother celebrating the last birthday he was at home].” (Lucy)

“Estar con mis hijas es lo mejor. Llegando del trabajo me sentaba con ellas y comíamos unas boquitas. Sonábamos con una nueva vida lejos de casa. Recuerdo días con mama y la tía hablando de como crecieron [Being with my daughters is the best. Coming from work I would sit with them and we would eat a few snacks. We dreamed of a new life away from home. I remember days with mom and aunt talking about how they grew up].” (Mayra)

"Yo pasaba mucho tiempo con mi familia. Mi madre me esperaba cuando yo llegaba tarde de trabajar. Ella se sentaba en la mesa a escuchar los detalles del día. Mi madre me enseno las recetas de la familia. Aprendí mucho sobre remedios. La fe es algo que nos unía. Rezábamos juntas y asistíamos a la iglesia. Cantábamos juntas en el corro [I spent a lot of time with my family. My mother would wait for me when I was late from work. She would sit at the table listening to the details of the day. My mother taught me the family recipes. I learned a lot about remedies. Faith is something that united us. We prayed together and went to church. We sang together in the choir]." (Olga)

"When I first arrived, I wrote many letters and called home often. I would tell them about my life and what I was trying to do here. I tried to sound happy and focus on good things. I was trying not to worry them. Hearing their voice and excitement gave me strength." (Sophia)

Emotional Support

All participants described Emotional Support when discussing familismo and family relations. Emotional Support included time spent together, shared meals, conversation, and sharing stories about previous generations. Emotional Support was also provided by neighbors and friends established in the United States.

"Mi hermana es muy importante en mi vida. He pasado toda mi vida junto a ella. Me llena de felicidad saber que mis esfuerzos ayudaron a criar a mis sobrinos. Mi trabajo fue cuidar de mis sobrinos todos los días. En la mañana, les preparaba desayuno y le preparaba el almuerzo para la escuela. Cuando llegaban de la escuela me contaban sobre su día. Me gustaba escuchar lo que tenían que contar mientras les preparaba una

merienda. Entonces preparaba la cena y todos comíamos juntos cuando mi hermana y su esposo llegaban a casa del trabajo [My sister is very important in my life. I have spent my whole life with her. It fills me with happiness knowing that my efforts helped to raise my nieces and nephews. My job was to take care of my nephew and niece every day. In the morning, I would fix them breakfast and pack their lunch for school. When they came home from school, they told me about their day. I liked hearing what they had to say while I made them a snack. Then, I would cook dinner and we would all eat together when my sister and her husband came home from work].” (Isabel)

“Hablaba con ellos y podia tomar una merienda o café. Es costumbre una rutina que formaba parte de mi vida diaria. A veces recuerdo esos tiempos. Me gusta salir y escuchar música y también bailar. Paso poco tiempo con mis amistades por mi trabajo. A veces vienen a mi casa y cenamos juntos. También vamos a escuchar música juntos [I would talk to them and I could have a snack or coffee. It is custom a routine that was part of my daily life. Sometimes I remember those times. I like to go out and listen to music and also dance. I spend little time with my friends because of my work. Sometimes they come to my house and we have dinner together. We will also listen to music together].” (Laura)

“Al llegar fui a casa de mi hermano. El tenia trabajo y me guio a buscar un trabajo. Pasaba mucho tiempo en casa sola. Para pasar el tiempo paseamos en auto y hablamos de nuestros sueños [When I arrived I went to my brother's house. He had a job and he guided me to find a job. I spent a lot of time at home alone. To pass the time, we drive and talk about our dreams].” (Lucy)

“Cuando niña recuerdo la escuela en el pueblo. Conocí a personas que venían de misión. Eran grandes con una sonrisa que brillaba como el sol. Nos sentábamos a escuchar aventuras de un mundo que todavía no conocía. Voy mucho a la iglesia. Son familia y ayudo con eventos familiares. En La iglesia me siento a rezar y se me llena el corazón de paz [When I was a girl I remember school in the village. I met people who came on mission. They were big with a smile that shone like the sun. We sat listening to adventures from a world I didn't know yet. I go to church a lot. They are family and I help with family events. In church I sit down to pray and my heart fills with peace].” (Mayra)

“Me sentaba a jugar a los pies de mama cuando ella estaba en la cocina. Los aromas me recuerdan esos días caliente sentada en frente de la casa para recibir a todos cuando llegaran. Llegue a casa llorando. Mis hermanas me dieron ropa seca un cocimiento y se sentaron a mi lado [I used to sit at my mom's feet when she was in the kitchen. The aromas remind me of those hot days sitting in front of the house to greet everyone when they arrive. I came home crying. My sisters gave me dry clothes a tea and sat next to me].” (Olga)

“I liked to play football (soccer). Boys only played and I would run out to watch them. I heard other boys saying things to him about me and girls can’t play. My brother would bring the ball home when he could to let me practice.” (Sophia)

Financial Support

All participants identified financial support as an important part of family relations and familismo. The participants described monetary gifts and assistance. The

participants also described providing or receiving essential items to meet basic needs, such as food and shelter. At times, money was the only way participants managed the pain of separation.

“I live alone. I have a friend in my building. She has no one. I visit her and drop off food and other things she needs. My sister and her husband pay me for take care of the house. They take me shopping. I don’t ask them and they want to do it.” (Isabel)

“Hablo con mama y sé que tienen necesidad. No tengo mucho pero ahora vivo con mi novio y me apoya. Yo les mando remesas para ayudar con los gastos [I talk to mom and I know they need it. I don't have much but now I live with my boyfriend and he supports me. I send them remittances to help with expenses].” (Laura)

“Al llegar no entendía bien las cosas. Mi hermano me enseñó como son las cosas de dinero aquí. No puedo estar con ellos. Hago lo que puedo y les mando remesas. Les mando un poco todos los meses y así puedo pensar que la pasan mejor [When I arrived I did not understand things well. My brother taught me how money things are here. I can't be with them. I do what I can and send them remittances. I send them a little every month so I can think that they have a better time].” (Lucy)

“Es difícil ver a tu familia pasándolo difícil. Yo me vine para tener dinero y que mis niñas tuvieran una mejor vida. Yo lo logré y empecé a mandar dinero a mi familia. Les puedo mandar ropa y otras cosas también [It's hard to see your family having a hard time. I came here to have money and for my girls to have a better life. I succeeded and started sending money to my family. I can send clothes and other things too].” (Mayra)

"La familia que está en Honduras recibe remesas y nos hablamos. Me alegra saber que estoy logrando cosas para la familia. Aunque este lejos, los puedo ayudar con mis ahorros. Con mi niña tengo más gastos. Mi esposo me entiende y está de acuerdo. Cuando la niña este en la escuela podré trabajar más tiempo y eso nos ayudara a todos [The family in Honduras receives remittances and we talk to each other. Glad to know that I am achieving things for the family. Although I am far away, I can help them with my savings. I have more expenses with my daughter. My husband understands me and agrees. When my daughter goes to school, I will be able to work longer and that will help us all]." (Olga)

"I lived with my mother and helped her with things at the house. I worked with my family's business and answered the phone all day. I would talk to my mother about my dreams about traveling. My family paid for my trip here. It was a gift. They helped pay things for me before I left When I made decision to stay, it was hard. I had to find a job. I try to help." (Sophia)

Loss

Most participants described feelings related to Loss when discussing familismo and family relations. Loss was expressed as movement away from connection. Some participants described a void that needs to be filled. Loss included elements of emotional losses and physical losses.

"A la misma vez es duro y me he sentido sola y perdida a veces. Muchos ya no están y no pude estar para despedirlos. Yo aprendí a escribir mis pensamientos y sentimientos. Mi vida ha sido criar a los niños de mi hermana. Mi tiempo paso. Yo no

tengo familia intima. Pienso lo que pudo ser [At the same time, it is hard and I have felt lonely and lost at times. Many are gone and I could not say my goodbyes. I learned to write my thoughts and feelings. My life has been raising my sister's children. My time passed. I don't have my own nuclear family. I think of what (my life) could have been]." (Isabel)

"Cuando pequeña me protegieron de la necesidad. Lo recuerdo ahora y pienso que muchas veces ellos me dieron más de lo que podían. Es difícil estar sin ellos a mi lado. Hay veces que me presiona el pecho y experimento un vacío dentro de mí. Camino sola y recuerdo los consejos y como me guiaban con decisiones [When I was little they protected me from need. I remember it now and I think that many times they gave me more than they could. It's hard to be without them by my side. There are times when I feel pressure on my chest and I experience a void inside me. I walk alone and I remember the advice and how they guided me with decisions]." (Laura)

"Antes de llegar a ver a mi hermano tuve mucho miedo. Por las noches lloraba y pensaba en cómo podría regresar a casa. Viví cosas muy feas. No creo tener la fuerza de hablar y pensar en ello. Me sentí tan sola y dudé de mi decisión. Miraba al mi alrededor y no tenía idea de lo que pasaba. Tenía unas fotos de mi familia y eso me mantenía con esperanza. Perdí una parte de mi durante la travesía [Before I got to see my brother I was very scared. At night I would cry and think about how I could get back home. I lived very ugly things. I don't think I have the strength to speak and think about it. I felt so lonely and doubted my decision. I looked around me and had no idea what was going on. I had

some photos of my family and that kept me hopeful. I lost a part of myself during the journey].” (Lucy)

“No me despedí. No les dije que me venía a los estados unidos para no asustarlos. Pensaron que era un viaje con unas amigas. Cuando llegue no tenía familia. Extrañaba mucho todo; la comida, las costumbres, mi casa, mi familia [I did not say goodbye. I didn't tell them that I was coming to the United States so as not to scare them. They thought it was a trip with some friends. When I arrived I had no family. I missed everything so much; food, customs, my home, my family].” (Olga)

Love

All participants expressed deep feelings of affection and love when describing familismo and family relations. The participants emphasized feeling strongly about individuals and customs in their country of origin. The participants described how love remained present after they were living in the United States.

“La familia pues la familia es muy importante. Quiero mucho a mi familia. Nosotros somos muy unidos. Si alguien enferma estamos pendiente de ellos y nos cuidamos. Cuando yo estuve en el hospital mi hermana se quedó a cuidarme. Yo comparto con ellos mucho. Ver crecer a los niños y pasar tiempo con ellos todos los días mientras hacen sus deberes. Soy feliz y doy gracias a dios que tengo una familia genial que me quiere y se ocupan de mi como yo me ocupo de ellos [Family is very important. I love my family very much. We're very close. If someone is ill, we care for them and we take care of each other. When I was in the hospital my sister stayed to take care of me. I share with them a lot. Watching the children grow up and spending time with them every

day while they do their homework. I am happy and I thank God that I have a great family that loves me and takes care of me as I take care of them].” (Isabel)

“Mi familia es todo para mí. Yo estoy aprendiendo mucho mientras hablo con mis hijos de sus asuntos y escuelas. No ha sido fácil ver a mi hija en problemas en la escuela y buscando apoyo fuera de casa. Mi divorcio lejos de mi familia no fue fácil. Pase muchas noches despierta recordando a mi familia y deseando estar con ellos. Me refugie en mis recuerdos de casa y en llamadas a mis padres [My family is everything to me. I am learning a lot while talking to my children about their affairs and schools. It has not been easy to see my daughter in trouble at school and looking for support outside the home. My divorce away from my family was not easy. I spent many nights awake thinking about my family and looking forward to being with them. I took refuge in my memories of home and in calls to my parents].” (Laura)

“La familia se respeta y se quiere. La familia es siempre familia. Es algo difícil de explicar es algo que se siente dentro. Recuerdo los días en casa junto a mi familia. En la finca cuidando los animales y pasándola bien juntos. Somos seis; tengo tres hermanas y dos hermanos. Yo soy la más pequeña y siempre los recuerdo a mi lado [Family respects and loves each other. Family is always family. It is something difficult to explain, it is something that you feel. I remember the days at home with my family. On the farm taking care of the animals and having a good time together. We are six; I have three sisters and two brothers. I am the youngest and I always remember them by my side].” (Lucy)

“Pues la familia es lo que me da la fuerza de vivir. Por mi familia he sacrificado todo. Es algo maravilloso. Mis hijas están con mi mama y mi hermana. Por ellas vine a este país. Hablo con mis hijas todas las semanas. Ellas no siempre entienden porque no las puedo ver [Well, family is what gives me the strength to live. For my family I have sacrificed everything. It is something wonderful. My daughters are with my mother and my sister. For them I came to this country. I talk to my daughters every week. They don't always understand why I can't see them].” (Mayra)

“Pues la familia es algo especial que valoro mucho. Amo a mi familia. La familia se apoya y comprende. Pasábamos mucho tiempo junto. Cenamos juntos y conversamos, sobre todo. Nos apoyamos y queremos a pesar de cualquier desacuerdo pequeño o grande. Celebramos muchas cosas juntas y nos la pasábamos bien hablando. Recuerdo mi último cumpleaños en casa. Estar junto a toda la familia se sentía bien [Well, family is something special that I value very much. I love my family. Family supports and understands each other. We spent a lot of time together. We had dinner together and we talked, about everything. We support and love each other despite any small or large disagreements. We celebrated many things together and had a good time talking. I remember my last birthday at home. Being with the whole family felt good].” (Olga)

“Family is love and worry and praying that everyone is ok. I have lived here for most of my life. My kids have a good start at life. I have time with them and we have fun together. I like to go on car trips and learn new things about the places we go. I enjoy my family and my life. Part of my heart is also back in my country. I show my kids about my life back home. When they were little, I would tell them stories at night about my family,

my home, and culture. I want them to know and love my country. It is part of them." (Sophia)

Safety

All participants identified protection and safety as components to familismo and family relations. The participants discussed feeling safe and secure, as well as a sense of predictability. The concept of safety included physical and emotional safety. Safety included a network that extended across borders.

"I have memories of my youth and all the family together on Sundays to eat together. We laugh, we tell stories, maybe some disagreements, and then laugh again. I am happy and thank God that I have a great family. I am most of the time with my sister and her husband. We do many things. I also made very good friends. I can be at my home and I check on my neighbors and friends. If they don't see me they come and knock on my door or call me. (Isabel)

"La familia hay que protegerla y amarla. Yo la pase muy mal antes del divorcio. Cuando se acabaron los problemas y discusiones en casa todo mejoro. Me gusta sentarme en silencio y mirar mis plantas. Me esfuerzo por proveer un ambiente de tranquilidad para mis hijos. Vivir con mi novio y pasar tiempo con el es una experiencia genial [Family must be protected and loved. I had a really bad time before the divorce. When the problems and arguments at home were over, everything improved. I like to sit quietly and look at my plants. I strive to provide a peaceful environment for my children. Living with my boyfriend and spending time with him is a great experience]." (Laura)

"Mi hermano paso mucho tiempo a mi lado cuando llegue aquí. El me enseno como es la vida en este país. Recuerdo mi primera vez usando el transporte. Yo estaba tan asustada y me quede cerca del mientras él me llevaba en la ruta necesaria para el trabajo. Estoy segura con la familia, soy querida y se siente bien [My brother spent a lot of time by my side when I got here. He taught me what life is like in this country. I remember my first time using transportation. I was so scared and stayed close to him as he took me on my route to work. I am safe with the family, I am loved and it feels good]." (Lucy)

"Por mis hijas me vine para acá. Mi mama paso mucho trabajo cuando yo era pequeña. Yo quiero que tengan mejor vida. Aquí me sentí sin protección cuando llegue, pero ahora voy con un grupo de mujeres a rezar y encuentro paz y mucha tranquilidad. Me gusta leer versos de la biblia con mis hijas cuando las puedo llamar [I came here for my daughters. I want them to have a better life. When I arrived, I felt unsafe, now I joined a prayer group and have found peace. When I can call my daughters, I like to read the bible verses with them]." (Mayra)

"Yo quería una mejor vida para poder ayudar a mi familia en Honduras. Su familia (esposo) me acogió y son un gran apoyo. Su familia me motiva a seguir adelante y me cuidan mucho. Me siento protegida. Todas las tardes su mama me llama cuando estoy en camino a casa para preguntarme como estuvo el dia [I wanted a better life so I could help my family in Honduras. Her family (husband) welcomed me and they are very supportive. His family motivates me to keep going and they take great care of me. I feel protected. Every afternoon his mom calls me when I'm on my way home to ask how the day was]." (Olga)

"My family takes care of each other. When I was little, I remember my brother standing in front of another boy and letting him know that I was his sister and liked playing sports. At first it was difficult to be without my family. My husband is great. When my husband asked to marry, I knew I, I felt calm and ready to keep working hard to have a good life." (Sophia)

Separation

Some participants described Separation as part of their experience of familismo and family relations. The participants described Separation in the physical sense since they were no longer in the same country as their family of origin. The participants also included descriptions of Separation as it relates to being away from the things and people they know and love.

"Es difícil en este país porque las personas son solitarias. A veces no conviven con sus familiares de la misma forma que yo estaba acostumbrada. Extraño a todos lo que ya no están. Mi familia me ayudó mucho. Yo me hice mujer en este país, pero llevo mi país y mis costumbres en mi corazón [It is difficult in this country because people are lonely. Sometimes they do not live with their relatives in the same way that I was used to. I miss everyone who is gone. My family helped me a lot. I became a woman in this country, but I carry my country and my customs in my heart]." (Isabel)

"Fue muy difícil y me sentí muy sola, con miedo y sin entender bien el inglés. Mi esposo se sentía sin esperanzas y se puso violento. Éramos solos nosotros en un país que no teníamos familia. Estuve tan sola cuando empezamos con problemas y me dio miedo con mis hijos [It was very difficult and I felt very alone, scared and did not understand

English well. My husband felt hopeless and became violent. We were alone in a country where we had no family. I was so lonely when we started with problems and I was scared with my children].” (Laura)

“Tenía tanto miedo y no sabía en quien podía confiar. A veces son muy pocos los momentos junto y no hay tiempo para compartir. Estamos lejos de la familia. Extraño despertar y poder tomar un café con mama. Mantengo los recuerdos con fotos y llamadas frecuentes. Quiero que mi niña hable con mi familia, aunque no podamos viajar [I was so scared and didn't know who to trust. Sometimes there are very few moments together and there is no time to share. We are far from family. I miss waking up and being able to have coffee with mom. I hold the memories with photos and frequent calls. I want my daughter to talk to my family, even if we can't travel].” (Lucy)

“Me fue difícil y derrame muchas lágrimas. Busque apoyo en mi nueva comunidad. Algunas personas me dieron ayuda y compartimos nuestras penas de estar separados de la familia. Muchos días recuerdo los tiempos de antes y me pregunto cómo hubiera sido mi vida en mi país [It was difficult for me and I shed a lot of tears. I sought support in my new community. Some people lent me a hand and we shared our sorrows of being separated from the family. I often remember the old times and I wonder how my life would have been in my country].” (Olga)

General Narratives

Latinas who are undocumented immigrants experience of being in the world before immigrating to the United States included some hardships and hope for a new way of life. The participants arrived in the United States with fore conception of what their

life would be. As they experienced life in the United States, their experiences shaped new ways of thinking and interpreting their world. As I examined the participants' experiences with the Hermeneutic circle, I started to capture each unique perspective of the lived experiences in relation to family relations and familismo. I took the final meaning units discussed above and incorporated them into three themes that were relevant in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Love and Connection

The participants discussed love and connection. All participants felt that familismo and family relations involved experiences that included sharing of time, thoughts, and feelings. All the participants described a longing for their loved ones and their home. Isabel described how her family would eat together and talk about their hopes and dreams. Laura shared that she would see her parents daily and they would eat together each week. Lucy recalled how her brother was so patient and helped her transition to a new country slowly. She described her experience walking into a store and taking transportation with her brother. Olga described how her mother sat at the table and waited for her every day to eat. Sophia discussed spending time with her mother and figuring out difficulties together.

Safety and Support

The participants discussed Safety and Support. All participants described experiences of Safety and Support that were present in the phenomenon of familismo and family relations. Isabel described her experiences of helping her sister that needed her and her experiences as she came to take care of the children. Laura discussed her

experiences as she immigrated to the United States to seek a better life for her family. She misses and appreciates her family in Honduras and everything they did and still do for her. She wants to take care of them Olga spoke about experiences that helped her find ways to create opportunities for a better life and to help her family in Honduras.

Loss and Separation

Most participants felt that after immigrating to the United States familismo and family relations involved experiences that included feelings of loss and separation. Isabel described experiences of being separated and how difficult it was for her to be away from her family and country. She shared experiences of loss related to lack of a life partner to share her life. Laura also described experience of being alone and afraid. Lucy described experiences that included guilt and sadness as she was not close to her family. Olga shared experiences of being alone and her doubts about immigrating to the United States.

General Description

The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants experience familismo and family relations beyond their nuclear family. Their narratives include stories of survival and resilience. The core value of familismo and family relations is present before and after the immigration to the United States. Many of them experience Loss and Separation as they expand their experience of familismo in a new country and social environment. For some of the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants the experience of familismo and family relations include individuals from work, church, or their neighborhood. These individuals provide support and allow for a collaborative relationship. At times, the experience of familismo in a new environment is described as a limited circle of support

as compared to a larger extended system of support in their country of origin. The experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants in a new social environment can leave them feeling disconnected and alone as they adjust to life away from their family and home.

Latinas who are undocumented immigrants arrive in a new country with preconceptions about familismo and family relations. These beliefs are tested as they experience a new way of life and interactions with others. Latinas who are undocumented immigrants readjust their beliefs as they continued to develop new experiences and understandings in a new country. The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants will demonstrate the core theme of Love and Connection through experiences that include memories, pictures, music, food, phone calls, and stories. Latinas who are undocumented immigrants establish the core theme of Safety and Support through stories, phone calls, material things, money, and actions of service. Latinas who are undocumented immigrants readjust their beliefs about familismo and family relations in a new country. They experience Love and Connection as well as Safety and Support through the development of new relationships and connections established in the United States.

The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants searched for love, connection, safety, and support. They immigrated with pre-conceptions about family relations and familismo that provided a context for their experiences in the United States. As they increased time in the United States, they adjust pre-conceptions about familismo and family relations incorporating new experiences. Some of the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants come to a new country with experiences of daily contact with

family while others may come with experiences of weekly family gatherings. Some of the Latinas adjust their pre-conceptions as they are unable to maintain consistent contact with family due to work schedule and other responsibilities. Others continue with daily contact with their families. At times, contact and access to family relations is achieved through means beyond face to face interactions, including texts, audio calls, or video calls. The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants at times experience loneliness, isolation, and rejection. Some of them experience disconnection from their culture and community. They shared experiences of loss and separation from their culture, country, and family. At times, Latinas who are undocumented immigrants experience a hostile environment. As part of new experiences and perspectives, the Latinas expanded their world view and cultural understanding of living away from their country of origin.

Latinas who are undocumented immigrants incorporate transnational relationships in the revision of their experiences of familismo and family relations. Their relationships with family members remain an integral part of their social supports even when separated by a large geographic distance. Some Latinas who are undocumented immigrants leave their country of origin and do not have the opportunity to return. The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants look for ways to overcome barriers to communicate with those back home. The relationships with families overseas may serve as a motivator. These relationships help maintain a sense of hope for a brighter future both for the family back home and the Latinas in a new country. Some Latinas experience barriers to consistent contact or access to family, including availability of monetary resources and technological access. Sometimes Latinas' relationships with those left behind become a

source of anxiety and pain due to barriers that prevent them from consistent contact or access.

Summary

Within this chapter, I discussed the setting and participant demographics. I also described data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Lastly, in this chapter, I presented the results of the study. I found the final meaning units related to familismo and family relations supported by all the interviews were Connection, Love, Emotional Support, Financial Support, and Safety. I found that these meaning units were present before and after the immigration to the United States. In addition, most participants also endorsed the meaning units of Loss and Separation. I synthesized the final meaning units and described three core themes that encompass the phenomenon of familismo and family relations: (a) Love and Connection; (b) Safety and Support; and (c) Loss and Separation. In Chapter 5, I provide a summary of the key findings and present conclusions. In Chapter 5, I address implications of these findings, as well as, provide possible direction for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore family relations and familismo as a core value in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. Many researchers have identified familismo as central to Latinx daily life and a source of resilience as well as a source of emotional stress (Ayon, 2010; Rojas et al., 2016). Gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants can provide further details that may assist in the development of programs, services, or systems that can incorporate key cultural information to meet Latinx's needs effectively. I met with six Latinas and discovered the following meaningful units: connection, love, emotional support, financial support, and safety. In addition, most participants endorsed the final meaning units of loss and separation. I synthesized the final meaning units and described three core themes that encompass the phenomenon of familismo and family relations: (a) love and connection; (b) safety and support; and (c) loss and separation.

In this chapter, I present the concluding discussion about familismo and family relations as described in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. I summarize the findings and how they related to the research I presented in Chapter 2. Research studies on the topic of familismo and Latinas who are undocumented immigrants continues to be limited, but I provide current references when available. I also analyze and interpret the findings in the context of feminist and social justice theories. Additionally, I address any limitations to trustworthiness that arose from my

execution of the study. I then make recommendations based on the findings of this study. Lastly, I address implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I discuss the interpretation of my findings. I examine my findings in the context of past research. The participants' lived experiences provided rich narratives that assisted with an understanding of familismo and family relations for the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Researcher's Experience

The hermeneutic phenomenological concepts of *Dasein*, fore-conception, and the hermeneutic circle were integral components of this study (Peoples, 2020). As a Latina born in the United States my experiences of familismo and family relations may be different than those of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. I used journaling to remain aware of how I experienced the core concept of familismo and family relations. The hermeneutic circle provided me an interactive relationship with the experiences and allowed me to adjust and change my understanding of the core concept of familismo. I expected the participants to describe experiences that aligned with dependence versus independence. As I interviewed participants and started to gain a deeper understanding, I revised my pre-conceptions and understood their experiences of familismo and family relations to be on a continuum with a focus on interdependence.

Participants' Experiences

I included observations about participant nonverbal communication during the interviews. The participants presented emotional accounts about their experiences that

illustrated their connection to the concepts of familismo and family relations. Based on their responses, the participants immigrated with a sense of hope and desire for a better life. The participants shared experiences that shifted how they experienced life after immigration as well as how they now understood their life prior to immigration. As they gained understanding of their new environment, many participants shifted their understanding of familismo and family relations. This process illustrated the hermeneutic circle as more of a spiral that incorporates new experiences and understanding.

Interpretations of the Findings Based on Past Research

My study focused on Latinas' experiences of family relations to gain an understanding of the multifaceted construct of familismo. The core themes of familismo (love and connection, safety and support, and loss and separation) emerged from participants' responses. Mental health professionals and Counselor educators can use these themes in the development of mental health resources and interventions for this population. In this section, I will describe ways in which my findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend current knowledge as it relates to the experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants who participated in my study.

Participants discussed the isolation, loneliness, and lack of trust experienced in the United States that links to the theme of loss and separation as it relates to familismo. Lucy described feeling scared and not knowing whom to trust. Olga described her doubts and fears related to immigration. Laura described walking and experiencing pressure in her chest as she encountered others that moved away from her as she approached them. The experiences presented by my participants provide a view of the social impact of their

experiences that are congruent with social implications described by previous research (Esses et al., 2013). Transitions in personal ties, social networks, and socioeconomic system are part of the immigration experience (Garcini et al., 2019; Solheim et al., 2016). Other research has similarly highlighted experiences related to fear and loss (Abrego, 2011a). In my study, Isabel described feeling lonely and lost, Laura expressed a feeling of emptiness or something like a void inside, and Lucy shared feeling lonely, scared, and doubting her decision.

The theme safety and support identified in my study also supports previous research that identified four dimensions of familismo: (a) family-level decision making, (b) family members as reliable providers of basic needs, (c) family members as providers of emotional support, and (d) family members as problem solvers (Capps et al., 2007). Lucy described her experience with her brother who helped her transition to a new country and would walk her through the necessary steps to learn daily living skills in a new country: “When I arrived I did not understand things well. My brother taught me how money things are here.” This experience could also show support for family members as problem solvers.

Additionally, the theme love and connection supports previous research indicating family members as providers of emotional support and family members as problem solvers (Capps et al., 2007). Isabel described her experiences of having her basic needs taken care of by her sister and brother. Mayra shared her experiences of coming to the United States because of her love for her family and the need to provide a better life and resources for them. Isabel also described moving to the United States to help her sister,

Laura described her experience of immigrating as a family to the United States for better opportunities, and Lucy discussed her experiences immigrating to the United States to be with her brother. Other researchers have also found that families influence Latinx individuals' path to immigration (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018; DeLuca et al., 2010; Rojas et al., 2016). The themes of love and connection and safety and support also confirms the concept of familismo as a "built-in system" (Lauricella et al., 2021). Family cohesion can be beneficial and helpful (Dillon et al., 2013). Future studies could continue to explore the correlation between familismo and healthy management of life stressors.

During my recruitment of participants, I also witnessed participants' expressions of fear and concerns about legal consequences related to their status as undocumented immigrants. The literature highlighted the potential impact of immigration reform and immigration policy on potential participants and their experiences (Doran et al., 2018), such as fear related to deportation and loss of freedom (Abrego, 2011a). My study did not directly explore the impact of the participants' undocumented status; however, participants' undocumented status was a central topic during the interviews. The participants in my study frequently mentioned living with fear and anxiety. Each of my participants' experiences developed in relation to their opportunities, interpretations, and behaviors.

Love and Connection

Mental health in the Latinx community is conceptualized as a family issue (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018; Fortuna & Porche, 2014; Garcini et al., 2019; Rojas et al., 2016; Waters et al., 2017). Previous researchers have highlighted the role of faith-based

centers and resources as significant sources of support for immigrants (Capps et al., 2007; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 2020). My study was possible due to the access to participants at religious sites and community centers. I found evidence in the narratives of the Latinas' lived experiences that confirms these findings. Isabel shared that she found peace at her church. "Yo busco paz y me alejo de lo que me parezca negativo. Yo ayudo en la iglesia y me siento plena [I look for peace and I stay away from what seems negative to me. I help in the church, and I feel fulfilled]." Laura also shared her experiences with her community of faith. "Encontre apoyo y fuerza con las otras mujeres en el grupo de la communidad. Compartimos la palabra de dios [I found support and strength with the other women in the community group. We share the word of God]."

The theme Love and Connection included faith-based locations as a source for these experiences. Olga shared experiences of connection at church in her home country as well as in the U.S. "Pude encontrar paz y alegría cuando estoy con el coro de mi iglesia. Poder compartir con las otras mujeres cuando tenemos actividades y ayudamos [I found joy and peace when I am with the choir at my church. Helping and sharing with the other women when we have activities]."

DeLuca et al. (2010) conceptualized the family as a risk factor since it served as a motivator for individuals to cross the border regardless of the dangers inherent in this act. Most of the participants in my study discussed family as the motivator to immigrate. Isabel shared: Mi hermana me necesitaba y yo vine para poder cuidarle a los niños [My sister needed me and I came to care for her children]." Laura explained: "La familia es la

razón que vine a este país. Para una mejor vida para nosotros [I came to this country for my family. A better life for us].” Olga discussed: “Yo quería una mejor vida para poder ayudar a mi familia en Honduras [I wanted opportunities to help my family in Honduras].” Lucy spoke about her brother and his success. “Mi hermano mayor se fue primero y vive aquí [My older brother came first and lives here].” Mayra reported: “Pues yo decidí hacer el sacrificio y buscar otras cosas para todos. Para la familia [I decided to make the sacrifice and find other things for all of us. For the family].”

Conversely, Ayon et al. (2010) found that high levels of familismo protected against negative mental health outcomes. Rama et al. (2020) helped to explore familismo within the context of helping Latinx family meet specific needs. My findings support this view when you examine the narratives from the theme of Safety and Support. Below I discuss the participant narratives in relation to this core theme. Rojas et al. (2016) found ambivalence as a context for familismo that helped conceptualize familismo beyond the idea of risk and protection. The narratives of the participants in my study illustrates some of the context of ambivalence. Below I discuss these findings in more details as I examine each of the core themes.

Safety and Support

My research questions did not focus on the underlying motivation of participants to cross the border. However, as I listened to the audio recordings and read the transcripts, I found examples of experiences that provide support to the concept that family serves as a motivator to immigrate to the United States. Rojas et al. (2016) reported that families were a motivator for immigration even if there was the cost of

separation. Participants in my study identified Financial Support as part of the essence of family relations and familismo. My findings support participants' desire for a better life and economic stability.

Rojas et al. (2016) described the theme of Give and Take, which included the desire to gain economic stability and for some the desire to join family already living in the U.S. Isabel described how financial support was tied to her experiences of familismo. "Voy con mi hermana y me compra lo que necessito. Eso ayuda y puedo ayudar a los que deje en mi pais [I go with my sister and she buys me what I need. That helps and I can help the family back home]." (Isabel)

Rama et al. (2020) found that familismo influences Latinx individuals feeling safe and secure. They found that participants' need to feel safe and secure included seven themes: financial stability, physical safety, parental availability, family interactions, family cohesiveness, open communication, and supportive environment (Rama et al., 2020). My finding of Safety and Support as a core theme of familismo is confirms findings from Rama et al.

After immigration to the United States, when family relations are predominantly transnational, the undocumented immigrants may develop other supports to negotiate the core value of familismo (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018; Campbell, 2008; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini et al., 2019; Mahalingam et al., 2009; Miranda et al., 2006). In my study, the participants described transnational family relations within the theme of Safety and Support. I found evidence in the Latinas' lived experiences that faith-based locations were a source of and Safety and Support. The participants described experiences

exemplifying these themes that extended beyond family and included neighbors, co-workers, religious institutions, and their members.

Loss and Separation

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the experience of loss and a crisis can have an impact on the Latinx family's mental health (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012; Berman, 2016; Dreby & Schmalzbauer, 2013; Moore et al., 2020). Leidy et al. (2010) discussed the positive impact of family cohesion in Latinx families. They found that one of the barriers to parenting and family cohesion was having limited access to extended family. The core theme of Loss and Separation offers further support to the role of transnational relationships and the creation of extended support systems in a new environment.

As I mentioned above, the core theme of Loss and Separation aligns with familismo as a potential risk. Rojas et al. (2016) discussed that familismo was a multidimensional construct. Familismo presented with benefits, but familismo also included an emotional and behavioral cost (Rojas et al., 2016). The theme of Loss and Separation aligns with the concept of ambivalence within familismo (Rojas et al., 2016). Latinas who are undocumented immigrants included experiences of Loss and Separation as they navigated new life experiences and discussed memories of previous experiences.

As I explore the experiences of these women, I focused on the complex context of familismo. I contributed to the expansion of available research on familismo and the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. The Latinas who are undocumented immigrants presented with pride and demonstrated resilience in their narratives. This is congruent with the findings of other researchers (Ayon, 2018;

Lauricella et al., 2021). Campbell (2008) found themes that included feelings of isolation and feeling disconnected from others and their community. Her finding was consistent with the results of this study that identified Loss and Separation as a core theme of familismo.

Interpretation of Results and the Theoretical Foundation

In this section, I interpret the results of my study through the lens of social justice theory and feminist theory. First, I discuss the core themes from my study and how they are reflected in the key principles of social justice theory. Then, I discuss the core themes from my study and how they relate to concepts that are present in contemporary feminist theory.

Social Justice Theory

I examined the results of my study in the context of social justice theory. As I discussed in Chapter 2, social justice theory incorporates four key principles: (a) equity, (b) access, (c) participation, and (d) harmony (Crethar et al., 2008). The core theme of Love and Connection supported the social justice theory principles of equity, access, participation and harmony. The experiences of the participants included their desire to achieve individual, social, and financial equality in a new environment. The participants shared experiences that exemplified how familismo and family relations interacted with their pursuit of equality, access, participation, and harmony.

The core theme of Safety and Support also supported the principle of equity. The participants described experiences that encompass a reciprocal and equitable view of familismo. “Recuerdo como eran las cosas en casa. Estoy creando relaciones con la

familia de mi novio. Pasar tiempo juntos me ayuda a sentirme parte de una nueva familia [I remember how things were at home. I am creating relationships with my boyfriend's family. Spending time together helps me feel part of a new family]." (Laura) Latinx reliance on familismo may have an impact on their access to resources and services (Lauricella et al., 2021).

The core theme of Loss and Separation addressed the Latinas' experiences that reflected need for access. The Latina's experiences reflected barriers to access in the United States in varying ways, including inability to obtain documents to reside in this country (Ayon et al., 2010). For most of the participants limited language proficiency impacted access to resources and opportunities.

When there was a lack of access to the other core themes Love and Connection and Safety and Support, the Latinas who are undocumented immigrants experienced emotional distress. Many of the participants' interviews described emotional distress. The participants expressed sadness related to inability to visit family and see their children in person. The participants shared experiences related to fear that they would not be able to see their loved ones again. Similarly, Garcini et al. (2019) found high prevalence of psychological distress reported by undocumented immigrants that was related to the experience of loss.

The social justice perspective supports the need to create change in available resources. The recent experience of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight inequities (Cross & Benson, 2021). This research supported the

need for increased action to create equitable access to services and health information to individuals such as Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Feminist Theory

I examined the results of my study in the context of feminist theory. As I described in Chapter 2, Evans et al. (2011) identified four core principles of feminist theory: "(a) the personal is political, (b) egalitarian relationships, (c) privileging of women's experiences, and (d) empowerment" (p. 17). McCann and Kim (2017) identified five concepts that are present in contemporary feminist theory: (a) gender, (b) difference, (c) women's experiences, (d) the personal is political, and (e) intersectionality. At a glance, these principles may present as contradictory to the core concept of familismo. Currently, feminist theory has explored the expansion of feminist knowledge using lived experiences and transnational conversations about core concepts (Lauricella et al., 2021; McCann & Kim, 2017).

As I explored my findings through this context, I found that the experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants encompassed these principles. I found it important to examine familismo as a protective or risk factor using multiracial and transnational feminism that supports the focus on lived experiences instead of the lens of the Western worldview (McCann & Kim, 2017). When I considered the possibility of familismo and family relations as a protective factor and risk factor in the context of feminist and social justice theory, I find that the participants' experiences may support familismo as both a risk and a protective factor. The core themes of Love and Connection, Safety and Support, and Loss and separation confirm Rojas et al. (2016)

findings that conceptualized familismo in the context of ambivalence. The themes of Love and Connection and Safety and Support from my study align with findings that familismo serves as a protective factor, whereas the theme of Loss and Separation aligns with finding of familismo as a risk factor.

Ayon et al. (2018) discussed how the fears experienced by the Latinx participants have an impact on emotional and behavioral functioning. The personal stories and journeys that lead Latinx individuals to immigrate to the U.S. are often lost in the current immigration political climate (Ayon et al., 2018). The participants' described experiences of intersectionality as they shared about their experiences related to familismo while living in a new country. The multiple contexts within the participants' experiences included: (a) Latina, (b) undocumented status, (c) marital status, (d) children, (e) educational level, (f) available resources, (g) age at time of immigration, (h) years living in the United States, and (i) language proficiency.

All the participants in my study shared the context of being Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. The other contexts varied among the participants. Isabel's experiences of familismo intersected with being a single, middle-aged women who speaks English. Laura's experiences of familismo intersected with being a divorced woman with children in a new relationship who does not speak English. Lucy's experiences of familismo intersected with being in a relationship with children. Mayra's experiences of familismo intersected with being a single, middle-aged women, separated from her children who does not speak English. Olga's experiences of familismo intersected with being a married woman with children who does not speak English.

Sophia's experiences of familismo intersected with being a middle aged, married woman with children that does not speak English. Familismo is another variable that intersects with the multiple contexts described above in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study involved transferability. This qualitative study's sample focused on participants from a state in the Northeast. This sample was not representative of all Latinas who are undocumented immigrants in the entire United States. Latinas who are undocumented immigrants and lived in other parts of the United States may have different life experiences. According to the zip codes provided by the participants, all the participants were living within urban areas. Therefore, the results of this study were limited to Latina women who are undocumented immigrants from Central America living in urban areas. The results of this study will not transfer to the experiences of Latino men who are undocumented immigrants. I did not address the impact of masculinity on the lived experiences of familismo in this study. Also, the results of this study will not transfer to Latinx children. I did not examine the impact of child and adolescent development on the lived experiences of familismo in this study.

I used a journal to keep notes about my pre-conceptions about familismo and family relations. I had pre-conceptions related to immigration as my parents and other family immigrated to the United States. I wrote about my experiences and thoughts and then returned to these notes as I gained insight and understanding from the participant

interviews. Maintaining a journal provided a way to revise my bias and incorporate new understanding.

Many participants expressed distrust in the research process and fear of legal repercussions. The fear of legal repercussions included a multitude of factors. The many fears included: being identified as an individual who was an undocumented immigrant; deportation back to their native country; being identified and tracked by the police or government; incarceration; separation from their families; loss of employment; negative impact on obtaining authorization through immigration; and loss of financial or economic support.

The participants required a detailed explanation of how their information would be kept private and often asked if immigration would have access to their interviews. In addition, many participants experienced fear of speaking openly and freely about their feelings and thoughts. Many participants were familiar due to personal experience or family exposure to political oppression and restrictions of speech in their native countries.

After meeting with many potential participants, I experienced cautious and fearful Latina women who expressed concerns and hesitation to participate in research. Some potential participants chose not to participate after they met eligibility requirements. Some participants even expressed fear that participation in my study could hurt future attempts to obtain legal residency. Some potential participants may have varied experiences, but they chose not to participate. My inability to access the population fully may have restricted access to a wider range of lived experiences.

Recommendations

As I reflect on my experience conducting this study, I would like to provide some recommendations for other researchers. Participants' experience of fear and concern of possible negative repercussions and distrust of institutions may limit access to a full range of available participants (Page & Flores-Miller, 2021). Although I participated in community events and explained my role as a researcher, it was not enough to overcome consistently the potential participant's feelings of fear and distrust. Future studies would benefit from including Latinx individuals who are undocumented immigrants who could join the researcher throughout the implementation of the study to gain and maintain the trust of the potential participants.

Future studies could explore the research questions of this study in rural areas, other urban sites, and other geographical areas in the United States. During, the Covid-19 pandemic, I have witnessed many Latinx immigrants experiencing unsafe work environments to continue to provide basic needs for their families (Cross & Gonzalez Benson, 2021; Page & Flores-Miller, 2021). There is a need for researchers to continue to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Latinx population. Future studies could examine how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted familismo within the undocumented Latinx population.

Some studies have referred to the concepts of resilience and reframing experience in relation to familismo (Ayón et al., 2010; Bostean & Gillespie, 2018); Campbell, 2008; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini et al., 2019). Future studies could examine these topics as they relate to undocumented Latinx men and women. In addition, with the increasing

number of unaccompanied undocumented children and adolescents entering the United States, researchers could explore these topics and the development of transnational familismo. Researchers must continue to build upon the current research available about this vulnerable population.

Implications

As I previously discussed, Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants are a vulnerable and underserved population with significant mental health needs who are under-represented (Doran et al., 2018). As a social justice advocate, it was important to me to conduct research that would assist in reducing barriers and increase awareness to help change public perception of undocumented Latina immigrants. My study contributed to the counseling profession by increasing diversity in research that may reduce bias toward this population.

As a counselor educator and researcher, I can shape the future of research and clinical practice to increase the inclusion of systemically excluded populations (Cross & Gonzalez Benson, 2021; Page & Flores-Miller, 2021). Similarly, understanding the role of familismo and family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants will allow for collaboration and the development of interventions, services, and treatments for this underserved population. My experiences while completing this research study can help to guide researchers as they develop and construct other studies. The barriers I experienced during the research process can also provide useful data to other researchers.

As I gained additional knowledge of familismo and family relations in the lived

experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants, I can incorporate my findings in the development of strategies and interventions for this population. I gathered data through this study about the themes of familismo (Love and Connection, Safety and Support, and Loss and Separation) that counselors can use to develop culturally informed mental health resources and treatment for undocumented Latinas from a state in the Northeast. The mental health professionals may develop program options that incorporate Love and Connection and Safety and Support by providing opportunities for positive activities.

In addition, the mental health professionals may link individuals to resources that can mitigate the experience of Loss and Separation. As providers learn about Latinas who are undocumented immigrants, they can include information about familismo and how to provide support during the treatment process. Providers can work within their institutions to develop access to treatment options that focus on the community and family, not just the individual.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore family relations and familismo as a core value in the lived experiences of Latinas who are undocumented immigrants. The results of this study identified three core themes that encompass the phenomenon of familismo and family relations: (a) Love and Connection; (b) Safety and Support; and (c) Loss and Separation. As I reflect on these findings, I can share a greater understanding of family relations in the lived experiences of Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants. I can provide information about familismo in the context

of a new culture. As an advocate for social change, I provided a platform for Latinas, who are undocumented immigrants to share their experiences and increase the presence of a vulnerable population in qualitative research. The spiral of the Hermeneutic Circle will continue as the lived experiences of the Latinx population informs research and as the researcher informs the development of culturally competent practice. Future research can continue to provide opportunities to increase the inclusion of underserved populations and reduce bias.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Review informed consent information and confirm that the informed consent form was signed.

English Language Version

1. What does family mean to you?

2. Discuss your perceptions about family prior to immigrating to the United States.

3. Discuss your perceptions about family after you immigrated to the United States.

4. Discuss your experience of the essence of family after immigration Share your thoughts, feelings and experiences about family relations.

5. Discuss your experience of the essence of family after immigration to the United States.

Versión en español

1. ¿Qué significa la familia para ti?

2. Comparte tus pensamientos, sentimientos y experiencias acerca de las relaciones familiares.

3. ¿Cuáles fueron tus experiencias familiares antes de que emigraras a los Estados Unidos?

4. ¿Cuáles fueron tus experiencias familiares después de que emigraras a los Estados Unidos?

5. Comparte tus experiencias sobre lo que significa la familia ahora que vives en los Estados Unidos.