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## Immigration as a "Theologizing Experience": Spiritual Well-Being as a Moderating Factor in Migratory Grief and Acculturation

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

IMMIGRATION AS A THEOLOGIZING EXPERIENCE:  
SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AS A MODERATING FACTOR IN  
MIGRATORY GRIEF AND ACCULTURATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

BY

IRMA A. SHARP

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of spiritual well-being to migratory grief and acculturation. The study employed a cross-sectional design and a convenience sampling method. Data were collected from 75 Mexican immigrant adult education students in the city of Chicago. Instruments used to collect data were a demographic form, Spiritual Well-Being Scale, Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire, and the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale. All instruments were translated into Spanish, the native language of the participants. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the moderator effects of existential well-being and religious well-being, the two subscales of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale. Existential well-being and religious well-being failed to show a moderator effect. A moderate positive correlation was found between migratory grief and acculturation-degree of immersion in the ethnic society. This study also found a moderate negative correlation between self-perceived adaptation and acculturation-degree of immersion in the dominant society. This study extends current knowledge on the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Immigration leads to a “sudden change from an average expectable environment to a strange and unpredictable one” (Ticho, cited in Garza-Guerrero, 1974, p. 409). The immigrant finds that the new environment is organized in a distinctly different manner than his previously held conceptions of the world. The language and culture of the new land do not resonate with him. The new land does not know him nor does he recognize himself in the new land. The lack of predictability in the new land is compounded by multiple losses. Relocation involves leaving behind emotional ties, social and financial capital, and the familiarity of the cultural environment. The social roles once performed in the country of origin may drastically change or may not be fully recovered. The distance of the new land from the country of origin is often exacerbated by the difference in world views. The native tongue, the language of emotions, memories, and dreams becomes secondary to the language of the adopted country.

The multiple losses on account of immigration inevitably yield a process of mourning (Akhtar, 1995; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Stein, 1985). “With immigrants there is no certainty as to when the feelings of loss will occur” (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981, p. 378). They may be experienced prior to the move, upon arrival, or it may be postponed until years later when one would expect to have reached a

resolution. The mourning process as a result of immigration is comparable to the grief experience at the death of a loved one and may take longer to resolve (Schneller, 1981).

Migratory grief is a concept that has captured the attention of researchers due to its repercussions for immigrants' mental health (Ahn, 2006; Brener, 1991; Casado & Leung, 2001; Lakatos, 1992; Prudent, 1988). The successful resolution of migratory grief is a key factor for psychological growth and identity. Mourning the past is the only way that an immigrant can begin to move forward with an emotional investment in the current reality (Stein, 1985). The degree of discontinuity in the immigrant's identity is directly proportional to the severity of the immigrant's grief experience (Garza-Guerrero, 1975).

Bowlby's (1961; 1969; 1973; 1980) seminal work on attachment, separation and loss provides the theoretical framework for understanding the immigrant experience related to the loss of the homeland. The phases of grief described by Bowlby (1980) and Parkes (1986) which include numbing, pining and yearning, disorganization and despair, and reorganization are relevant to the grieving experience of immigration (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981). This study focused on reorganization as it is within this stage that the immigrant may begin to reinvent the self (Ward, 2001; Ward & Styles, 2003) and develop a new identity (Garza-Guerrero, 1974).

The new identity developed through immigration endures a continual modification and negotiation with others in the new land. These alterations support the maintenance of identity and the possibility of growth. Identity complexity defined as the ability to maintain "a coherent sense of self while moving between different environments" (Saari, 2002, p. 76) allows a person to function across different social and

cultural contexts. The immigrant's ability to "transcontext" (Saari, 2002) or envision their identity within the context of two cultures leads to a greater capacity for mental health.

An important index of identity is captured in the concept of acculturation.

Acculturation entails the negotiation of the degree of immersion in the host culture and the degree of immersion in the native culture resulting in four acculturative positions: assimilation, integration, separation, marginalization (Berry, 1980; Stephenson, 2000).

The changes in acculturation can represent the reorganization of identity as a consequence of loss and grief. Lakatos (1992) pointed out the need to examine the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation as two processes that address identity on a different level, intrapsychically and consciously, respectively; however, one could argue that they follow a parallel process with the development of an integrated identity as the ideal outcome (Lakatos, 1992).

"The long term psychological consequences of acculturation are highly variable, depending on social and personal variables that reside in the society of origin, the society of settlement, and phenomena that both exist prior to, and arise during, the course of acculturation" (Berry, 1997, p. 5). Common personal and social factors include but are not limited to the following elements: language, education, receptivity of the new environment, and religion. Language issues can interfere with an immigrant's growing sense of security and autonomy in the new environment (Schneller, 1981). In the context of identity loss, language problems have the potential to undermine competency in several areas of functioning promoting a sense of inferiority (Arredondo, 1986).

"Education appears as a consistent factor associated with positive adaptations: higher education is predictive of lower stress" (Beiser et al.; Jayasuriya, Sang & Fielding, as



cited in Berry, 1997, p. 22). Education can be considered a personal resource since it contributes to problem solving potential, an important capacity necessary for adaptation. High educational achievement prior to immigration is also protective due to a greater opportunity for gainful employment and economic incorporation. A low level of education leaves an immigrant vulnerable to being typecast for low wage employment thus limiting opportunities for socioeconomic advancement (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

Receptivity of the new environment is a significant factor that dictates whether immigrants can truly participate in a new society. Exchanges with the environment that are colored by discriminatory attitudes further alienate immigrants in their search for identity. If we consider the environment important to the preservation of psychological health, then the denial of an immigrant's identity through negative historical and attitudinal factors can seriously compromise their well-being (Saari, 2002). Public policies may affect the context of acculturation such that they reflect a preference for assimilation or integration and thereby constrain the viable choices for the acculturation process (Berry, 1997).

Smith (1978) described immigration as a "theologizing experience". The losses and uncertainty during immigration often initiate an existential search for answers within the religious realm. It is not surprising that religious attachments frequently intensify following immigration to a degree that surpasses the devotion while living in the native land (Herberg, as cited in Hirschman, 2004). A study by Hagan and Ebaugh (2003) suggested that the risks and the experience of a lack of control during immigration create a stronger reliance on religion giving adversity a spiritual tone and meaning.

Religion can act as an anchor for identity in times of constant change (Dumont, 2003). For many immigrants, religion provided an important context for the development and maintenance of their identity. The preservation of religion following immigration reaffirms beliefs and strengthens the sense of self often debilitated by precarious circumstances. Religion may “strengthen the individual in an extreme situation, in which his selfhood (...) is violently assaulted (and) a religious framework may help some individuals in extreme situations maintain their self-cohesion, self-continuity, and self-esteem” (Marcus & Rosenberg, 1995, p. 81).

Spiritual well-being fulfills the need for transcendence or the “capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one’s self and the immediate” (Ellison, 1983, p. 332). Transcendence promotes a higher level of well-being that can enable an immigrant to gain perspective independent of their circumstances. Spiritual well-being consists of a religious and existential component. The religious component relates to the experienced connection with God or a Higher Power. In the existential sense, spiritual well-being allows a person “to know what to do and why, who (we) are, and where (we) belong in relation to ultimate concerns” (Ellison, 1983, p. 331). Although inter-related, religious and existential well-being can be considered separately and in this way capture a religious and nonreligious experience of spirituality.

Spiritual well-being may present an adaptive potential to mental health in the context of immigration. It has been associated to psychological well-being (Ramirez de Leon, 2002), lower level of acculturative stress (Chau, 2006), self-esteem, hardiness, and coping resources (Kamya, 1994) in different immigrant populations. Spiritual well-being has been found to be correlated to lower levels of loneliness in various populations

experiencing loss (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982; Miller, 1985). The role of spiritual well-being as a moderator variable in the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation has not been investigated.

### **Purpose and Rationale for the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine spiritual well-being and its relationship to migratory grief and acculturation in a sample of Mexican immigrants. The two components of spiritual well-being, existential well-being and religious well-being were considered separately in order to capture the distinctive aspects of this construct. The theoretical framework of this study conceptualized existential well-being and religious well-being as moderator variables that alter the direction and/or strength of the relation between the predictor variable and the outcome variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). It was expected that existential well-being and religious well-being would decrease the impact of immigration-related factors that may have a deleterious effect on psychological integrity and identity.

Research on the spiritual well-being of immigrant populations has been limited. This study contributes to the literature on the spiritual well-being in the foreign born. Ramirez de Leon (2002) investigated the spiritual well-being of Mexican American Catholics. The present study differs from this other study in several ways. This researcher selected a sample from outside a church setting and included participants that vary in their religious involvement and affiliation. The participants represented a younger age group than the subjects in the above mentioned study. In addition, participants in this study had significantly less years of residence in the United States compared to subjects in the study by Ramirez de Leon. Most importantly, Spanish was the exclusive language

of data collection in this study because it was the native tongue of the research participants.

The spiritual well-being of the Mexican immigrant was the focus of this study due to current environmental factors that significantly mark their acculturation experience. The experience of immigrants in the United States is colored by the matrix of welfare policy, immigration legislation, and xenophobia (Kilty & Vidal, 2000). This complicated web of political and social forces infused with exclusionary sentiments is discernible through public policies that have definite restrictive measures. Individualistic values in public policies and laws have contributed toward a climate that is unreceptive toward newcomers since it precludes the value of community and the extension of membership to foreigners. “Those groups that are less well accepted experience hostility, rejection, and discrimination, one factor that is predictive of poor long-term adaptation” (Beiser et al.; Fernando, as cited in Berry, 1997, p. 17). A study that focused on a salutary aspect of Mexican culture such as spiritual well-being was clearly needed at this point in time.

### **Research Questions**

In an attempt to explore the potential moderating role of spiritual well-being, this study pursued four questions:

- 1) Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and migratory grief and loss?
- 2) Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of demographic characteristics (e.g., marital status, years living in the United States) on migratory grief and loss?
- 3) Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on acculturation?

4) Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

### **Definition of Terms**

A definition of the key terms such as religion, spirituality, spiritual well-being, grief, identity, and acculturation will be outlined in the discussion that follows.

#### *Religion, Spirituality, and Spiritual Well-Being*

Historically, the conceptual meaning of religion included both individual and institutional components. William James defined religion as “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude” (as cited in Pargament, 1999, p. 5). James viewed personal and institutional experiences as a fundamental part of religion. Current thinking on the subject has re-defined the term and placed exclusive emphasis on the institutional, formal aspect. Pargament attributed the privatization of spirituality to a gradual disenchantment with social institutions and an increasing preference for the value of subjectivity and individualism. Therefore, it is important to note that the definition of spirituality and religion is influenced by the cultural context and the values that define a particular society at a specific point in time. In this study, the constructs of spirituality and religion are embedded within the context of contemporary Mexican culture and the Spanish language.

Some authors have started to highlight the similarities and the differences between religion and spirituality as distinct but overlapping concepts. Based on a survey of social work students, Hodge and McGrew (2005) reported that spirituality was primarily defined in terms of a “belief in /connection with God or a Higher power” (p. 16). This definition represented an experiential or existential dimension in relation to the

transcendent. This study concurred with other research that reported that there was a degree of overlap in the categories used to define these two constructs (Furman, Benson, Grimwood, & Canda, 2004; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The three major themes to describe religion were “practice of one’s spirituality or faith”, “organized beliefs or doctrines”, “belief in/connection with God” (p. 17). The themes that emerged to describe religion were more diverse but interrelated on a theoretical level. As a result, the authors concluded that “spirituality was understood in terms of some type of belief/connection with a transcendent entity while religion was seen as a communal setting in which beliefs about this entity were organized and one’s spirituality was practiced” (Hodge & McGrew, 2005, p. 17). Based on the above mentioned research, this study defined *spirituality as a belief/connection with a transcendent entity. Religion was characterized as a communal setting in which culturally oriented traditions, symbols, and spirituality is practiced.* For research purposes, both terms will be included in the literature review.

In this study, the concepts of religion and spirituality were not measured. Spiritual well-being was the focus of this study as conceptualized by the authors of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). *Spiritual well-being fulfills the need for transcendence or the “capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one’s self and the immediate”* (Ellison, 1983, p. 332). Based on Moberg’s work, Ellison conceptualized spiritual well-being along a vertical and horizontal dimension. The vertical or religious dimension is concerned with well-being in relation to God. The horizontal dimension is related to existential well-being or matters such as purpose and life satisfaction without any religious reference. Although distinct, these dimensions are inter-related on a conceptual level.

### *Migratory Grief*

“Grief is the process that allows us to let go of that which was and be ready for that which is to come” (Rando, as cited in Casado & Leung, 2001, p. 10). The author of the Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire (MGLQ) subscribes to the above mentioned definition of grief and believes that it implies a process of growth that is accomplished through the integration of the loss into the new situation. Bowlby’s (1961) perspective of mourning and its adaptive potential concurs with the ideas discussed here. He postulated that mourning is a process that involves the relinquishment of the lost object and subsequent disorganization in order to commence a reorganization that is directed toward future objects. Migratory grief is consistent with the phases described by Bowlby (1961; 1980) and offers an opportunity for growth within the last stage of reorganization where the bereaved immigrant may “reinvent himself” (Ward, 2001; Ward & Styles, 2003) and develop a new identity.

### *Identity*

Identity is a term that has been defined a number of different ways in the literature. Garza-Guerrero (1974) contends that in the case of immigration, “*new identity here refers neither to a total engulfment in the new culture nor to the mere sum of bicultural endowments. Neither does new identity mean a stable achievement, but rather denotes a continually re-edited process*” (Erikson, as cited in Garza-Guerrero, 1974, p. 425). Saari provides a definition of identity as a “personal meaning system that is created over the course of the individual’s experience with the world and is organized primarily in narrative form” (in Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996, p. 144). Meaning only makes sense if it is connected to current experience and given the changing nature of experience, meaning

requires recurrent evaluation. Consequently, identity as a personal meaning system is constantly being modified through interaction with others. Therefore, Saari conceptualizes identity as an interpersonal, intersubjective process that requires the participation of others for its maintenance throughout life. This study applied Garza-Guerrero's definition of identity (see above) within Saari's conceptual framework.

### *Acculturation*

Acculturation is a complex process of change that individuals and groups experience as a result of continuous contact with another culture (Berry, 1980). This definition is the guiding construct of acculturation inherent in the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS). On an individual level, acculturation is defined as a multidimensional process of psychological and behavioral transformation via interaction with the social and cultural environment (Berry, 1980; Stephenson, 2000; Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). *This study conceptualized acculturation as a multidimensional construct.* The SMAS measures the following dimensions as a function of acculturation: behavior, knowledge, and language. *Acculturation was considered a bilinear process which means that change can occur within the culture of origin and within the host culture.* Involvement in one culture does not preclude or decrease involvement in the other culture. As a result, a number of acculturative positions are possible which include assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1980). The SMAS assess acculturation by measuring the degree of immersion in the culture of origin and the host culture.



### *Mexican Immigrant*

A person who was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States.

Immigrants with legal and illegal status in the country were included in this study. This study did not request information regarding people's legal status in the country, therefore, people with legal and illegal status were included and not differentiated.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. The topic of *spirituality* has recently drawn significant attention in the social work literature. This is evident in the amount of articles that have been published on this topic in our profession's flagship journal (Cornett, 1992; Faver, 1994; Haight, 1998; Hodge, 2001; Morell, 1996; Okundaye, Gray, & Gray, 1999; Reese, Ahern, Nair, O'Farie, & Warren, 1999; Sermabeikian, 1994; Voss, Douville, Soldier, & Twiss, 1999; Walz, 2000). However, as a long neglected aspect of social work, the research on this topic continues to be scarce. A study of the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants fills a void in the literature. This study is *timely* in light of the growing number of people of Latin American origin in the United States. It is estimated that Latinos make up 15% of the total population in this country (U.S. Bureau of the Census). The Latino population is relatively young compared to the total United States population (del Pinal & Singer, 1997; U.S. Bureau of the Census). It behooves the social work profession to engage this specific population given the critical implications this will have on the mental health of the coming generations. The values and policies of society toward immigrants do not provide a facilitating environment for their adaptation. Therefore, a study on the restorative potential of spiritual well-being has significant *clinical* implications for the mental health of immigrants and their families.

Consequently, the inclusion of spirituality as a resource for healing and change is consistent with the curriculum *policy* statement issued by the Council on Social Work Education. The new educational policy and accreditation standards which went into effect in July 2002 included religion under the human behavior in the social environment section as requiring inclusion in the curriculum regarding training of clinical social workers. *Social justice* issues are related to this study as well. Research has indicated that spirituality has a very significant role in the lives of people of color (Banerjee & Pyles, 2004; Haight, 1998; Poindexter & Linsk, 1999; Tangenberg, 2001). “If religion is more highly valued by populations which have been typically oppressed, such as women, the elderly, the poor, and African Americans, then it would stand to reason that the marginalization of religion is part of that oppression” (Raines, 2001, p. 3). The NASW Code of *Ethics* encourages development in research, policy, and practice that is related to disadvantaged groups. It states the following:

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (National Association of Social Workers, 1997).

### **Assumptions**

A number of assumptions are inherent in the formulation of this research study and should be explicitly discussed. First, the approach toward the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants assumes a strengths-based perspective. It is not based on a naïve perspective that denies the injurious potential of spirituality and religion to mental health. A strengths orientation gives attention and articulates the manner in which certain types of religious orientations and religious beliefs can contribute to or reduce psychological

distress. It seeks to raise awareness of the spiritual dimensions of loss within immigration that may assist immigrants in building up their internal resources for the development of a new identity. Second, a bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspective of human behavior in the social environment is assumed here. Spirituality is not separate from the other dimensions of living rather it is an intrinsic part of the human experience. This view contends that spirituality has a significant place in understanding human strengths, weaknesses, and problems (Cornett, 1992). It supports the assertion that “spiritual needs of the individual must also be recognized, understood, and respected” (Towle, 1957, p. 8).

Finally, this study assumes that psychodynamic theory can be consistent with a spiritual perspective and that this reconciliation can broaden understanding of both of these fields (Meissner, 1984). Although these two areas were long thought to have irreconcilable differences (Freud, 1927), contemporary theorists (Cornett, 1998; Meissner, 1984; Northcut, 2000) recognize the ways in which they can intersect to create a dialectical relationship. A more insightful view of the immigrant experience is made possible by the valuable contributions of psychodynamic thinking and religious experience.

### **Metatheory of Research**

Developing a research study elicits questions about how one views the world and how one comes to know about it. The need to position oneself within a research paradigm is a necessary prerequisite in the design of a research study. One’s philosophy of research will reverberate through every part of the research process. The manner in which we ask a research question will inevitably influence the results of our study (Price, 1999).

Likewise, the decisions about research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results are all driven by the personal stance one selects to represent our philosophy of science.

The philosophy of science adopted in this study is known as transcendental realism (Bhaskar, 1989). This philosophy supports the position that “although knowledge is inevitably biased and socially constructed, there is a mind-independent reality to be known” (Bhaskar, 1989, cited in Tyson, 1992, p. 551). This perspective recognizes the power of social context and the role it plays in shaping knowledge and reality. However, it maintains that an independent reality does exist apart from our view of it. The topic of this study refers to the existence of discrimination and oppression in society and its potential negative repercussions for identity processes related to immigration. Therefore, these things cannot be reduced to the observer’s socially constructed meanings or experience. A standard is necessary in order to know that something is harmful or oppressive to a given individual, family, or group.

Transcendental realism is particularly complementary to research with an oppressed population because it espouses the values of empowerment and advocacy. Bhaskar (1991) explains that “social and behavioral knowledge can either reproduce or transform social reality” (cited in Tyson, 1995, p. 322). A critical stance toward research can be transformative because it has the potential to inform social structures. When research challenges current knowledge and addresses the manner in which it informs social systems, it can lead to solutions toward a more equitable reality for the oppressed.

Transcendental realism was incorporated into this research study by adopting a model of quantitative research that identifies with this philosophy of science. In the spirit

of postpositivism, this researcher carefully considered the problem formulation, research methodology, theory, and values that drive this study. The values that underlie the research problem are consistent with a social justice perspective. This study took into account the psychosocial factors that impress upon the psyche of an oppressed immigrant group. In addition, the research problem aimed to explore the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants in order to disseminate knowledge of an underserved population in the clinical, research, and educational spheres. Although this study followed a quantitative methodology, this researcher acknowledges that the findings are not present an exact and full representation of reality. There is a bias inherent in any single perspective. The new knowledge provided by this research reflects the research decisions made regarding design, measurement, and analysis. Different findings emerge given a distinct research question and methodology. This researcher recognizes that the theories used to understand and explain the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants were developed in a historical and cultural context (Flanagan, in Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 1996). Object relations theory in particular was derived in the context of a white, Jewish, high socioeconomic patient population. Although self psychology can be helpful in understanding the sociocultural factors involved in the self experience of immigrants, it is centered on the individual in a way that does not reflect the values of a collectivistic-oriented culture (Flanagan, in Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 1996). Therefore, this researcher realizes the manner in which the selected theories both widen and restrict the lens through which Mexican immigrants are perceived.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section will discuss the review of the theoretical literature that is pertinent to the topic of interest. The second part of this chapter will cover the research literature in order to situate the present study within the current body of knowledge. Each section will end with a summary of the literature and a discussion that integrates the research questions under investigation.

#### **Review of the Theoretical Literature**

This research requires a comprehensive theoretical conceptualization in order to appreciate the complexity of the topic of study. This section covers the development of three major concepts which include spirituality and religion, the loss of the homeland, and the remaking of identity through immigration. Two sub-topics situate the theoretical review in the religious and cultural context of the Mexican tradition. Following this brief discussion, spirituality and religion are examined through the lens of psychodynamic theory. The next major area provides an overview of attachment theory as it relates to mourning and loss of the homeland. Finally, two contemporary psychodynamic theories are used to illustrate identity processes and the re-invention of self during immigration. The relevant contributions of these theories are central to the theoretical formulation within this study.

*Religion in the Context of Culture*

Religion and culture are interwoven in all aspects of our spiritual experience” (Walsh, 1999, p. 14). Religious traditions and symbols are created and amended within a particular context and vary based on ethnicity and country of origin (Aguilar, 2001). Despite the diversity within the Mexican culture, the other-centered nature of religion resonates with the cultural orientation toward relationship and family. The perception and experience of the divine takes form within this relational context and determines that which is spiritually significant (Espin, 1997).

The image of God that is portrayed across cultures can vary considerably. Mexicans often believe in a personal God that relates to them in an intimate way. The common image of God is as a Father who is concerned with the needs of His children and provides for them. A personal relationship with God is frequently maintained through prayer, promises, offerings, and lighting candles. A devotion to a specific saint is another way that Mexicans may personalize their spiritual experience. A number of Mexicans view their relationship with God as one that is based on “reverence and love as well as fear and dread” (Ramirez, 1985, p. 7).

Major life events involve religious rituals which mark these occasions as spiritual celebrations. The different stages of life often correspond to spiritual milestones. Within the Catholic tradition, the sacrament of confirmation is received during adolescence. Confirmation is a symbol of the adolescent’s acceptance of faith and the coming of the Spirit in the life of the young person. During this time period, young Mexican girls who turn 15 years old traditionally celebrate their birthday with a mass and party otherwise

known as a quinceañera. The purpose of this cultural tradition is to introduce the girl to society and ask for God's blessing on her life. In this context, the coming of age is a spiritual and social event (Aguilar, 2001).

Religious adherence and preference is not a uniform phenomenon within any specific culture and ethnicity (Walsh, 1999). Although Mexicans have historically been affiliated with Catholicism, there is a growing number that are turning to the Protestant faith. Pentecostal churches have recently experienced a resurgence of Latino membership. In addition, many Latinos maintain a dual belief system that consists of a blend of Catholicism and African/indigenous spiritual beliefs such as Santeria or espiritismo. Moreover, religious traditions and symbols are not monolithic within a particular religion such as Catholicism. There is significant diversity among Mexican Catholics in terms of religious beliefs and observance that is related to factors such as generation, education, and socioeconomic status.

“Religion and family life are deeply intertwined” (Walsh, 1999, p. 8). Spiritual beliefs and practices have been associated with healthy family functioning in family process research. The transcendent nature of spiritual beliefs and values helps families to endure the unexpected losses and risks in life. This is critical to the lives of many immigrant families who experience an inordinate amount of loss as they traverse the unknown waters of the new country. Therefore, religion can support family relationships as they grapple to adjust to transitions in their environment.



*Spirituality and Relationality*

“Faith is inherently relational, from our earliest years, when the most fundamental convictions about life are shaped within caregiving relationships” (Walsh, 1999, p. 22). The interpersonal dimension is a requirement to plant the seeds of faith in the lives of children. Throughout life, relationships are the means to spiritual growth. It has been established that intimacy strengthens resilience (Higgins, 1994) and promotes a sense of wholeness. Meaningful experiences provide psychological and spiritual attunement considered necessary for vitality and well-being.

In many Latino immigrants, religion is often a function of a collective expression (Crane, 2003). It is passed on to future generations through the spirituality of their relatives. Bishop Ramirez (1985) eloquently described the faith experience of Latinos in the following statement:

The heart of spirituality touches not only the spiritual, as a mere interior and private event, but is also one that affects their total lives...including moral and external behavior, including religious and social relationships. The social dimension brings people in touch with the past spirituality of their ancestors. It is more than an isolated or private experience-it is also a legacy (p. 6).

Spirituality among Latinos provides an avenue for social connection with the community (Musgrave, Allen, & Allen, 2002). “Institutions such as ethnic-based churches and social clubs appear to be an important source of support for Mexican Americans and other Latinos and they function very much as an extension of the extended family” (Patterson & Marsiglia, 2000, p. 24). Since many immigrants leave their important social networks behind, the church community plays an important role in an immigrant’s capacity to acclimate to the new culture and language. The church can

provide a place of belonging and a safe haven from an environment that is often unwelcoming of foreigners (Falicov, in Walsh, 1999).

The communal aspect of religion is a powerful impetus for awakening a “justice-seeking spirituality” in oppressed populations (de V. Perry & Roland, in Walsh, 2008). A religious understanding of justice can mobilize people to engage in social activism. A contemporary example can be found in Liberation Theology which originated in Latin America in the 1970’s. It is based on the premise that God has a “preferential option for the poor” contrary to a worldly perspective that maintains them in a lowly position. It emphasizes liberation from oppressive conditions (both within and without) in order to live in a way that honors the human spirit (de V. Perry & Roland, in Walsh, 2008). Immigration rights demonstrations across the country are motivated by a similar sentiment which calls for recognition of their human rights and dignity.

#### *Spirituality and Religion: A Psychodynamic Perspective*

Contemporary psychodynamic theorists have begun to carve out a place for spirituality and religion in the literature on psychodynamic practice (Cornett, 1998; Meissner, 1984; Northcut, 2000). Dialogue on this subject has demonstrated the utility of integrating spirituality and religion into our clinical and theoretical frameworks. The intrapsychic aspects of spirituality and religious experience are critical to understanding their role in the psychological adaptation of immigrants. Understanding the function that spirituality and religion serve within immigration does not debate its truth value nor is it meant to diminish its transcendent aspects. The relational components of spirituality and religion are particularly relevant to this population and will be elucidated using a self

psychology and object relations perspective. The following discussion concludes with a consideration of the intrapsychic capacity to symbolize and its role in the development of a new identity.

Self psychology explains that the development of a healthy self is contingent upon needed selfobject experiences. Three selfobject experiences make up the primary building blocks to psychic health. Throughout development, the child needs experiences that validate her “innate sense of vigor, greatness and perfection” through interactions that express delight and approval of these states of being. This experience provides a selfobject function known as *mirroring*. Secondly, the child needs interaction with others “to whom the child can look up and with whom he can merge as an image of calmness, infallibility, and omnipotence” (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p. 414). This experience describes the selfobject function known as *idealizing*. The last selfobject experience consists of involvement with others that through a sense of similarity and receptivity provoke a sense of likeness between the child and themselves (Mitchell & Black, 1995). This situation illustrates the selfobject function referred to as *twinsip*. The child is eventually exposed to normative disillusionments within the caretaking environment. These disappointments are overcome with the aid of the internalization of the selfobject functions through a process known as transmuting internalization. Therefore, these functions become a permanent part of the psychic structure, the self. Nevertheless, “Kohut later suggested that no one fully outgrows the need for selfobjects” (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 357).

Spiritual practices or relationships associated with a belief system can provide positive selfobject experiences. Adherence to the principles of one’s faith can present an

opportunity for mirroring selfobject experiences. For example, the recognition for following spiritual standards from believers of the same faith can generate affirming mirroring experiences. In addition, a church community or people with similar spiritual beliefs can provide a twinship selfobject experience. Being a part of a community of faith promotes a sense of belonging based on spiritual beliefs and counteracts feelings of aloneness (Cornett, 1998).

A relationship with God or a higher power can provide positive or injurious selfobject experiences. The feeling of being considered as a devout follower by God or a higher power can provide affirming mirroring selfobject experiences. The idealization of God or the object of one's faith provides an opportunity for a merger experience which one can use to draw upon in times of distress. The representation that a person has of God or a higher power is influenced by the relationship with parents. For example, if a person's parents did not provide affirming selfobject experiences then God may be experienced as a demanding, harsh being who can not be pleased (Cornett, 1998).

The search for objects to idealize may lead many people to spiritual experiences or a relationship with God. "The ability to allow the self to merge with someone or something greater than it allows a sense of protection and empowerment" (Cornett, 1998, p. 70). An all-powerful God is sought after by many people as this representation provides shelter from a hostile world. However, the experience of disappointment or disillusionment in God or the object of faith is often not addressed by people because of fear or denial of these feelings. Therefore, spirituality or a relationship with God presents the possibility for disappointment and subsequent narcissistic injury.

Mason articulated an understanding of the intrapsychic function of religion based on the theoretical framework of self psychology. He provided an illustration of the selfobject functions which enriched the “symbolism in institutional religion” (in Goldberg, 1980, p. 423). The selfobject function of idealizing is conveyed through scriptures and hymns that speak of the strength, power, and omnipotence of God and the relationship between God and His people. The religious symbols during Mass or religious service can re-create in the believer an experienced connection with God as an omnipotent other. These occurrences may also cause the immigrant to construe the presence of others who have provided a similar selfobject function.

“It is by dwelling in various devices, including theories, that the mind extends itself into more complex ways of knowing and understanding” (Imre, 1982, p. 83). An object relations perspective allows for another layer of complexity of the intrapsychic world. Winnicott’s thesis of the intermediate area of existence depicts his view of illusion and its place in life. Initially, illusion is a developmental vehicle that supports the transition to reality and objectivity. In other words, the transitional object and transitional phenomena emerge at a time when the child is in the process of developing the capacity to perceive the mother as a separate object that is real. Contrary to Freud’s perspective, Winnicott portrays illusion as the medium that helps one to maintain health and a dynamic, reality based existence:

Men cannot be without illusions. The type of illusion we select—science, religion, or something—reveals our personal history and the transitional space each of us has created between his objects and himself to find a resting place to live in (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 209).

Winnicott (1951) declared that transitional phenomena and transitional objects are the “intermediate area of experience” (p. 256). In the beginning, the good enough mother through a live adaptation to the infant’s needs allows the sense of omnipotence and illusion where the infant believes that he/she is a part of the breast and that he/she creates it according to his/her needs. The good enough mother eventually allows the infant to experience her failure in adaptation in moderate amounts according to the infant’s growing capacity. The infant’s experience with frustration is the vehicle that allows the infant to experience the love object in a realistic way as a separate object from him/her. The area between illusion and reality is what he refers to as the intermediate space “between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived” (Winnicott, 1951).

Transitional objects emerge from transitional phenomena. Transitional objects are a symbol of the union experience with the mother. They are typically used as a defense against anxiety especially that of a depressive nature. The child often needs the object to achieve/maintain inner equilibrium. Transitional phenomena and transitional objects are frequently employed throughout the life time during times of transition and change. Transitional objects can later take the form of an idea or a feeling (Sengun, 2001).

Maturity enables play, creativity and eventually cultural experiences to develop from the intermediate area of existence. The capacity to use this intermediate area for play and creativity is contingent upon the early life experiences and whether they facilitated development of this realm of experience. According to Winnicott (1967), cultural experience is the “inherited tradition...something that is in the common pool of humanity, to which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we

may all draw if we have somewhere to put what we find” (p. 99). Cultural experiences involve the expression of creative living such as that found in art, music, poetry, theatre and other such pursuits.

Cultural experiences such as religion and faith can be conceived of as transitional objects that provide containment and comfort in the face of change. The containing function of religion promotes psychic survival since it supports the capacity to be alone. Based on Winnicott (1958), Sengun (2001) describes the capacity to be alone as “the feeling of being connected; the connection that makes one feel not alone in the physical absence of another person” (p. 70). During the process of migration, the immigrant’s experience of being alone is heightened. Migration involves the separation from significant relationships, language, familiar environment, and the world as it is understood in that cultural context. The participation in spiritual practices establishes a connection to past experiences, affective ties with significant others, and the culture which these existed in. In this manner, religion and faith can be used as a means of restoring equilibrium in the midst of transition that is accompanied by anxiety, feelings of estrangement, or traumatic experience all of which are experienced as a discontinuity in the self (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

The role of cultural experiences in containment is contingent upon certain dynamic elements. The immigrant’s ability to return home in reality or fantasy has some bearing upon whether the cultural experience continues to function in a soothing manner. The situation of political refugees is one in which this possibility is extinguished (Sengun, 2001). Similar to the transitional object that loses meaning, a political refugee

with no hope for return home could not retrieve the soothing functions of cultural experiences. This resembles the situation where the mother's extended absence causes the transitional object to lose meaning to the child. The conflict between the mother culture and the new culture may result in a type of splitting where one culture is denigrated in order to embrace the ideals of the other conflicting culture. The containing function of cultural experiences also depends on the degree to which the separation from the mother has been health-promoting. Separation from the mother that has not been growth oriented will have a parallel effect on the separation from the mother culture and the integration of the new culture. As a result, the mother culture can prevent separation and the use of cultural experiences as transitional objects (Sengun, 2001).

Religion has a nature that is characteristic of transitional phenomena as it finds its expression in the illusory experience of the intermediate area and results in the enrichment of psychic health. In this manner, it is similar to other cultural experiences which provide a pathway for the demonstration and nourishment of our inner most existence. However, religion is in a separate category from other cultural experiences because of the distinctive manner in which it draws attention to existential issues such as one's sense of meaning and purpose in life (Meissner, 1984).

The faith experience encompasses aspects that are within the realm of transitional phenomena (Meissner, 1984). Faith is not experienced by the believer as an experience that is primarily based on subjectivity. The believer's faith is felt as the realm of experience that informs his sense of purpose and mission in life, the guide that helps him make sense of the world, and the means to which he can access a relationship with a



higher power. By the same token, the faith experience does not attempt to explain its existence in the objective world. In this manner, faith does not exclusively belong to the subjective or objective area of experience. Alike other transitional phenomena, it is found within the intermediate area of existence (Meissner, 1984).

The origin of the faith experience emerges from a family environment that stimulates its growth as well as a community of believers that provides a doctrine to believe. The child receives the beliefs that he finds in his environment (Meissner, 1984). At some point, the believer may differentiate from the community of believers in order to arrive at his own personal belief system. The personal faith experience can be thought of as that which was received from his environment and that which is a product of his own subjectivity. Therefore, the faith experience of an individual can be said to take form in the intermediate area of experience. The faith of a community of believers can be considered as the “sharing of illusory experience within a given group of believers” (Meissner, 1984, p. 179).

Prayer is another aspect of religion that contains elements of transitional phenomena (Meissner, 1984). The believer that is engaged in this activity is immersed in a state of religious experience that is like no other in terms of its immediate, relational connection between the believer and the object of faith. Within this experience, the parallels between the God-representation and the believer’s self representation are active. The god a believer prays to is directly related to the individual object representation that is alive within his inner life. Therefore, the prayer experience takes place within the

transitional space where the believer interacts with the God-representation in a manner that is highly personalized to his internal world (Meissner, 1984).

Religious traditions utilize various material objects to represent different components of their beliefs (Meissner, 1984). The crucifix, cross, and the menorah are concrete signs that are employed within the religious practices of these belief systems. The significance of these signs is not limited to their physical attributes. These religious symbols represent the beliefs and meanings of a particular tradition. As symbols, they represent the meaning that has been attributed to them by a believer or community of believers. The believer recognizes that the symbol exists outside the realm of objective reality, however, it is not perceived as a subjective creation. Symbols arise from the matrix of their objective, physical experience and the subjective meanings that are attached to them by the believer or community of believers. Religious symbols are instrumental in maintaining the vitality and meaning of a belief system within the experience of a believer (Meissner, 1984).

An intrapsychic capacity that is essential in the adaptation to a new country is the immigrant's ability to symbolize and create. Good enough mothering that supported the ability to symbolize through separation and the development of transitional phenomena will increase the immigrant's likelihood of building a positive experience from the unknown (Sengun, 2001). The immigrant's ability to symbolize may help him to use spiritual symbols in the process of weaving together a new way of life. Spiritual symbols can provide an association with past life experiences and preserve the values of the country of origin while moving forward. The creation of symbols can be a means to

represent experiences in the new country in a personal, meaningful form for the eventual integration of these into one's identity.

*Attachment and Mourning the Loss of the Homeland*

The immigrant experience related to the loss of the homeland will be discussed in the language of attachment theory. Bowlby's seminal work on attachment theory has been the conceptual platform for research on grieving (Parkes, 1986). Bowlby's original thesis was based on data of children experiencing separation from their mothers and illustrated the emotional distress experienced upon separation or loss of this bond. In the optimal situation, the attachment relationship provides a strong sense of security and protection. In a secure attachment, the infant experiences the mother as a secure base to explore the world and as a safe haven in potential threat. Bowlby (1973) suggested that the special bond between mother and child is the forerunner to other significant attachments throughout life. Therefore, attachment processes are ongoing throughout the life cycle and the loss of these bonds (in this case due to immigration) may result in anxiety, anger, and depression (Bowlby, 1980).

Bowlby (1961) distinguished grief from mourning, two terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature. He proposed that grief is an emotional experience which involves anxiety, anger, despair that arises from the experience of an irreversible loss. The finality of the loss is what differentiates it from separation anxiety where hope is still present (Bowlby, 1961, p. 332):

Mourning is best regarded as the whole complex sequence of psychological processes and their overt manifestations, beginning with craving, angry efforts at recovery, and appeals for help, proceeding through apathy and disorganization of behaviour, and ending when some

form of more or less stable reorganization is beginning to develop (Bowlby, 1961, p. 332).

Bowlby (1980) argued that the response of children upon separation constitutes a variant of mourning that can be seen in similar form and sequence in adults. Bowlby (1969) postulated that grief in infancy and early childhood involved the progression of three distinct stages: protest, despair and detachment. He proposed that each of the stages invoked a core issue of psychoanalytic theory. “The phase of protest is found to raise the problem of separation anxiety; despair that of grief and mourning; detachment that of defence” (Bowlby, 1973, p. 27). In his later work, Bowlby (1980) applied the findings of several prominent studies, namely, the work of Colin Murray Parkes conducted in London (Parkes, 1970) and Ira O. Glick and Robert S. Weiss in Boston, MA (Glick, Weiss, & Parkes, 1974). As a result, Bowlby (1980) extended his theoretical formulations from three stages of grieving to four stages of mourning by adding numbing as the first stage.

Numbing, the first phase of mourning, is usually short-lived as it may last from a few hours to a week. However, bereaved persons may alternately experience outbursts of intense emotion and anger. The subjective feeling within this stage is that of shock as individuals struggle to accept the reality of their loss. In this stage, immigrants have not yet processed the fact that they left and all of the people and places that they will no longer see (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981). Some bereaved individuals may attempt to cope by avoiding thoughts about their loss and go on with their usual lives; however, this may be interrupted by overwhelming attacks of panic (Bowlby, 1980).

The second phase of mourning, yearning and searching, is characterized by the coexistence of “two states of mind” (Bowlby, 1980, p. 87). The bereaved person begins to gradually recognize the reality of the loss. This realization provokes intense pining, emotional distress, and weeping. Pain and hopeless yearning is associated with these emotions. Almost simultaneously, the bereaved person may experience an intense urge to find and recover the lost object. Restlessness, insomnia, and preoccupation with thoughts about the lost object are common features of this stage. In the case of an immigrant, this is a time when homesickness sets in as they grasp the magnitude of their loss (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981). Weeping and anger are expressions of the urge to recover the lost person and undoubtedly have a biological basis for survival. Bowlby (1961) compares the weeping response of an infant who is separated from his mother to the weeping of an adult at the loss of a significant person. In both cases, weeping emerges from an instinctual response that is designed to elicit the presence of the missing person. Anger is described as an adaptive response in the situation of a child that is separated from his mother. The aggressive feelings and reproaches toward the mother are the child’s way of communicating the affective experience of separation and minimizing the probability that it will be repeated:

In the case of mourning, anger is seen as an intelligible constituent of the urgent though fruitless effort a bereaved person is making to restore the bond that has been severed. So long as anger continues, it seems, loss is not being accepted as permanent and hope is still lingering on (Bowlby, 1980, p. 91).

When preoccupation with the lost object begins to diminish, the bereaved person enters a period of disorganization. In the third stage of mourning, activities and behavior

are missing the typical organization that made productivity possible. Behavior and thought patterns that were associated with the lost object are no longer appropriate. It is not surprising that the bereaved person may at times despair and believe that all is lost and consequently become depressed. The multiple difficulties experienced in the new land may leave the immigrant feeling depleted and unable to meet the challenges inherent in the transition. Bowlby (1961) believes that health (and adaptation) involves the ability to tolerate depression (disorganization) so as to re-invent oneself and adapt to new circumstances (new environment).

During reorganization, the final phase of mourning, the bereaved person must finally come to terms with the loss and accept it as permanent. He examines his present state and recognizes the need for redefinition of himself and of his situation. All hope of recovering the lost object and the old situation must be relinquished in order to start afresh (Bowlby, 1980). Immigrants acknowledge that “they are here to stay” (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981, p. 377) and begin to set roots in the new land. They begin to build new relationships and define themselves in terms of their current situation.

#### *Identity and Re-Invention of Self*

Bowlby’s (1961) model of mourning has a discernible influence on Garza-Guerrero’s (1975) thesis on culture shock. Garza-Guerrero extends Bowlby’s theory to illuminate the relevance of mourning and the vicissitudes of identity in immigrants. He proposed that culture shock is a “stressful, anxiety-provoking situation, a violent encounter-one which puts the newcomer’s personality functioning to the test, thus challenging the stability of his psychic organization” (p. 410). A successful outcome of

this crisis can lead to emotional growth. On the contrary, stagnation or pathology may occur to varying degrees.

Garza-Guerrero (1975) described massive object loss in similar terms to that of the experience of the death of a significant other. However, his theory addresses the manner in which culture shock and mourning debilitates the immigrant's identity. It is important to note that this theory was not intended to explain the experience of refugees. While there are some similarities in the experience between immigrants and refugees, the distinctions warrant a separate discussion that is not included in this theory. Garza-Guerrero pointed out that although the theory's stages follow a sequential order, the process does not necessarily follow a linear model; there is much overlap among these stages and this should be considered for clinical understanding.

Cultural encounter is the first phase that includes the features typically attributed to culture shock. The immigrant's encounter with the new land begets a sudden reawakening in his experience. Expectations of self and others are challenged and evaluated according to what he discovers in the cultural surround. The discrepancies become apparent and he must contend with the gap that cultural differences have created within him and outside of him. Immigrants experience feelings that are characteristic of mourning related to the death of a significant other such as "anxiety, sadness, hostility, desperation, a yearning to recover what was lost" (Garza-Guerrero, 1975, p. 418); all which predominate during this stage.

Along with the yearning for the lost objects is a growing sense of discontinuity in identity. The immigrant's experience of the new environment is missing the recognition

that previously confirmed his identity. The degree of discontinuity in the immigrant's identity is directly proportional to the severity of the immigrant's mourning experience. Therefore, an extreme experience of discontinuity in identity would result in a greater yearning for the lost objects of the native land and vice versa (Garza-Guerrero, 1975).

The pivotal points of the reorganization stage consist of the gradual working through of the mourning process and intrapsychic reorganization. Mourning for the native land is considered a requirement for intrapsychic health following immigration and a forerunner to reorganization. In healthy mourning, the immigrant reactivates in fantasy past good object relations and identification mechanisms to help recover aspects of the past. This process ameliorates the mourning process and reaffirms the immigrant's past identity. Selective identifications with the new culture are integrated with those from the past leading to the consolidation of a new identity. "New identity here refers neither to a total engulfment in the new culture nor to the mere sum of bicultural endowments. Neither does new identity mean a stable achievement, but rather denotes a continually re-edited process" (Erikson, 1950, Garza-Guerrero, 1975, p. 425).

A new identity denotes a subjective sense of belonging to the new culture (Garza-Guerrero, 1975). This identification is apparent through the immigrant's growing affinity toward the culture, customs, and food of the new land. The immigrant begins to adopt a taste for the new culture's modes of entertainment and recreation. In other words, the movies, literature, and sports of the new culture start to appeal to him. "The most important vehicle for the emergence of 'we-ness' is however, the acquisition of (or increased idiomatic fluency) a new language" (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1068). In the case of



Mexican immigrants, the emergence or increased use of Spanglish during daily communication is an indicator of this intrapsychic move. Some consider Spanglish as a hybrid language that involves the alternation of Spanish and English in an idiosyncratic way (retrieved January 8, 2010 from <http://www.aulahispanica.com/node/262>).

Saari's (2002) perspective of identity is consistent with Garza-Guerrero's description of identity as an ever-changing entity. A dynamic view of identity is central to her thesis on this concept. Saari (2002) maintains that identity endures continual revision through interaction with others throughout life. However, Saari views identity as being created and revealed through dialogue with others and does not perceive it as being an individual, intrapsychic process. In this theory, identity is defined as a "personal meaning system that is created over the course of the individual's experience with the world and is organized primarily in narrative form" (Saari, in Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996, p. 144). Narrative provides the means for the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity and engenders its complexity.

Identity complexity is defined as the ability to maintain "a coherent sense of self while moving between different environments" (Saari, 2002, p. 76). Immigration creates a situation where an immigrant is exposed to a completely different environment from his primary one. He must be able to function in more than one cultural environment and maintain a sense of self in this process. A successful adaptation is dependent on the degree to which an immigrant can retain a sense of who he is in the midst of this transition. If an immigrant's identity is solid and flexible enough to maintain its integrity, he will be able to "transcontext" (Saari, 2002) or envision the experience of self outside

the context of the native land. Therefore, identity complexity can be thought of as a precursor to the re-invention of self and a new identity.

### **Summary of Theory**

Spirituality and religious experience are culturally-bound phenomena. Although no one religion can define the spirituality of Mexican immigrants, the other-centered nature of religion is consistent with the relational orientation in the Mexican tradition. In this manner, religion is a collective expression of cultural and family beliefs, values, and experiences. It represents a legacy that is transmitted from generation to generation and a point of connection for immigrants seeking a stronger sense of community.

The need for sustaining self object experiences is heightened during the transition of immigration. New immigrants invariably experience a range of emotions associated with being uprooted from their homeland. Self object experiences that provide a sense of belonging, connection, and protection via spiritual means help immigrants to maintain and organize their self experience. Nevertheless, spiritual experiences or a relationship with God is not without any risks to psychological health. Negative experiences in the spiritual realm can have far reaching effects that may leave immigrants vulnerable during their time of need.

Transitional phenomena and transitional objects represent the union experiences that link immigrants with their homeland and the significant others they left behind. They establish a sense of connection to places and people that are far away and make them psychologically accessible to restore equilibrium in times of transition and uncertainty. Transitional phenomena of a spiritual nature are unique in the sense that the

illusion can lead to a highly personalized experience or it can be shared with other believers of the same faith. In this manner, transitional objects can “help bring what has become externally too far a bit nearer” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1062).

The multiple losses within immigration involve a mourning process that is a psychologically similar experience to the grief experience of a child upon separation from his mother. The homeland represents an attachment relationship that has significant repercussions for an immigrant’s felt sense of security and separation from it may be experienced as a potential threat to well-being. Mourning and grief debilitates the immigrant’s identity and involves a sense of identity loss (Parkes, 1986). During the process of reorganization, an immigrant comes to terms with his loss and accepts his new situation and his need to re-invent himself (Ward, 2001; Ward & Styles, 2003). A new identity emerges that does not represent a one time achievement but a continual modification through interaction with others in the new environment. Identity complexity allows the immigrant’s identity to remain intact and facilitates growth for the development of a new identity as a consequence of immigration.

### **Review of Research Literature**

The review of the research literature focuses on different content areas that together present the state of knowledge in the topic of study. The literature on spiritual well-being is a small but growing body of research. The discussion of spiritual well-being focuses on studies that approach this topic as it relates to immigrants, psychiatric disorders, religious variables, and loss. Following this section, research on religion highlights its salutary and injurious potential during bereavement. The next section

focuses on migratory grief and psychological distress. This section reviews findings related to grief and mental health outcomes. Finally, acculturation and mental health is conceptualized through the findings of epidemiological studies on Latinos. A summary of the research synthesizes the major findings and situates this study in the context of past and current knowledge.

### *Spiritual Well-Being in Immigrants*

Research on the spiritual well-being of immigrant populations has been limited. Only two studies have investigated the spiritual well-being within a Latino population. Psychological well-being and spiritual well-being was found to be positively related in a sample of Mexican American Catholics (Ramirez de Leon, 2002). The language of the participants, English or Spanish, a frequently used indicator of acculturation, did not have any bearing on the results. However, the demographic variables of age and income appeared to have influenced the findings. Younger participants of a low socioeconomic status scored lower on spiritual well-being and psychological well-being. The majority of participants were at least 45 years of age and living in the United States for more than 31 years. This sample was taken from a church setting and participants were actively involved in their parish. The participants' high level of religious involvement could partially explain the results. Lopez (2007) studied the relationship of spiritual well-being and demographic variables as predictors of acculturative stress in a Latino sample. No significant relationship was found between spiritual well-being and acculturative stress. The outcome of this study is believed to have been affected by lengthy self-report measures as well as reading ability of participants.

Spiritual well-being was found to have a significant correlation with acculturative stress in a sample of Chinese immigrant college students (Chau, 2006). Participants who reported a high level of spiritual well-being had a lower level of acculturative stress. Respondents who reported weekly church attendance on a regular basis scored higher on spiritual well-being and demonstrated lower scores on acculturative stress when compared to respondents that attended church less than once per week.

Spiritual well-being has been associated to demographic factors in immigrant groups. The effect of acculturation (measured by years of residence in the country or nativity) and age on spiritual well-being in a Chinese sample was examined by Jang (1986). The findings indicated that existential well-being was significantly greater in those participants who had lived in the country for six years or more and participants born in the United States than those who had lived in the United States for five years or less. In addition, research participants who were 26 years old and older had significantly higher existential well-being scores when compared to participants who were 18-25 years old. Participants who were employed full-time had a higher level of spiritual and existential well-being than students; participants who were financially independent experienced greater spiritual and existential well-being than participants who were financially dependent. Jang (1986) believed that the lower level of existential well-being in the less acculturated, defined by a short amount of time living in the country, was related to the experience of loss and grief as a result of immigration. In addition, he recognized that years living in the country may not reflect an accurate measure of acculturation since people acculturate to varying degrees independent of time in the host

society. In this study, language was not an indicator of acculturation since only English-speaking participants were included. The effect for age may have been related to the fact that younger participants were more likely to be students and financially dependent. Younger participants may have experienced low existential well-being compared to older participants due to developmental tasks related to identity and life choices which may have contributed to a higher level of uncertainty.

Spiritual well-being was found to have a significant positive relationship with self-esteem, hardiness, and coping resources in a sample of African immigrants (Kamya, 1994). Further analyses revealed that individuals who participated in the decision to emigrate were found to have greater ability to endure stressors or hardiness. Correspondingly, individuals who were less hardy were more likely to have a greater wish to return to the homeland. Spiritual well-being, religious well-being, a spiritual coping resources scale, and wish to return to the homeland demonstrated a positive relationship. Kamya (1994) concluded that the influence of religion in the life of an immigrant may intensify the attachment to the culture of origin. This study found that the longer immigrants had lived in this country, the higher the mean hardiness scores. The results of this study are interesting and appear to be contradictory. The small sample size (N=52) may contribute to the divergence in the research findings.

A few studies have examined the relationship of spiritual well-being to psychiatric disorders. Spiritual well-being had a significant correlation with psychological and Iranian depressive symptoms in a sample of Iranian immigrants (Kohbod, 1997). Participants with high scores on spiritual well-being had considerably

less psychological and Iranian depressive symptoms. A cross-sectional study investigated the relationship of spiritual well-being and minor psychiatric disorders in medical and law students of Pelota, Brazil (Volcan, Sousa, Mari, & Horta, 2003). Students with low and moderate scores on spiritual well-being demonstrated twice the risk of developing minor psychiatric disorders. In addition, minor psychiatric disorders were almost five times more common in students with low and moderate ranges of spiritual well-being. This study concluded that “spiritual well-being was a protective factor for minor psychiatric disorders and that the results were mostly due to the Existential Well-Being subscale” (Volcan, Sousa, Mari, & Horta, 2003, p. 440).

#### *Spiritual Well-Being and Religious Variables*

Spiritual well-being has been found to be associated to religious variables. A majority of the following studies were conducted on Protestant populations. Individuals who identified themselves as "born again" Christians had a higher religious and existential well-being in comparison to others who did not describe themselves in this manner (Campise, Ellison & Kinsman, cited in Ellison, 1983). Spiritual well-being has been positively associated with beliefs, practices, and worship styles that encourage positive self-affirmation and communion with God and others in the Christian community (Ellison & Economos, cited in Ellison, 1983). Jang (1986) found similar results in a study on Chinese church attendants. Religious commitment and importance of religion were associated to higher levels of spiritual well-being, religious well-being, and existential well-being. Frequency of church attendance was correlated to spiritual well-being and religious well-being but this relationship was not found with existential well-

being. Granstrom (1987) conducted a comparative study of loneliness, religiosity, and spiritual well-being in cancer patients. She found that spiritual well-being had a significant relationship with importance of religion and frequency of church attendance. Individuals who believed that religion was very important in their lives and attended church more than once a week scored higher on spiritual well-being than other participants who differed on these variables. Although the majority of the participants in this sample were Protestants, there was a small representation of Catholic individuals.

#### *Spiritual Well-Being and Correlates of Loss*

Spiritual well-being has been found to be related to correlates of loss such as loss of health and loss of spouse or loved one. Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) studied the relationship between loneliness and spiritual well-being and found a negative relationship in two separate samples: married women and college freshman. They also reported that spiritual well-being had a positive correlation with self esteem, higher social skills, and intrinsic religiosity. Similarly, Miller (1985) replicated the previous studies on loneliness and spiritual well-being in a sample of chronically ill and healthy adults. The results of her study indicated that chronically ill adults had a significantly higher spiritual well-being than the healthy individuals in the study. Interesting correlations were found related to the age and spiritual well-being of chronically ill adults. Those who scored low in loneliness tended to be young with a high level of existential and religious well-being while older women who scored low on loneliness had a high level of religious well-being. Hanna (2000) investigated the effects of divorce on spiritual well-being in a protestant sample of men and women. She found that divorced individuals scored lower



on spiritual well-being than those who were married. Gender did not have a significant influence on the spiritual well-being of divorced individuals. However, married men scored higher on spiritual well-being than married women.

Rottini (2005) investigated attachment style and spiritual well-being on the grief experience of people who had lost a loved one to death within a one year period. The findings revealed that 9.7% of the variance in grief could be explained by adult attachment style. Spiritual well-being explained 12.9% of the variance in grief. The two variables combined explained 36% of the variance in the grief experience. Attachment style and level of spiritual well-being were not found to be statistically significant in the prediction of grief. However, a significant relationship was found between a secure attachment style and a high level of spiritual well-being. Strada-Russo (2006) examined the relationship of spiritual well-being and complicated grief among primary caregivers whose loved one had received hospice services. No significant relationship was found between spiritual well-being and complicated grief. However, a significant difference was found in levels of complicated grief between participants who reported being spiritual and not religious and individuals who reported that they were not spiritual or religious. In this study, self reported spirituality differentiated levels of grief while spiritual well-being as operationalized in the spiritual well-being scale did not. In addition, Strada-Russo (2006) found significant differences on levels of grief between individuals who reported that their spiritual/religious orientation helped them with their loss and participants who reported that it did not.

*Religion and Loss*

Despite the perception that religion is beneficial to the bereaved, empirical studies reveal mixed results. Rosik (1989) found that religiosity with an extrinsic orientation (religion as a means to some other end) increased psychological distress in elderly widows and widowers. In college undergraduates, religiosity with an intrinsic orientation (religion as an end in and of itself) has been found to be indirectly associated to personal growth and directly related to higher distress in the recent death of a close friend (Park & Cohen, 1993). Sherkat and Reed (1992) reported that religious behavior had a selective effect on bereaved individuals by increasing self-esteem but no significant improvement of depression was noted once social support was considered. Frantz, Trolley, and Johl (1996) reported that nearly 80% of their participants found religious and spiritual beliefs helpful in managing their grief. McIntosh, Silver and Wortman (1993) interviewed parents who had lost a child to sudden infant death syndrome on two different occasions following their loss. The results indicated that religious participation and importance of religion were related to finding meaning in the loss and indirectly to greater well-being. Smith (2002) conducted a qualitative study of African American daughters who had lost their elderly mothers. The results revealed that religious beliefs helped adult daughters to cope with the present and nonetheless maintain a positive connection to the deceased. Walsh, King, Jones, Tookman, and Blizard (2002) recruited relatives and close friends of people with a terminal illness in a prospective study in London with follow up after their loss. The results indicated that “people who profess stronger spiritual beliefs seem to resolve their grief more rapidly and completely after the death of a person close to them

than do people with no spiritual beliefs” (p. 5). Brown, Nesse, House, and Utz (2004) tracked the changes in religiosity and grief in a prospective study of widowhood with pre-loss measures and three follow-up interviews afterward. Their study found that although widowed individuals experienced an increase in their religious beliefs and church attendance (compared to controls), the increase was temporary. Widowed participants who experienced an increase in their religious beliefs had lower grief levels; however, there was no significant finding for indicators of well-being such as depression.

#### *Migratory Grief and Psychological Distress*

“Migration from one country to another involves profound losses” (Akhtar, 1999, p. 123). The loss experience of migration has been documented in the literature. Arredondo-Dowd (1981) contends that the emotional experience of loss caused by migration is comparable to the mourning process in the death of a loved one. This assertion has been supported in a number of studies. Schneller (1981) interviewed 13 Soviet-Jewish immigrants in order to investigate whether mourning related to the loss of the homeland parallels the grief reaction at the death of a loved one. The results of her study confirmed and supported the experience of the three phases of mourning as described by Bowlby (1961). In addition, she pointed out that a majority of the immigrants in her study had not completed the grieving process as defined by the literature which suggests that the grief resolution associated with migration may take longer than the mourning of the death of a significant other. Aroian (1990) found results which supported the previous study. She conducted in-depth interviews with 25 Polish immigrants to investigate the sources of psychological distress and well-being of

immigrants at different stages of the resettlement process. Despite indications of overcoming resettlement demands, some of the immigrants in her study continued to demonstrate symptoms related to unresolved grief due to the loss of their homeland. She concluded that “feeling at home represents the endpoint of psychological adaptation to migration and resettlement and requires the dual task of mastering resettlement demands and grieving and resolving the losses left in the homeland” (Aroian, 1990, p. 8). A qualitative study which involved twelve immigrant women from three different cultures found that migratory grief is experienced by immigrants regardless of cultural differences (Emmenegger-Hindin, 1993).

A few studies have examined the grief experience upon migration and the symptoms of psychological distress. Brener (1990) investigated the differences among 264 Mexican immigrant adults in their levels of acculturation, depression, and perceived losses based on social support and number of years living in the United States. Length of time in the United States ranged from one month to 25 years with a mean of five years. The author used the Immigrant’s Losses Questionnaire to measure perceived losses. Depression was measured with the CDS-D scales and the Generalized Contentment Scale. The author used the Los Angeles Epidemiological Catchment Area Acculturation Scale to obtain a measure of acculturation. The results of the Pearson Correlations indicated that the Immigrant’s Losses Questionnaire (ILQ) was significantly correlated with CES-D ( $r=.27$ ) and GCS ( $r=.42$ ). She also found that the ILQ had a significant negative correlation with the Los Angeles Epidemiological Catchment Area Acculturation Scale ( $r=-.34$ ). The findings suggest immigrants with low acculturation are

more likely to experience high levels of depression and loss. Recent immigrants, people who had lived in United States for five years or less reported a higher level of perceived loss. Prudent (1988) detected a positive association between the symptoms of psychological distress and grief in the Haitian immigrants in her study. Participants were interviewed individually using a structured interview schedule that consisted of a Grief Questionnaire which she designed for the study, a modified version of Juffer's Culture Shock Adjustment Inventory, and the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist. Interestingly, the symptoms of psychological distress that were most significant were related to feelings of attachment to the homeland and loved ones left behind and not to the shock of being in an unfamiliar culture. The findings suggested that some demographic variables were significant in relation to grief. Prudent found that the experience of grief decreased the longer immigrants lived in the United States. Those who experienced the most grief were women and immigrants with children and relatives still living in Haiti. Those whose families were with them experienced the least grief. In addition, Prudent found a negative association between frequency of church attendance and grief. Immigrants who attended church regularly in Haiti and in the United States experienced lower levels of grief. Further analysis revealed that frequency of church attendance in Haiti had an inverse relationship with two dimensions of grief: yearning to reconnect and disorganization.

Lakatos (1992) explored the relationship between migratory grief and psychological adjustment in Hispanic immigrants. The measures used in this study included the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D) checklist, and two instruments developed

by the author: the Migratory Grief Inventory (MGI) and the Immigration Factors Inventory. Lakatos performed a factor analysis on the two instruments that she designed for the study. The analysis of the MGI yielded three factors: attachment to homeland, idealization of the United States, and identity discontinuity. Confidant support in the United States, self-esteem, and knowledge of the United States were included in the study as variables of interest. The significant predictors of psychological symptomatology were migratory grief, confidant support, and self-esteem. Post hoc analysis based on the three factors of the MGI suggested that identity discontinuity is the best predictor of psychological symptomatology even after confidant support and self-esteem were considered.

Casado and Leung (2001) examined various factors that contribute to depression among elderly Chinese American immigrants. The length of residence in the United States among participants ranged from one half of a year to 40 years with a mean of 10.86 years. Migratory grief, one of the principal factors in this study, was evaluated through the use of the Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire (MGLQ) created by the first author. In addition to migratory grief, the authors investigated other factors such as acculturation, length of residence in the United States, age, gender, marital status, living arrangement, contact with relatives, relatives in their home country, home country visits, and home country identity that might be associated to depressive symptoms. The results of the regression analysis indicated that four variables had a significant contribution to prediction of total depression score. The four variables were migratory grief, English proficiency, age, and home country visit which accounted for 53.9% of the variance in

the depression score. It is important to note that migratory grief alone contributed to 41.5% of the variance. The findings indicated that immigrants who experienced more intense migratory grief had marked indicators of depression.

Casado and Leung (2001) found results that were significant for the impact of family on migratory grief and loss. Results from t-tests indicated that those who had more visits to relatives in the area had a significantly lower score on depression compared to those who had fewer visits. Also, those who had relatives in the home country scored higher on the measure for depression than those who did not. This finding is consistent with Prudent's (1988) that separation from family due to immigration contributes to migratory grief and psychological distress while having family available may be protective of harmful effects in the migration process.

Ahn (2006) examined the risk factors associated with depression and the somatic manifestations among 234 elderly Korean immigrants. Length of time living in the United States ranged from 1 year to 44 years with a mean of 18 years. This study used a battery of nine self-rating scales that included the Geriatric Depression Scale and the Somatization subscale derived from Symptom Checklist-90. This study found a high level of depression in the sample (34%). Risk factors for depression were age, prior treatment for depression, stressful life events, and migratory grief while perceived health status and perceived satisfaction with social support were found to be protective. Correlation analysis revealed a negative association between migratory grief and years of residence in the United States ( $r = -.15$ ).

*Acculturation and Mental Health*

The complexity of migration engenders a host of simultaneous transitions that reverberate within the psychological, social, economic, and spiritual/religious spheres of experience. The combined affect of these changes and the process of acculturation may present a formidable challenge to the new immigrant. Notwithstanding, scholars contend that acculturation leads to varying degrees of acculturative stress (Hovey & King, 1996) and may “enhance one’s life chances and mental health or virtually destroy one’s ability to carry on” (Berry & Kim, cited in Williams & Berry, 1991, p. 634). Higher levels of acculturative stress can result in depression and suicidal ideation (Hovey, 2000) and an increase in the perception of discrimination (Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000). Some factors may moderate the relationship between acculturative stress, depression, and suicidal ideation. Hovey (2000) studied a community sample of Mexican immigrants enrolled in ESL classes in Los Angeles, California. He found that poor family functioning, ineffective social support and high levels of acculturative stress were correlated with high levels of depression. Positive expectations for the future were associated to lower levels of depression. Most importantly, all three religious variables, namely, perception of religiosity, influence of religion, and church attendance had an inverse relationship with suicidal ideation.

The relationship between acculturation and mental health has been widely investigated in a number of fields including psychiatry, psychology, and sociology. The number of studies conducted on Latinos regarding this topic is significantly greater than empirical investigations on other ethnic minorities to date (Organista, Organista, &



Kurasaki, in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2003). Rogler, Cortes, and Malgady (1991) presented an extensive review of the literature on acculturation and mental health and examined 30 research studies published between 1967 and 1988. Despite a few patterns they discovered in the literature, synthesis of the findings was not viable due to various methodological issues and problematic assumptions that guided measurement. Of foremost importance across studies was the general lack of uniformity in the measurement of acculturation, assessment of mental health was highly variable, and Latino groups were studied without consideration of their diversity. As a result, these studies produced inconsistent results. The overall pattern of findings revealed that 12 studies reported a positive relationship between acculturation and mental health while 13 studies found negative relationships. The remaining studies demonstrated similar inconclusive results. Three studies reported a curvilinear relationship and of two studies positive and negative relationships were demonstrated contingent upon variable used. Recommendations for methodological uniformity were made to point new research efforts in a more productive direction (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991).

A number of epidemiological studies were conducted on Latino populations that heeded the above mentioned precautions and recommendations (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2003). The Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HHANES) represented the first major initiative to study Latino health in the United States. The HHANES was conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics and data was collected from July 1982 to December 1984. This survey included two measures of depression, namely, the Diagnostic Interview Schedule and the

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. All measures were translated into Spanish. This study targeted the three largest ethnic groups among the Latino population in the United States: Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans. The findings of this study suggested a higher rate of depression in Puerto Ricans than in Cuban Americans and Mexican Americans (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2003).

A follow up study by Moscicki, Locke, Rae, and Boyd (1989) expanded on the findings of the HHANES study by focusing on Mexican American adults. It is interesting to note that high levels of depressive symptoms were predicted by the following factors: female sex, low educational achievement, low income, and United States birth with Anglo-oriented acculturation. The authors of this paper indicated that the results of their study were contrary to the findings of previous studies since marginal acculturation (Mexican-oriented) was believed to be associated with greater levels of psychological distress. They found “Mexican-oriented acculturation to be a protective factor” (Moscicki, Locke, Rae, & Boyd, 1989, p. 358).

Kaplan and Marks (1990) conducted a study that examined the relationship of acculturation and psychological distress in Mexican American adults using the HHANES data. They were specifically interested in looking for factors related to age that may mediate the relationship between the above mentioned variables. They found a positive relationship between acculturation and psychological distress for Mexican American young adults (ages 20-30). In older adults, the findings suggested an inverse relationship between acculturation and psychological distress. Their findings were consistent for men

and women. They supported the formulation that young adults of Mexican descent who adopt an Anglo orientation to facilitate economic and social mobility may inadvertently isolate themselves from ethnic bases of support such as family and friends. Alienation may result in an increased vulnerability to psychological distress. They also concluded that Mexican American young adults who are economically mobile may be exposed to discrimination in a variety of social contexts. The relationship of discrimination and depression has been documented in the literature. Finch, Kolody, and Vega (2000) found that the effects of perceived discrimination on depression were highest among adults of Mexican descent when compared to immigrants and transnational migrants.

The Epidemiological Catchment Areas Study (ECA) funded by the National Institute of Mental Health during the 1980's provided an unprecedented perspective of the prevalence of mental health disorders on a national level (Robins & Regier, 1991). The ECA study used the Diagnostic Interview Schedule which is designed for diagnostic purposes of mental disorders and a Health Services Questionnaire to elicit information relevant to the utilization of health and mental health services. This landmark study interviewed more than 19,000 individuals. The ECA collected data from catchment areas situated in five major cities which were partially selected due to differences in their size and characteristics of their residents. Of the minority groups in the United States, Mexican Americans and African Americans were well represented in the ECA study. However, other Latino groups such as Cubans and Puerto Ricans were underrepresented (Robins & Regier, 1991).

Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, and Telles (1987) reported the lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders in relation to acculturation and country of birth among adult Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. This study composed part of the collaborative research projects included in the Epidemiological Catchment Area (ECA) study. Mexican Americans were the target population within this particular site due to the growing number of individuals from this ethnic group in the United States. The acculturation measure was a modified version of the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans and the Behavioral Acculturation Scale. The Diagnostic Interview Schedule was used to assess psychiatric disorders. English and Spanish versions of survey instruments were available to meet respondents' language preferences. The results revealed a strong correlation between level of acculturation and country of birth. Nearly all of the respondents (98.7%) who scored within the low acculturation level were born in Mexico. The sample consisted of slightly more Mexican immigrants (58%) than native born Mexican Americans. A higher level of acculturation was significantly related to a higher lifetime prevalence of phobia, alcohol use/dependence and drug use/dependence even when sex, age, and marital status were held constant. Further analyses compared the lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders among native born Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. "Native-born Mexican Americans, who tended to have high levels of acculturation, had higher lifetime prevalence of disorder (phobia, alcohol abuse or dependence, drug abuse or dependence, as well as major depression and dysthymia) than immigrant Mexican Americans" (Burnam et al., 1987, p. 89). Mexican immigrants

demonstrated a higher risk of drug abuse/dependence at high levels of acculturation.

However, this relationship was not consistent when looking at other disorders.

Lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorder among Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic whites revealed interesting findings in the Los Angeles-ECA. Mexican immigrants had a lower probability of a lifetime diagnosis of major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and drug abuse/dependence than non-Hispanic whites. Native born Mexican Americans also had a lower probability of a diagnosis of drug abuse/dependence than non-Hispanic whites. However, native born Mexican Americans had a higher probability of a diagnosis of dysthymia, phobia, and alcohol abuse/dependence when compared to non-Hispanic whites (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987, p. 96).

The National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) was the first epidemiological survey to include a national probability sample of individuals aged 15 to 54 within 48 states (Kessler et al., 1994). The NCS approximated the national population with a representative number of Hispanics (9.7%), Blacks (11.5%), and non-Hispanic whites (75.3%). The total sample consisted of 8,098 individuals. Diagnostic information was collected using a modified version of the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI), a state of the art structured interview based on the Diagnostic Interview Schedule. The results indicated that almost half of the respondents reported at least one lifetime disorder and close to 30% reported at least one 12-month disorder. Approximately one sixth of the population who had three disorders or more represented more than 50% of all lifetime disorders. Major depressive disorder and alcohol dependence were the most

common psychiatric disorders. Social phobias and simple phobias were the second most reported disorders. However, when considered together, anxiety disorders (17%) were more prevalent than substance abuse disorders (11%) and affective disorders (11%). Consistent with other research, women were more likely to experience higher rates of affective disorders and anxiety disorders whereas men were more likely to have higher rates of substance abuse disorders and antisocial personality disorder (Kessler et al., 1994).

The findings of Kessler et al. (1994) were not consistent with the ECA study in relation to Hispanic mental health. The NCS indicated that Hispanics had a higher rate of affective disorders and comorbidity than non-Hispanic whites. In general, Hispanics were not found to have a lower lifetime/12-month prevalence of any disorder than non-Hispanic whites. The NCS has been criticized for its lack of regard for cultural differences among Latinos. They did not make any distinctions based on national origin but studied Latinos as one homogenous group. In addition, the NCS study did not interview respondents in Spanish. “About half of Latinos participating in prevalence studies elect to do the interview in Spanish which underscores the enormity of this omission” (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2003, p. 154).

The Mexican American Prevalence and Services Survey (MAPSS) compared lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders among Mexican immigrants and native born Mexican Americans to data from the NCS and a population survey from Mexico City (Vega et al., 1998). A total of 3,012 adults were interviewed for this survey. A sample of

urban and rural residents of Fresno County, California ages 18 to 59 were assessed using a modified version of the Composite International Diagnostic Interview. This instrument was translated into Spanish in Puerto Rico; however, it was adapted to reflect cultural and linguistic nuances consistent with Mexican-origin populations. The results of this study were consistent with previous research (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987). Vega et al. found that “the native born lifetime rate for any disorder (48.1%) was twice that of immigrants” (24.9%; p. 778). In addition, immigrants who lived in the country for 13 years or more had an increased risk of experiencing psychiatric disorders although the risk was disproportionately high in the category of drug abuse or dependence. The comparison of prevalence rates among Latinos in Fresno County, the United States population (NCS data), and Mexico City discovered that Mexican immigrants had similar rates of disorder to their compatriots in Mexico City. Mexican immigrants with few years in the United States had lower rates while those with more years in the country had higher rates. In addition, Vega et al. found parallel rates of disorder for native born Mexican Americans in their sample and estimates of the United States population from the NCS data.

Acculturation scholars have proposed two explanations for the current research trends regarding the higher rate of psychiatric disorder in native Mexican Americans than Mexican immigrants despite the socio-cultural stress related to immigration (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987; Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2003; Vega et al., 1998). The selective migration hypothesis states that individuals who migrate to the United States possess a stronger psychological

constitution than their fellow citizens who remain in the country of origin. The social stress hypothesis suggests that native Mexican Americans have lower mental health due to the stress of being from a devalued ethnic minority group in the United States. Native born Mexican Americans may also have higher expectations for their future due to their participation in the mainstream culture and the frustration of these expectations may promote a greater sense of deprivation (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987). The selective migration hypothesis was not supported by Vega et al. (1998) since Mexican immigrants in their sample had comparable rates of disorder to individuals in the Mexico City study. Nevertheless, Vega et al. noted that “Mexican immigrants share the lower risk of their national origin, but acculturation has deleterious effects on many aspects of their health at the population level” (p. 777).

### **Summary of the Research**

The majority of the research on spiritual well-being indicates that it has a positive affect on the mental health of immigrants. Only one study suggested that religious well-being may not facilitate psychological adjustment to the new culture (Kamya, 1994). Despite this trend, demographic factors such as age and years living in the country seem to have some bearing on the spiritual well-being of immigrants. Existential well-being in young adult immigrants (18-25 years old) may vary according to the degree to which they are working through developmental issues of identity. Research also indicates that immigrants who have been living in the country for five years or less may have a lower level of existential well-being although this has been attributed to the experience of loss and grief as a result of immigration.



Spiritual well-being has been associated to religiosity (importance of religion, frequency of church attendance) in several studies. Spiritual well-being and religiosity have been considered beneficial during different circumstances associated with loss and bereavement, respectively. Although religiosity has been known to reduce grief, it may not have the same effect on other indicators of well-being such as depression. Religious orientation (intrinsic versus extrinsic) and type of religious beliefs seem to vary in terms of their associated psychological outcome. Spiritual well-being does not make a distinction based on the type of religious beliefs; however, it has been positively correlated with intrinsic religiosity.

A few studies have found significant effects of migratory grief on the psychological adjustment of immigrants. The studies reviewed provided evidence of the relationship between migratory grief and psychological symptomatology among different immigrant populations. The findings suggested that some demographic variables were significant in relation to grief. Demographic variables such as acculturation, years living in the United States, and separation from family due to immigration were associated with grief and immigrants' psychological adjustment. Studies on migratory grief also supported previous findings regarding the relationship of religiosity (high church attendance) and lower levels of grief (Prudent, 1988).

Recent epidemiological studies on acculturation found interesting results related to psychiatric disorders in native born Mexican Americans versus Mexican immigrants. Native born Mexican Americans with high levels of acculturation tended to experience a higher prevalence of certain disorders during their lifetime when compared to Mexican

immigrants. In addition, Mexican immigrants with lower levels of acculturation seemed to have lower rates of disorder than those with higher levels of acculturation and more years in the country (13 years or more).

The findings of acculturation studies are surprising and do not seem to concur with most of the research on grief. As stated earlier, immigrants with low levels of acculturation and few years in the country tend to have higher levels of grief and less favorable psychological outcomes. Notwithstanding, a negative association between religiosity (spiritual well-being) and grief has been noted and is relevant to this discussion. Based on previous research, we can speculate that religiosity (and spiritual well-being) may lower levels of grief and temporarily reduce loss-related distress in immigrants with low acculturation and few years in the country. However, the accumulated effects of acculturation may take their toll over time on the mental health of the more established, acculturated immigrant resulting in a higher prevalence of psychiatric disorder.

Religion and spirituality play a central role in the cultural resources of many Mexican immigrants. If we consider immigration as a “theologizing experience” and that religious attachments may intensify following immigration then we can speculate that spiritual well-being may moderate the effects of migratory grief (an indicator of psychological distress) on identity and acculturation processes. This study extends current knowledge on the spiritual well-being of Mexican immigrants. It also explores the potential moderator effects of existential well-being and religious well-being and the interaction between these variables and demographic variables of interest (marital status,

years living in the United States, children living in the home, relatives living in the United States) that have been significantly associated to grief. This study provides useful information on spiritual well-being; an aspect of Mexican culture that may be protective to mental health (at least temporarily) and assist immigrants in the process toward a new identity or re-invention of self.

### Conceptual Framework

Baron and Kenny (1986) articulated the distinction between moderator variables and mediator variables. They defined a moderator in the following manner:

A qualitative (e.g. sex) or quantitative (e.g. level of reward) variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent variable or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable...a basic moderator effect can be represented as an interaction between a focal independent variable and a factor that specifies the appropriate conditions for its operation (p. 1174).

The conceptual framework of the study is depicted in Figure 1. This figure displays the effect of the moderator variable (Existential well-being and Religious well-being) on the relationship between the predictor variable (i.e., years living in the United States) and the outcome variable (Migratory Grief).

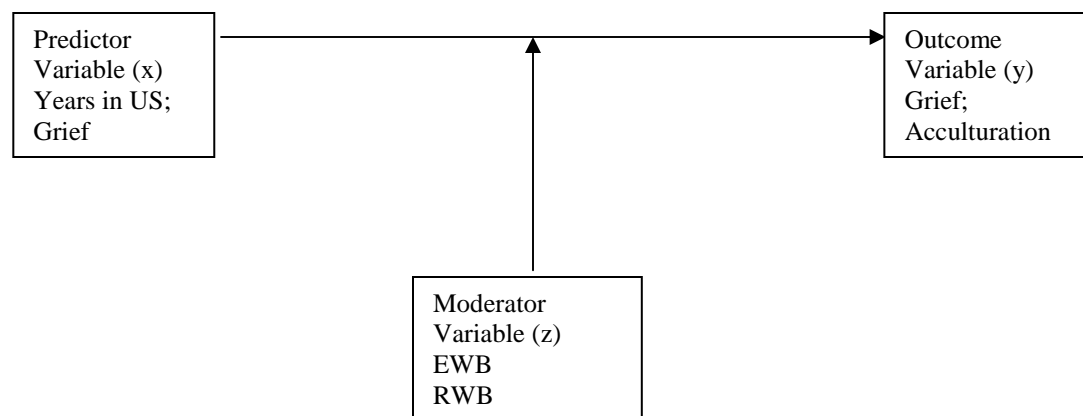


Figure 1. Moderator Effects Model (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004)

## Research Questions

The research questions were based on the theoretical literature and research studies that delineated the challenges to immigrants' psychological adjustment and identity and the restorative potential of spiritual well-being and religion to correlates of loss.

*Research question 1: Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and migratory grief?* Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 1 investigated each construct separately.

- Research question 1.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 1.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss?

*Research question 2: Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of demographic characteristics on migratory grief and loss?* Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 2 explored each construct separately. In addition, there were four demographic variables of interest: 1) marital status; 2) years in the US; 3) children living with participants, and 4) family members other than spouse/children living in the US. The sample size was not large enough to permit testing all four variables in the same model. Thus, research question 2 was broken down into 8 separate research questions, one for

each demographic variable, and for each demographic variable, one for existential well-being and one for religious well-being.

- Research question 2.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the U.S. on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the U.S. on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.5: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.6: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.7: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the U.S. on migratory grief and loss?
- Research question 2.8: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the U.S. on migratory grief and loss?

*Research question 3: Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on acculturation?* Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 3 examined each construct separately. In addition, acculturation consisted of two separate constructs, dominant

society (host culture) and ethnic society (Mexican culture) immersion. Thus research question 3 was broken down into four sub questions:

- Research question 3.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on dominant society immersion?
- Research question 3.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on dominant society immersion?
- Research question 3.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on ethnic society immersion?
- Research question 3.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief on ethnic society immersion?

*Research question 4: Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and self-perceived adaptation?* Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 4 investigated each construct separately.

- Research question 4.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation?
- Research question 4.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study was theory-driven and relational in nature using a quantitative approach to address the aforementioned research questions. A correlational design is appropriate to a study that is explorative since it provides “a way of scanning the field, to consider the possibility of interrelations among a number of pairs of variables, to see if future research into possible causality is worthwhile” (Black, 1999, p. 620). A cross-sectional approach was used to collect information at one point in time due to time and financial limitations.

#### **Population and Sample**

The participants in this study were recruited from two Chicago community sites for adult education. Both sites are situated in communities that are populated with a high number of Mexican immigrants. A convenience sampling strategy was utilized in this research study as adult education classes at these sites facilitated access to the population of interest.

Participants were adult students who attended ESL (English as a Second Language) and GED (taught in Spanish). At the first research site, ESL students from level two and level three were invited to participate in the study. The primary level of ESL at this location focused on literacy. Since students at the primary level were working

on their literacy skills, they were not asked to participate. All GED students who met the criteria for the study were invited to participate. Participants were required to meet two criteria: (a) born in Mexico and (b) 18 years of age or older. Only those that met the criteria for the study were invited to participate. At the second research site, ESL and GED classes were held at two different locations within the community. ESL classrooms were smaller and included students from different instruction levels. All were invited to participate. The philosophy of this site supported a teaching model that strengthened students' literacy skills in their native language while they participated in English language instruction. GED students were also organized into small groups at these locations and all were invited to participate if they met the requirements for the study.

One hundred participants were recruited between the two research sites. Of the number recruited, a total of 85 participants accepted the invitation to join the study. Ten participants were excluded from the study because they did not meet study criteria or complete forms. Seventy-five participants were included in the final analyses.

This researcher was an employee of a non-profit agency and independent affiliate of a well known university in Chicago. This non-profit agency has community outreach programs within various communities in Chicago and Evanston. One of the agency's community outreach programs is based at a Chicago Public School. This site is an elementary school and full service community center open for programming during the evenings and summers for the residents of the community. This researcher was initially introduced to the community center in April 2001 via an 18 month clinical practicum (requirement of the doctoral program at Loyola University) with this agency. This researcher remained involved with the community center by offering pro bono therapy



services for 2.5 years until August 2005 when this researcher was offered a part-time position. This author's affiliation with the community center established trust and created an opportunity to conduct research. Upon approval of the Loyola Institutional Review Board and other cooperating institutions, Mexican immigrants who participated in the community programs were recruited with the support of the community center staff. It is important to note that the study participants were not a clinical sample; this researcher's current or past therapy clients were not included in the study.

The second research site (mentioned above) was sought out for this study in order to recruit additional participants for the sample. Loyola University faculty helped to establish a link to a community based organization whose mission is to raise awareness and promote personal growth through education and social programs. This researcher made contact with the executive director and the coordinator of adult education of this organization in order to explain the purpose of the study and the general implications of the study for the population of interest. After a series of meetings, the organization agreed to support this research study by granting permission to recruit participants among the students that attend adult education classes.

### **Instruments**

Four instruments were used to collect the data for this study. Participants were asked to fill out the Spanish versions of the following instruments: demographic form (see Appendix A), the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire, and the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale. The demographic form asked questions that included the following personal information: age, place of birth, gender, marital status, if they have children, do their children live with them, how

many family members were already living in the United States when they emigrated from Mexico, who they live with, how long they have been living in the United States, the main reason for coming to the United States, employment status, family monthly income, level of education, how well they think they are learning English, how they compare their economic situation to when they first moved to the United States, how they think they are adapting to life in the United States, what religion they identify with, how important is religion in their life, how frequently they attend church, and how frequently they partake of individual spiritual practices.

#### *The Spiritual Well-Being Scale*

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) was used to measure spiritual well-being. This scale was recommended as a “general indicator of personality integration and resultant well-being” (Ellison & Smith, 1991, p. 35). Based on Moberg (1984), this scale measures two distinct but overlapping dimensions, religious well-being and existential well-being (as cited in Ellison & Smith, 1991). The vertical dimension or religious well-being gives an assessment of well-being in relation to God or a Higher Power. The horizontal dimension or existential well-being provides an assessment of a sense of purpose and life satisfaction.

The SWBS has 20 items and its responses are designed on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Responses to the items are assigned a numerical value ranging from 1 to 6. Ten of the scale's items are made to measure the horizontal dimension, existential well-being. The vertical dimension, religious well-being is measured by the remaining items. Three scores can be obtained from the Spiritual Well-Being Scale: existential well-being, religious well-being, and

spiritual well-being. The score for the existential well-being sub-scale can be obtained by adding up the total for the even numbered items. The religious well-being sub-scale score can be obtained by adding up the odd numbered items. A total scale score for spiritual well-being can be obtained by adding up the even and odd numbered items. This study considered existential well-being and religious well-being separately, therefore, the total scale score was not used. The range for the existential well-being sub-scale and the religious well-being sub-scale falls between a score of 10-60.

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale is the most widely used measure of subjective and spiritual well-being. Bufford, Paloutzian, and Ellison (1991) published initial work that has been done on norms for the scale. They reported the means and standard deviations on several samples including religious groups, college students, counseling patients, and others (among those were also non-religious groups). They drew a number of conclusions that are relevant to the present study. The SWBS needs to be interpreted with caution based on differences among groups. Currently, there is only one study that provides normative data for Mexican American Catholics (Ramirez de Leon, 2002), however, this sample was taken from church communities. In general, religious groups tend to score higher than non-religious groups. In addition, religious groups may score higher on religious well-being since it refers to questions about God. However, both groups may score about the same in terms of existential well-being.

Test-retest reliability has been promising in research with the SWBS. In three samples, test-retest reliability was over .85 after one, four, and ten weeks (Ellison; Upshaw as re-analyzed by Brinkman, as cited in Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991). The instrument and the subscales have also suggested high reliability. The internal

consistency in seven samples was above .84 (Brinkman; Kirschling & Pittman; Paloutzian & Ellison, as cited in Bufford et al.). Overall, the current literature suggests that the SWBS has good reliability.

“A factor analysis of the SWBS revealed that the items loaded on two factors. All the RWB items loaded on the first factor, and several of the EWB items clustered on the second factor” (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991, p. 57). However, the eigenvalue of the remaining EWB items were not higher than 1.0 (Ellison; Ledbetter, Smith, Vosler-Hunter, & Chew, as cited in Bufford et al.). In general, the SWBS and its subscales have a positive association with indicators of well-being such as good emotional adjustment and an inverse relationship with ill physical health and emotional correlates of poor mental health (Brinkman; Brinkman & Bufford; Moody, as cited in Bufford et al.) .

Bruce (1996) provided preliminary validation of the Spanish translation of the SWBS (see Appendix B). A convenience sample of 110 participants from the Pacific Northwest was administered this scale. The sample consisted of Spanish-speaking people from 6 religious groups. This study measured the consistency across test forms (English SWBS and Spanish SWBS) through a subsample of bilingual participants. On the full scales, the results ranged between .83 and .91. The correlation between the English SWBS and Spanish SWBS in the bilingual group was significant at .92 (Bruce, 1996, p. iii).

#### *The Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire*

The Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire (MGLQ; Casado & Leung, 2001) measured the experience of migratory grief and loss. This questionnaire is based on the symptoms of grief and bereavement identified by Zisook, Devaul, and Click (1982), the

Migratory Grief Inventory (Lakatos, 1992) and The Grief Questionnaire (Prudent, 1988). The MGLQ is a 20 item scale that is designed to measure the experience of grief and loss related to immigration. Responses to this questionnaire are organized on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Scores on this scale can range from 0-60 with higher scores indicating more intense migratory grief. The reliability of this questionnaire is good with an alpha coefficient of .94. "All three factors of the MGLQ (searching and yearning, nostalgia, and disorganization) have significant correlations with the total MGLQ, showing content validity of the instrument" (Casado & Leung, 2001, p. 14).

Casado (2002) performed a factor analysis of the MGLQ with data on Chinese older adults. She found three factors in the scale: 1) searching and yearning, 2) disorganization, and 3) nostalgia which were the concepts used in developing the scale (Casado & Leung, 2001). B. L. Casado (personal communication, July 9, 2006) informed this researcher that another student who used this scale with Korean older adults found different factors. This study treated grief as a single construct because the two previous studies did not find the same factors. In addition, as a single construct, grief has good internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

The MGLQ first developed in English was translated into Spanish (see Appendix C) for this study by a Mexican born male that is employed as an interpreter. Back translation was conducted by a woman of Mexican heritage who attained her undergraduate degree from a well-known institution of higher education in Mexico. The English and the Spanish versions were compared and all items were retained. Pre-testing was conducted to ensure the accuracy of translation and validity of the instrument before arriving at the final version (Casado & Leung, 2001, p. 14). The Spanish version was

administered to two Mexican immigrant women who have lived in this country for less than eight years. Based on their responses, a few items on the questionnaire were clarified.

#### *The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale*

The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS; Stephenson, 2000) was the instrument used to measure acculturation. The present study conceptualizes acculturation as a multidimensional construct. The SMAS measures the following dimensions as a function of acculturation: behavior, knowledge, and language. Acculturation is also considered a bilinear process which means that change can occur within the culture of origin and within the host culture. Involvement in one culture does not preclude or decrease involvement in the other culture. As a result, a number of acculturative positions are possible which include assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1980). The SMAS assess acculturation by measuring the degree of immersion in the culture of origin and the host culture.

The SMAS has 32 items and is designed to measure behavior and attitudes relevant to acculturation across different ethnic groups. The responses on this scale are organized on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The SMAS consists of two subscales. One subscale measures degree of immersion in the dominant society (DSI), the other measures degree of immersion in the ethnic society (ESI). The DSI subscale consists of 15 items. Scores can range from 15 to 60. The ESI subscale consists of 17 items. Scores can range from 17 to 68.

The SMAS used three studies for the development, refinement, and examination of its psychometric properties (Stephenson, 2000). The last study evaluated the factor

structure with a new sample and assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of the SMAS compared to two well known and reliable measures of acculturation, the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) and the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS; Marin & Gamba, 1996). Participants were recruited from communities in the northeast and a large public university in the same area. Participants were recruited to represent a diversity of ethnic groups and demographic factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and levels of education. The results indicated a strong factor structure across groups. “Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the 2-factor model provided a close approximation to the observed data. Studies indicated high reliability and validity indexes” (Stephenson, 2000, p. 77). Although other instruments have been designed for use with Mexican Americans (ARSMA-II and BAS), this scale was selected because it appears to be sensitive to acculturation processes for recent immigrants (Stephenson, 2000). In addition, the SMAS was selected for its ease of use with 32 items versus 50 items on the ARSMA-II. This instrument measures more than one dimension of acculturation compared to the BAS that uses language as its sole indicator of acculturation.

The SMAS first developed in English was translated into Spanish (see Appendix D) for this study by a man of Mexican origin that is employed as an interpreter. Back translation was conducted by a woman of Mexican heritage who attained her undergraduate degree from a well-known institution of higher education in Mexico. The English and the Spanish versions were compared and all items were retained. Pre-testing was conducted to ensure the accuracy of translation and validity of the instrument before

arriving at the final version (Casado & Leung, 2001, p. 14). The Spanish version was administered to two Mexican immigrant women who had lived in this country for less than eight years. Based on their responses, a few items on the questionnaire were clarified.

#### *The Self Perceived Adaptation Scale*

Research question four in this study measured the participants' self perceived adaptation as the dependent variable. Therefore, an adaptation score was created and measured on a continuous measurement scale. The adaptation score was derived by computing the average of questions 16, 17, 18 and 20 from the demographic form. A lower score indicated a study participant whose perception is that they were less adapted to the United States while a higher score indicated a study participant whose perception is that they were better adapted to the United States.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedures were the same at both research sites. During non-instruction time, this researcher visited ESL and GED classrooms and made an announcement in Spanish to advance recruitment efforts for the study (see Appendix E). As a part of the recruitment process, this researcher explained that spiritual well-being is an important factor in the lives of many immigrants who are adjusting to this country. This researcher stated that this study was designed to gather information on spiritual well-being as a factor in the psychological adaptation to the United States. Adult education students were informed that the research was being conducted as part of a requirement for a Doctor of Philosophy in the social work program at Loyola University of Chicago. This researcher pointed out that information will be collected via



questionnaires translated into Spanish. Students were assured that their ESL/GED teacher would not participate in the data collection process and that the researcher would be present to answer any questions or concerns regarding the study or the questionnaires. This researcher explained in Spanish that participation in the study was voluntary and that the study was not affiliated with any community based agency, church, their degree-granting academic institution or any programs within. Participants were assured that their identities and information will be kept confidential. This researcher stated that as an incentive, participants would be compensated with a \$5 giftcard to Target for participation in the study.

Prior to distributing research packets, this researcher verbally reviewed the Spanish consent form (see Appendix F; Scharron del Rio, 2005) with participants. They were not required to sign the consent form. Return of the completed measures implied consent. Adult education students who were interested in participating in this study were asked to raise their hands and they were given a research packet to review and complete. Participants who completed forms were instructed to return research packets to an identified collection box. Adult education students who declined to participate were asked to leave the classroom temporarily. All of the above mentioned information was communicated in Spanish because it is the native language of the research participants.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Quantitative research involves a myriad of ethical issues. The informed consent process is an external indicator of the inherent power difference between the researcher and the participants (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000). It is an act that reminds this researcher that despite the similarities with participants there are irremediable differences

that should not be glossed over. One of the temptations of a culturally-similar researcher is the false belief that there is less distance between themselves and the participants because of shared cultural understandings. This illusion can cloud a researcher's judgment of the manner in which her position demands a continual evaluation of her role. This is especially important because participants may inadvertently respond to the power imbalance with deference and feel obligated to participate in the study. This researcher consciously applied a sensitive approach to minimize this dynamic whenever possible. Participants were repeatedly reminded of their right to decline to participate in the study and that there would not be any adverse consequences to them if they decided not participate.

Standards for informed consent provided a useful guideline to safeguard the emotional well-being of participants. Participants were made fully aware of their right to decline to participate in this research study. Participants were informed of their right to confidentiality which will protect their identity and alter any identifying information in order to ensure the privacy of the information given during the study. Special procedures were followed to ensure informed and voluntary consent. Participants were part of a vulnerable population due to their recent arrival in the United States. They were likely experiencing the psychological strain involved in the process of adaptation and vulnerable to enticing financial rewards. They were most likely unfamiliar with research protocol and their right to confidentiality and informed consent. In addition, their lack of English proficiency placed them in a vulnerable position to negotiate things independently. As a result, this researcher explained information relevant to informed consent in Spanish, the native language of the participants. This researcher reviewed the

consent form verbally with the participants. For purposes of clarification, this researcher reviewed the consent form verbally as many times as needed in order to address any questions or concerns. Individual help was offered to participants who needed more assistance in this process.

Participants were informed of any foreseeable risks associated to their participation in this study. The sensitive and private nature of spirituality exposed participants to psychological risks associated with disclosure of this type of information. Negative experiences with religion may have been elicited through participation in this research. The level of risk involved is an idiosyncratic variable that could range considerably depending on the participant's life experience. The focus on immigration may have created an emotional reaction due to the losses incurred during this life change. Participants may have been in different stages of the grieving process and experienced its effects accordingly. Many recent immigrants experience some level of nostalgia in response to discussion of their homeland. Therefore, it is probable that the participants had at least a mild emotional reaction to questions of this nature. This researcher was mindful of the psychological risks associated with the topic of spiritual well-being and immigration which could be unpleasant or overwhelming for some participants. Thus, this researcher remained with the participants to allow a period of time to de-brief. This researcher, a LCSW trained clinician, also made herself available for individual consultation immediately following the group administration.

The participants in this study varied in their legal status. This researcher did not ask participants about their legal status. Nevertheless, undocumented immigrants live in a precarious situation in the United States. They are understandably threatened by

situations that could jeopardize their continued residence in this country and subject them to deportation. Participation in a research study on Mexican immigrants represented a legal, social, and economic risk to the well-being of the participants and their families despite the fact that information on their legal status was not collected. The situation warranted special provisions to ensure their anonymity outside of the research context. Participants' identities were safeguarded as they were not required to sign their names on consent forms. In this manner, participants were protected from any unintended consequences of participation in this research. In all cases, consent forms were kept separate from demographic questionnaires and scales, therefore, the identity of participants remained anonymous.

Specific procedures were utilized to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants. This researcher distributed coded forms in manila envelopes containing a cover letter, demographic questionnaire, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire, and the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale. Each packet was assigned an identification number. The identification number included the date and participant number. For example, an identification number of 1001-01 denoted Oct. 1, first participant. Following this process, any identifying information was removed from the data and stored separately. Data was stored in a locked file cabinet to ensure its confidentiality. Only this researcher and her dissertation chair had access to the raw data. At the conclusion of the study, the data was stored in a secure, locked location for a specific amount of time in accordance with the professional and legal standards of the field of social work. Presentations or publications will manage issues of

confidentiality in a discrete manner. Identifying information will be disguised so as to maintain the anonymity of participants.

### **Data Analysis**

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS for Windows (SPSS 17.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). All of the analyses were two-tailed with a 5% alpha level. Demographic characteristics of the study sample were described using the mean, standard deviation and range for continuous scaled variables and frequency and percent for categorical variables. Categorical variables in this study were dichotomous when later used for the multivariate analyses. For example, there were too few study participants in the "Cohabiting" and "Separated" categories of marital status to analyze. Therefore, marital status was recoded as: 0=Single, or Cohabiting, or Separated; 1=Married. Similarly, there were not enough participants with either 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 children living with them. Therefore, "number of children living with you" was recoded as: 0=None, or 1=1 or more. Also, the survey contained several questions asking whether or not various family members immigrated with them, such as spouse, children, parents etc. There were too few study participants that immigrated with each type of relative, so those variables were combined into a single measure as: 0=Did not immigrate with any relatives, or 1=immigrated with one or more family members.

Research questions 1.1 and 1.2 examined the relationship between existential well-being and migratory grief and religious well-being and migratory grief. These relationships were investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation.

Research questions 2.1 through 2.8 tested the moderator effects of existential well-being and religious well-being in the relationship between demographic variables

and migratory grief. Multiple linear regression analysis was selected to test for moderator effects. Separate analyses were conducted for existential well-being and religious well-being. The predictor and moderator were entered into the regression equation first followed by the interaction of the predictor and the moderator (Holmbeck, 1997). The interaction term was of primary importance in this analysis. If the interaction term was statistically significant then it was concluded that existential well-being and religious well-being moderated the effect of the demographic variable on migratory grief and loss.

Research questions 3.1 through 3.4 tested the moderator effects of existential well-being and religious well-being in the relationship between migratory grief and loss and acculturation. Multiple linear regression analysis was selected to test for moderator effects. Separate analyses were conducted for existential well-being and religious well-being. The predictor and moderator were entered into the regression equation first followed by the interaction of the predictor and the moderator (Holmbeck, 1997). The interaction term was of primary importance in this analysis. If the interaction term was statistically significant then it was concluded that existential well-being and religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on acculturation.

Research questions 4.1 and 4.2 investigated the relationship between existential well-being and self perceived adaptation and religious well-being and self perceived adaptation. These relationships were investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine spiritual well-being and its relationship to migratory grief and acculturation in a sample of Mexican immigrants. Spiritual well-being fulfills the need for transcendence or the “capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one’s self and the immediate” (Ellison, 1983, p. 332). “Grief is the process that allows us to let go of that which was and be ready for that which is to come” (Rando, as cited in Casado & Leung, 2001, p. 10). The concept of migratory grief is in agreement with the above stated definition as it implies a process of growth that is accomplished through the integration of the loss into the new situation. Acculturation is considered a bilinear process which means that change can occur within the culture of origin and within the host culture. Involvement in one culture does not preclude or decrease involvement in the other culture (Berry, 1980).

This chapter presents an overview of the results for this study. First, this author reports demographic information of the sample. Next, descriptive data for the analyzed variables are summarized. Finally, results specific to each research question are outlined.

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

During the data collection phase, 85 people agreed to participate in the study. Of those, ten participants were excluded from the study because they did not meet the stated criteria or complete one of the instruments or demographic form. Therefore, the total

sample size was N=75. The assumptions for multiple linear regression were evaluated by visual inspection of P-P plots and scatter plots. There were no indications of non-normality, extreme outliers, non-linearity or heteroscedasticity.

Demographic characteristics of the sample including age, children, years living in the United States, education, and religion are discussed in this section. Gender and marital status data are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Gender and Marital Status Data for Sample*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	28	37.3
Female	43	57.3
Total	71	94.7
Missing	<u>4</u>	<u>5.3</u>
	<u>75</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	23	30.7
Married	40	53.3
Cohabiting	7	9.3
Separated	3	4.0
Total	73	97.3
Missing	<u>2</u>	<u>2.7</u>
	<u>75</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

In summary, there were more female than male participants in this study. Gender was unknown for four participants. Slightly more than half of the participants were



married. The next most frequent marital status category identified in this sample was single. The majority of participants (73%) reported that they had children. Only 22% of participants reported that they did not have children. The participants were asked how many children they had and how many of their children lived with them. A smaller part of the sample (13%) indicated that they had only one child. Slightly over 40% stated that they had 2-3 children while 14% said they had 4 or more children. Of the sample, 17% reported that they did not have any children living with them and 12% indicated that they had one child living with them. Over 40% reported that 2-3 children were living with them. A smaller part of the sample (9%) stated that they had four or more children living with them. Overall, 64% of the sample stated that they had children living with them.

The average age of the participants was 35.4 ( $SD=11.1$ ) and the range was 18 to 61 years of age. The median age of the participants was 35 years old.

All of the study participants were immigrants from Mexico. Almost half of the sample (46.7%) did not indicate the specific state where they originated from in Mexico although a slight percentage (12%) stated that they were from Michoacan. On average, participants had about eight family members ( $SD=15.3$ ) living in the United States when they emigrated from Mexico. More than half of the sample (56%) reported that they immigrated to the United States for economic reasons. A smaller part of the sample (28%) indicated that they came to the United States to join family.

The average length of time that participants had lived in the United States was 12.5 years ( $SD=7$ ) and the range was 2 to 34 years. The median value for the number of years since immigration to the United States was 11 years.

Participants were asked to indicate their highest grade completed. In this study, the highest grade completed for almost 90% of the sample fell within the range of a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education or less. Of the sample, 27% completed the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 19% completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 9% completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and the remaining part fell somewhere within the range stated above. A greater part of the sample (77%) indicated that they were employed. The mean family monthly income was slightly over \$1800 for 76% of the sample. Only 9% of the sample indicated that between 1-2 people depended on the family monthly income. When taken together, a total of 61% of the sample stated that between 3-5 people depended on the reported family monthly income. Of the sample, 11% indicated that six or more people depended on the family monthly income that was reported. Some of the participants (19%) did not provide this information on the demographic form.

As part of the demographic form, participants were asked to self-identify with a particular religion. Of the participants, 80% identified with the Catholic religion, 5.3% reported being of the Protestant religion, 2.7% identified themselves as Jehovah's Witness, 2.7% reported being with the Church of Latter Day Saints, 1.3% identified with the Seventh Day Adventists, 2.7% identified with some other religion (not indicated on the demographic form) and 5.3% of participant responses were missing. Participants were asked to indicate how important religion was in their life on a four point scale. Fifty-three percent reported that religion was very important in their life. When asked how important spiritual and religious beliefs were in their daily life, 53% of the sample responded that these beliefs were very important in their life. When asked how frequently they attend church, 10.7% indicated that they never attend church, 25.3% indicated that they attend

church less than once per month, 16% of the participants attend church one to two times per month, 30.7% of the sample said they attend church once per week, 12% reported that they attend church more than once per week and 5.3% of participant responses were missing. Participants were asked how often they partake in individual spiritual practices (i.e., praying, meditation), 13.3% of participants stated that they never partake in individual spiritual practices, 12% of participants stated that they partake in individual spiritual practices less than once per month, 8% of the sample reported that they partake in individual spiritual practices one to two times per month, 18.7% indicated that they partake in individual spiritual practices once per week, 40% of the sample in this study partake in individual spiritual practices more than once per week, and 8% of participant responses were missing.

### **Descriptive Data for Scales**

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) has two subscales: Existential well-being (EWB) and Religious well-being (RWB). This study examined these two subscales separately; it did not combine them for a full scale score. The Existential well-being subscale provides a measure of well-being as it relates to a sense of meaning and purpose. The Religious well-being subscale examines well-being in connection to a relationship with God or a Higher Power. The highest score for both the Existential and Religious well-being subscale is 60. Descriptive statistics for the Existential well-being subscale and Religious well-being subscale for this sample are presented in Table 2. Spiritual Well-Being Scale Scores from the Ramirez de Leon (2002) study are presented in Table 3. Although the scores from this sample and the Ramirez de Leon sample can not be directly compared due to differences between these groups, the Ramirez de Leon sample

scored higher on the religious well-being sub-scale. Both samples scored within the same range on the existential well-being sub-scale.

**Table 2**

*Existential Well-Being and Religious Well-Being Sub-scale Scores*

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing				
Existential Well-Being (EWB)	70	5	45.5921	7.57936	26.00	60.00
Religious Well-Being (RWB)	67	8	47.0083	7.56163	27.78	60.00

**Table 3**

*Spiritual Well-Being Scale Scores*

Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	X	SD
SWB	124	64	120	102.81	13.918
RWB	124	29	60	53.06	7.335
EWB	124	29	60	46.83	7.780

*Source:* Data from Ramirez de Leon, 2002.

Descriptive statistics for the other analyzed variables (Migratory Grief and Loss, Acculturation: Degree of immersion in dominant society-DSI, Acculturation: Degree of immersion in ethnic society-ESI, and Adaptation) are presented in Table 4. Examination of the mean scores reveals different trends among these variables. Participants scored within the moderate range in the degree of immersion in the dominant society (DSI) and demonstrated a very high score in the ESI or degree of immersion in the ethnic society. A moderate score in the DSI subscale would indicate that the immigrants in the study have

interaction with the cultural preferences, language, and mainstream society. A high score in the ESI subscale or degree of immersion in the ethnic society indicates that immigrants in this study are highly identified and involved in the Mexican culture. According to the MGLQ, participants reported moderate scores indicating definite levels of grief and loss related to immigration. Adaptation scale scores were in the moderate range and suggested that study participants' perception was that they were adapting relatively well to the United States.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for MGLQ, DSI, ESI, and Adaptation Scale*

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing				
Migratory Grief and Loss (MGLQ)	67	8	31.9851	10.14515	15.00	54.00
Acculturation: Degree of immersion in dominant society (DSI)	65	10	33.4769	6.33223	20.00	45.00
Acculturation: Degree of immersion in ethnic society (ESI)	67	8	62.5224	5.43099	35.00	68.00
Adaptation	68	7	2.2279	.57422	1.00	3.75

**Research Question Results**

The research questions were analyzed using the data collected with the research instruments and the statistical analyses as described in the methods section. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance in all of the analyses.

Research question 1: Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and migratory grief and loss?

Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 1 investigated each construct separately.

Research question 1.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss?

Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to determine the association between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss. Table 5 shows there was not a statistically significant relationship between migratory grief and existential well-being. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest there is a correlation between migratory grief and existential well-being.

**Table 5**

***Correlation between MGLQ, EWB and RWB***

		Existential Well-Being	Religious Well-Being
Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire (MGLQ)	Pearson Correlation	-.07	-.09
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.56	.47
	N	65	62

Research question 1.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss?

Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to determine the association between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss. Table 5 also shows there was not a statistically

significant relationship between migratory grief and religious well-being. Consequently, there is no evidence to suggest there is a correlation between migratory grief and religious well-being.

Research question 2: Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of demographic characteristics on migratory grief and loss?

Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 2 explored each construct separately. In addition, there were four demographic variables of interest: 1) marital status; 2) years living in the United States; 3) children living with participants; and 4) family members other than spouse/children living in the United States. Due to a small sample size, research question 2 was broken down into eight separate research questions, one question for each demographic variable, and for each demographic variable, one question for existential well-being and one question for religious well-being.

Research question 2.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 6**

***Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and Marital Status on MGLQ (N=65)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	41.45	11.99	
	Married	-8.48	16.11	-.42
	Existential Well-Being	-0.17	0.26	-.13
	MarriedExten	0.14	0.35	.33

Table 6 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Marital status, existential well-being, and the interaction between marital status and existential well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 61)=0.38$ ;  $p=0.77$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between marital status and existential well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.69$ . Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 7**

***Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and Marital Status on MGLQ (N=62)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	40.35	13.44	
	Married	-1.61	18.53	-.08
	Religious Well-Being	-0.14	0.28	-.09
	MarriedRelig	-0.01	0.39	-.04

Table 7 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Marital status, religious well-being, and the interaction between marital status and religious well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 58)=0.42$ ;  $p=0.74$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between marital status and religious well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.97$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss.



Research question 2.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 8**

*Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and Length of Time in US on MGLQ (N=60)*

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	40.29	19.18	
	How long ago did you immigrate to the United States (years)?	-0.34	1.38	-.22
	Existential Well-Being	-0.10	0.43	-.07
	ResideExisten	0.00	0.03	.07

Table 8 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Length of time living in the United States, existential well-being, and the interaction between length of time living in the United States and existential well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 56)=0.62$ ;  $p=0.61$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between length of time living in the United States and existential well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.95$ . Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 9*****Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and Length of Time in US on MGLQ (N=57)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	31.04	21.66	
	How long ago did you immigrate to the United States (years)?	0.65	1.68	.41
	Religious Well-Being	0.11	0.46	.07
	ResideRelig	-0.02	0.03	-.64

Table 9 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Length of time living in the United States, religious well-being, and the interaction between length of time living in the United States and religious well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 53)=0.92$ ;  $p=0.44$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between length of time living in the United States and religious well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.58$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.5: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 10*****Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and Children on MGLQ (N=57)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	32.96	16.35	
	Children	1.39	19.13	.06
	Existential Well-Being	0.01	0.35	.01
	ChildrenExisten	-0.09	0.41	-.19

Table 10 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Having children living at home, existential well-being, and the interaction between having children living at home and existential well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 53)=0.32$ ;  $p=0.81$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between having children living at home and existential well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.82$ . Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.6: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 11*****Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and Children on MGLQ (N=54)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	34.45	17.43	
	Children	9.96	21.16	.40
	Religious Well-Being	-0.02	0.38	-.01
	ChildrenRelig	-0.27	0.45	-.54

Table 11 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Having children living at home, religious well-being, and the interaction between having children living at home and religious well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 50)=0.72$ ;  $p=0.55$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between having children living at home and religious well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.55$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.7: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 12*****Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and Family on MGLQ (N=63)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	83.99	36.66	
	Family	-48.11	37.61	-1.16
	Existential Well-Being	-0.93	0.72	-.68
	FamilyExisten	0.85	0.74	1.10

Table 12 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Having other family members living in the United States, existential well-being, and the interaction between having other family members living in the United States and existential well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 59)=0.92$ ;  $p=0.44$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between having other family members living in the U.S. and existential well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.26$ . Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.8: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

**Table 13**

***Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and Family on MGLQ (N=61)***

	Variable	B	Std. Error	B
1	(Constant)	157.56	67.40	
	Family	-121.86	68.03	-2.94
	Religious Well-Being	-2.74	1.52	-1.84
	FamilyRelig	2.66	1.54	3.52

Table 13 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Having other family members living in the United States, religious well-being, and the interaction between having other family members living in the United States and religious well-being did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in migratory grief and loss scores,  $F(3, 57)=1.40$ ;  $p=0.25$ . The

standardized beta value for the interaction between having other family members living in the United States and religious well-being was not statistically significant,  $p=0.089$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 3: Does spiritual well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on acculturation?

Before we look at whether spiritual well-being moderates the effect of migratory grief and loss on acculturation, we needed to determine whether there is a relationship between these two variables. Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to determine the association between migratory grief and loss and acculturation-DSI and acculturation-ESI. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $r=.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for the relationship between migratory grief and loss and acculturation-degree of immersion in ethnic society (ESI). This finding suggests that immigrants who experience a higher level of migratory grief and loss tend to have a higher degree of immersion in the Mexican culture. Near significance was found with acculturation-DSI ( $r = -.22$ ).

Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 3 examined each construct separately. In addition, acculturation consisted of two separate constructs, dominant society immersion and ethnic society immersion. Thus research question 3 was broken down into four sub questions.

Research question 3.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion?

**Table 14****Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and MGLQ on Acculturation-DSI (N=62)**

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	57.35	15.78	
	Existential Well-Being	-0.44	0.34	-.51
	Migratory Grief and Loss	-0.84	0.49	-1.36
	ExistenGrief	0.02	0.01	1.25

Table 14 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Existential well-being, migratory grief and loss, and the interaction between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in dominant society immersion,  $F(3, 58)=1.55$ ;  $p=0.21$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss was not statistically significant,  $p=0.15$ . Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion.

Research question 3.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion?

**Table 15****Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and MGLQ on Acculturation-DSI (N=59)**

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	30.77	17.60	
	Religious Well-Being	0.14	0.36	.16
	Migratory Grief and Loss	0.26	0.52	.45
	ReligGrief	-0.01	0.01	-.73

Table 15 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Religious well-being, migratory grief and loss, and the interaction between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in dominant society immersion,  $F(3, 55)=1.54$ ;  $p=0.21$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss was not statistically significant,  $p=0.44$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion.

Research question 3.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion?

**Table 16**

*Multiple Regression Analysis for EWB and MGLQ on Acculturation-ESI (N=63)*

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	76.84	12.71	
	Existential Well-Being	-0.38	0.27	-.54
	Migratory Grief and Loss	-0.52	0.40	-1.04
	ExistenGrief	0.01	0.01	1.35

Table 16 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Existential well-being, migratory grief and loss, and the interaction between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in ethnic society immersion,  $F(3, 59)=1.78$ ;  $p=0.16$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss was not statistically significant,  $p=0.12$ .



Therefore, it was concluded that existential well-being does not moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion.

Research question 3.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion?

**Table 17**

*Multiple Regression Analysis for RWB and MGLQ on Acculturation-ESI (N=60)*

	Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$
1	(Constant)	49.39	15.19	
	Religious Well-Being	0.21	0.31	.28
	Migratory Grief and Loss	0.46	0.45	.92
	ReligGrief	-0.01	0.01	-.77

Table 17 displays the beta values, their standard errors, and the standardized betas for this regression analysis. Religious well-being, migratory grief and loss, and the interaction between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in ethnic society immersion,  $F(3, 56)=1.08$ ;  $p=0.36$ . The standardized beta value for the interaction between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss was not statistically significant,  $p=0.41$ . Therefore, it was concluded that religious well-being does not moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion.

Research question 4: Is there a relationship between spiritual well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

Since spiritual well-being consists of two constructs, existential well-being and religious well-being, research question 4 investigated each construct separately.

Research question 4.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to determine the relationship between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation. Table 18 shows there was not a statistically significant relationship between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest there is a correlation between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation.

**Table 18**

*Correlation between EWB, RWB and Adaptation*

		Existential Well-Being	Religious Well-Being
Adaptation	Pearson Correlation	-.10	.04
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.43	.75
	N	66	64

Research question 4.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to determine the relationship between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation. Table 18 shows there was not a statistically significant relationship between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest there is a correlation between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation.

The relationships among the following variables were compared using Pearson correlation: existential well-being, religious well-being, migratory grief and loss, acculturation-degree of immersion in ethnic society (ESI), acculturation-degree of immersion in dominant society (DSI), self-perceived adaptation, and years living in the United States. Of all the possible correlations, only two were statistically significant (see Table 19; although some were significant they were forms of the same variable). A moderate negative correlation was found ( $r = -.27, p < .05$ ) for the relationship between adaptation and acculturation-degree of immersion in dominant society (DSI). This result suggests that immigrants with a higher level of adaptation tend to have a lower degree of immersion in the mainstream culture (DSI).

**Table 19***Summary of Correlations Among Variables*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Existential Well-Being	Pearson	1	.59	-.07	.06	0	-.10	.14
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	.56	.62	1	.43	.27
	N	70	67	65	63	65	66	65
2. Religious Well-Being	Pearson	.59	1	-.09	-.10	-.10	.04	.15
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		.47	.47	.44	.75	.24
	N	67	67	62	60	62	64	62
3. Migratory Grief and Loss	Pearson	-.07	-.09	1	-.22	.25*	.03	-.17
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.56	.47		.07	.04	.78	.20
	N	65	62	67	64	65	64	62
4. Acculturation: Degree of immersion in dominant society (DSI)	Pearson	.06	-.10	-.22	1	.25	-.27*	.22
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.62	.47	.07		.04	.03	.09
	N	63	60	64	65	65	62	60
5. Acculturation: Degree of immersion in ethnic society (ESI)	Pearson	0	-.10	.25*	.25	1	-.12	.07
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.44	.04	.04		.36	.61
	N	65	62	65	65	67	64	62
6. Adaptation	Pearson	-.10	.04	.03	-.27*	-.12	1	-.21
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.43	.75	.78	.03	.36		.09
	N	66	64	64	62	64	68	64
7. How long ago did you immigrate to the United States (years)?	Pearson	.14	.15	-.17	.22	.07	-.21	1
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.27	.24	.20	.09	.61	.09	
	N	65	62	62	60	62	64	68

\*p &lt; .05.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents an overview and discussion of the results of this study. It begins with a summary of the study and a discussion of major findings. Findings are considered in light of current research and the theoretical framework of this study. Limitations of this study and implications for practice are outlined at the end of the chapter.

The purpose of this study was to examine spiritual well-being and its relationship to migratory grief and acculturation in a sample of Mexican immigrants. The two components of spiritual well-being, existential well-being and religious well-being were considered separately in order to differentiate the religious and nonreligious aspects of this construct. The theoretical framework of this study conceptualized existential well-being and religious well-being as moderator variables that alter the direction and/or strength of the relation between the predictor variable and the outcome variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). It was expected that existential well-being and religious well-being would decrease the impact of factors that may have a deleterious effect on migratory grief and acculturation.

**Research Question 1**

Research question 1.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss?

Existential well-being is the aspect of spiritual well-being which relates to a sense of meaning and purpose. It is believed that existential well-being can promote a sense of ultimate direction (Ellison, 1983) that can help immigrants look beyond their circumstances of loss and grief due to immigration. No statistically significant relationship was found between existential well-being and migratory grief and loss. The findings of this study concur with Strada-Russo (2006) who did not find a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and complicated grief. She pointed out that the Spiritual Well-Being scale may not be the most appropriate instrument to measure spiritual well-being in the context of the loss of a loved one. Assumptions about reality and the self are challenged during the mourning process and these changes may provoke a re-evaluation of existential matters. "As bereavement is a process that requires changes in individuals' understanding of reality, it is conceivable that their relationship to spiritual well-being, or experience of what constitutes spiritual well-being, might also develop and assume different connotations during the bereavement process" (Strada-Russo, 2006, p. 57). Although this study does not deal with the grief experience at the death of a loved one, the mourning process as a result of immigration follows a similar course (Gonzalez, 2005; Schneller, 1981).

Research question 1.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss?

Religious well-being has been found to be correlated with religious variables such as importance of religion and frequency of church attendance (Granstrom, 1987; Jang, 1986). Religiosity is considered to be beneficial in certain situations related to loss (McIntosh, Silver, & Wortman, 1993; Roski, 1989; Sherkat & Reed, 1992;) and has been known to reduce grief (Brown, Nesse, House, & Utz, 2004; Frantz, Trolley, & Jhll, 1996; Smith, 2002; Walsh, King, Jones, Tookman, & Blizard). Prudent (1988) found a negative association between frequency of church attendance and grief in her study on Haitian immigrants. This study did not support these findings. No statistically significant relationship was found between religious well-being and migratory grief and loss.

## **Research Question 2**

Research question 2.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?

Research has indicated that people who are married have lower levels of psychological distress due to higher levels of social support, social attachments, and economic support (Ross, 1995). Stated another way, people with no partner are more likely to have higher levels of psychological distress than people with married or unmarried partners in the household. When asked about marital status, slightly more than half of participants reported that they were married, 30% were single, 9% were cohabiting, and 4% were separated. Since some participants may have been separated from their spouse due to immigration, they were asked about their current living

arrangement: 54% indicated that they lived with a spouse/partner and 42% stated that they did not live with a spouse/partner. Existential well-being promotes a sense of meaning and purpose that may be sustaining during the experience of grief and loss due to immigration. No moderating effect for existential well-being was found in this study. Participants reported moderate levels of existential well-being. Although this study did not support the conclusion that existential well-being moderates the effect of marital status, further study with a larger sample size may be warranted to test for weaker moderating effects than were detectable with this study.

Research question 2.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of marital status on migratory grief and loss?

As stated above, slightly more than half of the sample indicated that they were married while thirty percent reported that they were single. “A close, confiding relationship protects men and women against stressful events” (Ross, 1995, p. 130). Marriage or a close, committed relationship can provide a sense of protection and security at a critical time of change. An immigrant with no partner may not have this relational resource. Religion or a relationship with God may represent shelter from a hostile world and empowerment. Religious well-being did not moderate the effects of marital status on migratory grief and loss. Participants in this study demonstrated moderate levels of religious well-being. Although this study did not support the conclusion that religious well-being moderates the effect of marital status, further study with a larger sample size may be warranted to test for weaker moderating effects than were detectable with this study.



Research question 2.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

Length of time living in the United States and migratory grief and loss has demonstrated a negative relationship in some studies (Ahn, 2006; Brener, 1990; Prudent, 1988). Existential well-being provides a sense of meaning and purpose that may be lacking in immigrants with few years in the country. Existential well-being failed to show a moderator effect. As stated earlier, immigrants reported moderate levels of existential well-being. In this study, the average number of years that participants had lived in the United States was 12 years. Despite the possible implications of existential well-being, this study did not demonstrate that existential well-being moderates the effect of the length of time living in the United States on migratory grief.

Research question 2.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of the length of time living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

As stated above, immigrants with few years living in the country tend to experience a more intense level of migratory grief and loss. In particular, immigrants who have lived in the country for five years or less tend to experience higher levels of loss (Brener, 1990). Religion or a relationship with God can provide a sense of comfort and solace in times of grief and loss. Religious well-being did not demonstrate a moderator effect between length of time living in the United States and migratory grief and loss. Further study is needed with a larger sample size and perhaps another measure of religious well-being may yield different results.

Research question 2.5: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?

Prudent's (1988) study on Haitian immigrants found that those who experienced the most grief were women and immigrants with children still living in Haiti. Existential well-being could help immigrants make meaning out of their experience of loss. However, existential well-being did not demonstrate a moderator effect between these two variables. It is important to note that sixty-four percent of the sample had children living with them. This finding supports the cultural orientation of Mexican immigrants that values family relationships. Despite the possible implications of the moderator variable, this study did not demonstrate that existential well-being moderates the effect of not having children at home on migratory grief and loss.

Research question 2.6: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having children living at home on migratory grief and loss?

As mentioned above, Prudent (1988) found that women and immigrants with children still living in their native country experienced the most migratory grief. According to Walsh (2008), "religion and family life are deeply intertwined" (p. 8). Participation in spiritual practices establishes a connection to past experiences, affective ties with significant others, and the culture which these existed in. Religious well-being failed to demonstrate a moderator effect in this study. Despite the possible ramifications of religious well-being during immigration, this study did not demonstrate that religious well-being moderates the relationship between not having children at home and migratory grief.

Research question 2.7: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

Within the Mexican culture, the definition of family includes not only immediate family members but relatives that are a part of the extended family and those relationships formed through religious milestones such as baptism and marriage. Family relationships are a resource for social and economic support that can prove to be invaluable in the case of immigration. For example, the home of relatives often becomes the point from which immigrants initiate the resettlement process. Close proximity to family members maintains relational attachments that may help to lessen the experience of loss. In her study of Haitian immigrants, Prudent (1988) found that participants whose families were with them experienced the least migratory grief. Immigrants with few close family relationships in the United States may experience the separation from significant attachments in a more intense manner. Existential well-being speaks to a sense of purpose and life satisfaction that may help immigrants to look beyond the current situation. Existential well-being did not moderate the relationship between other family members living in the United States and migratory grief and loss. As stated in the previous chapter, participants had about eight family members living in the United States when they emigrated from Mexico. In addition, 28% of the sample indicated that they moved to the United States to join family. Despite the possible effects of the moderator variable during immigration, this study did not offer evidence that the affective experience of the loss of the homeland in the presence (or absence) of significant others may be experienced differently depending on the level of existential well-being.

Research question 2.8: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of having other family members living in the United States on migratory grief and loss?

Cultural norms within the Mexican culture support close proximity to significant attachment figures into adulthood. Migration often involves separation from significant relationships. Religion promotes psychic survival since it supports the capacity to be alone. Based on Winnicott (1958), Sengun (2001) described the capacity to be alone as “the feeling of being connected; the connection that makes one feel not alone in the physical absence of another person” (p. 70). In the current study, religious well-being did not moderate the relationship between having family members living in the United States (or not) and migratory grief and loss. Therefore, the relationship between presence (or absence) of family members living in the United States and migratory grief did not change with varying levels of religious well-being. One possible explanation for this finding is that emotional support provided by attachment figures in the native land may not be replaced by religious networks in the new country (Ward, 2001). In addition, the immigrant’s previous experience with separation can determine the degree to which religiosity or religious symbols can be used to represent past life experiences with significant others (Sengun, 2001).

### **Research Question 3**

Research question 3.1: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion?

The resolution of migratory grief and mourning is a precursor for the formation of a new identity as a result of immigration (Garza-Guerrero, 1975; Stein, 1985).

Acculturation is an index of identity that consists of the negotiation between the degree of immersion in the host culture and the degree of immersion in the culture of origin.

Existential well-being may help an immigrant to maintain a sense of self through the process of migratory grief and loss and support the development of a new identity.

Existential well-being did not demonstrate a moderator effect in this study. No evidence was provided to suggest that the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation-immersion in the host culture varies with different levels of existential well-being.

Research question 3.2: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on dominant society immersion?

The successful resolution of migratory grief is a key factor for psychological growth and identity. Acculturation is an index of identity that consists of the negotiation between the degree of immersion in the host culture and the degree of immersion in the culture of origin. Religion can act as an anchor for identity in times of constant change (Dumont, 2003). Religious well-being failed to demonstrate a moderator effect between migratory grief and acculturation-immersion in the host culture. As stated earlier, slightly more than half of the sample reported that religion was very important in their lives and the same percent indicated that their religious/spiritual beliefs were very important in their daily lives. Of the sample, only 30% of participants reported that they attended church once per week. Religion has been shown to reduce grief (Brown, Nesse, House, & Utz, 2004; Frantz, Trolley, & Johll, 1996; Smith, 2002; Walsh, King, Jones, Tookman, & Blizard). However, religious beliefs without religious behavior (i.e., church attendance) and its associated benefits (i.e., social support) may not have a significant impact on an

immigrant's ability to work through the process of migratory grief and the degree of immersion in the dominant culture.

Research question 3.3: Does existential well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion?

As stated above, the resolution of migratory grief and mourning is a precursor for the formation of a new identity as a result of immigration (Garza-Guerrero, 1975; Stein, 1985). Acculturation is an index of identity that consists of the negotiation between the degree of immersion in the host culture and the degree of immersion in the culture of origin. Existential well-being may help an immigrant to maintain a sense of self through the process of migratory grief and loss and support the development of a new identity. Existential well-being did not demonstrate a moderator effect in this study. No evidence was provided to suggest that the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation-immersion in the Mexican culture varies with different levels of existential well-being.

Research question 3.4: Does religious well-being moderate the effect of migratory grief and loss on ethnic society immersion?

As stated above, the successful resolution of migratory grief is a key factor for psychological growth and identity. Acculturation is an index of identity that consists of the negotiation between the degree of immersion in the host culture and the degree of immersion in the culture of origin. Religion can act as an anchor for identity in times of constant change (Dumont, 2003). In this study, religious well-being failed to demonstrate a moderator effect between migratory grief and immersion in the Mexican culture.

**Research Question 4**

Research question 4.1: Is there a relationship between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

Spiritual well-being fulfills the need for transcendence or the “capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one’s self and the immediate” (Ellison, 1983, p. 332).

Existential well-being, one aspect of spiritual well-being, relates to matters such as purpose and life satisfaction without any religious reference. In this study, self-perceived adaptation was used as a measure to explore the immigrants’ own rating of the extent of their adaptation. No statistically significant relationship was found between existential well-being and self-perceived adaptation.

Research question 4.2: Is there a relationship between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation?

As stated above, spiritual well-being fulfills the need for transcendence or the “capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one’s self and the immediate” (Ellison, 1983, p. 332). Religious well-being, one dimension of spiritual well-being, is concerned with well-being in relation to God. In this study, self-perceived adaptation offered a measure to explore the immigrants’ independent rating of their adaptation. No statistically significant relationship was found between religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation.

## **Summary of Findings**

This study did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between existential and religious well-being and migratory grief. Religious well-being was not found to be associated to migratory grief although previous research reported an association between these variables. In this study, there were no statistically significant indications that existential or religious well-being would have an impact on the relationship between demographic variables and migratory grief. The relationship between demographic variables such as marital status, length of time living in the United States, children living in the home, and family members living in the United States and migratory grief were not found to be moderated by either existential or religious well-being. This study did not support the conclusion that either existential or religious well-being moderates the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation-immersion in the host culture and immersion in the Mexican culture. Lastly, no statistically significant relationship was found between existential and religious well-being and self-perceived adaptation.

Intercorrelations among all key variables in the study were performed. This study found two statistically significant findings. A moderate positive correlation was found for the relationship between migratory grief and acculturation-degree of immersion in the ethnic society (ESI). This finding suggests that immigrants who experience a higher level of migratory grief tend to have a higher degree of immersion in the Mexican culture. This result concurs with Brener's (1990) study that found that immigrants with low acculturation are more likely to experience high levels of depression and loss. Bowlby's (1961) model on attachment and Garza-Guerrero's thesis on culture shock are consistent



with the findings of this study. As immigrants work through the mourning process, they are able to take part in the reorganization of identity. A moderate negative correlation was found for the relationship between adaptation and acculturation-degree of immersion in dominant society (DSI). This result seems contradictory to the present discussion of adaptation and acculturation. It would make sense that adaptation would be positively associated with immersion in the dominant society culture. It is possible that participants were influenced by a desire to present themselves in a favorable way and may have over-reported on their adaptation scores. Marin (1992) cautioned researchers regarding the tendency for Latino participants to respond in a socially desirable manner and how this may affect their overall response style to surveys.

Descriptive statistics on measurements scales are discussed in order to provide an overall impression of the major variables in this study. Participants reported moderate levels of existential well-being and religious well-being. The sample in this study presented different results from the sample of Mexican Catholics in the Ramirez de Leon (2002) study. Participants in this study reported lower levels of existential and religious well-being. This finding may be explained by a few factors. Ramirez de Leon recruited his sample from a church setting and he reported that many of them were regularly involved in church activities. Therefore, participants were active and strong believers of their faith. Participants in this study may be more representative of Catholic believers who practice their faith on a weekly basis and Catholic believers that do not participate in Sunday mass or other church activities. In contrast to the Ramirez de Leon study, the participants in this study were younger (average age was 35 years old) and had resided in

the United States for a much shorter length of time (an average of 12 years). It is conceivable that the recruitment setting, age, and length of time living in the United States contributed to the different results in existential and religious well-being between these two studies. Since there are limited studies on the spiritual well-being of immigrants and a number of them are taken from churches or religious organizations (Chau, 2006; Lopez, 2007; Ramirez de Leon, 2002), the results from this study contribute to the norms for the Spiritual Well-Being Scale on non-religious samples.

Descriptive statistics on measurement scales revealed interesting findings relevant to the current theoretical framework. Participants reported moderate levels of migratory grief and loss. In addition, participants scored high on the degree of immersion in the Mexican culture and demonstrated moderate scores on the degree of immersion in the host culture. These results may indicate that the participants are still working through the grief process. Although the participants reported a moderate degree of immersion in the host culture, a high degree of immersion in the Mexican culture may be representative of the searching and disorganization periods of migratory grief. Gonzalez (2005) conducted a qualitative study on the migratory experience of married Latina women. The length of residence in the United States ranged from two to ten years. She found a number of similarities between the grief related to the loss of a loved one and grief related to the loss of the homeland. She indicated that only one out of twelve participants had resolved the losses due to immigration. Searching behaviors such as calling those they left behind, thoughts of or actual visits to the native country, and going to places and activities that remind them of their native environment were found in almost all of the participants. One

of the most salient aspects of the disorganization stage involved language and feeling lost because of an inability to communicate with others. Given the findings of the Gonzalez study, it is possible that although the participants in the present study demonstrate indications of re-organization and the re-invention of self through a moderate immersion in the host culture, it is unlikely that a majority of participants have reached the phase of resolution.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations of this study are discussed with respect to design, participant characteristics, external validity, and measurement. The limitation relevant to the design of the study pertained to the number of participants in the study. The sample size was limited to N=75. Moderation effects typically have a small effect size; therefore, a small sample size would make it difficult for the interaction to be significant (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004).

Several participant characteristics presented some challenges to the integrity of the study. Participant characteristics that are discussed include recruitment from ESL classes, fears regarding anonymity, and reading ability. This research was conducted with Mexican immigrants enrolled in ESL classes. Participants recruited from these programs may have been ready to acculturate to the new land evident by the commitment to learn English (Brener, 1990). Their desire to acculturate may have been reflected in the manner in which the questionnaires were answered. For example, participants within this sample may have reported a lower level of grief. Another limitation arose from the possibility that participants may have been apprehensive regarding the anonymity of their responses.

Despite the assurance of confidentiality, participants may have still been fearful that this researcher would report their information to immigration officials; this may have resulted in a distortion of their demographic information or questionnaire responses (Lakatos, 1992). The reading ability of the participants may have affected the manner in which questions were answered and the completion of the questionnaires in general. Missing items on the measurement instruments may have been the result of an inability to understand the written material.

This study contained some factors that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. “Many cross cultural researchers have established that studies utilizing Hispanic participants must be careful when generalizing their results due to the high heterogeneity among the same ethnic groups” (Lakatos, 1992, p. 103). Although all of the participants were of Mexican origin, it can not be assumed that the sample represented the diversity within this group. This sample consisted of Mexican immigrants with a primary level of education and low wage employment. Lastly, the ethnic composition of this sample limits the generalization of the results to other Latino groups.

The measurement of existential well-being and religious well-being using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale presented some difficulty to participant response. Participants appeared to have difficulty in using and understanding the question and response format of this scale. This scale provides six different response options. In many cases, participants seemed overwhelmed by this response set and sometimes did not understand the subtle differences implied by the different response options. The reported levels of existential and religious well-being may have been affected by the difficulty experienced

in responding to the questions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Brown, Nesse, House, and Utz's (2004) study suggested that the effect of religiosity on grief might be mediated by the length of time since the loss of loved one. They found that although widowed individuals experienced an increase in their religious beliefs and church attendance, the increase was temporary. Those who experienced an increase in their religious beliefs had lower levels of grief. It is conceivable that the participants in this study also experienced an increase in their religiosity and a temporary reduction in their grief during the initial years following their immigration. Although this study did not provide evidence of this conclusion, further study with a larger sample size may be warranted to test for moderating effects that may be weaker than what can be detected with a small sample size. Also, a longitudinal study could be conducted to gain a better understanding of how the relationship between religiosity and migratory grief might change with time living in the United States.

Research investigating spirituality in Latino immigrants should consider possible limitations in using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale with this population. A significant limitation of this instrument that should be considered is that this instrument is not easy to use or understand for a sample of individuals that have a low level of reading ability and education. This instrument may need to be adapted or revised to improve its applicability and ease of use with diverse populations.

### **Implications for Practice**

The results of this study have implications for social workers and family therapists that are providing clinical interventions to Mexican immigrants. The inclusion of spirituality in the assessment process is important to understanding the role of religion and spirituality in the life of the immigrant client. Religion and spirituality may be an emotional resource to an immigrant who is struggling with the loss of the homeland and separation from significant attachment figures. Although religion and spirituality may pose a risk to psychological well-being due to past negative experience for some immigrants, it represents a valuable cultural resource for many Mexican immigrants. Therefore, it is critical to evaluate to what degree spirituality and religion may be accessed as a means of helping an immigrant resolve his losses and move toward the re-invention of self.

Psychosocial assessments should consider the manner in which migratory grief may be impacting the psychological functioning of the individual and the family. The recognition of migratory grief in the experience of the Mexican immigrant adult can help validate feelings of loss that are often unacknowledged and include them in the treatment plan as a viable challenge to mental health. Migratory grief is also a family system issue. Erikson proposed that “immigrant mothers often fail to create a sense of trust in their children since having been uprooted from their secure and familiar environment, their own sense of personal confidence is in crisis (as cited in Mirsky, 1991, p. 623). From this perspective, the systemic effects of migratory are significant to formulating a clinical understanding of the parent-child relationship and the child’s inner world.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

### Demographic Form

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Female  
                   \_\_\_\_\_ Male
4. What is your marital status at the present time?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Single           \_\_\_\_\_ Married           \_\_\_\_\_ Cohabiting  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced       \_\_\_\_\_ Separated       \_\_\_\_\_ Widow
5. Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes   \_\_\_\_\_ No  
       How many? \_\_\_\_\_  
       How many of your children live with you? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who did you come with when you immigrated to the United States? (You can choose more than one option)  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Alone           \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Partner   \_\_\_\_\_ Children  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Parent(s)       \_\_\_\_\_ Sibling(s)       \_\_\_\_\_ Relative(s)  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Friend(s)       \_\_\_\_\_ Other
7. How many family members were already living in the United States when you emigrated from Mexico? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many close family members did you leave behind in Mexico (Please provide a number at each option if appropriate)?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Partner   \_\_\_\_\_ Children       \_\_\_\_\_ Parents  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Siblings           \_\_\_\_\_ Grandparents   \_\_\_\_\_ Uncles/Aunts  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Cousins           \_\_\_\_\_ Other Relatives



9. How many close family members currently live in the United States (Please provide a number at each option if appropriate)?

Spouse/Partner     Children     Parents  
 Siblings     Grandparents     Uncles/Aunts  
 Cousins     Other Relatives

10. Who do you live with? (You can choose more than one option)

Alone     Spouse/Partner     Children  
 Parent(s)     Sibling(s)     Uncle/Aunt  
 Other Relatives     Friend(s)

11. How long ago did you immigrate to the United States?

Years     Months

12. Had you ever been to the United States before immigrating?

Yes    For how long?  Years     Months  
 No

13. What was the main reason for coming to the United States? (Select one option)

Economic     Pursue education     Join family  
 Other

14. Are you employed?     Yes     No

Please describe the kind of work that you do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your family income? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people depend on this income? \_\_\_\_\_

15. What is the highest grade you completed in Mexico? (Please circle only one option)

Primary 1 2 3 4 5 6

Secondary 1 2 3

Preparatory 1 2 3

Undergraduate studies 1 2 3 4

Graduate studies (Master's or Doctorate) 1 2 3 4

16. How well do you think that you are learning English?

\_\_\_ I am learning English very well

\_\_\_ I am learning English well

\_\_\_ I am learning English somewhat well

\_\_\_ I am not learning English well

\_\_\_ I am not learning English at all

17. How often do you socialize with other people who are not from Mexico?

\_\_\_ Everyday

\_\_\_ More than once a week

\_\_\_ Once a week

\_\_\_ One to two times per month

\_\_\_ Less than once per month

18. Compared to when you first moved to the United States, do you think that your economic situation is:

\_\_\_ Much better

\_\_\_ Better

\_\_\_ About the same

\_\_\_ Worse

\_\_\_ Much worse

19. To what extent do you feel that you are becoming a part of American society?

\_\_\_ I *definitely* feel I am becoming a part

\_\_\_ I *somewhat* feel I am becoming a part

\_\_\_ I feel that I am *not* becoming a part

\_\_\_ I feel that I am *definitely not* becoming a part

20. How well do you think that you are adapting to life in the United States?

\_\_\_ I am adapting very well

\_\_\_ I am adapting well

\_\_\_ I am adapting somewhat well

\_\_\_ I am not adapting well

\_\_\_ I am not adapting well at all

21. With which of the following religions or theologies do you identify with?

\_\_\_ Catholicism

\_\_\_ Protestantism  
(Ex. Pentecostal)

\_\_\_ Jehovah's Witness

\_\_\_ Seventh Day  
Adventists

\_\_\_ Church of the  
Latter Day Saints

\_\_\_ Santeria

\_\_\_ Islam

\_\_\_ Buddhism

\_\_\_ Judaism

\_\_\_ Atheism

\_\_\_ Agnosticism

\_\_\_ Other (specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. How important is religion in your life?

\_\_\_ Not important at all

\_\_\_ Not very important

\_\_\_ Fairly important

\_\_\_ Very important

23. How frequently do you attend church? (Ex. Mass, service, prayer group)

\_\_\_ Never

\_\_\_ Less than once per month

\_\_\_ One to two times per month

\_\_\_ Once a week

\_\_\_ More than once a week

24. How frequently do you partake in individual spiritual practices?  
(Ex. Prayer, meditation)

\_\_\_ Never

\_\_\_ Less than once per month

\_\_\_ One to two times per month

\_\_\_ Once a week

\_\_\_ More than once a week

25. How important are your religious/spiritual beliefs in your daily life?

\_\_\_ Not important at all

\_\_\_ Not very important

\_\_\_ Fairly important

\_\_\_ Very important

### Datos Demográficos

1. Edad \_\_\_\_\_
2. Lugar de origen \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sexo \_\_\_\_\_ Femenino  
                   \_\_\_\_\_ Masculino
4. ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Soltero/a        \_\_\_\_\_ Casado/a \_\_\_\_\_ Unión Libre  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Divorciado/a    \_\_\_\_\_ Separado/a        \_\_\_\_\_ Viudo/a
5. ¿Tiene hijos? \_\_\_\_\_ Si    \_\_\_\_\_ No  
       ¿Cuántos? \_\_\_\_\_  
       ¿Cuántos de sus hijos viven con usted? \_\_\_\_\_
6. ¿Con quién se vino cuando inmigró a los Estados Unidos? (Puede marcar más de una opción)  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Solo(a)            \_\_\_\_\_ Esposo(a)/Pareja        \_\_\_\_\_ Hijos  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Padres            \_\_\_\_\_ Hermanos/as            \_\_\_\_\_ Familiares  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Amigos/as        \_\_\_\_\_ Otros
7. ¿Cuántas personas de su familia ya vivían en los Estado Unidos cuando Usted emigro de México? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Al mudarse a este país, ¿cuántas personas dejó (en México) con quien tiene una relación muy cercana? (Por favor marque un numero en cada opción si es apropiado)  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Esposo(a)/Pareja        \_\_\_\_\_ Hijos        \_\_\_\_\_ Padres  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Hermanos/as            \_\_\_\_\_ Abuelos        \_\_\_\_\_ Tíos  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Primos/as                \_\_\_\_\_ Familiares

9. ¿Cuántas personas con quien tiene una relación muy cercana viven en los Estados Unidos en el presente? (Por favor marque un numero en cada opción si es apropiado)

\_\_\_\_ Esposo(a)/Pareja      \_\_\_\_ Hijos      \_\_\_\_ Padres

\_\_\_\_ Hermanos/as      \_\_\_\_ Abuelos      \_\_\_\_ Tíos

\_\_\_\_ Primos/as      \_\_\_\_ Familiares

10. ¿Con quién vive? (Puede marcar más de una opción)

\_\_\_\_ Solo/a      \_\_\_\_ Esposo(a)/Pareja      \_\_\_\_ Hijos

\_\_\_\_ Padres      \_\_\_\_ Hermanos/as      \_\_\_\_ Tíos

\_\_\_\_ Familiares      \_\_\_\_ Amigos/as

11. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo que inmigró a los Estado Unidos?

\_\_\_\_ Años      \_\_\_\_ Meses

12. ¿Había estado alguna vez en los Estados Unidos?

\_\_\_\_ Si ¿Por cuanto tiempo? \_\_\_\_ Años      \_\_\_\_ Meses

\_\_\_\_ No

13. ¿Cuál fue la razón principal por la que decidió inmigrar a los Estados Unidos? (Marque solamente una opción)

\_\_\_\_ Económica      \_\_\_\_ Para reunirse con su familia      \_\_\_\_ Para continuar sus estudios

\_\_\_\_ Otra

14. ¿Trabaja? \_\_\_\_ Si      \_\_\_\_ No

¿Qué clase de trabajo desempeña o a que se dedica? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuál es el ingreso mensual de su familia? \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuántas personas dependen de este ingreso? \_\_\_\_\_

15. ¿Cuál fue el grado más alto de educación que terminó en México? (Favor de circular **solo una opción**)

Primaria: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Secundaria 1 2 3

Preparatoria 1 2 3

Estudios Sub Graduados (Licenciatura) 1 2 3 4

Estudios Posgrado (Maestría y/o Doctorado) 1 2 3 4

16. ¿Que tan bien está aprendiendo el inglés?

\_\_\_ Estoy aprendiendo inglés *muy bien*

\_\_\_ Estoy aprendiendo inglés *bien*

\_\_\_ Estoy aprendiendo inglés *más o menos*

\_\_\_ *No* estoy aprendiendo inglés *bien*

\_\_\_ *No* estoy aprendiendo inglés *para nada*

17. ¿Que tan seguido socializa con otra gente que no es de México?

\_\_\_ Todos los días

\_\_\_ Más de una vez a la semana

\_\_\_ Una vez a la semana

\_\_\_ Una a dos veces por mes

\_\_\_ Menos de una vez por mes

18. Comparado a cuando Usted se mudó a los Estado Unidos, piensa que su situación económica está:

\_\_\_ Mucho mejor

\_\_\_ Mejor

\_\_\_ Igual

\_\_\_ Peor

\_\_\_ Mucho peor

19. ¿Hasta que punto siente que se está haciendo parte de la sociedad americana?

\_\_\_ Siento que *definitivamente* me estoy haciendo parte de ella

\_\_\_ Siento que *de algún modo* me estoy haciendo parte de ella

\_\_\_ Siento que *no* me estoy haciendo parte de ella

\_\_\_ Siento que *definitivamente no* me estoy haciendo parte de ella

20. ¿Cómo piensa que se está adaptando a la vida en los Estados Unidos?

\_\_\_ me estoy adaptando *muy bien*

\_\_\_ me estoy adaptando *bien*

\_\_\_ me estoy adaptando *más o menos*

\_\_\_ *no* me estoy adaptando *bien*

\_\_\_ *no* me estoy adaptando *para nada*

21. ¿Con cuál de las siguientes religiones o teologías se identifica?

\_\_\_ Catolicismo

\_\_\_ Protestantismo  
(Ej. Pentecostal)

\_\_\_ Testigos de Jehová

\_\_\_ Adventistas del  
Séptimo Día

\_\_\_ Iglesia de los Santos  
de los Últimos Días

\_\_\_ Santería

\_\_\_ Islamismo

\_\_\_ Budismo

\_\_\_ Judaísmo

\_\_\_ Ateísmo

\_\_\_ Agnosticismo

\_\_\_ Otra (especifique)

\_\_\_\_\_

22. ¿Qué tan importante es la religión en su vida?

\_\_\_ No es importante en lo absoluto

\_\_\_ No es muy importante



\_\_\_ Moderadamente importante

\_\_\_ Muy importante

23. ¿Con qué frecuencia asiste a la iglesia? (Ej. misa, servicio, grupo de oración)

\_\_\_ Nunca

\_\_\_ Menos de una vez al mes

\_\_\_ Una a tres veces al mes

\_\_\_ Una vez a la semana

\_\_\_ Más de una vez a la semana

24. ¿Con que frecuencia se envuelve en alguna practica espiritual individual?  
(Ej. Rezar, orar, meditar, etc.)

\_\_\_ Nunca

\_\_\_ Menos de una vez al mes

\_\_\_ Una a tres veces al mes

\_\_\_ Una vez a la semana

\_\_\_ Más de una vez a la semana

25. ¿Qué tan importante son sus creencias religiosas/espirituales en su vida diaria?

\_\_\_ No son importantes en lo absoluto

\_\_\_ No son muy importantes

\_\_\_ Son moderadamente importantes

\_\_\_ Son muy importantes

APPENDIX B

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING SCALE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

### Spiritual Well-Being Scale

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale is a copyrighted instrument. It may be purchased at: <http://www.lifeadvance.com> or by writing to:

Life Advance, Inc.  
81 Front Street  
Nyack, NY 10960  
[lifeadvance@hotmail.com](mailto:lifeadvance@hotmail.com)

APPENDIX C

MIGRATORY GRIEF AND LOSS QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

### The Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire

The Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire is a copyrighted instrument. This instrument may be reproduced with permission from the author at the following address:

Banghwa Lee Casado Ph.D., LCSW  
Assistant Professor  
University of Maryland-Baltimore  
School of Social Work  
525 West Redwood Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
[bcasado@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:bcasado@ssw.umaryland.edu)

APPENDIX D  
STEPHENSON MULTIGROUP ACCULTURATION SCALE IN  
ENGLISH AND SPANISH

### The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale

The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale is a copyrighted instrument. This instrument may be reproduced with permission from the author at the following address:

Margaret Stephenson can be reached at [mstephenson@birkshirefarm.org](mailto:mstephenson@birkshirefarm.org).

APPENDIX E

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH



### **Recruitment Announcement**

Hello! My name is Irma Alvarado and I am present today to announce a research study about spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being is an important factor in the lives of many immigrants who are adapting to this country. The purpose of this study is to examine spiritual well-being and the manner in which it may contribute to the process of psychological adaptation to the United States in Mexican immigrants. This study focuses on Mexican immigrants because this group is the most numerous among the different Hispanic nationalities in this city. This research project is part of a requirement for a doctoral degree in the social work program at Loyola University of Chicago. Data collection will take place by way of three questionnaires and a demographic information form which have been translated into Spanish. Your teacher will not participate in the data collection process. I will be present to answer any questions you have regarding the study or the questionnaires. Participation in this investigation is voluntary. If you decide to participate your identity and personal information will be confidential. There will be a small compensation for participation in this study. This project is not affiliated with (your degree granting institution) or any of its programs within. I invite those of you who are Mexican immigrants to participate in this study and to those who are interested I will explain the consent form in detail.

### **Anuncio para Reclutar Participantes**

¡Hola! Mi nombre es Irma Alvarado y me presento hoy para anunciar un proyecto de investigación sobre el bienestar espiritual. El bienestar espiritual es un factor importante en la vida de muchos inmigrantes que están adaptándose a este país. El propósito de este estudio es de examinar el bienestar espiritual y la manera en que puede contribuir al proceso de la adaptación psicológica a los Estados Unidos en los inmigrantes Mexicanos. Este estudio se enfoca en los inmigrantes Mexicanos porque es el grupo mas numeroso entre todas las nacionalidades Hispanas en esta ciudad. Este proyecto de investigación forma parte de los requisitos para el grado doctoral en el programa de trabajo social en la universidad de Loyola en Chicago. La colección de datos se hará a través de tres cuestionarios de auto informe y un formulario de información general personal que han sido traducidos al español. Su maestro(a) no tomará parte en el proceso de colección de datos. Yo estaré presente para contestar cualquier pregunta referente al estudio o a los cuestionarios. Participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Si decide participar su identidad e información personal será confidencial. Habrá una pequeña compensación por participar en este estudio. Este proyecto no esta afiliado con (su colegio) o alguno de sus programas. Invito a las personas que son inmigrantes de México a participar en esta investigación y a los que estén interesados se les explicará en detalle la hoja de consentimiento informado.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** Immigration as a “Theologizing Experience”: Spiritual Well-Being as a mediating factor in Migratory Grief and Acculturation

**Researcher:** Irma Alvarado

**Faculty Sponsor:** Terry Northcut, PhD

### Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Irma Alvarado, for a dissertation under the supervision of Terry Northcut, PhD in the Department of Social Work at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Mexican immigrant. **If you have participated in counseling with the researcher, you are not eligible to participate in this study.**

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine spiritual well-being and the manner in which it may contribute to the process of psychological adaptation to the United States in Mexican immigrants.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete three questionnaires and a demographic information form. The questionnaires will include questions about your spiritual life, your thoughts and feelings about your homeland, and cultural changes you may have experienced since you moved to this country. Participation in this study will take approximately 25 to 35 minutes.

### Risks/Benefits

The risks associated with this project are minimal and consist of the possibility of experiencing some discomfort with revealing personal information in the research questionnaires. However, the questions may refer to sensitive issues that may present a level of psychological risk to some people. In this case, you can talk to the researcher in person or call her at the number indicated below to discuss your concerns and/or obtain appropriate recommendations for your assistance.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation. However, the results of this study may provide a better understanding of the role of spiritual well-being and contribute in a

positive way to the provision of mental health services to the Mexican immigrant population.

### **Compensation**

A \$5 gift certificate will be given to whoever decides to participate in the study. A person who withdraws from the study before completing it will still receive this compensation.

### **Confidentiality**

Your participation in this study is confidential and your privacy and anonymity will be protected through certain strategies. The questionnaires, including the demographic form will only be identified through an assigned number. The data collected in this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet and only the researcher and her faculty sponsor will have access to them.

### **You are not being asked to provide your name and signature on this consent form.**

In this manner, your identity will be protected from the unintended consequences associated with this research.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you have the right to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. This study is not affiliated with (your college) or any programs within. Your grade in the course will not be affected in any way if you decide not to participate.

### **Contacts and Questions**

If you have questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Irma Alvarado at 847-733-4300, extension 742 or her faculty sponsor at 312-915-7034. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

## HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

**Título del Proyecto:** La inmigración como una experiencia religiosa: El bienestar espiritual como un factor de integración en la pena migratoria y aculturación

**Investigadora:** Irma Alvarado

**Supervisora de la investigadora:** Dra. Terry Northcut

### Introducción

Usted está invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación realizado por Irma Alvarado para su disertación bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Terry Northcut, en el programa de trabajo social en la Universidad de Loyola en Chicago.

Se solicita su participación en este proyecto porque usted es un inmigrante Mexicano. **Si usted ha asistido a consejería con esta investigadora no es elegible para participar en esta investigación.**

Por favor lea esta forma con cuidado y haga cualquier pregunta que tenga antes de decidir si va a participar en esta investigación.

### Propósito

El propósito de este estudio es entender el bienestar espiritual y la manera en que este puede contribuir al proceso de la adaptación psicológica a los Estados Unidos en los inmigrantes Mexicanos.

Si usted está dispuesto a participar en este proyecto, se le pedirá que llene tres cuestionarios y un formulario de información general personal. Los cuestionarios incluyen preguntas sobre su vida espiritual, sus pensamientos y sentimientos sobre su país, y cambios culturales que tal vez ha experimentado desde que se mudó a los Estados Unidos. Su participación en este estudio le tomará aproximadamente de 25 a 35 minutos.

### Riesgos y Beneficios

Los riesgos relacionados con esta investigación son mínimos, y consisten de la posibilidad de sentir incomodidad al revelar información personal en los cuestionarios de auto-informe. Sin embargo, las preguntas pueden referirse a temas sensitivos que pueden exponer algunas personas a cierto nivel de riesgo psicológico. En dado caso, puede hablar con la investigadora en persona o llamar a la investigadora al número indicado abajo para discutir sus preocupaciones y/o obtener recomendaciones apropiadas para su asistencia.

No hay ningún beneficio a usted al participar en esta investigación. Sin embargo, los resultados de esta investigación pueden proveer un mejor entendimiento del bienestar

espiritual y contribuir de manera positiva a la entrega de servicios de salud mental a la población de inmigrantes Mexicanos.

### **Compensación**

Habrán un certificado de regalo de \$5 para la persona que decida participar en este estudio. La persona que se retire de la investigación antes de terminar aun recibirá esta compensación.

### **Confidencialidad**

Su participación en este estudio es confidencial, y su privacidad y anonimato será protegido a través de ciertas estrategias. Los cuestionarios, incluyendo el de datos demográficos solo se identificarán con un número asignado. Los formularios recogidos en este estudio serán mantenidos bajo llave y solo la investigadora y su supervisora tendrán acceso a ellos.

**No se le esta pidiendo dar su nombre y firma en esta hoja.** De esta manera, su identidad no se conocerá y usted estará protegido de las consecuencias involuntarias asociadas con la participación en este estudio.

### **Participación Voluntaria**

Su participación es voluntaria. Si usted no quiere participar en esta investigación no tiene que hacerlo. Aun si decide participar, usted tiene el derecho a no contestar alguna pregunta en particular o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin ninguna consecuencia adversa. Este proyecto no esta afiliado con (su colegio) o alguno de sus programas. Por lo tanto, sus calificaciones del curso no serán afectadas de ningún modo si decide no participar.

### **Preguntas**

Si tiene alguna pregunta de este proyecto de investigación, por favor comuníquese con Irma Alvarado al 847-733-4300, extensión 742 o con la supervisora de la investigadora al 312-915-7034. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de este estudio, usted puede comunicarse con el gerente de conformidad en la oficina de servicios de investigaciones en la Universidad de Loyola al 773-508-2689.

APPENDIX G  
PERMISSION TO USE INSTRUMENTS



**Life Advance, INC.**

81 Front Street  
Nyack, NY 10960  
(845) 353-2020 ext. 6945  
lifeadvance@hotmail.com  
www.lifeadvance.com

June 27, 2006.

Irma Alvarado  
5432 S. Lotus  
Chicago, IL 60638

Dear Ms. Alvarado:

Thank you for your order of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale Specimen Set. Enclosed you will find the Specimen Set, which also includes one copy of the Scale. If you would like to use additional copies of the Scale in your research, please use the enclosed form to order them through Life Advance, Inc.

You are granted permission to use the Spiritual Well-Being Scale in your research. Please be aware that the Spiritual Well-Being Scale is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without expressed written consent from Life Advance, Inc., 81 Front Street, Nyack, New York, 10960.

We wish you well in your research. If you would like more information on the SWBS or Life Advance, Inc., please visit our website at [www.lifeadvance.com](http://www.lifeadvance.com). We are delighted to be of assistance to you and look forward to a continuing working relationship.

Sincerely,



Craig W. Ellison, Ph.D.  
President

Enclosures

er

**Quality of Life Assessment and Resources**

**Irma Alvarado**


---

**From:** Casado, Banghwa [BCASADO@ssw.umaryland.edu]  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 09, 2006 9:16 PM  
**To:** irmalvarado@comcast.net  
**Subject:** RE: migratory grief questionnaire

Hello, Irma,

It is so good to hear from you. Hope all are well with you.

I am thrilled to learn your interest in using my Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire in your dissertation research. Please consider this email as my permission to use the questionnaire in your research.

Three other social work students (2 PhDs and 1 MSW) also used the questionnaire in their research with Korean older adults. I did with Chinese older adults. And now, you're going to do with Latino immigrants. As you can imagine, I am very glad to have other researchers' interests in using my instrument with different immigrant groups. I hope that the findings of our studies will contribute to better understanding of the lives of immigrants.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need anything else. Good luck on your dissertation!!! I would love to hear what you find in your research!

Banghwa

\*\*\*\*\*  
 Banghwa Lee Casado, Ph.D., MSW  
 Assistant Professor  
 University of Maryland-Baltimore  
 School of Social Work  
 525 West Redwood St.  
 Baltimore, MD 21201  
 Phone: 410-706-0815  
 Email: bcasado@ssw.umaryland.edu <mailto:bcasado@ssw.umaryland.edu>  
 <mailto:bcasado@ssw.umaryland.edu>

---

**From:** Irma Alvarado [mailto:irmalvarado@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 09, 2006 8:32 PM  
**To:** Banghwa.Casado@mail.uh.edu  
**Subject:** migratory grief questionnaire

Banghwa,

**Irma Alvarado**

**From:** Stephenson, Margaret [mstephenson@berkshirefarm.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 17, 2006 3:42 PM  
**To:** Irma Alvarado  
**Subject:** RE: acculturation scale

Dear Ms. Alvarado,

You are welcome to use the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS) for your research project and to translate the instrument into Spanish. However, should you use the SMAS, I ask that you send me a copy of your research findings and translation of the instrument upon completion.

Please let me know whether or not you agree with these terms.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Irma Alvarado [mailto:irmalvarado@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 17, 2006 4:22 PM  
**To:** Stephenson, Margaret  
**Subject:** acculturation scale

Dr. Stephenson,

Hello. I am a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago. I am writing because I am interested in using your acculturation scale in my dissertation research. I plan on studying spiritual well-being and its relationship to migratory grief and acculturation in Latino immigrants. I believe your questionnaire is a good fit for my study because it seems to be consistent with the experiences of new immigrants across ethnic groups. My study will focus on new immigrants primarily from Mexico but I may also have some immigrants from Central America.

I would like your permission to use your questionnaire in my dissertation research. Has this scale been translated into Spanish? If it has already been done, then I will need the Spanish version. Otherwise, I will translate it into Spanish since it is the native language of my research participants. I plan to have a professional interpreter validate my translation of the scale to ensure for accuracy. I would also conduct a pre-test before arriving at the final version of the scale.

If given permission to use the questionnaire, I will need instructions on how to score the questionnaire and interpret the total score.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Irma Alvarado

7/17/2006

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## VITA

Irma A. Sharp received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1991. She began her work with Mexican immigrant families at this time and discovered her passion to serve this population. During this period, she was inspired by the knowledge of a supervisor who was trained as a licensed clinical social worker. As a result, she obtained a Masters Degree in Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1995. She has continued her work with Mexican immigrants by providing individual and family therapy, consultation, and training workshops within different community based agencies. She has worked as an adjunct faculty member within the School of Social Work at Loyola University Chicago. During her tenure as a doctoral student, she received the President's Medallion Award at Loyola University Chicago, the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty Fellowship Award, and the Council on Social Work Education, Minority Fellowship Award.