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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Examining the Lived Experiences of Divorce Among Hispanic Parents

by

Maria Rosa Perez

MA, University of Phoenix, 2008

BS, University of Texas at San Antonio, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Parental divorce does not have the same effect on all children, and the cultural

background of families may have an impact on children's experience of divorce. The

purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experiences of Hispanic parents of

school-aged children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order

to examine how their children adjust to this family change. Crisis theory and critical race

theory were used as theoretical frameworks, and a phenomenological approach was used

to collect data from 13 parents through semi-structured interviews. Twenty-seven themes

(six minor, five major, 14 subthemes, and two thematic categories) were generated that

relate to the impact of divorce on Hispanic children and how cultural factors influence

that impact. Protective themes included guidance from extended family and friends and a

prolonged process of separation/divorce due to Hispanic values regarding marriage and

family. Negative themes included undesirable changes in children's actions and

behaviors such as wanting to be isolated or left alone and engagement of the children in

problematic behaviors. The findings were similar to studies with non-Hispanic children in

regard to the changes in behavior that were observed by parents. A recurring and primary

theme was the support Hispanic children obtain from and the crucial role played by

extended family after divorce. The findings of this study can be used to instigate positive

social change by adding to the understanding of the experience of divorce for Hispanic

children and encouraging care providers to emphasize the role of extended family as a

support for these children.

Examining the Lived Experiences Among Hispanic Parents and Divorce

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Dedication

First and foremost I would like to thank God for providing me the support and strength during this very difficult journey. I dedicate this dissertation to my family, the biggest support system I could ever have asked for. My parents Rosamaria G. Perez and Dr. Felipe Perez Rodriguez, without your encouragement, guidance, and financial support this process would have been impossible. I have always wanted to reach my goal of receiving my Doctorate and without your support this would have been difficult. I love you both more than you will ever know and Thank God everyday for giving me parents as special and wonderful as you. I love you!!!

Next I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my siblings (Angel, Vera, and Rosa) who were my editors and listeners to all my ideas and factors contributing to my dissertation. I am grateful for all your words of wisdom and praise to help me get through this difficult and challenging journey. To my twin sister Rosa, you unconditional support, late night talks and constant motivation helped provide me the strength to continue when it seems like quitting was the better option. Love you guys more than you will ever know.

Family is life's greatest blessing and I am thankful for having all of you in my life. I couldn't have asked for a better family and support system. I love you with all my heart.

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Once again I would like to thank my family for all their support, encouraging words and patience during my dissertation process. I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues Dr. Jesus Botello Jr., Dr. Art Flores, and Dr. Jacqueline Del Fierro-Avila. I am blessed to have you with me during this challenging journey. To all my friends who have been by my side every step of the way. Thank you, your support and encouragement helped me to continue going and achieve my goal. I am grateful to God for having people in my life who encouraged me and listened when I wanted to quit.

Finally I would like to acknowledge all of my participants who made this study possible.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Since the 1960s, there has been a steady increase in the rate of divorce around the world, specifically in industrialized nations (Afifi et al., 2013). The increase has been particularly visible in the United States, where 50% of adult Americans are likely to go through divorce (Afifi et al., 2013). As a result, divorce is an ongoing concern for individuals working with children and families. Research on divorce during the past decade has focused on a range of topics including the predictors of divorce, associations between divorce and well-being (for children as well as former spouses), and interventions for divorcing couples (Amato, 2010).

Divorce affects many individuals, including children. Parental divorce does not have the same effect on all children. Some children can cope with little to no significant trauma to their development, while others exhibit continued difficulty in behavior and psychological adjustment (Morrison, Fife & Hertlein, 2017; Schaan & Vögele, 2016). Literature on economics, sociology, and developmental psychology indicates that children with married parents are developmentally better suited for life then children with divorced parents (Anderson, 2014). Children of divorced parents tend to have lower test scores, lower educational achievement, and a higher likelihood of dropping out of high school (Asmato, Patterson & Beattie, 2015). Researchers found that the conflicts of divorce are often long-term and trans-generational in nature for children (Bernardi & Radl, 2014; van de Weijer, Thornberry, Bijleveld & Blokland, 2015). Amato and Anthony (2014) reported that research has consistently demonstrated that children of

divorced parents, as compared with children of married parents, score lower (on average) on achievement, adjustment, and well-being measurements. However, Amato (2001) also noted that the differences in school performance, behavior, self-concepts, and social relationships between children of divorce and children of married parents appeared relatively small. The overall results of Amato's study revealed that, as a group, children of divorced parents were slightly worse off than children of married parents; nonetheless, not all children of divorced parents were worse off than children of married parents.

Furthermore, the cultural background of families may also have an impact in the children's experience of divorce (Afifi et al., 2013). Although it is rarely mentioned in divorce research, in some cultures, extended family might view one's divorce as *our divorce*, which can affect how divorce manifests itself and the way family members communicate (Afifi et al., 2013). Researchers who examined Hispanic families in the 1990s noted the overall stability of marriage among Hispanic families when compared to White and Black families; however, recent data on the rates of divorce among Hispanic families contradicts this conclusion (Falicov, 2013). Studies suggested that the divorce rate for Hispanics has increased and will soon approach that of Whites (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Raley, Sweeney & Wondra, 2015; Suro, 2007). This is partially due to acculturation into the United States (Afifi et al., 2013), which is the central focus of this study. Moreover, Cohen, Leichtentritt, and Volpin (2014), in a study of 20 divorced Israeli mothers with children under 18 years old, suggested that the lived experiences of divorced mothers regarding their perceptions of how their children coped with the

divorce varied depending on communication. The mothers' lived experiences provided meanings in how the children were impacted by the divorce.

The need for a study on the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who have gone through divorce or are undergoing divorce and their perceptions regarding the challenges experienced by their school-aged children from Hispanic families is substantial given the limited amount of research in which the cultural factor of acculturation has been considered in relation to the effects of divorce on children. The positive social change implications include the possibility of culture-specific interventions to help Hispanic children cope with the divorce of their parents. The following chapter will provide background to the present study, including the problem statement and purpose of study, research questions, theoretical framework, significance, nature of study, definition of key terms, assumptions, and limitations.

Background to the Study

Divorce is a norm that affects approximately half of the marriages in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). An estimated 20 million children in the United Stated live with divorced or separated parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The percentage of children who lived in a two-parent household decreased from 88% in 1960 to 69% in 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Further, there are about 1.5 million children who experience the divorce of their parents every year in the United States and four out of 10 children will experience their parental divorce before they reach adulthood (Fagan & Churchill, 2012, Kreider & Fields, 2005;).

Children who have experienced the divorce of their parents are more vulnerable to experiencing emotions such as depression, shame, anger, insecurity, fear, and shock (Teke, Yildirim, Polat & Toros, 2015). However, some children develop healthy coping mechanisms, as revealed in divorce resilience studies (see Greeff & Cloete, 2015; Jamison, Coleman, Ganong, & Feistman, 2014). Nevertheless, the higher rates of divorce and the relationship between divorce and the negative outcomes on children has led various researchers to examine the consequences of divorce on children (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Velderman, Cloostermans, & Pannebakker, 2014; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012).

Parental divorce is a highly prevalent risk factor associated with high rates of mental health problems for youth (Boring, Sandler, Tein, Horan, & Velez, 2015; Shifren, Bauserman, Blackwood, Coles & Hillman, 2015). They may feel blame, hopelessness, abandonment, rejection, and anxiety. Children may not be able to significantly cope with the system of support upon which they rely. This disrupts the continuity and security that was present in their life once prior to the divorce of their parents taking place (Angacian et al., 2015). It is important for parents to be aware of the psychological effects that a child may experience during a divorce.

As part of these divorce-related mental health issues, there are multiple factors that cause divorce to impact children. These include exposure to inter-parental conflict (Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Armistead, 1994), deterioration of positive parenting (Sigal, Sandler, Wolchick, & Braver, 2008) and exposure to a cascade of other stressful events and transitions (Sandler, Wolchik, Braver, & Fogas, 1991). These factors can

negatively impact a child's well-being. (Boring, 2011). If ignored, these factors can result in a child's malfunctioning later in life. Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman (2002) shared critical findings that dysfunctional family relationships may result to "accumulating risk for mental health disorders, major chronic diseases, and early mortality" (Repetti et al., 2002, p. 330). It is important to consider how divorce may impact children's demeanor.

Researchers have reported that divorce varies across cultures (Afifi et al., 2013; Furtado, Marcén, & Sevilla, 2013). Sandel and Plutzer (2005) indicated that the impact of divorce may differ across racial groups, but literature on such variance is limited. The impact of divorce taken altogether indicated that cultural influence may reduce the negative consequences of divorce on children. For instance, Cohen et al. (2014) conducted a study in which children of divorced Israeli parents tended to cope better and encouraged communication with their custodial single mothers. In the United States, Hispanic families may experience the consequences of divorce differently compared to other ethnic groups due to cultural factors. For instance, Alvarez (2011) revealed that Hispanics in the United States tend to experience socioeconomic challenges and may experience difficulty in coping. However, Arman (2014) argued that Hispanic families were also largely Catholic and believed in *fatalismo* in which situations happened according to God's will. Hispanic children were generally taught to have a faith-based outlook, which may either suppress their coping with the perception of having no control over their lives or encourage coping with faith and hope (Arman, 2014). In addition, extended families often played a role in Hispanic families (Afifi et al., 2013). Extended families may perceive that the divorce involved them and may exhibit the manifestation

of the divorce as well as the process of communication among family members regarding it (Kreager, Felson, Warner, & Wenger, 2013). The concept of *la familia* may help provide stability to Hispanic children of divorce (Falicov, 2013a).

The conflicting arguments about the impact of divorce on Hispanic children led to a gap in research. A recommendation for research on Hispanics in the context of divorce was proposed as far back as in the 1990s, when it was suggested that research on this group was focused on the concept of la familia as an enduring and stable institution that was the fundamental part in the life of Hispanics (Falicov, 2013a). In this study, I sought to fill a gap in the research resulting from the conflicting arguments about the impact of divorce on Hispanic children by exploring the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce in order to gather their subjective experiences regarding underlying themes related to the impact of divorce on school-aged Hispanic children. I examined the factor of acculturation in relation to the consequences of divorce on children from the perception of parents and will contribute to the literature through generating culture-specific results which may help develop culture-specific interventions for Hispanic children of divorced parents.

Problem Statement

There has been extensive research on the increase in divorce rates in the United States since the 1970s (see Fine & Harvey, 2013). The focus of this research was primarily on divorce and its effect on White American families (Fine & Harvey, 2013; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, & Peterson, 2013; Saunders, 2014). Research on Black American families has increased but the research on the changing structures of Hispanic

families is still limited. There is a lack of research on the effects of divorce among Hispanic children (Fine & Harvey, 2013).

The problem to be investigated in my study was the conflicting results have been found regarding the impact of divorce on Hispanic children (Amato, 2001; Arman, 2014). Young children regardless of their race are affected by their parents' divorce resulting in lower academic performance, poor mental health, and strained relationships with family members (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). While some individuals benefit from their parents getting divorced, the result for others is a temporary decrease in their quality of life and on a downhill path from which they might never fully recuperate" (Amato, 2000). Having a better understanding of treatment for possible trauma and negative emotional conditions resulting from divorce can be avoided through such treatment, which can help not only the individual child, but the parents seeking to ensure their divorce does not have negative effect on their children.

Divorce hurts many individuals, with each experience being different. Based on what 238 Hispanic children reported, less than 20% were informed about the divorce by their parents, and only 5% reported that their parents tried to explain why they were divorcing and were given the opportunity to ask questions (Dunn, Davies, O'Connor, & Sturgess, 2001). Those who were given the opportunity to ask questions and voice their thoughts on the living arrangements reported more positive feelings and less painful memories on transitioning between households (Dunn et al., 2001). Data obtained from the National Survey of Family Growth (2012) indicated that 39% of non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics divorced within the first 15 years of marriage compared with 55% of

African Americans. Afifi et al. (2013) explained that exploring the relationship between culture and divorce is often done in a simplistic view on culture failing to take into consideration the complexity of culture. Divorce is a complex phenomenon and culture has a significant influence on which needs to be taken into account (Afifi et al., 2013). Due to the lack of literature in this area, the purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Hispanic families form a subculture in the United States, where the coping of children may be influenced by cultural factors such as the Catholic faith and the concept of la familia (Afifi et al., 2013; Arman, 2014; Falicov, 2013a). Parental perceptions may reveal an important picture regarding divorce, acculturation, and the well-being of children of Hispanic families in the United States.

The literature contained information on the impact divorce has on children, but it was unclear whether predictors of divorce vary across racial and ethnic groups, and if they do, whether they reveal "historical, economic, structural or cultural factors" (Amato, 2010, p. 661). Ethnicity is a factor in understanding the relationship between parental

marital conflict, divorce, and outcomes for youth because of variations in cultural values. For instance, Hispanic families are particularly likely to emphasize family unity and harmony (Riggo & Valenzuela, 2011). With such strong emphasis on family unity, it is worth considering how Hispanic parents perceive the consequences of their divorce, specifically the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Previous research on Hispanics and divorce focused on the supportive and caring aspect of having extended families, and there was a lack of focus on potentially disruptive factors for the functioning and structure of the family that might be active in spite of the presence of a supportive and caring extended family (Falicov, 2013). To address the gap resulting from limited research on Hispanic children and parental divorce, I investigated the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being.

Research Questions

RQ1:   What are the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or post divorce regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation used for this study was grounded in family stress theory and critical race theory (CRT). Family stress theory was first proposed by Hill (1949) in order to explain the way members of a family respond to stressful events. The theory explored why some families adapt, grow, and even thrive when faced with

stressful situations while other families succumb to pressure under similar conditions (McCubbin, 1993). Since its introduction, the theory has been used by researchers in the context of outcomes related to marital relationships (McCubbin, 1993). A significant development in this model relates to the perception of the family event, which is extended to the perception of the meaning of the crisis for each member of the family after the crisis has taken place (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). In this study, the goal was to explore the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce in order to gain insight into underlying themes related to the impact that divorce has on their school-aged children. Because crisis theory provided an important framework for understanding the perception of family members in relation to a crisis, this theory is particularly useful in examining the impact of divorce and its impact on school-aged Hispanic children.

The second theory used for the theoretical framework of this study was CRT. As pointed out by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), "for the critical race theorist, social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations" (p. 57). CRT theorists recognized that racism is part of the American society and asserted power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In line with CRT, the assumption of the study was that the experiences of Hispanic parents, including perceptions about divorce, are inseparable from their cultural and racial situations. The purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into the impact of the cultural

factor of acculturation on a child's emotional well-being.

Nature of the Study

I used a phenomenological qualitative approach for this study. In research, the purpose generally is to answer a question or address a problem, specifically a problem of interest to the researcher and the researcher's audience (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2003). The nature of the study defined the appropriate approach to address the research problem, as quantitative and qualitative methods differ in the research methods employed (Creswell, 2003). I used a qualitative research design because the goal of this study was to explore the perceptions of parents on the experiences of Hispanic children after divorce of their parents. Qualitative research is used for studying a phenomenon by gaining an in-depth understanding of the research problem through the experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative research method addresses human experiences and the transferability of information in validating the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A qualitative research study provides richness of data through interview (Moretti et al., 2011). The qualitative approach was chosen for this study to establish focus on the perceptions and lived experiences of parents. These are better explored through the gathering of interviews that use the information in a detailed approach and how these can be used to better understand the impact of divorce on children specifically for Hispanics.

The phenomenological research approach for this study was to explore the lived experiences of parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce to gather their perceptions on how their divorce has affected their school-aged Hispanic

children. Phenomenology relies on experiences and feelings, which is consistent with the study's scope (Husserl, 2012). This approach describes the meaning of a phenomenon based on the lived experiences of different individuals on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of the research was to understand the personal experiences of the participants and attempt to capture the human experience.

As part of this approach, I gathered participants through announcements posted in social media sites, newspapers, churches, and schools. To gather data, interviews were conducted in either English directly or the language preferred by the parents using open-ended questions, as the interviews was semi structured. Data gathered from the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Data analysis was conducted by using Nvivo

Key Term Definitions

The following terms and phrases are defined, as they were used in this study:

Divorce: The concept of divorce is predominantly associated with the separation of two people who have decided to terminate their marriage for a number of reasons (Anthony, DiPerna, & Amato, 2014 Blofield, 2013;; Hatemi, McDermott, & Eaves, 2015).

Extended Family: Refers to a family in one household, which includes near relatives (such as aunts, uncles, grandparents) of the immediate family (Extended family, n.d.).

Hispanic: Relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the United States; especially: one of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin (Webster Dictionary)

Lived Experiences: Lived experiences refer to experiences that are subjectively recalled by participants and are obtained through interviews in the form of verbalized statements (Creswell, 2003).

Psychological Impact: Psychological impact refers to the effects from environmental and/or biological factors on the psychological aspects of an individual (De Oliveira, Buchain, Vizzotto, Elkis & Cordeiro, 2013)

Assumptions

I assumed that participants would be comfortable with being interviewed and be truthful in the responses they provide during the interview. It was also assumed that participants would not intentionally withhold information or misstate responses in the interview. During interviews, I used open-ended questions to avoid influencing the response of the participants with leading questions. Confidentiality and privacy of participants were given emphasis in the informed consent procedure to assure participants that all information disclosed is confidential and to encourage the participants to be as honest and open as possible during the interview.

Limitations and Delimitations

One of the limitations of the study was that the data gathered may be limited as parents are the only participants to be interviewed. The children's experience may be different from parents' representations, as parents may be under or overstating the impact to their children due to their own distress about the divorce. This was unavoidable since I used information provided by parents. As a result, a limitation in this study was that

during the interviews, I relied on the perceptions of parents, who may have a different

perception of how their child was affected by divorce.

The study's results may not be generalized to the general population, as the

research was only be focused on a specific population. The population was limited to

Hispanic individuals who have or had school-aged children during a divorce or are

currently going through divorce; all other participants were not in the scope for this

study. Participants were recruited from only one state, Texas, due to limited resources.

Significance

According to Uphold-Carrier and Utz (2012), most relevant studies have

concluded that young children whose parents divorce exhibit lower academic

performance, strained family relationships, and poorer mental health. These

consequences, specifically those that have the potential to persist into the later stages of a

child's life course, may initially occur through short-term disruptions in education

(Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). Due to the limited amount of research in which cultural

factors have been considered in relation to the consequences of divorce for children, the

goal of this study is to contribute additional research on divorce and the effects on

children, specifically Hispanic children.

I looked at the phenomenon through the view of the parents and their perceptions

and experiences on how their children are affected by their divorce or on-going divorce.

The findings of this study have possible significance on multiple levels. First, the

findings can be used to provide personalized mental care to Hispanic children with

divorcing or divorced parents in which the impact of acculturation on the child's

emotional well-being is considered. A better understanding and treatment for possible trauma and negative emotional conditions resulting from divorce can be avoided through such treatment, which can help not only the individual child, but the parents seeking to ensure their divorce does not have negative effect on their children. Healthcare professionals may be able to provide such personalized care and assist in minimizing the negative emotional states among a growing number of children in society given the rate of increasing divorces in Hispanic families.

Summary

There have been numerous research studies conducted on divorce. The limited research is reviewed to better understand the impact divorce has on children in the Hispanic culture. The perception of divorce is mainly associated with the separation of two people who have decided to terminate their marriage for several reasons (Anthony et al., 2014 Blofield, 2013;; Hatemi et al., 2015). However, in the wider context of the whole society, the impact divorce has on children is equally significant (Carlsund, Eriksson, Lofstedt, & Sellstrom, 2012). In Chapter 2, I will review the research that has been conducted to provide a detailed discussion of how divorce can impact Hispanic children, and the psychological consequences it has on them. In Chapter 3, the research methods used for this study will be discussed including the research design and approach, procedures, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical protections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem that was addressed by this study is the need to conduct research on the lived experiences of parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce and to help gain insight on the impact of divorce has on school-aged Hispanic children. The purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being.

Although many researchers have studied divorce, there is limited research conducted on the psychological and emotional impact of divorce specifically on Hispanic children. Therefore, this study focused on the lived experiences of parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce in order to gather their subjective experiences regarding the underlining themes among school-aged Hispanic children and the impact divorce has on them. The Hispanic culture may influence the impact that divorce has on children. Multiple researchers have conducted studies on the emotional and psychological impact of parental divorce on children, but there is a dearth of studies in which such impact is explored in the context of Hispanic school-aged children. Additionally, researchers have also examined, as Tein et al. (2013) pointed out, how the behavioral problems among children observed at younger age affect the later development. Such an understanding shows the significance of conducting research on school-aged children. As such, this study focused on the lived experiences of Hispanic

parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce in order to gather their subjective experiences regarding the underlining themes among school-aged Hispanic children and the impact divorce has on them.

A general lack of research emerges from the review of literature on how Hispanic school-aged children are affected by parental divorce. This review of literature provided an overview of literature on the problem examined in this study in order to show the gaps in the literature and the rationale for conducting this study. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will focus on the theoretical foundation of the study. The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded on crisis theory and CRT. Crisis theory was first proposed by Hill (1949) in order to explain the forms in which members of a family respond to events that are stressful. The second section will provide a review of literature in which the constructs of the problem explored in the study will be examined. These components were examined in the following subsections: divorce, Hispanic culture and family, divorce and behavioral problems among children, and methodology. The third section will highlight the gaps in literature found based on the reviewed literature. The literature review will end with a summary of the findings of the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

The strategy I used to obtain the literature for this study was through the library at Walden University and Google scholar. Specifically, the databases used for to locate research were; Academic Search Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, ProQuest, PsycCRITIQUES, Psyc EXTRA, PsycTESTS, and SocIndex with full text. Google scholar was also used to help further research. The key terms used to search for relevant

literature on these databases were *divorce, children, Hispanic Children, Psychological effects of divorce,* and *behavioral effects of divorce*. The review consisted primarily of peer-reviewed studies published in the preceding five years in order to ensure the inclusion of relevant and recent developments in the field. In order to include foundational and seminal studies on the problem examined in the study, the review also includes a few older studies. The studies published in the last 5 years formed 85%, and the studies published before 5 years formed 15% of the complete reviewed literature.

Theoretical Foundation

The purpose of this research was to study the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. The purpose consisted of two major constructs that form the foundation of the study: the consequences of divorce on a child and the role of cultural characteristics in how these consequences are shaped. As such, the theoretical framework was chosen to ensure that the framework grounding the study addressed both these constructs. Therefore, the crisis theory and CRT were chosen to form the theoretical framework of the study. The former deals with the consequences of divorce in the context of a family, addressing the consequences of divorce on a child that is to be studied, while the latter highlights the role of race in shaping experiences, addressing how the racial characteristic of being Hispanic affects a child's experiences of parental divorce.

Crisis theory was first proposed by Hill (1949) in order to explain the forms in which members of a family respond to events that are stressful. Ever since its

introduction, the theory has been used by researchers in the context of outcomes related to marital relationships. An essential part of this theory is the ABC-X model proposed by Hill. In this model, B refers to the different resources available to a family when responding to A, which are events that are stressful (Hill, 1949). These resources and events differ between families and are subject to the individual contexts of the different families, which is referred to as C (Hill, 1949). X refers to the crisis in terms of its outcomes and its nature, which, according to Hill, is decided on the basis of the adequacy of resources available to the family in order to cope with stressful event, which is an event that is defined as stressful by the individual context of the family. In the perspective of marriage, the capacity of a couple to respond adequately to crisis results in stability and satisfaction (Hill, 1949). On the other hand, the chances of negative results increase on the basis of the increase in stress related to the event and its constructs, such as the way an event is characterized as stressful as well as the availability of resources necessary to cope with the stress (Hill, 1949).

An important development to the original model of Hill (1949) was contributed by McCubbin and Patterson (1982), who noted that the model proposed by Hill focused mainly on the factors present before a crisis had taken place. In their new development of the model, McCubbin and Patterson identified that responding to a crisis is a dynamic process and it is important to consider factors resulting from a crisis in order to fully understand stability and satisfaction in marriage. In other words, this development led to an extension of the events that are considered stressful to include not only the marital crisis but also the stressful events resulting from the original marital crisis (McCubbin &

Patterson, 1982). Similarly, the resources available to cope with the stressful event include not only the resources available initially at the beginning of the conflict, but the resources developed in the process of responding to stressful events (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). Another important development in this model was regarding the perception of the event, which is extended to the perception of the meaning of the crisis to each member of the family after the crisis has taken place (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

The revision in the original model developed deeper layers to the theory, which are significant in the context of the study. In this study, the crisis considered is not only the marital dissolution between a couple, but the stressful event resulting from this original marital crisis, namely, its impact on the children of the couple. Further, the resources available for dealing with the crisis include those developed during the process of coping with the impact of divorce on children, and not only the resources present initially when the divorce took place. The most significant factor of the model that is relevant in the context of this study is the perception of divorce. According to the extended model, the meaning of the crisis should not be limited to the understanding of the couple, but also to each member of the family, which includes the children (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

As such, the inclusion of children as members of the family in the process of the crisis makes this model significant in the context of this study, as I examined the impact of divorce on children.

The second theory I used for the theoretical framework of this study is CRT. This theory was originally developed in the legal circles in order to address the inequalities in the social systems for power that were driven by racialized perspective (Delgado, 1995). Additionally, this theory is also a theoretical approach, which enables a researcher to explore other types of social realities through the perspective of culture, racial, and religious identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Researchers such as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have expanded the scope of CRT by using this theoretical approach to examine the diversities and inequalities in the educational system of the United States based on different racial and cultural identities. Several factors make CRT an important approach for understanding differences based on racial and cultural differences. CRT assists in understanding by means of challenging the dominant ideology on an issue that is engrained as essential in a society (Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), which is divorce in this case through the lens of cultural identity centered around non-Hispanic population. Perhaps more importantly, the CRT approach also has a focus on social justice (Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). CRT approach examines social systems and supports that individuals in a society are affected by their social and cultural situations and act as agents of change (citation). As pointed out by Ladson-Billings and Tate, "for the critical race theorist, social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations" (p. 57). An assumption of this study is that the experiences of Hispanic parents are assumed to be affected by their cultural and racial situations.

Literature Review

Divorce

The concept of divorce is predominantly associated with the separation of two people who have decided to terminate their marriage for a number of reasons (Anthony et al., 2014; Blofield, 2013; Hatemi et al., 2015). However, in the wider context of the whole society, the impact divorce has on children is equally significant to the impact it has on the couple divorcing (Carlsund et al., 2012). At the end of the 20th century, 43% to 46% of marriages were predicted to end in dissolution (Fine & Harvey, 2013). Because a small percentage of marriages end in permanent separation rather than divorce, the common belief that about half of all marriages are voluntarily disrupted is a reasonable approximation (Amato, 2010; Hawkins, Amato, & Kinghorn, 2013). Afifi et al. (2013) have acknowledged divorce rates have increased dramatically on a global scale since the 1960s, particularly in industrialized countries. Perhaps nowhere has this change been more palpable than in the United States, where anywhere from 40 to 50% of Americans will experience divorce in their lifetime (Fine & Harvey, 2013).

Researchers have reported that divorce varies according to culture (Afifi et al. 2013; Furtado et al., 2013). Afifi et al. (2013) stated that there were three primary conclusions that could be determined from the research on divorce and culture. First, as cultures become more distinctive and developed, the divorce rates tend to increase (Afifi et al. 2013). Second, divorce rates increase as women become more educated and financially independent (Afifi et al. 2013). Finally, divorce rates are lower when religion is a central part of the culture (Afifi et al. 2013).

According to Maatta (2011), there are four reasons based upon which intimate relationships end up in divorce as follows:

1. A relationship is doomed to failure at the beginning because the spouses' values or personalities differ greatly from each other. Quite often these relationships have started either at a very young age because of parents' pressure or as a demonstration against the parents' resistance.

2. A marriage falls apart if not taken care of. Mutual interaction does not function well, the partners are not equal, the woman in the relationship is not satisfied with a lifestyle that is accordant with the traditional roles, as she works outside the home and has to take care of the housework and children without the man's help, or the emotional content of a relationship just withers away.

3. The spouses change and develop at a different pace and grow away from each other. They take the challenges that life offers in a way that makes them draw away from each other. One might become unemployed while the other forges ahead with his or her career. If a spouse considers his or her self-fulfillment threatened or he or she constantly falls into contempt, criticism, and vitiation, a relationship is likely to break up.

4. A relationship might end unexpectedly after one learns something unacceptable about a partner. For example, infidelity or a crime can destroy a marriage quickly. Outsiders might regard a sudden divorce as the result of quite an insignificant reason. (pg. 417)

Maatta stated there are numerous societal and psychological reasons that can be named as reasons for a divorce; yet they do not sufficiently explain why people divorce. People try to make their divorce more understandable and acceptable by searching for reasons. The reasons for a divorce are seen in a different light during a divorce and after it (Maatta, 2011). There are also excuses involved, although all the feelings cannot be expressed with words.

In alignment with this view, some researchers have noted that there is significant shift in marital behavior. Gottman (2014) noted that researchers have explained this change by stating that people who married in the 1980s and later had better calibration regarding the trajectory of their marriage as well as compatibility based on modern notions of gender role, and as such, had more chances of being in a marriage that survived when compared to individuals marrying in the preceding decade. Researchers have argued that the disruption risk of marrying has lowered in recent years; however, some researchers have pointed out that the lower risks are limited to only the individuals who graduated from college (Jeynes, 2012). On the other hand, other researchers have stated that there has been a consistency in divorce rates in the preceding 3 decades (Krantzler, 2014, Milton, 2013;). As early as in 1975, researchers realized, based on indirect methods, that approximately 44% of all marriages, on the basis of the rates of disruption noted in 1973, would terminate in divorce (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Then, in the 1980s, analysis of demographic information suggested that out of all the marriages that were taking place at the time, approximately one half would terminate in divorce (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Estimates based on recent information also predict a high

rate of divorce, suggesting that approximately one half of all marriages will terminate in divorce (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Based on the changes in divorce timings, researchers have suggested that to believe the chances of marriages ending in divorce have declined would be premature (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). The existing literature suggests that overall, divorce is considered to increase by many researchers. As such, divorce is still a significant issue for research as it was in the preceding 3 decades (Jeynes, 2012).

Extended Hispanic Families

There has been extensive research on divorce rate increase in the United States since the 1970s (Fine & Harvey, 2013). However, this research has primarily focused on divorce and its effects in the context of White American families (Fine & Harvey, 2013; Markman et al 2013; Saunders, 2014). Research has increased on marital stability in the context of Black American families; however, research on the changing structures of Hispanic families is limited. Additionally, there is lack of research on the effects of divorce among Hispanic children (Fine & Harvey, 2013).

Although these families have had lower divorce rates historically when compared to other groups, as suggested by Lebow (2012), the phenomenon of divorce is not alien to Hispanic families (Arredondo et al., 2014). A recommendation for research on Hispanics in the context of divorce has been proposed as far back as in the 1990s, when it was suggested that research on this group was focused on the concept of la familia as an enduring and stable institution that was the fundamental in the Hispanic culture (Falicov, 2013a). Research has been conducted addressing Hispanic families has focused on intact

extended and nuclear families, and not on potentially disruptive factors to the functioning and structure of the family, which might be active despite the presence of a supportive and caring extended family (Falicov, 2013).

Further, researchers in the early 1990s also realized that research on Hispanics and divorce had to include all the members of family, such as children, mother, father, as well as members of the extended family (Fine & Harvey, 2013). This is due to family members as a whole and as individual towards marital disruption and stress could potentially be different among Hispanics when compared with other ethnic groups (Fine & Harvey, 2013). Additionally, in the last 3 decades, the Hispanic population in the United States has grown rapidly, resulting in Hispanics now being the biggest ethnic group in the country (Falicov, 2013). Both these factors make the examination of this population relevant and significant.

Researchers who examined Hispanic families in the 1990s noted the overall stability of marriage among Hispanic families when compared to White and Black families (Falicov, 2013); however, Falicov (2013) mentioned that despite approximately similar rates of divorce between non-Hispanic and Hispanic individuals, the trends' developments show a tendency towards permanent separation among Hispanics. For instance, there is a 52% chance that Hispanics couples would end their marriage in separation or divorce within the first 20 years, compared to 48% chances among the Caucasian population (Falicov, 2013). Further, the probability of divorce is also affected by immigration among Hispanics. For instance, among first generation Hispanics, 90% of them marry Hispanics individuals (Falicov, 2013). On the other hand, postimmigration

there is a higher chance of Hispanic individuals marrying non-Hispanic spouses (Falicov, 2013). Unfortunately, interracial Hispanic marriages have the second highest divorce rate after African Americans (Falicov, 2013). The choice of marrying Hispanic spouses is stated as the reason for the lower divorce rates among Mexican Americans (Falicov, 2013). However, such is not the case for other Hispanic groups, leading to higher divorce rates (Falicov, 2013). Divorce rates among Hispanics continue to increase, whether it is an interracial marriage or marry a non-Hispanic spouse.

Stereotypes associated with Hispanic families regarding stronger ties of family when compared to other groups in the United States as well as these families having clearly defined roles based on gender, even if they are true, do not result in protecting them from divorce and marital stress (Sotomayor-Peterson, De Baca, Figueredo, & Smith-Castro, 2012; Sotomayor-Peterson, Figueredo, Christensen, & Taylor, 2012). Therefore, it was noted that as Hispanics undergo the process of acculturating to the mainstream values and norms of the American society, their views on divorce are also adjusted (Falicov, 2013). In this process, they seek to take advantage of legal protection that is provided by divorce laws regarding the freedom to leave a marriage (Falicov, 2013). Although Hispanics face challenges caused by the process of acculturating to the mainstream values and norms of the American society, their distinctive cultural values still influence their reactions towards divorce (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, & Szapocznik,, 2012).

Culture and Divorce

There has been dramatic increase in the rates of divorce around the world, and

especially in industrialized nations, since the 1960s (Afifi et al., 2013). This development has been more visible in the United States, as 50% of Americans are estimated to experience divorce (CDC, 2014). As a result of the higher rates of divorce, the increased literature on divorce-related research in the United States and countries in the West, the concept of divorce is approached often from a perspective of individualism (Cohn, 2010). Divorce is seen as a process, which results from negotiations between two people. One major assumption of this approach is that in this process, the two spouses negotiate the best outcomes for their children and for themselves, without focusing on the extended family and culture. Such assumption is utilized in studies on cultures that are both internal and external to the United States.

Although relatively rare in research on divorce, the influence of culture, especially through extended family, on divorce is significant. For example, it is possible that in some cultures the extended family might see the divorce as their divorce, influencing the manifestation of the divorce as well as the process of communication among family members regarding it (Kreager, Felson, Warner, & Wenger, 2013). Researchers have found variations in divorce rates in relation to cultural values (Afifi et al., 2013; Kreager et al., 2013). On the basis of current literature, three major facts can be established regarding culture and divorce. First, the rates in divorce are likely to increase as cultures transform towards a more industrialized and individualistic form. Next, the increase in the financial independence and education of women results in higher rates of divorce (Afifi et al., 2013; Kreager et al., 2013). Finally, in cultures where religion is a fundamental cultural component, the rates of divorce are likely to be lower (Afifi et al.,

2013). However, Afifi et al. (2013) noticed that researchers studying the relationship between culture and divorce often assume a simplistic view on culture, where the complexity of culture that characterizes it is often not taken into consideration.

Research on demographics has shown distinctive divorce patterns among Hispanic families in the United States (Santisteban, et al, 2012). However, relatively little attention has been paid to the behaviors and attitudes related to family through cultural differences (Santisteban et al., 2012). Researchers such as Santisteban et al. (2012), Ellison Wolfinger, and Ramos-Wada, (2012) have noticed that Hispanics, when compared to other ethnicities, accept stronger norms favoring marriage, viewing marriage as a more favored outcome when compared to being single. Furthermore, marriage is seen as more important in comparison to self-sufficiency of the spouses as individuals and is viewed as a commitment of a lifetime (Ellison et al., 2012). Marriage rates have steeply declined in the past 50 years. From 1960 to 2010, rates of marriage for Latinos have decreased from 72% to 47%, representing a sharper decline than for non-Hispanic whites, where rates of marriage decreased from 74% to 55% Darghouth, Brody, & Alegria, 2015). Hispanics who are not married, especially females, are more likely to hold stronger goals for marriage when compared to unmarried females from other ethnic and racial groups (Ellison et al., 2012). Closer examination has revealed these patterns favoring marriage are likely to characterize Mexican and Cuban Americans more when compared to Puerto Ricans (Ellison et al., 2012). The norms of these groups guide their behavior, as it was found that Mexican Americans had higher likelihood of getting married when compared to other ethnic and racial minorities (Ellison et al., 2012).

This is in spite of the fact that Hispanics have lower socioeconomic status on average when compared to other groups, which might otherwise result in lower rates of marriage (Ellison et al., 2012).

Therefore, divorce is a complex phenomenon that is influenced significantly by culture, and it is important to examine its components, such as its consequences on children, by taking this complexity into account (Afifi et al., 2013). The purpose of my research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into the impact of the cultural factor of acculturation on a child's emotional well-being.

Hispanic Culture and Family

Individuals may be differently impacted by divorce due to their values and cultural background. A growing number of researchers in recent years have explored the marriage and divorce patterns among Hispanic families in the United States (Arredondo et al., 2014; Ayón, Williams, Marsiglia, Ayers, & Kiehne, 2015; Bermudez, Zak-Hunter, Stinson, & Abrams, 2012; Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, & Henderson, 2013). This interest has been inspired in large part due to the developments in the demographic, as Hispanics have become the largest population of ethnic minority in the United States, surpassing African Americans (Falicov, 2013).

Researchers studying the family life of Hispanics have long highlighted the significance of distinctive values in the cultural life of Hispanics in influencing family behaviors, especially the concepts of machismo and familism (Umaña-Taylor &

Updegraff, 2013). Recent studies have also focused on the influence of structural constructs such as socioeconomic success and assimilation in influencing Hispanic families (Wright & Levitt, 2013). In terms of methodology, these studies approach the topic by comparing Hispanics with non-Hispanic populations such as African Americans and Caucasian (Ellison, et al; 2012). The findings from these studies highlight the long-term pattern of divorce rate- and marriage-related outcomes between various subgroups among Hispanics, especially non-Hispanic Whites and Mexican Americans (Ellison et al., 2012).

One of the stereotypes held regarding the culture of Hispanic people is that in the Hispanic culture there are clearly established gender roles based on gender for different family members (Darghouth, Brody, & Alegria,, 2015). For instance, the father in a family is seen as the bread-winner and dominant member, while the mother is seen as the child-bearer and subordinate member (Ayón et al., 2015, Ospina, Roy, & Studies, 2014; Shaw & Pickett, 2013). One of the reasons for Hispanic families are often perceived as stable is due to this stereotype of strong traditionally defined roles among family members (Ayón et al., 2015). According to the stereotypes, it is expected that these clearly defined roles might result in the absence of conflicts of role among partners, which would typically result in marital tension, and thus Hispanic families are expected not to have high rates of divorce (Ayón et al., 2015). Although this stereotype regarding Hispanics may be true regarding a father and mothers role in the family, times are changing and more equal opportunity are being established.

In the Hispanic culture, being surrounded by family is a key component. The Hispanic culture is different from other cultures in its importance on family unity (Ellison et al., 2012). Ethnicity is of great interest in understanding relations between parental marital conflict and divorce, and outcomes for youth because of variations in cultural values about family as Hispanic families are more likely to emphasize family unity and harmony (Ellison et al., 2012). Since culture has important and meaningful effects on beliefs about marriage and family, it is important to examine family processes, including outcomes associated with parental marital conflict and divorce, based on ethnic groups (Ellison et al., 2012).

Among Hispanics, the views on marriage in the past emphasized the significance of lifelong marriages; nevertheless, the view that marriages are forever has undergone changes due to acculturative stress, in addition to lower educational attainment levels, early marriage, and low socioeconomic status (Ellison et al., 2012). As a result, the phenomenon of divorce among Hispanic population is gradually becoming more acceptable (Landale, et al, 2006). In spite of this change, divorce, in general, is still viewed with disapproval (Pardo, Weisfeld, Hill, & Slatcher, 2012). Additionally, divorce where no one is blamed is relatively less common in Hispanic culture (Pardo et al., 2012). Divorce has not become a part of the family structure among Latin American families and their cultural fabric. While almost half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, divorce in the United States is not seen as a tragedy or surprise by the family when it takes place (Ellison et al., 2012). In contrast, for Latin American families, there is still negative stigma attached to divorce, which results in stress for everyone involved

(Ellison et al., 2012). However, as immigration to the United States continues and the process of acculturation of Hispanics to American culture takes place, divorce has become one of the behavioral outcomes that results from the process of acculturation to the norms and values of American culture (Ellison et al., 2012).

There are many aspects that are involved in the Hispanic culture when discussing family, such as the patriarch, importance of extended family, and familism. The culture of Hispanic families is more likely to be patriarchal, consisting of complex social networks (Ayón et al., 2015). In Hispanic cultures, higher significance is placed upon extended family as well as wider social networks of family in which the collective goals of the group are placed higher than individual goals (Darghouth, Brody, & Alegria, 2015). Familism is a strong force among Hispanic families (Falicov, 2013). The concept of familism consists of an attitude where family is prioritized over individuals, the name of the family is honored, and elders in the family are respected (Falicov, 2013). Children from Hispanic families, especially girls, are taught about the significance of family and marriage from a very young age (Gonzalez et al., 2013). Hispanics in the United States are more likely than Asian Americas, non-Hispanic Whites, and African Americans to have positive views towards marriage and are also more likely to get married at a younger age (Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2013).

The experience of divorce among Hispanics differs from other cultures is also due to the proximity and importance of extended families (Wright & Levitt, 2013). Members of extended family in many cases live with each other or near each other, provide significant social support, and spend a large amount of time together (Landale, et al,

2006). This experience could prove an important network for social support to members of the family who undergo divorce.

As noted previously, Hispanic families are patriarchal in nature; as such, the role of women generally consists of family relationships and household maintenance. In contrast, the ultimate power for making decisions still remains with the husband (Santisteban et al., 2012). Females generally have lesser power relative to men within Hispanic families. These characteristics are often common among many Hispanic families however, there are also variances noted regarding how divorce is viewed among Hispanic families (Santisteban et al., 2012). It is stated that such differences may be the result of patterns emerging from immigration. The views of Hispanics towards divorce could change as part of their assimilation in the broader culture of the United States, transforming into a more individualistic character (Santisteban et al., 2012).

In today's society individuals are changing their cultural views due to acculturation in the United States. Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures (Sam, & Berry, (2010). When Hispanics families come to the United States they are learning to adjust to new beliefs and customs. Although Latino families are relatively traditional and may endorse traditional gender roles parents in modern Latino families are likely to share child-rearing, decision-making work, and household responsibilities particularly as education and income levels increase (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011). As noted in the above paragraphs, Hispanics have designated gender roles and their viewpoints on what familism means to them.

Furthermore, when they come to the United States they are learning to adapt their cultural

views to living in a different country.

Changes on the views towards divorce among Hispanics can also be due to generational

changes in the attitudes of individuals if the parents of a child were born in Latin America

while the child was brought up in the United States (Santisteban et al., 2012).

Researchers have noted this factor in terms of divorce as it was found that there

was a correlation between divorce and depression among Hispanic women who were first

and second generation, who experienced increased depression. (Santisteban et al., 2012).

However, for third generation Hispanic women, this association was not significant

(Santisteban et al., 2012). Noting this effect, it can be stated that the lowered association

between depression and divorce among third generation Hispanic women was due to the

latter's assimilation in the culture of the United States, which is more individualistic

(Santisteban et al., 2012). As such, the pressure for upholding traditions that may come

from extended family and acculturative pressure towards American culture presents a

unique condition for Hispanic couples. Therefore, the study of the consequences of

divorce on their children requires additional research due to their uniqueness.

Immigration is a complex phenomenon, which affects the attitudes of people

towards divorce through a number of ways. In the United States as well as in other

countries around the world, immigrants are often scared of not being able to maintain

their immigration status, connections to friends, and relationship with family if they

decide to get divorce (MacFarlane, 2012). This is especially true for females as they have

relatively stricter expectations from family and fewer rights than males (MacFarlane,

2012). Research on divorce among immigrants is less; however, the existing literature shows that decisions regarding divorce are significantly affected by gender (MacFarlane, 2012).

Research conducted in a number of countries suggested that females who originally come from collectivistic cultures and move to individualistic Western cultures have conflicting experience and feelings regarding divorce when they decide to get it **(**MacFarlane, 2012**)**. In many cases, they feel more liberated due to the higher acceptance of the rights of women and divorce in Western cultures; however, higher rates of divorce can also be a challenge to their perception of their gender role as family maintainers and their sense of values regarding family (MacFarlane, 2012). The gender and familial expectations of these women in their original culture can come into conflict with the broader culture where they have migrated (MacFarlane, 2012). An example of such conflict was provided by MacFarlane (2012) in terms of women from Islamic countries to get divorce after migrating to the United States. The researcher noted that receiving divorce is relatively easier for them through the court system in the United States; however, it is often harder for them to receive divorce through the religious and family authority (MacFarlane, 2012). In conclusion, contexts they have to receive permission from their religious authorities and husband in order to receive divorce (MacFarlane, 2012). Many Hispanic families are patriarchal in nature and women in these families may not see divorce as a possibility in the network of their family (Santisteban et al., 2012).

The situation is more likely not the same for Hispanic women born and raised in the United States. For the latter, the perception of divorce is more likely to be influenced

by individualistic views (Davidson, O'Hara, & Beck, 2014). For their parents as well as grandparents on the other hand, if they were born and raised in Latin American countries, divorce may not be an acceptable option (Davidson et al., 2014). The differences regarding the attitudes towards divorce of this kind can result in stress and conflict (Davidson et al., 2014). Furthermore, differences in the attitude towards divorce can result from the combination of a number of factors such as immigration, differences based on culture, generational differences, and power (Afifi et al., 2013). Thus, a study on Hispanic children can provide a greater understanding about the effects of divorce on children in the context of Hispanic culture.

Role of Religion

In spite of the research interest in marriage and divorce in Hispanic culture, Ellison et al. (2012) stated that there is a lack of research on the topic. Although studies have been conducted to examine the influence of religion in matters related to divorce among economically disadvantaged families (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2010), there is a lack of research in which the influence of divorce on children is examined in the context of racial characteristics of Hispanics. Religion has been, in large part, an overlooked construct that significantly influences the beliefs and attitudes of Hispanics (Ellison et al., 2012). It is important to address this lack of attention primarily due to the evidence that religious dedication and affiliation is relatively high among Hispanics. This belief has dominated the beliefs of researchers to such extent that researchers often assume a relationship between religion and family practices and believes among Hispanics (Ellison et al., 2012).

Evidence also suggested that Hispanic evangelicals show, in general, higher devotion and conservative views regarding family and issues related to family when compared to Catholic evangelicals, especially on issues such as divorce, same-sex marriage, and abortion (Ellison et al., 2012). Although, cultural factors specific to Hispanics such as familism and machismo have been examined widely by researchers, as noted by Ellison et al. (2012), there is a lack of attention directed towards understanding the consequences of Hispanic religious beliefs on divorce. These findings clearly reveal a greater role of religion in affecting the Hispanic view on family in general, and, in the context of this study, of divorce in particular. As such, there is a gap in the research on the complete examination of Hispanic cultural influence on divorce, especially on children.

Divorce and Behavioral Problems Among Children

Parental divorce is a highly prevalent risk factor associated with high rates of mental health problems for youth (Boring et al., 2015; Shifren et al., 2015). In divorce, there is more than the moment when a spouse departs the household; divorce reduces a process of uncoupling that begins well in advance of the event and has the potential to create issues far into the future (Stroheschein, 2012). According to Stroheschein (2012), parents and their children often confront stressors that are specific to the different stages of the divorce process. During the divorce process there are many stressors that may be included such as drop in economic resources, greater parenting demands on custodial parent, and relocation to a new home or neighborhood (Stroheschein, 2012). As a result of stressors that occur prior to divorce, these feelings might be manifested and reinforced

in parental interactions that are hostile and volcanic or emotionally detached and brittle (Stroheschein, 2012). The stressors mentioned above have a major impact on parents as well as children involved, who are impacted as well. It is through the pathway of increasingly dysfunctional family relationships that the pre-disruption effects of divorce are thought to influence child mental health (Stroheschein, 2012).

Amato and Anthony (2014) reported when parents choose to divorce, the factors that lead parents to end their marriages also may affect children negatively, resulting in false associations between divorce and child outcomes. While researchers agree that there are differences in life adjustment and psychological well-being between children of divorce and those from intact families, there is extensive difference about how large those differences are and how long they last (Gatins et al., 2013; Voena, 2015).

Academic Problems

Researchers have focused for several decades on how or if divorce impacts children of all ages (Gatins et al., 2013). Studies have provided general comparisons of multiple measures such as academic achievement, conduct problems, substance abuse, social and emotional adjustment, and parental relationships of children from divorced families with those from intact families (Gatins et. al., 2013). Children who come from divorced families have more behavior problems compared to children from intact families, according to teachers and mothers (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). In their study, Weaver and Schoefield discussed a number of academic and behavioral outcomes observed in children from divorced families. The methodology utilized by Weaver and Schoefield consisted of procedures for matching propensity score and the previous

behavioral difficulties and emotional levels of children as control variables. Based on the findings, Weaver and Schoefield concluded that children from families that recently went through divorce had remarkably more problems related to behavior than their friends from families that were intact. These issues became evident following immediately after the divorce and were also influential in the development of the child at later stages (Weaver & Schoefield, 2015). Thus, researchers who examined the influence of divorce on children in the past and in recent times both agree regarding the negative outcomes associated with divorce among children whose parents had divorced across multiple categories. In terms of how divorce affects children, children exhibit more internalizing and externalizing problems at the first assessment after their parent's separation and at last available assessment (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). The majority of researchers agree about the potential negative associations between divorce and outcomes of children, which will be examined in detail in later subsections.

Two kinds of factors have been shown to predict children's problem outcomes after parental divorce: : first the current level of problems the child is experiencing and the factors related to divorce (Tein et al., 2013). According to Tein et al. (2013) evidence from research demonstrates that behavior problems at an earlier stage of development predict elevated problems in subsequent stages. Following a divorce, several risk factors have also been found to be associated with problem outcomes for children (Tein et al., 2013). Strohschein (2012) noted that, while evidence shows that the effects of divorce can be observed before the actual divorce, especially due to the difficulties between the parents, there remains uncertainty over which aspects of a child's mental health are

affected and why. According to Strohschein (2012), evidence shows that the levels of a child's depression at initial interview were significantly higher in children whose parents subsequently divorced relative to stably married parents, although one study found no differences (Strohschein, 2012). Although findings regarding whether and how parental divorce is related to children's adjustment are not always clear in the literature, there is agreement among most researchers that children experiencing parental divorce are at risk for a variety of negative developmental outcomes. Weaver and Schofield (2015) report that children from divorced families had more behavior problems compared with a prosperity score matched sample of children from intact families, according to teachers and mothers. Weaver and Schofield (2015) noted that children exhibit more internalizing and externalizing problems at the first assessment, with divorce predicting both short-term and long-term rank order increases in behavior problems. Strocheschein (2012) stated the research suggests that pre-divorce differences might exist across a wide range of child mental health problems. Several studies have showed that levels of child depression at initial interview were significantly higher in children whose parents subsequently divorced relative to stably married parents (Strocheschein, 2012).

Divorce rates noted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2014) have shown high rates in the United States, with an estimated 50% marriages terminating in divorce. One of the consequences of these higher divorce rates is the impact of divorce on the psychological health of children (Bergström, Fransson, Hjern, Köhler, & Wallby, 2014). Researchers examining the consequences of divorce on children have noted that when children whose parents have divorced were compared to those whose parents had

remained married, the former children had higher chances of scoring lower in a number of outcomes such as emotional, academic, health, social, and behavioral (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012).

Due to the higher rates of divorce and the relationship between divorce and the negative outcomes on children, various researchers have examined the consequences of divorce on children (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012; Velderman et al., 2014). Researchers have suggested that effects that follow divorce are based on the relationship between stressors such as remarriage of parents, conflict, moving, and so on, and the resources available after divorce to the children for coping such as parental and financial support (Anthony et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Velderman et al., 2014). According to this analysis, divorce is not an event, rather it is a process (Anthony et al., 2014). The experience of stressors opening up before the children through the changes in the marriage of their parents results in the children beginning to experience undesirable outcomes that continue as well as change after the divorce (Anthony et al., 2014). There are a number of such undesirable outcomes, one of which is lower educational success (Anthony et al., 2014). However, there is limited research on the variables that mediate the relationship between educational success and divorce (Anthony et al., 2014).

Psychological Impact

As noted above, researchers view divorce as a process in which the children of the divorcing parents have to deal with loss that can take place on multiple levels and a number of different stressors (Anthony et al., 2014; Kendler, Ohlsson, Sundquist, &

Sundquist, 2014). Children may not be able to continue having the system of support upon which they relied on as well as the continuity and security that was present in their life once prior to the divorce of their parents took place (Angacian et al., 2015). Different effects on children are noticed relative to the stage of development the child was upon when divorce took place. For instance, Anthony et al. (2014) found that infants between the ages of 6 to 12 months are affected negatively due to the disruption of healthy attachments that develop at this stage, hindered by the inconsistent care as well as separation of their parents.

In contrast, children at the age of attending elementary school are at a stage where they are beginning to evolve moral conscience and independence (Strasheim, Durden, & Cuickshank, 2013). The divorce of parents at this developmental stage may results in the children developing feelings of guilt and hurt, which are often displayed through the anger of children towards both or one parent (Strasheim et al., 2013). Other changes that can take place due to the divorce of parents, which are not necessarily associated with the age of the children, include parenting that is less effective from the parent who has custody, lower involvement from parent who does not have custody, lowered economic resources, continuity of discord among parents, introduction of new members in a family, and school changes (Strasheim et al., 2013).

Researchers have also noted that children who have experienced the divorce of their parents have higher chances of developing vulnerability to emotions such as depression, shame, anger, insecurity, fear, and shock (Teke et al., 2015) They may feel blame, hopelessness, abandonment, rejection, and anxiety. As discovered by Teke et al

(2015), these feelings can have influence in negative outcomes regarding the emotion, social relations, educational success, self-esteem, psychosomatic diseases, and behavior of the children.

Research has also suggested that the likelihood of more challenges in behavior as the divorce-related stressful transitions take place could affect the psychological well-being of children (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Rosenthal, 2013). Children whose parents are divorced have twice the chances of developing negative outcomes related to mental health when compared to their friends from intact homes (Tartari, 2015). These outcomes take place in terms of depression, shame, anger, abandonment, rejection, anxiety, aggression, low self-esteem, emotional liability, less effective social relationships, lower social skills, and decreased educational success (Tartari, 2015). It can be noted that a number of negative psychological impacts of divorce upon children, such as anxiety, shame, anger, and depression, have been noted by multiple researchers (Angacian et al., 2015). These can be seen repeated in many other studies as well, highlighting the consistency of these feelings across children of divorced parents (Angacian et al., 2015; Tein et al., 2013). Researchers have highlighted the significance of all the said issues related to the psychological well-being of children from divorced parents (Tein, Sandler, Braver, & Wolchik, 2013; Angacian et al., 2015). Researchers have also recognized impairments in interpersonal and social skills among children whose parents have been through divorce (Angacian et al., 2015; Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2015). Researchers studying interventions efficacy for children whose parents have divorced have also noted that children who do not receive support services are less likely to share their experiences

with others (Kalmijn, 2012; Larson & Halfon, 2012).

The renewal of interest in research on children of divorced parents at governments at local, state, and federal level is in major part due to the negative relationship discovered between divorce and a number of outcomes among children (Bruze, Svarer, & Weiss, 2015; Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014;). In particular, Tartari (2015) noted that recent public policies have been influenced by the belief that the best atmosphere for raising a child is a two-parent family. This trend can be traced to the 1990s, when the AFDC program provided more positive emphasis on families with two parents for requirements related to work and eligibility (Tartari, 2015). There have been initiatives to promote marriage on state level as well. For instance, couples from low-income background are provided a bonus of $100 in West Virginia every month they stay married, and other states have also considered introducing similar schemes (Tartari, 2015). Encouraging healthy marriages is one of the agendas at the Federal government as well, in which funds are allocated to programs encouraging marriage (Tartari, 2015).

One challenge faced by policies that promote marriages emerges from evidence found by researchers examining child psychology. For instance, evidence has established that conflict between parents has negative outcomes on children; as such, policies promoting marriage may encourage marriages, which are filled with conflicts (Larson & Halfon, 2012; Tartari, 2015). In particular, researchers have found a correlation between marriages filled with conflict and adjustment-related problems among children such as anxiety, withdrawal, depression, low self-esteem, aggression, academic challenges, and so on (Meltzer, 2011; Tartari, 2015). Studies where the relationship between development

of children and conflict between parents has been examined suggest that conflict between two parents is a successful predictor of problems among children related to adjustment (Anthony et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Tartari, 2015). Thus, researchers who have examined divorce all agree that there are negative outcomes associated with divorce on the development of children whose parents divorce. Specifically, factors related to social skills and emotions such as anger, depression, and anxiety have been mentioned in the majority of literature where this associated has been examined.

Observing this research, Tartari (2015) examined whether a child with divorced parents would have experienced more positive outcomes had the parents of the child not divorced. The researcher examined this question by noting the characteristics of families and children belonging to the families before and after divorce. By comparing the children whose parents had divorced with those whose parents had not divorced. Tartari (2015) found a negative gap observed by the majority of researchers examining the same groups. Tartari (2015) further discovered that a significant portion of the negative gap had existed already before divorce. In other words, children whose parents had divorced at present and those whose parents will in the future go through divorce had closely similar scores.

Tartari (2015) also examined the issue through the time spent by mothers with their children before and after divorce in the context of their employment. On the basis of the assumption that the time spent at work was not spend with their children, the researchers noted two observations (Tartari, 2015). These observations shed light on the effects of divorce on the relationship between parents and child. For instance, one gap

discovered by researcher between children whose parents were at present married to

children whose parents were divorced was that the latter were provided lower time by

their mothers (Tartari, 2015). Additionally, there were similarities between the time spent

by mothers with their children among children whose mother were at present divorced

and those whose mothers were to be divorced in the future (Tartari, 2015). These insights

add to the findings of other researchers such as Kurz (2013) and Wallerstein et al. (2013)

where similarities on the effect of divorce on children were noted by researchers between

children whose parents were to divorce in the future and those whose parents had already

divorced. It is also important to note that majority of studies have discovered the

association between parental divorce and its negative outcomes on children.

One suggestion that differs from the general explanation mentioned above

similarities is the view that what researchers in the past understood as negative impact of

divorce may possibly be the negative impact of conflict between parents (Tartari, 2015).

A comparison between the outcomes among children with divorced parents and children

with intact family at present whose parents will divorce in the near future revealed that

between these two, there are outcomes that are indistinguishable, with outcomes

remarkably more negative when compared to children with parents who have not and will

not divorce in the near future (Tartari, 2015). On the basis of this finding, it can be

concluded that conflict between parents is responsible for negative outcomes among

children before divorce in cases where the only factor determining the outcomes related

to children is conflict (Tartari, 2015). Factors other than conflict that influence negative

outcomes among children include lower investment of financial resources as well as time

by parents on the development of their children while parents are not divorced (Tartari, 2015).

Outcomes among Hispanic Children

In the specific context of Hispanic children, although the research has been limited, there are findings that have suggested the different cultural factors that may result in outcomes among Hispanic children that may differ from those of their non-Hispanic counterparts. For instance, a study conducted by Caballero et al. (2017) suggested higher resilience among children of immigrant families to adverse experiences like divorce compared to Hispanic children native to United States, possibly due to generational differences and the influence of protective cultural measures. Thus, it may be that Hispanics children may experience adversities such as divorce of parents differently due to their cultural background depending on whether they are native born or immigrants. Further, acculturative stress is high among Hispanic families, and researchers have suggested that this factor may also contribute to how Hispanic children may experience the effect of divorce of their parents, due to factors such as different familial support system compared to non-Hispanic children, caused by the specific cultural makeup of Hispanic families.

In this context, a review of existing literature, although limited, suggested the need to explore the specific outcomes among Hispanic children due to parental divorce. One method for understanding the outcomes of divorce on Hispanic children is through performance in school. A study conducted by Fraleigh (1990) on 8483 students suggested that the educational attainment of Hispanic parents was lower compared to other ethnic

groups. Among non-Hispanic children, parental education was found to have positive correlation with the stability of family. However, among Hispanic children, the structure of family operated in a different way. Fraleigh (1990) noted that subcultural values among Hispanic children, along with institutionalized racism, might have independent influence on the various outcomes among Hispanic children with divorcing parents that may be peculiar to Hispanic families, which needed additional attention. It is also important to note that Fraleigh's (1990) was conducted on a large sample and did not consider qualitative elements.

Researchers have also suggested that children who are part of extended networks of family experience divorce of the parents differently compared to children who are not part of extended networks of family (Amato & Keith, 1991). As noted previously, Hispanic children are more likely to be part of extended networks of family, suggesting a need to understand their peculiar experience; however, there is a lack of research on this topic. The findings suggest that the responses of children from Hispanic family towards divorce may be marked by resilience compared to children from non-Hispanic families who experience divorce. However, such resilience may be depended on the generational characteristics, and whether the children are from immigrant parents. Thus, such conflict presents a need to study the specific outcomes of divorce among Hispanic children. An important part of such inquiry will also be the specific importance of extended family networks, as research suggests that children who are second or third generation American may not be able to rely on extended family networks (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Thus, the ways in which extended family networks influence the outcomes for Hispanic

children that may differ from children of non-Hispanic backgrounds, requiring additional exploration.

Divorce Research and Methodology

Researchers have commonly utilized three methodological approaches for examining the impact of divorce on children: in-depth interviews conducted with families that have undergone divorce, comparisons of relevant factors between intact and divorced families, and clinical assessments (Fine & Harvey, 2013). The first methodology consists of in-depth interviews conducted by the research on the children and parents from a family, which has experience divorce to understand their experiences through their own voice (Fine & Harvey, 2013). This technique is beneficial as it provides subjective accounts of all the participants; however, this can also be a limitation as there is always the possibility of distortion of truth and bias from the part of the participants (Fine & Harvey, 2013).

The methodology where comparisons are drawn usually consists of two groups of participants: samples of children who come from families that are intact and children who have experienced divorce between their parents (Fine & Harvey, 2013). Studies of this kind in general explore outcomes that are quantifiable and objective, such as self-esteem, emotional well-being, educational success, and so on by utilizing questionnaires and tests (Fine & Harvey, 2013). One disadvantage of this technique is it does not provide a subjective understanding about how divorce is experienced by the participants and understood by the children and parents (Fine & Harvey, 2013).

The method of clinical assessments usually consists of studying children whose parents have divorced that have been referred to different clinical and counseling programs (Gottman, 2014). This method provides significant information regarding the experience of children from families where divorce has taken place; however, one negative is this method has limitations regarding generalization as participants often represent extreme cases (Gottman, 2014). Furthermore, this method usually always provides a negative framework about the experience of adjustment among children after divorce (Gottman, 2014). In the early days when research on the impact of divorce on children had begun, the method of clinical assessments in general dominated the field (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014).

Researchers have also used other methodologies such as longitudinal studies and cross-sectional research (Jeynes, 2012). The latter is utilized more commonly, and it consists of studying participants at a specific point in time in order to understand whether there are differences between children from divorced families and those from intact families (Jeynes, 2012). The method of longitudinal research examined a sample set of participants from a specific point in time, with interviews for follow-up at multiple other times (Jeynes, 2012). One obstacle of cross-sectional studies is their inability to gather retrospective information, which makes it harder to realize development effects (Jeynes, 2012). While longitudinal studies have better abilities at providing causal relationship between divorce of parents and its impact on children, they have a significant drawback that they require higher investment of time and costs, which is the reason why they are conducted rarely (Jeynes, 2012).

For the study, I examined the lived experiences of parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce in order to gather their subjective experiences regarding the underlining themes among school-aged Hispanic children and the impact divorce has on them. The participants were explained the purpose of study, provided an informed consent, and interviewed regarding divorce and behavioral effects, impact culture, socioeconomic status, education, and machismo among Hispanics. This research methodology will be helpful for the study as subjective experiences of parents will provide in-depth understanding regarding how divorce affects children among Hispanics.

Research Gap

Researchers have investigated links between parental marital conflict and divorce and relationships with parents, but with mixed results and little investigation of non-Caucasian groups. When it comes to divorce, ethnicity is of great interest in understanding relations between parental marital conflict and divorce and outcomes of youth because of variations in cultural values about family. In as much as researchers have yet to systematically identify which aspects of child mental health are defenseless to the pre-disruption effects of divorce, there are equally large gaps in understanding their underlying causes. Additionally, the review of literature showed that there is lack of research on the effect of divorce on children for Hispanic children. This study filled the gaps in the understanding of the impact of divorce on children in the context of Hispanic children.

Summary and Conclusions

This review of literature provided an overview of literature on the problem

examined in this study in order to show the gaps in the literature and the rationale for conducting this study. The chapter was divided into three sections. The first section focused on the theoretical foundation of the study, crisis theory. Crisis theory was first proposed by Hill (1949) in order to explain the forms in which members of a family respond to events that are stressful. The second section provided a review of literature in which the constructs of the problem explored in the study were examined. These components were examined in four subsections.

In the first subsection on divorce, it was noted that the concept of divorce is predominantly associated with the separation of two people who have decided to terminate their marriage for a number of reasons (Anthony et al., 2014; Blofield, 2013; Hatemi et al., 2015).). However, in the wider context of the whole society, the impact divorce has on children is equally significant (Carlsund et al., 2012). In the second subsection on Hispanic culture and family, it was found that a growing number of researchers in recent years have explored the patterns among Hispanic families in the United States (Arredondo et al., 2014; Ayón et al., 2015; Bermudez et al., 2012; Gonzalez et al., 2013). In the next subsection, focusing on divorce and behavioral problems among children, it was discovered that due to the higher rates of divorce and the relationship between divorce and the negative outcomes on children, various researchers have examined the consequences of divorce on children (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012; Velderman et al., 2014). In the subsection on methodology, it was found that researchers have commonly utilized three methodological approaches for examining the impact of divorce on children: in-

depth interviews conducted with families that have undergone divorce, comparisons of relevant factors between intact and divorced families, and clinical assessments (Fine & Harvey, 2013). The third section highlighted the gaps in literature found on the basis of the reviewed literature, where it was noted that the review of literature showed that there is lack of research on the effect of divorce on children for Hispanic children. This study filled the gaps in the understanding of the impact of divorce on children in the context of Hispanic children.

The following chapter provided information about the methodological plan for the present study. On the basis of the problem and gaps in the literature identified in this chapter, a study will be conducted to explore the impact of divorce on Hispanic children. The descriptions of the selection process of participants, recruitment procedures, instrumentation, participation, data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness will also be provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Chapter 3 includes the qualitative phenomenological approach as the research design and the role of the researcher. The chapter provides a discussion of the sample and the sampling technique, the interview questions, and the data analysis plan. Finally, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical issues will be discussed. A summary of the chapter will be provided prior to transitioning to Chapter 4.

Research Questions

The qualitative research question that be guided the study included:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or postdivorce regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children?

Qualitative Research

The purpose of research is to solve a question and address a problem, specifically, a problem of interest to the researcher and the researcher's audience (Booth et al., 2003). Research problems may be addressed in either a quantitative approach or a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014). The nature of the study defines the appropriate approach to address the research problem, as quantitative and qualitative methods differ in the research methods employed (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research typically attempts to explain causal relationships through positivist claims (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Positivism is rooted in the possibility of objective reality (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In quantitative research, the researcher uses a falsifiable theory to deduct or hypothesize an outcome (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The hypothesis is then tested through surveys, standardized tests, or experiments. The researcher's findings may support or counter the theory (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Quantitative research is often used to address an explicit research question and problem. The methodology is often rigid and predetermined, and the data may be categorical or numeric (Creswell, 2014). The collected data may be examined through descriptive, comparative, correlation, and regression analyses (Creswell, 2014). The use of quantitative research is recommended for concrete and/or numeric data, quick data gathering, outcome prediction, and a large sample size (Creswell, 2014). Given the need for an in-depth understanding of the impact divorce on Hispanic children, the use of qualitative research was more appropriate.

On the other hand, qualitative research is a scientific method aimed at contributing to theory development (Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2006). Qualitative researchers employ a social constructivist perspective in order to explore and explain social trends (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As in any study, qualitative research also aims to address a research question and problem using specific methods. Qualitative researchers collect data from field observations, interviews, and archival documents, then use research strategies such as ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and

phenomenology (Creswell, 2014). The instruments used to collect the data are often

open-ended, semistructured, or unstructured (Creswell, 2014). The collected data are

organized into themes (Creswell, 2014). The themes are analyzed for relationships, which

with hope address the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative studies typically

use small samples, compared the large sample size used in quantitative studies (Creswell,

2014). Qualitative studies are interpretive, context-specific, and center on the verbal and

visual rather than statistical-inquiry procedures. For this reason, the aim in qualitative

research is to describe and interpret rather than generalize from a sample to the

population (Creswell, 2014). Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies do not test an

existing theory. Qualitative research attempts to formulate or develop a theory (Creswell,

2014). Qualitative research is recommended for studying a phenomenon without an

existing theory, for scarce information about the research problem, or for gaining an in-

depth understanding of the research problem through the experiences of individuals

(Creswell, 2014). In order to gain further insight and understanding to this study a

qualitative research was found to be the most appropriate.

In some studies, a part of the research problem may be addressed through testing

an existing theory, but the remaining part may not. In this case, a mixed-methods design

was considered ideal. Mixed-methods design may be sequential or concurrent, depending

on the data collection strategy (Creswell, 2003; Patten, 2007).Sequential strategies

collected either quantitative or qualitative data first before the other, depending on the

nature of the research problem (Creswell, 2003; Patten, 2007).In concurrent strategies,

the quantitative data and qualitative data are collected at the same time (Creswell, 2003; Patten, 2007).

For this study, qualitative approach was found to be the most suitable to use. The theory on the psychological impact of divorce on children has not yet been developed, especially when accounting for cultural factors (Amato, 2010). Given that little information is known about the impact of divorce on Hispanic children, and my interest in gaining an in-depth understanding, the use of qualitative research is more appropriate than a quantitative method. The following section will discuss the research designs under the qualitative approach, and how the designs will impact the study.

Research Design

Based on the nature of the research study, a researcher can select qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method to conduct the research (Yilmaz, 2013). The focus in quantitative research is on empirical data that can be measured quantitatively. In scientific research, the use of quantitative method is significant as it allows rigor to the collected data and substance to the conclusions (Yilmaz, 2013). Although researchers agree that the quantitative method contributes value for empirical data, some have also criticized certain aspects of quantitative method (Mankelwicz & Kitahara, 2010), mainly due to its limited application in research exploring the experiences of individuals (Mankelwicz & Kitahara, 2010). As the purpose of the research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the

impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being, the qualitative approach was used.

Qualitative methodology is used in the exploration of social phenomena with the goal of interpreting the meaning of experiences (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The mixed method approach involves elements from both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. Although it allows the researcher to use the benefits from both the methods, it also includes the limitation of both the methods. Thus, neither the quantitative method nor the mixed method approach was appropriate for this study. The focus in qualitative method on the exploration of research phenomenon was more appropriate considering the research purpose of this study. Therefore, the qualitative method was the most consistent method for this study.

Within the qualitative research method, a researcher can use several research designs including case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. In a case study, a participant or a group of participants is studied over time to describe a behavior (Creswell, 2014). In a group of participants, the behavior is explored as a whole. Case studies may be single or multiple and may be supported by numerous data sources including quantitative evidence to study a phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2014). Recently, case studies have also been used to test theory (Yin, 2014). Although the case study involves the perspectives of participants, the focus is not directed solely on the participants' experiences, but on collecting the data through multiple sources to provide a view of a phenomenon that is rich in data (Yin, 2014). The case study research design was not appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study was on exploring the

lived experiences of the participants through their own expressions, and a phenomenological research design provided a better alternative for such inquiry.

Ethnography is a type of case study that examines a culture or a social group (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). A cultural or social phenomenon is studied by a researcher in the perspective of the participants. Ethnography is typically used in anthropology, and often includes the study of the setting, such as terrain and climate (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Like any other qualitative method, ethnography does not describe a causal relationship, but an ethnographic researcher may describe a symbol-meaning relation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The choice of ethnographic research design would have been more appropriate if the nature of the inquiry leaned towards anthropological inquiry, instead of the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, the ethnographic research design was appropriate for this study.

The construction of theory through data analysis is referred to as grounded theory (Faggiolani, 2011). Grounded theory may be regarded as almost a reverse of a positivist approach. The approach generally starts with a research problem, or sometimes even a collection of qualitative data (Faggiolani, 2011). The researcher in search of emerging patterns or themes will review the data. The emerging themes will be grouped into concepts, which will then be the basis of a theory (Faggiolani, 2011). The grounded theory was not chosen for this study because the purpose of this research is not to formulate a theory on the influence of divorce on school-aged Hispanic children, but rather on understanding such influence through the perceptions of the parents.

I considered phenomenology to be the most suitable for this study, as the aim was to understand the experience and meaning of the phenomenon under investigation (see Yin, 2014). Researchers using the phenomenological method aim to capture the essence of the phenomenon under study by selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The phenomenological research design is centered around understanding the lived experiences of individuals. In this study, the specific phenomenon for which such experiences will be explored were the influence of divorce on school-aged Hispanic children, as perceived by their parent.

Phenomenology may be categorized as interpretive (Heideggerian) or descriptive (Husserlian; Laverty, 2003). Heideggerian is hermeneutic, which means to interpret data looking for common meanings in the narrated lived experiences without bracketing the researcher's own preconceived notions (Crist & Tanner, 2003). Interpretation of data collected from the participants' narration of their lived experiences, then extracting the gist, is the end goal of conducting the Heideggerian-hermeneutic approach (Laverty, 2003). In contrast, the Husserlian approach, being descriptive in nature, necessitates the researcher to suspend judgment in handling data (Hein & Austin, 2001). The Husserlian approach stems from mathematics, and crossed over to the field of philosophy (Hein & Austin, 2001). The Husserlian approach is derived from the work of Husserl, who is considered the founder of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003). For this study, the Heideggerian-hermeneutic phenomenology was deemed as the most appropriate method, as the focus of this study was to interpret the interpretation of data collected from the Hispanic parents' narration of their lived experiences with their children, with the goal of

extracting common themes. Phenomenology provided an avenue for in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study, as I took into account the lived experiences of the informants. I also used bracket for my perspectives in interpreting the data, thus the Heideggerian-hermeneutic approach.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative research study (i.e. objective, isolation/separation from the participants) I strived for a more neutral approach on handling data, in which the role of the researcher in the study requires interaction with each participant to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (see Creswell, 2014). My views on the effects of divorce on Hispanic children were taken in the context of my experiences. As an individual who witnessed divorce with family members, I have experienced the impact divorce has, especially on a child's behavior. I understand that the personal experience of divorce may influence my personal view of divorce and could, if unchecked, lead to bias in data collection and analysis. In order to manage my experiences, thoughts, and bias, I took multiple steps. In the issues of trustworthiness described in a later section, I specified the steps I took to ensure the internal and external validity of the research findings. These steps included member checking, data saturation, reflexivity, and proper documentation using field notes and memos. I also had a trained peer review the transcripts and themes and categories for accuracy and bias. As the researcher, it is essential to minimize personal bias in understanding of the participants' feelings regarding the topic. I allowed participants to express their feelings honestly and provided them with further assistance if needed. For this purpose, I used a semistructured,

open-ended format for the interviews with the purpose of allowing the participant to

clarify their experiences. I also adopted bracketing, a process in which I entered the

interviews with the participants with no preconceived opinion, suspending my personal

beliefs. I sought to minimize the intrusion of subjective attitudes in the study to ensure

the findings are neutral and revealing of the truth as communicated by the participants.

Participants of the Study

Moustakas (1994) emphasized that participants in a phenomenological study

should have experienced the phenomenon under study. To better understand the

phenomenon, participants with lived experiences were selected. Furthermore, potential

participants were recommended to be willing and interested in understanding the nature

and meanings of their experiences. Willingness of the participant to undergo the

interview process, including being digitally recorded and having the data collected from

them published in this dissertation was significant; therefore, purposive sampling was

used as the sampling technique for this study. Purposive sampling is defined as a

nonprobability sampling in which participants are selected through a list of criteria

(Welman & Kruger, 1999). The criteria were based upon the purpose of the study, which

as the researcher I judged (see Greig & Taylor, 1999). The inclusion that the selected

participants have a lived experience of the phenomenon under study. The inclusion

criteria included

- Hispanic
- 2.   One or both parents of a child who are divorced or going through a
  divorce and who have been living separately for at least 1 year

- 3. Currently with children aged 5 to 10 years or who were in that age range at the time of the divorce

According to Creswell (2014), detailed interviews with up to 10 participants is sufficient to reach saturation. Boyd (2001) also had a similar recommendation of two to 10 participants for a phenomenological study. Fusch and Ness (2015) said that data saturation does not depend on the number of participants, but on the depth of the information collected from the participants. In a phenomenological study, as little as 2 participants to a maximum of 10 participants will be enough, given that the interview questions are somewhat structured. The researcher is recommended to ask similar questions to the participants to collect as much information as possible in one topic (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, I sought to recruit 10 participants who met the criteria mentioned above. However, based on my judgement of when the data saturation was achieved, I choose to include more than 10 participants in the final study.

I initially advertised the study by providing flyers around my community and posting notices in social media to gather participants. The setting was targeted for participant selection due to the purpose of understanding lived experiences of divorced or undergoing divorce Hispanic parents with school-age (5-10) children at the time of divorce. The announcement contained the nature and purpose of the study, as well as my contact details. Participants who contacted me were screened according to the recruitment criteria prior to being scheduled for a face-to-face interview. The interviews were conducted at a professional time and private and quiet place convenient to the participant.

Data Collection

I used interviews as the data collection method, specifically, semistructured interviews. The use of interviews is recommended to gather complex and wide-ranging information about the phenomenon under study (Wertz, 2005). A semistructured interview allowed me to direct the interview, at the same time allow the participants to speak freely (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I was able to ask follow-up questions for further understanding (Wertz, 2005). This section is composed of two sub-sections that will further discuss instrumentation and data collection procedures in detail.

Instrumentation

Prior to the interview, demographic information was collected from the participants to ensure that the inclusion criteria were met. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used as a guide in data collection. The use of semistructured questions was beneficial to the study, as the study will require narratives that will reveal in-depth information. Furthermore, the semistructured questions permitted me to construct questions that are in line with the research problem (Wertz, 2005). The interviews were semi-structured to allow the participants to answer the questions specified as well as add further information (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Guided questions were developed from the review of related literature, so as to provide consistency and direction to the study (Wertz, 2005).

Through the research questions, I obtained concrete descriptions of the participants' lived experiences (Wertz, 2005). However, I guided the questions to direct rather than lead the participants and maintain a subject-subject relation and subject-

phenomenon relation during the interview process (Yin, 2014). The guide questions are as follows:

1. Overall, how do you think the divorce impacted your child (ren)?

2. Did your child (ren) experience difficulty coping with the divorce (e.g., problem behaviors, trouble in school, etc)?

3. Did Hispanic cultural values play a role in how your child (ren) experienced the divorce? If so, how?

4. What role did your extended family play in the challenges your child (ren) experienced during divorce?

5. What role did the Hispanic community (e.g., friends, church, etc) play in the challenges your child (ren) experienced during divorce?

6. Do you think Hispanic views of divorce are different from other cultures? If so, how?

7. Do you think your Hispanic culture played a significant role in the process of your divorce? If so, how?

Data Collection Method

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to data collection. Upon receiving the approval, the participants who expressed interest in participating in the study were screened to ensure they meet the inclusion criteria. Next, the participants were invited for an interview in a private yet professional place, such as a private room in a public library, at a time of their convenience. Prior to the interview, I explained the nature of the study, and an informed consent form was given to each participant to review and sign. The informed consent form included an outline of the

study, the methodology, and what will be required of the participants in joining the study. The form included statements that the participating in the study is voluntary, and is without incentives, as well as informing participants that signing the form will grant me permission to publish the data in this doctoral dissertation to complete a doctoral degree and in any possible future publications unless the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, in which case any data collected from them by then will be permanently destroyed. The form included an easy to understand words that the participants allowed me permission to carry out all aspects required to complete the study, including to digitally record the interview sessions. Finally, the informed consent form indicated that the participants have a right to withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so. The participants received one copy of the informed consent form, while I will keep the second copy in a secure location for five years before being destroyed. The participants were assigned a random number to replace their name and protect their identity.

The participants were interviewed individually, and the interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes each. The interviews described the participants' lived experiences on undergoing divorce while raising school-age children. The cultural context was also included in the interviews. The interview will be guided by the protocol provided in the previous sub-section. The protocol was designed to be semi-structured, which allowed me to ask follow-up questions for further probing.

Third, I immediately transcribed the interviews, which were recorded using two digital recorders embedded within my smartphone and laptop, verbatim into Microsoft Word and forwarded them to the participants for member checking. Member checking

served as the follow up procedure, in which the participants may correct or change their initial response (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2010). I contacted the participants to ask if the transcript was accurate, or if they were satisfied with their response. If the participants opted to change his or her answer, I would have conducted a follow up interview procedure over the phone. Similarly, the follow up interview was transcribed in Microsoft Word, and underwent member checking. Finally, the data analysis procedures described below were performed on all collected data.

Data Analysis Plan

I compiled all the collected data using NVivo. NVivo is qualitative data analysis software that assists the researcher in coding and keeping tabs on the data. The compiled data were read and re-read several times in order to reach data saturation while looking for patterns. The data patterns were analyzed according to how they are related, which will generate themes and categories to address the research questions. After the themes and categories were finalized, I asked a trained peer to review the transcript, and themes and categories to minimize bias. The field notes taken by me during the interviews were used for data analysis, as no bracketing of ideas are required in this Heideggerian-hermeneutic approach.

A data analysis procedure was guided by the van kaam method of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The analysis included seven steps; (a) horizonalization, (b) reduction and elimination, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) validation of invariant constituents, (e) individual textural description, (f) individual structural description, and (g) composite description (Moustakas, 1994). Horizonalization

included an examination of the transcripts to generate invariant constituents. The transcripts were reviewed, and codes were assigned to interview excerpts. The invariant constituents are generated meanings in the data. Reduction and elimination, the second step, was conducted to ensure that invariant constituents that are not central to the experience, through comparing the relevance of the data with the research questions. Clustering and thematizing involve grouping the invariant constituents in terms of themes. Individual structural description will involve the finalization of the themes. I ensured that the themes were representative of the participants' lived experiences, and that the themes were supported by raw data. The generation of individual textural description summarized the meaning of the experience using key words from the transcripts, while individual structural description were created using the interpretation of the transcripts. Finally, the composite description included the final report of the meaning of the lived experience, focusing on the experience not through each participant, but as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Issues of Trustworthiness

The researcher utilized validity and reliability methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Although reliability is mostly associated with quantitative studies, qualitative studies produce findings that are considered significant for other critical cases to test the theory, or even analyze cases that may be longitudinal, extreme, typical, or revelatory; therefore, reliability, as well as validity, are considered important in a qualitative study (Yin, 2014).

The credibility of the study is referred to as internal validity. The internal validity in a qualitative study is dependent on the researcher as the instrument of data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). The researcher used member checking, data saturation and reflexivity to increase the internal validity of this study. For external validity, the researcher's strategy was to provide detailed descriptions of the phenomenon for the readers to have their own ideas on the extent of the generalizability of the study findings. Researcher aimed to attain reliability of the study by documentation of all the data including field notes, memos, and research journals. Proper documentation is a procedure in keeping an audit trail where the researcher keeps documents for detailed and accurate cross-checking of references (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Ethical Procedures

In order to maintain the ethical integrity of the study, permission was sought from the IRB. Following the ethical policies of the IRB ensured confidentiality to protect the human subjects. Throughout the study, the names of the participants were replaced with numbers to protect the participants' identity. For example, the first participant was identified as 2, the second participant as 5, and so on. Furthermore, The American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Code (Fisher, 2003) was followed.

All the participants were voluntarily recruited. The participants were briefed and given an informed consent form prior to the interview. After the interviews, member checking was conducted, which served as follow-up interviews for data accuracy.

Furthermore, data collected was handled with confidentiality. A pseudonym was assigned prior to the interview to each participant. Demographic information was

tabulated with the pseudonyms immediately after the interview. The pseudonyms were meant to be useful during the publication, but the researcher has the knowledge of the identity of each participant, which was required in order to contact the participants. During the research process, the researcher secured the participant data by storing it in my password-protected personal computer. All the data will be kept in a secured locked cabinet in researcher's personal office for five years before they will be destroyed. All digital data have been secured with a password. At the time of the publication, the researcher will review the data again, and remove identifying information prior to quoting and using the data in the analysis.

Summary

A Heideggerian-hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research methodology was selected as the most suitable method to explore the effects of divorce on Hispanic children. The participants of the study were parents who will meet the criteria of being Hispanic, divorced or going through a divorce and have been living separately for at least a year, and have school-age (5-10) Hispanic children at the time of the divorce. Ten subjects were regarded as the appropriate sample size based on literature on phenomenological studies. The Ethical Code of APA (Fisher, 2003) and the policies of the IRB were followed. The participants were interviewed face-to-face, individually using semistructured questions. The data collected was analyzed and coded into themes and categories, which were used to address the research questions. The researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the study using validity and reliability methods. Chapter 4 will provide discussions on the data analysis procedures and research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 of the study contains the results of the qualitative phenomenological analysis of the 13 interviews with the Hispanic parents. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to investigate the lived experiences of individuals who are divorced or are going through the divorce process and are parents of school-aged Hispanic children in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Moustakas' (1994) van Kaam method was employed to uncover the most significant experiences of the participants, addressing the main research question of the study. NVivo12 by QSR was also used to assist the researcher in methodically organizing and tabulating the themes of the study. Only one research question guided the study: What are the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or post-divorce regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children? In this chapter, the demographics, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, findings, and summary will be discussed.

Demographics

Thirteen Hispanic parents were interviewed for the study. The three main standards were the following: (a) Hispanic, (b) one or both parents who are divorced or going through a divorce and who have been living separately for at least 1 year, and (c) currently with children aged 5 to 10 years or who were in that age range at the time of the divorce. Nine females and four males were commissioned for the current study. Table 1 contains the participant code and the gender of each participant.

Table 1

Participants' Gender

Participant Code	Gender
Participant 1	Male
Participant 2	Female
Participant 3	Female
Participant 4	Female
Participant 5	Male
Participant 6	Female
Participant 7	Female
Participant 8	Female
Participant 9	Female
Participant 10	Female
Participant 11	Female
Participant 12	Male
Participant 13	Male

Data Analysis

First Step: Listing and Preliminary Grouping

The first step of the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) was the noting and initial grouping of the experiences from the interviews of the 13 Hispanic parents. The practice of listing down of the relevant points of the participants' experiences was known as the horizonalization process of the analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

Second Step: Reduction and Elimination

Another step of the modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994) was the reduction and elimination process. During this stage, the I read and reread the data to determine the relevant responses, related to the main research question of the study. For the researcher to classify the invariant constituents or known as the other significant

perceptions and experiences of the participants, two questions were proposed by

Moustakas (1994):

- Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding? And;

- Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience. (p. 121)

From the two questions of Moustakas, all 13 interview transcripts of the Hispanic parents were thoughtfully examined. These two questions were used to determine which parts of the interviews were to be employed and incorporated into the next five stages of the analysis. The lived experiences shared by the participants, which strictly addressed the main research question of the study, were then sustained and tagged as the initial invariant constituents of the study.

Third Step: Clustering and Thematizing of the Invariant Constituents

The third step of the analysis was the grouping of the primary invariant constituents uncovered from the previous step. The grouping followed the main research question of the study and the two thematic categories to fully address the research question. According to Moustakas (1994), the grouped and categorized invariant constituents should then be analyzed further and transformed as the core themes of the study. NVivo12 by QSR was vital in determining the invariant constituents and themes of

the study, through the systematic organization and tabulation of the manually coded themes.

Fourth Step: Validation of Invariant Constituents and Themes

The fourth step of the study was the verification of the invariant constituents and themes established from the third step of the analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The step was completed to confirm the invariant constituents and themes, comparing and associating the participants' responses with the newly formed study results. Three questions were again suggested by Moustakas (1994) in line with the fourth step of the analysis:

- "Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?

- Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? And

- If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the participant's experience and should be deleted." (p. 121).

Fifth Step: Individual Textural Descriptions

The fifth step of the analysis was the creation of the individual textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). In the fifth step of the analysis, the authenticated invariant constituents and themes were employed to create the individual textural descriptions of the participants. Again, verbatim examples of the interviews were vital in examining and determining the findings from each of the participants.

Sixth Step: Individual Structural Descriptions

The sixth step of the method was the identification of the individual structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). I used the experiences shared by all 13 participants along with their responses supporting the uncovered invariant constituents and themes. This

step allowed me to validate the overall results of the study in line with the thematic categories and main research question of the study.

Seventh Step: Composite Description

The final step was conducted to summarize the results of the study. The composite descriptions report the "meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). From the said definition, the overall experiences of the participants were again discussed.

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Evidence of Trustworthiness

</div>

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study were practiced in the study, these were the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Polit and Beck (2010), credibility pertains to the researcher's confidence in the authenticity of the data being reported. In the study, this was achieved by reporting the data directly based on the interviews of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or postdivorce. Their experiences regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children became the main source of data. A technique employed to solidify the credibility of the study results was the member checking conducted with the 13 participants. All transcripts and initial interviewed were e-mailed to the participants and I provided them with the opportunity to review the data and make the necessary changes and edits as deemed relevant. Transferability concerns the possibility for the finding to be applied to another context or setting of future research studies (Baillie, 2015). With the rich and meaningful description of both the study setting and the parents as the participants, transferability

was then achieved (Baillie, 2015). Another criterion was the dependability of the study

which was defined by Polit and Beck as the "stability of data over time and over

conditions" (p. 492). In this case, an audit trail was recorded and maintained which

contained the decision-making processes of the researcher as the study was being

completed. Finally, confirmability was also warranted by analyzing and presenting the

actual voice of the participants; and not the personal biases of the researcher (Polit &

Beck, 2010). A reflective journal was also produced to exhibit the researcher's actual

"position and influence" (Baillie, p. 37) in performing the study (Baillie, 2015).

Presentation of Findings

In this section, the results of the phenomenological analysis are presented. It must

be noted that only the themes receiving the greatest number of references from the

analysis are tagged as the major themes of the study. Meanwhile, the themes that

followed the major themes but with fewer references were considered as the minor

themes or the other important findings of the study. Subthemes were also added to better

explain and elaborate on the ideas or concepts of the major and minor themes of the

study. Only the themes receiving a significant number, or five references or more, are

thoroughly presented and discussed in the section. With a total of 13 participants, themes

with references below 38% may need further research to improve or increase the

trustworthiness of the established data.

The main research question of the study explored the lived experiences of

Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or postdivorce regarding how cultural

factors impact the coping of their school-aged children. Two thematic categories emerged

from the analysis of the 13 interview transcripts to fully address and discuss the main

research question. From the thematic analysis, 27 themes were generated which all

pertain to the impact of divorce on school-aged children and the impact of cultural factors

on the coping of school-aged children. Table 2 contains the display of all the themes

uncovered from the phenomenological analysis of the interviews with the Hispanic

parents.

Table 2

Display of Themes Addressing the Main Research Question of the Study

Thematic Categories (TC)	Themes	Number of References	Percentage of References
TC1: Impact of divorce on school-aged children	Experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors	6	46%
	Wanting to be isolated or left alone		
	Having anger management issues		
	Engaging in problematic behaviors inside school	5	38%
	Drinking alcohol and smoking		
	Refusing to do their best and take their studies seriously *Skipping classes and school*		
	Fighting in school		
	Experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent *Showing resentment towards one parent*	5	38%
	Altering the views and beliefs of children on family life and relationships	3	23%
	Experiencing anxiety and depression	3	23%
	Experiencing issues in dealing with new parents and siblings	3	23%
TC2: Impact of cultural factors on the coping of school-aged children	Receiving guidance from Hispanic families and relatives	10	77%
	Supporting amidst the difficulties in terms of care and other needs of children *Having the grandparents, uncles, and aunts step up and fulfill the role of the missing parent/s* *Teaching the values of love and respect*		
	Prolonging of separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage *Needing to save marriage at all costs*	6	46%
	Family's traditional belief that women are not equal to men in marriage *Fighting the stigma against women as divorcees* *Refusal of family to cut ties with ex-partner*		
	Receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers	6	46%

	Lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture	5	38%
	Being coddled by grandparents leading to the change in attitude of children	2	15%
	Having the belief of needing to stay strong amidst the separation of parents	2	15%
	Experiencing difficulties in balancing the time of children with parents	1	8%

*Note: Subtheme/s

Thematic Category 1: Impact of divorce on school-aged children

The first thematic category of the study was the impact of divorce on school-aged children. The interviewed participants had varying perceptions and experiences on the effects of the parents' divorce on their children. As a result, only minor themes emerged. Six of the 13 participants reported experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors. Meanwhile, another five participants shared how their children were engaging in problematic behaviors inside the school. Another five of the participants added how their children were experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent. Three other subthemes followed, receiving just three references respectively. These participants witnessed the following changes: altering the views and beliefs of children on family life and relationships, experiencing anxiety and depression, and experiencing issues in dealing with new parents and siblings. The breakdown of the minor themes, number, and percentage of references are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Display of Themes Addressing Thematic Category 1

Themes	Number of References	Percentage of References
Experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors	6	46%
Wanting to be isolated or left alone		
Having anger management issues		
Engaging in problematic behaviors inside school	5	38%
Drinking alcohol and smoking		
Refusing to do their best and take their studies seriously		
Skipping classes and school		
Fighting in school		
Experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent	5	38%
Showing resentment towards one parent		
Altering the views and beliefs of children on family life and relationships	3	23%
Experiencing anxiety and depression	3	23%
Experiencing issues in dealing with new parents and siblings	3	23%

*Note: *Subtheme/s*

Minor Theme 1: Experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors. The first minor theme of the study was the experience of observing changes in their children's actions and behaviors. Specifically, the participants shared how they witnessed their children wanting to be isolated or left alone; and having anger management issues in the process or after the parents' divorce. The participants explained how their children displayed a change in their attitude, especially how they relate and communicate with their parents and the individuals around them.

Subtheme 1: Wanting to be isolated or left alone. The first subtheme that emerged was the change in behavior in terms of wanting to be isolated or left alone. The interviewed parents stated how their children preferred to be left alone and wanted to be isolated from their parents and families. Participant 1 shared how his daughter became distant and detached from them over time. This participant commented, "She copes with everything by shutting herself out from all her emotions and keeps it inside." Meanwhile, Participant 2 has three children in which two showed signs of changes due to the divorce of the parents. Participant 2 added how her children showed greater changes in the children's behavior at home, more than when they are in school:

> The baby was not affected. Since he was only 1 year old he did not feel the impact. My 8 year-old did not seem to show signs until a year or so later. There was some acting out and anger, trying to play both parents, but it only lasted a few months. The 9 year-old took it the hardest because she is a Daddy's Girl and did not like that Daddy was moving out.

I did not see any changes in school behaviors only home behaviors. My oldest

daughter (9) was the one that showed more of a reaction. She is a Daddy's girl, so

she was upset that he moved out. She stopped talking to me as much and was very

short in her answers. This lasted about a year. My youngest daughter (8), acted

out for a few months but nothing major. She would talk back or throw a tantrum if

she didn't get her way. If could have been the divorce or just typical child

behaviors. Behaviors noted were anger, irritability, distant, and isolation. There

was no change with the baby.

Similarly, Participant 11 admitted that the divorce heavily affected her daughter. She

witnessed how her daughter struggled as she felt alone and misunderstood. The

participant added that family members and friends have tried to connect and

communicate with her daughter but still failed to do so, saying: :

It was hard because she felt like she had no one to talk to because no one had

gone through what she was going through. The family tried to talk to her and try

to make her feel better. They tried but it didn't help.

Subtheme 2: Having anger management issues. The second subtheme that

followed was the presence of anger management issues. The participants indicated how

their children also constantly displayed anger and annoyance as they interacted with the

people around them. Participant 6 explained that 3 of the 4 children encountered

problems in school due to their uncontrollable anger, saying: "3 out of 4 struggled with

anger management. At one point, they were suspended for fighting each other at school.

Their grades suffered, they struggled trusting male figures, and engaged in high-risk

behaviors (drinking, smoking)." Additionally, Participant 7 expressed how "Their emotions ranged from anger to extreme sadness. My second child struggled with anger management, anxiety, and later, substance abuse."

Minor Theme 2: Engaging in problematic behaviors inside school. The second minor theme that emerged was the engagement of the children in problematic behaviors. In particular, the parents shared how their children displayed the following behaviors: (1) skipping classes and school; (2) drinking alcohol and smoking; (3) fighting in school; and (4) refusing to do their best and take their studies seriously. The participants revealed that their children encountered issues and even high-risk behaviors in school.

Subtheme 1: Drinking alcohol and smoking. The first subtheme was the children's coping mechanism of drinking alcohol and smoking. Three participants, Participants 3, 6, and 7 admitted that their children struggled to cope with the divorce and turned to alcohol and other substances. Participant 7 simply commented, "Their emotions ranged from anger to extreme sadness. My second child struggled with anger management, anxiety, and later, substance abuse."

Subtheme 2: Refusing to do their best and take their studies seriously. The second subtheme that followed was the refusal of the children to do their best and take their studies seriously. The participants expressed how their children would use the divorce as a reason for their low grades or not having enough effort to fulfill their responsibilities as students. Participant 9 shared his observations of her daughter, "She stopped eating on/off for a while, had habits of breaking her nails from anxious scratching at them, used the divorce as a reason for not doing her best in school at times."

Meanwhile, Participant 11 related her personal experiences and how her studies were impacted by her parents' divorce. The participant stated,

> The divorce impacted my daughter quite a bit. She didn't know all the answers and wasn't sure who to blame and if there was even anyone to blame… Daughter had a lot of difficulty coping with the divorce. I was only 10 when my parents divorced. I had trouble paying attention in school because I was so upset. I ended up participating in group therapy sessions at my school for students that were in the middle of divorce. Because I didn't know the reasons, no one really ever explained it to me I had a lot of anger. What didn't help was my dad got remarried a little too soon. I had to put blame on someone, so I blamed my stepmom for many years.

Subtheme 3: Skipping classes and school. One subtheme that emerged was the children's deliberate absences and skipping of classes. For the two participants, their children struggled as they were trying to adjust with the divorce of the parents and their school requirements. Participant 3 shared how her youngest daughter has been involved in various issues in school and was even caught when she skipped school and smoked weed. The participant explained,

> As the years went by, I started to notice my youngest daughter when she was in 4th grade having difficulties accepting she didn't have a dad. She started having behaviors at school. Nothing really bad but just looking for attention. She is now 14 years old and I have had so many issues with her from skipping school once and smoking weed.

Subtheme 4: Fighting in school. One participant shared that her children fought in school and were even suspended for some time. The participant expressed that the children's grades suffered from their lack of focus and refusal to take their education properly. Participant 6 stated, "3 out of 4 struggled with anger management. At one point, they were suspended for fighting each other at school. Their grades suffered, they struggled trusting male figures, and engaged in high-risk behaviors (drinking, smoking)."

Minor Theme 3: Experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent. The third minor theme of the study was the children's inability to accept the absence of one parent or having an incomplete family. Five of the 13 parents shared how their children had a difficulty accepting that they were not living a "normal" family life, having both parents in one home. In particular, it was a typical sight for the interviewed parents to witness the resentment and hatred of the children toward their mother or father.

Subtheme 1: Showing resentment towards one parent. According to Participant 3, her children were not very much affected as the father did not originally spend time and showed care for the children while they were still together. However, through the years, one child developed an increased hatred towards her father as he displayed unacceptable behaviors such as lying and doing drugs in front of the child. As young as 11 years old, this child has already decided to not see the father and have a relationship with him. The participant shared,

> My ex-husband was abusive and not really involved in their life even though we
> were married. I then remarried and had my fifth child. Her dad and I were only
> married for a year she was 5 months old when he ran off with another woman. At

the time my other children were 14, 11, 9, and 6 years old… None of them

demonstrated a loss or confusion about the divorce because once again my ex

wasn't involved much in their life. A year later my 11-year-old daughter (now 12)

stopped speaking to her dad. He continued lying and doing drugs and she was

exposed to this by him so she decided not to have a relationship with him.

Meanwhile, Participant 4 had a different story as the mother of the children and the one

who struggled from the divorce; one of her children could not understand the situation.

Although Participant 4 tried to be both the mother and the father of her children, one of

her children blamed and resented her for the lack of presence and relationship with the

father. This participant explained,

Overall, my children were able to deal pretty well with the separation/divorce.

They were more impacted by the absence of their father. Due to the age of my

oldest boy at the time of the separation, my youngest didn't get to bond with her

dad as well. As she grew older, she resented not having his attention at the same

level as him. Once I realized their needs, I tried to compensate for that loss.

My son struggled to separate his time from his dad. His dad would

promise to pick him up, and then he would not show up. He started blaming me

for that and resented me for a while.

Lastly, Participant 5 shared his own story and how their divorce affected the children. His

story centered on how he wanted to continue having a warm and peaceful relationship

with his own children and stepson. Due to the age of the youngest daughter, it was very

important to genuinely show that he still loved and cared for her despite the divorce.

However, the mother decided to separate Participant 5 from the children; especially the youngest daughter and his stepson. The 2 children then shared how they did not like the manner in which the mother tried to remove their father from their lives and developed a feeling of resentment towards their own mother. The participant stated,

> There was a total of 4 children involved (three are mine and a stepson, who I raised and was 10 months old when his mother and I married. The divorce had a negative impact on my youngest daughter and my stepson. My youngest daughter was very attached to me and then she was suddenly separated from me. This led to abandonment issues and internalized anger. My stepson was also very attached to me. All his life he knew me as his "daddy", now his mother began to push his biological father on him and began telling him that I was not his father anymore. The emotional implications on him were extremely damaging and still prevalent today. My remaining two daughters are twins. They consoled each other. As is the case with most twins, they rely on each other for all of their basic needs. Of course, they were impacted by the divorce, but the extent was not as great as the other two children.
>
> There were no effects regarding their behavior, academic performance in school, social interaction, or physiological issues (eating, sleeping, etc.) The only issue they ever shared with me was the resentment that developed toward their mother.

Thematic Category 2: Impact of cultural factors on the coping of school-aged children.

The second thematic category was the impact of cultural factors on the coping of school-aged children. From the thematic analysis of the interviews, one major theme, six minor themes, and seven subthemes emerged. The majority of the participants reported receiving guidance from their Hispanic families and relatives. Other minor themes receiving six references were the experiences of prolonging the separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage and receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers. Meanwhile, there were five participants who admitted that they were lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture. Three participants then added the influences of the following: being coddled by grandparents leading to the change in the attitude of children; having the belief of needing to stay strong amidst the separation of parents; and experiencing difficulties in balancing the time of children with parents. Table 4 contains the display of the themes in relation to the effects of the cultural factors on the coping of the school-aged children.

Table 4

Display of Themes Addressing Thematic Category 2

Themes	Number of References	Percentage of References
Receiving guidance from Hispanic families and relatives	10	77%
Supporting amidst the difficulties in terms of care and other needs of children		
Having the grandparents, uncles, and aunts step up and fulfill the role of the missing parent/s		
Teaching the values of love and respect		
Prolonging of separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage	6	46%
Needing to save marriage at all costs		
Family's traditional belief that women are not equal to men in marriage		
Fighting the stigma against women as divorcees		
Refusal of family to cut ties with ex-partner		
Receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers	6	46%
Lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture	5	38%
Being coddled by grandparents leading to the change in attitude of children	2	15%
Having the belief of needing to stay strong amidst the separation of parents	2	15%
Experiencing difficulties in balancing the time of children with parents	1	8%

*Note: Subtheme/s

Major Theme 1: Receiving guidance from Hispanic families and relatives.

The first major theme of the study was the guidance received by the single parent and their children as they adjust to the difficulties of the divorce and post-divorce processes. In particular, participants and their children survived the difficulties of divorce with the following: (1) supporting the single parent and children amidst the difficulties in terms of care and other needs of children; (2) having the grandparents, uncles, and aunts step up and fulfill the role of the missing parent/s; and (3) teaching the values of love and respect. Participants explained how the help of their Hispanic families allowed them to endure the changes and adjustments in their lives as they were going through the effects of the divorce.

Subtheme 1: Supporting amidst the difficulties in terms of care and other needs of children. The first subtheme that emerged was the support of the family members amidst the difficulties in terms of caring for and providing the needs of the children. Participant 2 simply responded, "Extended family was there to support and help my children in any way they could." Participant 3 provided other examples of support such as through financial assistance and even babysitting the children when the participant was at work or at school. This participant had her whole family at her back during the most challenging time of her life, saying:

> I went back to college when four of my children were at home so my extended family helped with some finances and babysitting. Working and going to school was a challenge so my mom, stepdad, sister, and my second husband brother helped a lot.

Participant 5 then explained how the families of both sides were extremely helpful in ensuring that the children would not feel the gap and differences stemming from the divorce of the parents. This participant shared how the family of the mother of his children exerted extra effort to make the children feel welcomed and valued despite the divorce. The children would still spend time with the other side of the family during special occasions or family outings, saying:

> In the Hispanic culture, the extended family is often classified as immediate family. This is definitely the case in my family and they were extremely supportive and helped to ensure as a little disruption as possible. They continued to have the children spend the night on occasion, continue to conduct family outings, and spent the same amount of time and gave the same amount of attention for the children as they did prior to the divorce.

In addition, Participant 6 simply commented on how: "Friends and family were our support through the separation and divorce." Participant 7 echoed the contribution of their family members where the participant's mother took over and cared for the children in her absence. The participant expressed: "They were very involved. My mother became their caretaker and another parent in my absence. Their aunts and uncles were also supportive through the process." For Participant 8, her family members "were always there giving support and advice."

Subtheme 2: Having the grandparents, uncles, and aunts step up and fulfill the role of the missing parent/s. The second subtheme that followed was having the grandparents, uncles, and aunts step up and fulfill the role of the missing parent/s. For the

three of the participants, they shared how their family members were willing to step up

and fulfill the role/s of the other parent for the benefit and welfare of the children.

Participant 4 explained how the male figures in their family took on the role of the father

for the children. From the participant's parents to her siblings, they worked as one family

to fill the missing piece as the father of the children was absent due to the divorce. The

participant shared her story,

> Other male figures in my family stepped in to fill the void their father was
>
> leaving. This move helped them cope through the changes, and provided the
>
> support for my children. My sisters and brothers also supported us through this
>
> time, which also helped them benefit from the family support.
>
> My mother became the other parent, their uncles invited them and
>
> included them in their family activities. My family, his paternal and maternal
>
> grandparents would show up for his sports activities, which were a great way to
>
> distract him from his father's absence. Taking my children to church helped them
>
> find greater meaning and connection to a greater calling. It gave them purpose and
>
> a community for their sense of belonging. Our greatest community was our large
>
> and close-knit family (8 siblings, 8 spouses, 33 grandchildren).

Meanwhile, Participant 9 highlighted how her family members were always present to

serve as the male role models and reduce the impact of the divorce and absence of the

children's father. This participant commented, "They were all extremely supportive,

encouraging and took over the male role model she was missing from her dad."

Subtheme 3: Teaching the values of love and respect. The third subtheme that
followed was the imparting of Hispanic values and respect to the children. As the
participants shared, Hispanics highly value the words and lessons of their families and the
participants provided examples of how the families were always present to teach valuable
lessons to their children. Participant 1 commented, "Family played a big role in my
daughter's life. They showed her continuous love and respect. They would lead by
example and teach her the values of respecting one's self and others." Meanwhile,
Participant 5 again highlighted the closeness of the Hispanic families and how this value
helped the children to feel loved and treasured despite the absence of one parent. The
participant explained:

> There are many values that come into play when discussing Hispanic culture.
> From my perspective, I would say the closeness of family which is prevalent in
> the Hispanic culture did play a part, ensuring that the children never felt out of
> place, abandoned, or unloved, especially with regard to my stepson. Aside from
> the fact that their mother was no longer at family functions, nothing changed.

**Minor Theme 1: Prolonging of separation due to the Hispanic values on
marriage.** The first minor theme that emerged was the prolonging of separation due to
the Hispanic values on marriage. The parents interviewed admitted how the traditional
Hispanic views on marriage even stretched and extended the marriage despite their issues
as the families did not want to give up on the relationship of the couple. Specifically, the
participants shared the effects of the Hispanic value on marriage with the following
factors: (1) needing to save marriage at all costs; (2) family's traditional belief that

women are not equal to men in marriage; (3) fighting the stigma against women as divorcees; and (4) refusal of family to cut ties with ex-partner.

Subtheme 1: Needing to save marriage at all costs*.* The first subtheme that emerged was the belief that marriage should be saved and protected at all costs. Five of the participants shared how they were encouraged by their parents and other family members to try to fix the marriage for their family, despite the presence of many issues between the couple. Participant 4 shared that divorce is not an option for their parents. However, this participant also believed that divorce has become common in the current generation. The participant stated: "Both sets of parents (grandparents) grew up with a generation where divorce was not an option. Unfortunately, divorce is so common in our own generation, that it is accepted, and rarely opposed." Participant 6 shared their experience of wanting to preserve their marriage for the sake of the children, saying:

> Our divorce was prolonged due to our values of marriage. Our separation would
> be on and off because we believed we had to find a way to work on our marriage
> for the sake of the children.

Finally, Participant 7 had the same experience with their family's value of marriage. Their family influenced and tried to encourage them to reconcile but still failed to do so after a few tries. This participant then expressed,

> It actually kept me in the relationship longer than I should have been. Our family
> influenced our reconciliation, and we struggled to on and off. Our culture has also
> influenced our males to have a different idea to what is acceptable and what is not

in a relationship, and those ideas and actions strongly influence their

relationships. As it strongly influenced mine.

Subtheme 2: Family's traditional belief that women are not equal to men in marriage. The second subtheme that followed was the family's traditional belief that

women are not equal to men in marriage. The participants explained how the Hispanic

culture promotes a sense of privilege to the males, increasing the differences between the

couple. Participant 4 explained how this belief along with the constant involvement of the

family members did not help the marriage, saying:

> The ideology of "machismo" or male chauvinist passed on through generations
>
> creates a sense of entitlement to our males. Our extended family (both sides) felt
>
> the need to include themselves in the process, which created more tension for our
>
> dissolving relationship.

Meanwhile, Participant 7 echoed: "Our culture has also influenced our males to have a

different idea to what is acceptable and what is not in a relationship, and those ideas and

actions strongly influence their relationships. As it strongly influenced mine."

Subtheme 3: Fighting the stigma against women as divorcees. The third

subtheme uncovered was fighting the stigmas against women as divorcees. This theme is

another factor affecting the decision of the couple to divorce. Participant 6 stated how

the Hispanic culture gives a great value to marriage. This participant added that due to

this value, women divorcees are viewed differently by the society: "From some cultures.

While our divorce is legal, our culture views our bond as a lifetime, due to our religious

ceremony. Many choose to stay in debilitation marriages just because of how they will be viewed as a divorcee."

Subtheme 4: Refusal of family to cut ties with ex-partner. The fourth subtheme that emerged was the refusal of the family to cut ties with their ex-partners. Two of the participants shared how their families still communicated and connected with their ex-partners despite the divorce. As Participant 6 shared, the refusal of their other family members to cut ties with their ex-partner caused issues between her own family as well. The participant expressed, "Family was very involved. Some male figures from my own family would not cut ties with my ex-husband, which caused friction between us. My reasons for the separation were at times not validated, and I was criticized for requesting a separation. "

Minor Theme 2: Receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers. The second minor theme that emerged was the encouragement and advice coming from the Hispanic family friends and peers. From the six of the 13 participants interviewed, they shared how the advice and other forms of support and guidance from their friends and peers helped their family overcome the difficult process of divorce. Participant 3 did not specifically believe that the Hispanic community played a role in their lives during the divorce process. However, their friends and church family were always willing to help: "I can't say the Hispanic community played a role in my children's lives while experiencing my divorces but my church family and friends were always there to help." Participant 6 echoed, "Friends and family were our support through the separation and divorce." Meanwhile, Participant 9 shared the value of

friends as she and her children were dealing with the effects of the divorce on the family: "The same as my family, supportive, encouraging and caring to her needs."

Minor Theme 3: Lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture. The third minor theme that emerged was the lack of Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture of the parents and their children. For the five if the 13 participants, they shared how the Hispanic cultural values did not have much effect on the children's coping mechanisms and abilities as they have already adapted the culture in the U.S. Participant 1 admitted that, "the Hispanic community did not play much of a role in my daughter's life." Participant 11 explained how the community they lived in had numerous single parent homes which affected the view and perception of the child on families and relationships. As a result, the Hispanic cultural values did not have much of an effect as the child was brought up in a different community with different norms and values. The participant stated:

I don't think being Hispanic played much of a role on how she experienced the divorce. Where we lived, there were a lot of single-parent homes. A lot of her friends had both parents, most of them had just one parent and a few of them had a step parent. So, for her, it was just fitting in with normality.

Similarly, Participant 12 had the same experience as Participant 11. The community and environment a person was brought up in would have more weight than their original ethnicity or culture. The participant explained,

Not at all, I wasn't really raised in the defined Hispanic culture though. I'm not aggressively religious, and I wasn't raised around my extended family. My

mother was in the army in my early years so we moved away from "the family" at a very young age and was raised around kids and other families from around the country.

Chapter Summary

The fourth chapter of the study contained the results from the phenomenological analysis of the 13 interviews with the Hispanic parents. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to investigate the lived experiences of parents of school-aged Hispanic children who are divorced or are going through the divorce process in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method led to the generation of 27 themes, all addressing the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or post-divorce regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children. Two thematic categories were uncovered from the interviews to fully answer the main research question.

In terms of the Impact of divorce on school-aged children, the following changes were witnessed: (1) experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors; (2) engaging in problematic behaviors inside school; and (3) experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent. Meanwhile, a number of participants also reported how the divorce altered the views and beliefs of children on family life and relationships, development of anxiety and depression, and needing to deal with new parents and siblings. In response to the second thematic category or the impact of cultural factors on the coping of school-aged children, one major theme or most significant experience

emerged. The majority of the interviewed parents and their children were able to cope with, and survive the effects of the divorce process as they received guidance from Hispanic families and relatives. Further, other crucial experiences uncovered form the analysis were the prolonging of separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage, receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers, and lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture. Other experiences were also uncovered but may need further research were the impact of the following: being coddled by grandparents leading to the change in attitude of children; having the belief of needing to stay strong amidst the separation of parents; and experiencing difficulties in balancing the time of children with parents. In the final chapter, the themes will be discussed along with the literature presented in the second chapter. The recommendations of the researcher, implications of the results, and the conclusions are also found in the final chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research is to study the lived experiences of individuals who are divorced or are going through the divorce process and are parents of school-aged Hispanic children in order to gain understanding into their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their child's emotional well-being. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of divorce through Hispanic parents and their perceptions regarding the challenges experienced by their school-aged children. Hispanic families are substantial population given the limited amount of research in which the cultural factor of acculturation has been considered in relation to the effects of divorce on children.

Phenomenological research aims to capture the essence of the phenomenon under study by selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The phenomenological research design is centered around understanding the lived experiences of individuals. The study was established to gain a better understanding of the impact divorce has on Hispanic children. All participants interviewed were parents who shared lived experiences of their divorce to gather their perceptions on how their divorce affected their school-aged Hispanic children. In order gain insight on how divorce affects children of Hispanic parents, each participant was provided with questions to help address the research question. The following research question was examined:

What are the lived experiences of Hispanic parents who are in the process of divorce or postdivorce regarding how cultural factors impact the coping of their school-aged children?

In order to answer the research question, a group of participants were collected who met the criteria of being Hispanic, divorced or going through a divorce and who have been living separately for at least 1 year, and being a parent of children who were school aged at the time of the divorce. I used a qualitative phenomenological approach as the research design. After the interviews and collection of data were complete, I examined patterns and themes among the participants. This research study was established to gain insight on the impact divorce has on Hispanic children and the role acculturation plays. Participants provided many details to interview questions that allowed for the research question to be supported. Each participant that was interviewed was Hispanic, divorced or currently going through divorce, and had school-aged child(ren). Interviews were reviewed by each participant to make sure they did not want to add anything more information. Upon approval, the interview was then transcribed. Transcripts were reviewed numerous times to determine the pertinent responses related to the research question. The modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) was the prominent and original grouping of the experiences gathered from the 13 Hispanic parents. This helped me to list the important points of the participants experiences which is known as the horizontalization process of the analysis (see Moustakas, 1994). The invariant constituents and themes were found by answering two questions proposed by

Moustakas. This process helped to determine the clusters and themes that were used for the study.

Participants described the impact their divorce had on their children and how their culture played a role. Major themes that were found after interviewing participants were that children were impacted by their parents' divorce, exhibiting both negative and positive themes. Negative effects that were found included (a) engaging in problematic behaviors in school, (b) difficulty in accepting the absence of one parent, (c) emotional turmoil (increased anxiety and depression), and (d) experiencing issues with introducing new parents and siblings. A positive impact was that, due to the Hispanic culture, children received guidance from their extended family and friends. It was also found that parents prolonged their separation/divorce due to their Hispanic values on marriage.

The results of the study found both major and minor themes. Subthemes were also added to help gain a better understanding/ explanation of the ideas and concepts found. The next section will outline a more detailed review of the results.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this study to address the research question, the following interview questions were asked to each participant;

1. Overall, how do you think the divorce impacted your child(ren)?

2. Did your child(ren) experience difficulty coping with the divorce (e.g., problem behaviors, trouble in school, etc.)?

3. Did Hispanic cultural values play a role in how your child(ren) experienced the divorce? If so, how?

4. What role did your extended family play in the challenges your child(ren) experienced during divorce?

5. What role did the Hispanic community (e.g., friends, church, etc.) play in the challenges your child(ren) experienced during divorce?

6. Do you think Hispanic views of divorce are different from other cultures? If so, how?

7. Do you think your Hispanic culture played a significant role in the process of your divorce? If so, how?

Research Question

The principal research question explored in this study was the lived experiences of divorce and the impact it has on Hispanic children. While researchers have studied divorce, there is limited research conducted on the psychological and emotional impact of divorce specifically on Hispanic children. Participants all reported negative and positive impact of the divorce and the impact it had on their children.

There were two thematic categories were found to address the research question. From the thematic analysis, 27 themes (six minor, five major, 14 subthemes, and two thematic categories) were generated that relate to the impact of divorce on Hispanic children and the impact of cultural factors.

Thematic Category 1: Impact of divorce on school aged children

The first thematic category of the study was the impact of divorce on school-aged children. Participants had varying perceptions and experiences on the effects of the parents' divorce on their children. Consequently, only minor themes emerged. Six of the

13 participants reported experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors. While another five participants shared how their children were engaging in problematic behaviors inside the school. Another five of the participants added how their children were experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent. Three other subthemes followed, receiving just three references respectively. These participants witnessed the following changes: altering the views and beliefs of children on family life and relationships, experiencing anxiety and depression, and experiencing issues in dealing with new parents and siblings.

Minor Theme 1: Experiencing changes in children's actions and behaviors. The first minor theme of the study was the experience of observing changes in their children's actions and behaviors. Mostly, the participants stated how they observed their children preferred to be isolated or left alone and there were anger management issues during or after the parents' divorce. The participants explained how their children demonstrated a change in their attitude, specifically how they relate and communicate with their parents and the individuals around them.

Minor Theme 2: Engaging in problematic behaviors inside school. In particular, the parents shared how their children displayed the following behaviors: (a) skipping classes and school; (b) drinking alcohol and smoking; (c) fighting in school; and (d) refusing to do their best and take their studies seriously. The participants revealed that their children confronted issues and even high-risk behaviors in school.

Minor Theme 3: Experiencing difficulties in accepting the absence of one parent. The study was the children's inability to accept the absence of one parent or

having an incomplete family. Five of the 13 parents shared how their children struggled in accepting that they were not living a "normal" family life, having both parents in one home. Especially, it was a typical sight for the interviewed parents to observe the resentment and hatred of the children toward their mother or father. A participant stated that her children were not very much affected as the father did not originally spend time with or showed care for the children while they were still together. Nonetheless, through the years, one child developed an increased hatred towards her father as he showed intolerable behaviors such as lying and doing drugs in front of the child. Meanwhile, another participant had a different story as the mother of the children and the one who struggled from the divorce. One of her children could not understand the situation. According to Stroheschein (2012), divorce is more than the moment when a spouse departs the household; divorce reduces a process of uncoupling that begins well in advance of the event and has the potential to create issues far into the future. When it comes to divorce, it signifies the absence of one parent and the potential impact it has on the child later on in life.

After a divorce, children go through many stressors such as such as drop in economic resources, greater parenting demands on custodial parent, and relocation to a new home or neighborhood (Stroheschein, 2012). It is noted that through the pathway of increasingly dysfunctional family relationships the predisruption effects of divorce are thought to influence child mental health (Stroheschein, 2012). Both Hispanic children and non-Hispanic children are both impacted in similar ways when discussing emotional

health. In the Hispanic culture, extended family plays a large role and helps fill the void of the missing parent.

Thematic Category 2: Impact of cultural factors on the coping of school-aged children.

Most of the participants reported receiving guidance from their Hispanic families and relatives. Other minor themes receiving six references were (a) the experiences of prolonging the separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage and (b) receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers. Meanwhile, there were five participants who admitted that they were lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White culture. Three participants then added the influences of (a) being coddled by grandparents leading to the change in the attitude of children, (b) having the belief of needing to stay strong amidst the separation of parents, and (c) experiencing difficulties in balancing the time of children with parents.

Minor Theme 1: Prolonging of separation due to the Hispanic values on marriage. Parents interviewed admitted how the traditional Hispanic views on marriage even stretched and extended the marriage despite their issues as the families did not want to give up on the relationship of the couple. Particularly, the participants shared the effects of the Hispanic value on marriage with the following factors: (1) needing to save marriage at all costs; (2) family's traditional belief that women are not equal to men in marriage; (3) fighting the stigma against women as divorcees; and (4) refusal of family to cut ties with ex-partner.

Minor Theme 2: Receiving help and advice from other Hispanic family friends and peers. Six of the 13 participants interviewed, shared how the advice and other forms of support and guidance from their friends and peers helped their family overcome the difficult process of divorce. Participant 3 did not specifically believe that the Hispanic community played a role in their lives during the divorce process. However, their friends and church family were always willing to help: "I can't say the Hispanic community played a role in my children's lives while experiencing my divorces but my church family and friends were always there to help." Participant 6 echoed, "Friends and family were our support through the separation and divorce." Meanwhile, Participant 9 shared the value of friends as she and her children were dealing with the effects of the divorce on the family: "The same as my family, supportive, encouraging and caring to her needs."

Minor Theme 3: Lacking Hispanic cultural values due to the adaptation of the White or Non-Hispanic culture. For the 5 of the 13 participants, shared how the Hispanic cultural values did not have much effect on the children's coping mechanisms and abilities as they have already adapted the culture in the U.S. Participant 1 admitted that, "the Hispanic community did not play much of a role in my daughter's life." Participant 11 explained how the community they lived in had numerous single parent homes that affected the view and perception of the child on families and relationships. Consequently, the Hispanic cultural values did not have much of an effect as the child was brought up in a different community with different norms and values.

The literature states In the Hispanic culture, being surrounded by family is a key

component. The Hispanic culture is different from other cultures in its importance on family unity (Ellison et al., 2012). Although relatively rare in research on divorce, the influence of culture, especially through extended family, on divorce is significant. For example, it is possible that in some cultures the extended family might see the divorce as their divorce, influencing the manifestation of the divorce as well as the process of communication among family members regarding it (Kreager, Felson, Warner, & Wenger, 2013). In this study it was found that extended family is a essential part of support for children as well as the parents to help them during the divorce. The results of the research show that Hispanics extended family play a crucial part in a child's life after divorce. Therefore the study supports the research findings with regards to extended family and provided a further confirmation on the important role extended family plays in the Hispanic culture.

Limitations of study

There were some limitations to the study. The data gathered was limited as parents were the only participants who were interview. Children's occurrence may be different from parents' representations, as parents may be under or overstating the impact to their children due to their own distress about the divorce. This was unavoidable since the data collected was provided by parents. Therefore, a limitation of this study was relying on the perceptions of parents, who may have a different perception of how their child was affected by divorce.

The research results were simplified to the general population, as the research was focused on a specific population. The population was limited to Hispanic individuals who

have or had school-aged children during a divorce or are currently going through divorce; all other participants did not meet criteria for the scope of this study. Participants were recruited from San Antonio, Texas due to limited geographical resources.

Another limitation that was interviews were conducted by one parent only, primarily mothers. Further research may be considered to study if both parents have the same perceptions of how their child is impacted by divorce. Finally, the number of participants was low (13). Although the number of participants gathered was sufficient to meet theme saturation, further researchers may consider using a larger number of participants.

Recommendations

While conducting the research on this topic I found there to be a lot of information on divorce and children, but not the effects it has on children specifically Hispanic children. When it comes to discussing divorce in children, and comparing Hispanics, and Non Hispanics, they are impacted in similar ways. The difference found in the Hispanic children is the support they receive from their extended families. As a Hispanic myself, I felt that there needed to be a better understanding how Hispanic families and their culture is different when going through a divorce. Because of limited amount of research in which cultural factors have been considered in relation to the consequences of divorce for children, the goal of this study was to contribute additional research on divorce and the effects on children, specifically Hispanic children. I would also recommend that further research be conducted on how parents help their children cope with the divorce, whether it be talking to their parents and/ or counseling.

A second recommendation will be to broaden the participant pool. As noted earlier there were a total of 13 participants, themes with references below 38% may need further research to improve or increase the trustworthiness of the established data. In this study there were primarily women who participated in the study. In future studies it will be beneficial to further expand on how mothers and father perceive divorce, and if they respond to questions differently.

My third recommendation will be to interview children directly. As noted in my limitations, parents have a different perspective of how they see things as opposed to their parents. In this research the ages studied were 5 to 10, additional research will be beneficial if children of different ages are studied to see how their maturity levels play a role in how they are affected by divorce.

Finally, the study focused on Hispanic parents who lived in the United States. Further research will be beneficial on how Hispanic children on impacted who live in Mexico versus in the United States. It may be interesting to examine whether their cultural values stay the same and what role extended family plays. Another topic that can be researched will be comparing Hispanics to a different culture.

Implications

This research study can have a positive outlook on social change and how divorce impacts children. The study looked at the phenomenon through the view of the parents and their perceptions and experiences on how their children are affected by their divorce. The findings of this study provided significant data on multiple levels. The findings can be used to provide personalized mental health care to Hispanic children with divorcing

parents The results of this study found children to experience changes in their behavior with their interpersonal relationships, increased anxiety and depression.

Having a better understanding of treatment for possible trauma and negative emotional conditions resulting from divorce can be avoided through such treatment, which can help not only the individual child, but the parents seeking to ensure their divorce does not have negative effect on their children. Healthcare professionals may be able to provide such personalized care and assist in minimizing the negative emotional states among a growing number of children in society given the rate of increasing divorces in Hispanic families. The experience of divorce among Hispanics differs from other cultures is that the proximity and importance of extended families (Wright & Levitt, 2013). Members of extended family in numerous cases live with each other or near each other, provide significant social support, and spend a large amount of time together (Landale, et al, 2006). This experience could prove an important network for social support to members of the family who undergo divorce.

This information can also help with understanding the impact divorce has on children and help parents, caregivers gain insight on things to look for to prevent the child from experiencing any negative effects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this phenomenological research was to study the lived experiences of parents who are divorced or are currently going through a divorce to gather their perceptions on how their divorce affects their school-aged Hispanic children. As the research was being conducted, it was unclear whether predictors of divorce vary

across racial and ethnic groups. There is an essential a need to understand the impact divorce has on children and understanding if culture plays a role.

All participants in this study were willing to respond to all questions to help gain a better understanding of how their child was affected and how they can help them in the future. Every single participant voiced how extended family played in an important role in their divorce and how they supported their children.

Although this study can be researched further, there were many conclusions that were made to help parents. This research offers a guide to help other researchers with providing them a direction to explore and help improve a child's outlook on divorce and also assists treatment providers or clinicians to factor in the Hispanic culture into their treatment.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Overall, how do you think the divorce impacted your child (ren)?

2. Did your child (ren) experience difficulty coping with the divorce (e.g., problem behaviors, trouble in school, etc)?

3. Did Hispanic cultural values play a role in how your child (ren) experienced the divorce? If so, how?

4. What role did your extended family play in the challenges your child (ren) experienced during divorce?

5. What role did the Hispanic community (e.g., friends, church, etc) play in the challenges your child (ren) experienced during divorce?

6. Do you think Hispanic views of divorce are different from other cultures? If so, how?

7. Do you think your Hispanic culture played a significant role in the process of your divorce? If so, how?

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Name of Participant: _____

Identifying Number given by Researcher: _____

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

Age of Parent: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Divorce ☐   Separated ☐

Age of Child / and or Children at time of Divorce:

Child 1: _____

Child 2: _____

Child 3: _____

Child 4: _____

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH STUDY ON

Examining the Lived experiences of Divorce Among Hispanic Parents. Maria R. Perez, is

a doctoral student at Walden University, and is conducting this research study as a part of

her doctoral degree requirement. The researcher is looking for parents who are divorced

or going through a divorce and have Hispanic school-aged children. Volunteers will be

interviewed on the impact divorce has had on their children. The researcher aspires to

understand the underlying emotional issues that impact school-aged Hispanic children.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to: reflect on particular memories from

your experience with divorce and the impact it had on your child. The study will take

approximately 30 to 60 minutes for you complete depending on your responses.

If you are interested, please inquire here. or call at . Thank you! This study has been

reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board, Walden University

Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-26-18-0166326 and it expires

on and it expires on October 25th, 2019