

12-2020

Cuban Immigrants' Experience with Acculturation and How They Cope in the United States

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Cuban Immigrants' Experience with Acculturation and How They Cope in the United States

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AND ADVANCEMENT

PROGRAM IN EDD: COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION

AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

OF NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION: COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION

LOURDES ARAUJO

DECEMBER 2020

**CUBAN IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE WITH ACCULTURATION AND HOW THEY
COPE IN THE UNITED STATES**

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
National Louis University, Tampa, Florida
College of Professional Studies and Advancement

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
Counselor Education and Supervision

by
Lourdes Araujo

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research examines how Cuban immigrants experience cope and adapt to the United States. Cuban immigration is associated with specific stressors related to the immigration experience and the necessary process of acculturation and assimilation. These major stressors can result in mental health concerns among Cuban immigrants; however, no studies have examined how acculturation may influence Cuban immigrants' coping skills and resultant mental health concerns. This unique study is the first to examine the coping skills Cuban immigrants use during acculturation and the effects of these skills on Cuban immigrants' mental health.

Methods: Seventeen participants completed a semistructured interview and six participants completed a focus group interview. This study only included Cuban immigrants who immigrated within the last 10 years and who currently reside in Florida. The researcher used a phenomenological qualitative methodology approach to examine how Cuban immigrants managed the acculturation process using coping strategies. **Results:** Key findings revealed that Cuban immigrants who used coping skills during their first 2 years in the United States had higher levels of acculturation. Participants used coping skills related to technology, family, religion, personal coping skills, friends, career services, mental health, and English proficiency to reduce acculturation stress. **Conclusion:** These findings highlight how mental health counselors and educators would benefit from accessing training to recognize and provide appropriate care for disorders related to acculturative stress among Cuban immigrants.

Keywords: Cuban immigration, stress, acculturation stress, mental health counselors, mental health services, immigration stress, cope, coping strategies, acculturation coping, Cuban American, multiculturalism, racial identity, and culture identity.

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this study to my son, Javier, the love of my life and greatest gift, my parents, my brothers Jorge and Eddie, Madrina y Padrino, and all of my family. A special dedication to my parents: Thank you for your sacrifices and for your unconditional love and support. I would not be here today if not for the culture, beliefs, values, faith, and respect you instilled in me starting early on in my life. I remember teaching at 6 years old, and you never discouraged me from dreaming and going after what I wanted in life so that I could aspire to achieve this great honor and accomplishment in my life. I am the first in my family to reach these heights and I am so honored and grateful. I want to thank God, the one that makes everything happen in his own time. My faith is strong and without it I could not have endured the pain, the dark, and the light in my life. I could not have done any of this without unconditional love. I was not born in Cuba but what my parents instilled in me about my culture, nostalgia, history, and value runs deep in my veins. We have an incredible family story that I hope to share one day. I hope this study provides future counselor educators and supervisors with history about the Cuban population and their struggle to find success in the United States. Many Cuban immigrants do not have any coping skills or the experienced support system to get them through the most important years of acculturation and assimilation. A great majority of Cuban immigrants do not have coping skills and strengths, yet they must still survive in a foreign country after leaving their most valuable piece of them behind: their family. Some Cuban immigrants wait 20 years or more to see their family again due to the political issues of the Castro regime and policies of the United States, which are different than any other immigrant. My passion for counseling and education work with the Cuban and all Latino(a) population will continue so that future generations can have a better experience with acculturation and

acclimation. More importantly, I hope that these populations find counseling as a coping skill to be beneficial early on to reduce any stigma or negative feelings about pursuing counseling in the future.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate the following poem by the late Cuban poet, Jose Martí, to my father (93 years old), who has not been back to Cuba since 1962 during the Cuban revolution and longs to see his “free” Cuba.

Yo soy un hombre sincero
De donde crece la palma,
Y antes de morirme quiero
Echar mis versos del alma.

Yo he visto al águila herida
Volar al azul sereno,
Y morir en su guarida
La víbora del veneno.

Con los pobres de la tierra
Quiero yo mi suerte echar:
El arroyo de la sierra
Me complace más que el mar

Denle al vano el oro tierno
Que arde y brilla en el crisol:

A mí denme el bosque eterno

Cuando rompe en él el sol.

“Mi hijo, Mamita y Papito lindos, mis hermanos, Jorge y Eddie, los amo con todo mi corazon.” Luly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my deepest gratitude to various individuals who have supported me in completing my doctorate and, subsequently, my dissertation. I extend profuse thanks to my dissertation chair, Dr. Joffrey Suprina, my committee member, Dr. Angemil Perez-Peña, and my dear friend Denise Tyler, who supported and guided me even before I started my doctoral degree. Denise: I have acquired so much from you, especially that life goes on, and that I can do anything with faith and perseverance. I am positively able to get through my challenges and I am a better person as a result of your friendship and your sense of compassion.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the friends and colleagues who have been helpful in my growth. I am humbled to be a part of an outstanding doctoral cohort! Nicole, Marina, Jane, and Shuntaye: Thanks for your incredible support, friendship, and honesty. It seems like yesterday when we just started our doctoral studies. We've shared many affectionate memories, including endless nights, strenuous assignments, and uncertain life challenges. I am proud to call you all my classmates and friends.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over 1,000,000 Cuban immigrants have immigrated to the United States since the Fidel Castro regime took power in 1959 (Pew Research Center, 2020). A great majority of these Cubans have immigrated to the United States due to the political, religious, and equality repressions that occurred during the 1959 Cuban revolution. The Cuban immigrants came in five waves (Woltman & Newbold, 2009). The first wave was during the revolution through the missile crisis and consisted of approximately 248,100 immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2020). The United States Congress enacted the Cuban Refugee Adjustment Act (CAA) to provide humanitarian help to the Cuban people facing an oppressive regime starting in 1959 with the Cuban revolution. CAA provides special provisions conferring legal status for Cuban refugees and serves as an escape toward freedom and justice for Cuban immigrants. The second wave was during the closing of the air or sea options for Cuban immigrants to leave the country, and this wave included 260,600 Cuban immigrants. The third wave was during the Mariel exodus as a result of Fidel Castro's response to protests of political asylum seekers leaving Cuba, and this wave consisted of 124,800 immigrants. The fourth wave was the Balsero crises, a result of lifting the Cuban immigration restrictions, and approximately 30,900 Cuban immigrants left Cuba to seek political asylum in the United States. The last wave, post-Soviet Exodus, was the most massive migration from Cuba to the United States, which consisted of 649,700 Cuban immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2020). The last wave is essential to this study because it includes Cuban immigrants who arrived in the United States in the last 10 years, which was a criterion for this study. Immigration laws for Cubans are very different from immigration laws for people arriving from other nations (Perez, 2016). The United States gave Cuban immigrants special treatment that no other group of refugees or immigrants received. This treatment was

based on the former Wet-Foot Dry-Foot policy, which was built on Cuba's severity of oppression and freedoms. As of January 2017, the special parole policy for Cuban migrants was discontinued (Moffett, 2020). The last wave of Cuban immigrants were included in this study and adhered to this latest law. This law increases Cuban immigrants' stress as Cubans are now considered undocumented or illegal immigrants and experience the same struggles to get to the United States as other illegal immigrants, including deportation.

The mass numbers of Cuban immigrants and their immigration reasons are different than other immigrants. Latino/a immigrants experience different challenges during the immigration process to the United States that can cause mental health psychological distress. For example, the circumstances of departure, including whether individuals had to migrate because of political conflict, desperate economic conditions, or other pressures, are different between Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants (Torres et al., 2013). Cubans made a journey based on a difficult choice to leave their country (Travieso-Díaz, 1998). Cuban immigrants' decision to leave Cuba largely centered around their need for freedom of choice, religion, and politics; thus, Cuban immigrants' face unique challenges when acculturating and coping due to the differences in social norms, values, language, and political and economic systems between Cuba and the United States (Duany, 2018). Acculturation is the process of cultural change, which happens when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together and experience changes in values, attitudes, beliefs, and identities as a result of social and cultural differences (Steffen & Merrill, 2011). The changes that occur during acculturation can be both psychological and sociocultural. Cuban immigrants may experience acculturation as a stressful event. Individuals engaged in problem-focused coping skills aim to tackle problems that cause stress to better regulate emotions resulting from stress (Hajro et al., 2019). Cubans' immigration experience can be difficult or

stressful during the acculturation process and it is currently unknown what coping mechanisms Cubans use to acculturate in the United States.

This chapter presents the background and need for the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions to the study, definition of terms, and a summary.

Background and Need for the Study

One million Cubans now reside in the United States; however, little has been studied regarding Cubans' acculturation process and how they cope during their acculturation process in the United States. Cubans leave their country as a result of economic concerns, fear of persecution, and an unwillingness to accept conflicting political views (Perez, 2016). Cuban immigrants decide to immigrate for professional advancement opportunities and to escape oppression (Helterbrand, 2010; Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Valdez et al., 2013). For some immigrants, premigration adversity—such as war-related violence or persecution—can be the main reason families migrate (Cooper et al., 2019). Cubans have experienced the Cuba's transformation of Fidel Castro taking power in 1959, which dramatically changed Cuba's economic position; therefore, many Cubans immigrated to the United States. Cuban immigration occurred in response to the loss of personal and economic freedom via a series of reforms planned and enacted by the Castro regime (Whaley & Paul-Ward, 2011; Gainor, 2016).

Many Cuban Americans who immigrate to the United States are not wealthy, well-educated, or highly skilled. Cuban immigrants have a difficult time adjusting to life in the United States. As with other immigrants, Cuban Americans have difficulty learning a new language, overcoming ethnic discrimination, gaining access to public services, reconstructing family ties, and forging a new cultural identity (Duany, 2018).

The U.S. economy offers financial stability, and many Cubans see the United States as a foreign country that could offer a better life and survivorship (Eckstein & Berg, 2009). Cuban immigrants who migrated during the post-Soviet migration wave suffered what is called the *periodo especial* (special period). The Cuban immigrants who left Cuba considered their living standards as deteriorating and the distribution of essential goods was scarce, causing an increased radicalization of the political system (Kanopiadmin, 2002). Among these challenges are the questions of how well Cuban immigrants acculturate in the United States and what Cubans use to cope in the United States while maintaining a link to the homeland and developing a link to the United States.

Most literature on Cuban immigrants centers on the loss of personal and economic freedom (Perez, 2016). For many Cuban immigrants coming to the United States is not their preferred choice but a reaction to systemic issues. They seek to escape a communist regime, seek personal and political freedom, and seek to reclaim their way of life, valued roles, and occupations (Whaley & Paul-Ward, 2011). Newly arrived Cubans either stayed at refugee camps, with family, or moved to other states that offered jobs. Cuban immigrants are optimistic that their prospects in the United States will be more favorable than back home.

Limited studies relate to the specific Cuban immigrant experience with acculturation and coping. Furthermore, no studies have explored the experience of individuals who leave Cuba and immigrate to the United States, specifically what coping skills Cuban immigrants use to adapt in the United States. Upon arrival, Cubans have difficulties obtaining jobs and housing and must learn a new language, which can be difficult. Cuban immigrants must also adapt their customs to fit daily life in the United States, which requires confidence. Because the Cuban immigration and

acculturation topic has not been empirically studied, the similarities or differences in Cuban immigrants' adaptation to the United States in comparison to other immigrants is unknown.

Problem Statement

Acculturation creates a feeling of loss, confusion, and powerlessness due to immigrants losing their traditional cultural values, morals, family, friends, language, country, income, support, and beliefs that result in acculturative stress (Lyubansky et al., 2013). Cuban immigrants fleeing Cuba may experience acculturative stress from losing culture, family, friends, language, country, income, and support, all while facing a new culture (Eckstein, 2010; Torres & Wallace, 2013).

Most published literature centers on the reasons why Cuban immigrants leave Cuba. At first, Cubans' immigration experience may demonstrate a physical escape rather than offering mental or emotional peace (Johnson, 2010). Few studies have explored Cuban immigrants' experience with the acculturation process and Cubans' coping strategies as they acculturate and adapt to the United States. For example, very few researchers have studied Cuban immigrants' life events as part of the acculturation process or Cubans' appraisal of these experiences in terms of how the experiences contributed to (a) feeling stressed, (b) the coping strategies that they used, and (c) how those coping strategies aided in reducing stress to better cope and adapt. This study intends to add to the limited literature, and the results will directly serve as a better understanding of acculturation with Cuban immigrants and their coping mechanisms used to adapt and assimilate in the United States (Damas, et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process and how they cope during the acculturation

process in the United States. The study explored the life events, appraisal of the experience and stressors, strategies used to cope, immediate effect and stress, and the long-term outcomes of adapting for Cuban immigrants. The researcher explored Cuban immigrants' experiences by conducting individual interviews and a focus group interview with Cuban immigrants who (a) immigrated from Cuba to the United States within the past 10 years, (b) were between the ages of 18 and 65, and (c) resided in South Florida.

The researcher assessed and reported the stressors related to Cuban immigrants' conditions, including cultural, social, and fundamental inequities Cuban immigrants experienced upon arriving and settling in the United States. The study results detail the levels of acculturation, acculturative stress, and the coping skills Cuban immigrants used to adapt to the United States.

The researcher used research questions to determine whether Cuban immigrants who settle in the United States use the linear questions used in Berry's (1997) conceptual framework for acculturation. These questions address the life events, coping frequency and skills, influences on coping skills, and how immigrants finally adapt. Overall, the study results revealed how acculturation, coping, and adaptation benefit Cuban immigration. The study results illustrated how future counselors can work with the Cuban immigrant population to provide education and support to this population as they adapt to the United States.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process to the United States?

RQ2: How do Cubans cope during their acculturation process in the United States?

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: Acculturation is the process of cultural change, which happens when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together and experience changes in values, attitudes, beliefs, and identities, which causes social and cultural differences (Steffen & Merrill, 2011).

Acculturation stressors: Acculturative stress is the level of emotional strain experienced by immigrants in response to immigration-related challenges or stressors they encounter as they adapt to life in a new country (Arbona et al., 2010).

Coping: Coping is a thoughtful and systematic way to solve problems using a relatively strong emotional response effective in relieving perceived symptoms (Wei et al., 2010).

Coping skills: Individuals engage in awareness for tackling problems or situations that cause stress and attempt to reduce the pressure using their conscious effort to eliminate the stress sources (Hajro et al., 2019).

Hispanic or Latino/a origin: Hispanic or Latino/a refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

Life events: Life events are significant events that occur throughout an individual's life based on age, marriage, getting or losing a job, or losing a close family member (Pams, 2013).

Summary

The researcher used a phenomenology qualitative study to uncover insights and develop an understanding of how Cubans struggle and cope with the acculturation process. This chapter presented the background and need for the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions to the study, definition of terms, and a summary.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review on what is revealed on Cuban immigration, along with a comparison to other Hispanic acculturation processes and the deficiencies in how other Hispanic populations cope during the acculturation process. Chapter 3 details the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 provides the research results and Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Literature Review

This phenomenological qualitative study explored the Cuban immigration experience, including how Cuban immigrants acculturated, coped, and adapted to the United States. The study participants were Cuban immigrants who live in Florida, who were between the ages of 18 and 65 years old, and who immigrated to the United States within the last 10 years. This chapter begins with describing Berry's (1997) conceptual framework for acculturation, which provided the foundation for this study. Furthermore, this chapter consists of the following sections: theoretical framework, motivation for this research, immigration to the United States, motivations for immigration for Latino/a, motivations for immigration for Cubans, process of immigration, process for Latino/a, process for Cubans, barriers encountered, barriers encountered by Latino/a, acculturation, integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization, stress, acculturation process, acculturation process for Latino/a, acculturation process for Cubans, level of bias and perception, risk factors, protective factors, reasons for immigration, what we do not know, and a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was conducted using several different library databases, including APA PsycARTICLES, APA PsycEXTRA, APA PsycINFO, Directory of Open Access Journals, E-Books NLU Library, EBSCOhost-Search All EBSCOhost Databases Simultaneously, EBSCOhost Education Databases, EBSCOhost, Psychology Databases, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Library One Search, SAGE, Social Sciences Citation Index Journals, and the Wiley Online Library.

Keywords

The following keywords and key phrases were used for the literature search: acculturation, Cuban, Cuban immigration, assimilation, Cuban assimilation, Refugee, immigration, Cuban acculturation and adaptation, Hispanics, Hispanic acculturation, Five Cuban Waves, coping skills, coping strategies, acculturation stress, Cuban acculturation stress, Fidel Castro, Cuban Revolution, acculturation experience, Cuban culture, Hispanic culture, Mariel Boatlift, motivation for immigration, consequences of immigration, process for Latino/a, acculturation process for Cubans, adaptation, integration, separation, marginalization, cultural maintenance, intercultural contact, and multiculturalism. All articles were published in English within the last 10 years and all articles specifically referenced the key words, search terms, and theories related to this study.

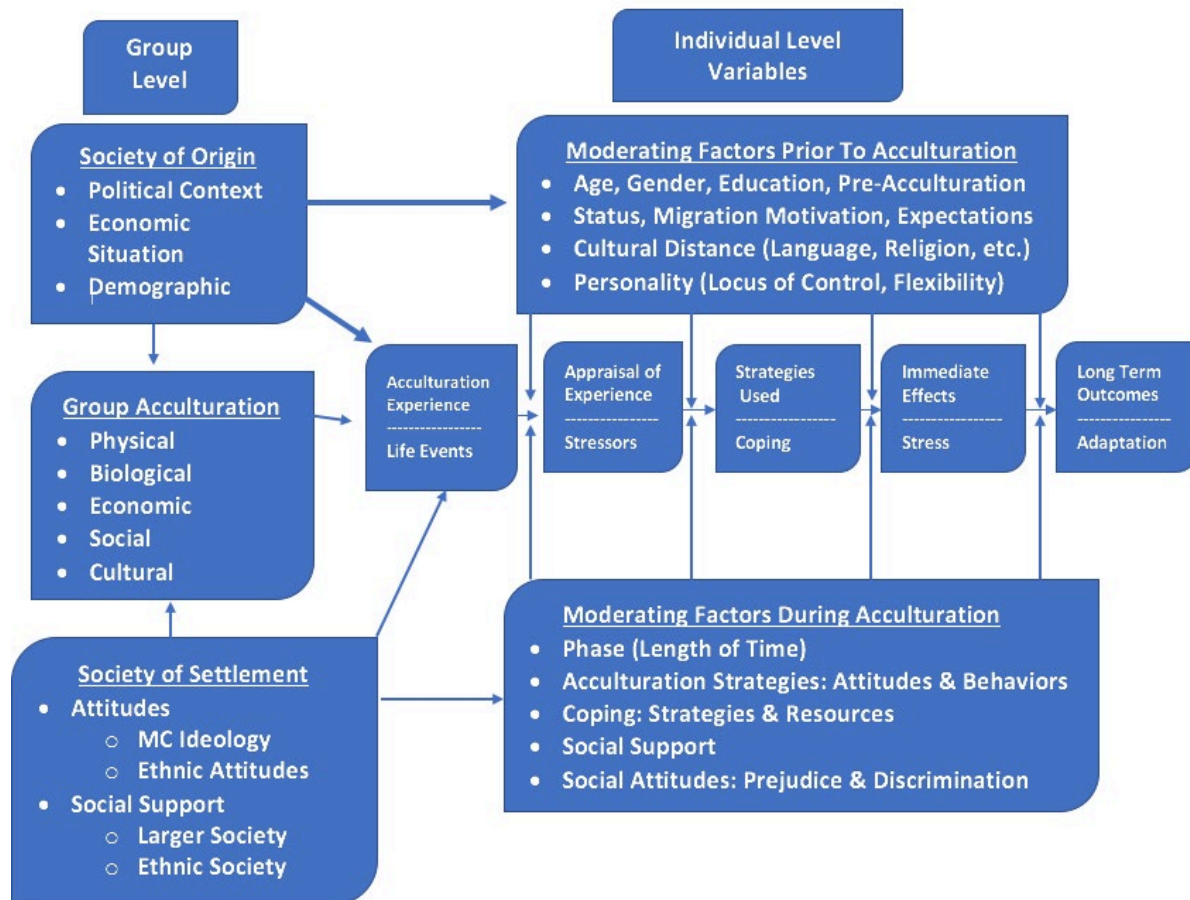
Theoretical Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed by Berry (1997) guided this study. Berry posited that to understand acculturation, one must understand what is occurring at the group level and what is really happening at the individual level when a person goes through the acculturation process. At the group level, one must look at the society of origin and the contrary side they are going to be settling in. Group acculturation is how the group as a whole is going to acculturate. Berry stated the acculturation experience is a linear process that includes (a) acculturation and life events, (b) appraisal of the experience and stressors, (c) strategies used and coping, (d) immediate effect and stress, and (e) long-term outcomes that result in adaptation. One must consider how stressful it is for immigrants to acquire these things. Berry's theory states that a person can gauge what they are doing to reduce their own stress and examine how much these strategies helped them reduce stress. Then, individuals can gauge how well they adapted in the

acculturation process. Berry also stated that one should examine the factors that play a role in influencing coping strategies. Finally, Berry’s theory compares the moderating factors prior to acculturation and the moderating factors during acculturation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Berry’s Theory



Note. Retrieved from “Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation,” by J. W. Berry, 1997, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), p. 464. (<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>).

Berry’s (1997) conceptual framework for acculturation theory is broken into two broad areas: the group level of acculturation and the individual levels of acculturation. At the group level, the theory looks at three overarching aspects: (a) the society from which the person is coming, (b) the society in which they are settling, and (d) how a group is acculturating. The

researcher used Berry's theory to study acculturation at the individual level among the Cuban immigrant population. The researcher studied the Cuban acculturation process and explored how Cuban immigrants process the life events they encounter when they come to the United States; these life events included how Cubans find work, housing, and financially support family in Cuba and in the United States. The researcher also used Berry's theory to explore the level of stress immigrants are exposed to during acculturation in both the individual and group levels.

The study findings will contribute to extant literature regarding what leads Cuban immigrants to adapt to the United States. The researcher used Berry's (1997) framework to form the study's interview questions. The participants' responses to the interview questions revealed Cuban immigrants' life events, coping frequency and skills, influences on coping skills, and how immigrants finally adapt.

Review of Literature

Acculturation

Immigrants generally experience culture shock when they initially arrive to a country that is different from their own. New sights, smells, sounds, people, and customs can be frightful or fearful during the acculturation process (Schildkraut et al., 2019). Some immigrants have challenges adjusting to their new country. Strategies such as learning a new language, meeting new friends, self-care, and maintaining cultural practices from one's country of origin is part of a process known as acculturation. Acculturation describes what happens to individuals who have developed in one cultural context and attempt to live in a new cultural context (Lu et al., 2010; Molina & Alcántara, 2013). For example, Latino/a immigrants experience losing their language, unique cuisine, music, weather, and cultural and artistic traditions (Rodríguez, 2020). Immigrants

in the United States are challenged when some of these customs are not available (Martínez, 2013).

Studies related to acculturation have highlighted important aspects of how individuals make meaning of their life experiences, including mental health experiences, through language, cultural norms, and values, and often comes at the expense related to Latino/a immigration, in both places of origin and the United States (Torres & Wallace, 2013; Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014). During the acculturation process, Latino/a immigrants face numerous stressors, including the fear of deportation and worrying about the lack of financial assistance during the acculturation process. Acculturation can be described as Latino/a individuals who make changes that reflect the cultures in their new communities while maintaining their original practices, values, and identifications (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019; Carter et al., 2013). There is a need to explore acculturation among Latino/a immigrants to better understand how the process impacts their mental health while migrating to the United States (Sánchez et al., 2014). Steffen and Merrill (2011) discussed the acculturation process and offered four acculturation strategies:

The process of acculturation involves the interaction between the degree to which immigrants work to maintain their native cultural identity and the degree to which they become involved with other cultural groups, resulting in four possible acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. (p. 561)

Many factors can affect the experience of cultural identity formation and negotiation, including age during migration, how immigrants adapt to the host cultures' educational system, immigrant status in the new society, feelings of belonging, and the inherent worth the immigrants feel among their newfound cultural values and that of their families (Cohen & Kassan, 2018). Bustamante et al. (2018) discussed the acculturation experienced by all immigrant populations:

Migrants often experience a set of traumatic experiences in their country of origin, during migration, and/or during the resettlement process in the new country; hence, it is not surprising that the prevalence of mental health problems is high in this population. (p. 222)

Lastly, Oppedal et al. (2020) discussed indicators of an individual's acculturation status and general risk factors:

From a mental health perspective, it may be argued that cultural preferences, attitudes, or strategies regarding e.g., food, music, media, values, or ethnicity of friends, which are typical indicators in measures of acculturation status, do not assess concepts with theoretical or empirical relevance as risk or protective factors of mental health while social support, coping, belongingness, and self-efficacy are consistent protective factors. (p. 3)

Integration

Once in the United States, immigrants integrate their own culture and individuality with features of the host country. Integration among immigrants combines different elements of culture from immigrants' home and host countries, including food, tradition, food, and clothing. In other words, immigrants introduce their culture to the host country. A multicultural environment is created through combining the features and values of multiple cultures. Integration is important, and includes recognizing, welcoming, and accepting each individual culture. It is also crucial that immigrants' practices, beliefs, and values are accepted.

Immigrants have their own perception of being welcomed in a new country. Immigrants consider the opportunities that will unfold and envision the availability of social support that the receiving community will offer (Schwartz et al., 2014). Eckstein and Berg (2009) stated that

“Immigrant adaptation is likely to be contingent on the ‘thicknesses’ of co-ethnic involvements. The larger an immigrant community, the more likely it is to be ‘institutionally complete,’ to enmesh immigrants collectively in diverse spheres of their lives” (p. 161). Conversely, immigrants can also have negative perceptions of how they will be received in their country: “A negative perceived context of reception would be expected to lead to depressive symptoms and other negative reactions” (Schwarz et al., 2014, p. 1).

Assimilation

The assimilation process includes (a) the nature of immigration, (b) learning the American way of acquiring social networks, employment opportunities, language barriers, and (c) adjustment to the American norms (Obinna & Field, 2019). Immigrants consider themselves assimilated to the host country after they have successfully learned the host country’s native language. For example, immigrants coming to the United States from non-English speaking countries consider themselves assimilated when they can speak English. Immigrants consider economic success important; however, immigrants also strive to retain the values of their home community. Assimilation can also involve marriage within cultures, including outside of racial, ethnic, and generational lines.

Separation

Separation is created when immigration to the United States directly impacts families emotionally, physically, and psychologically based on how immigrant families encountered their immigration experience (González, et al., 2017). Family separation has various effects on Latino/a immigrants that include financial and mental health strains during their immigration process. These strains include not being able to find a job to support your family based on

language barriers. Immigrants who experience this strain become depressed because they are worried about not being able to see or help their family back home (Held et al., 2018).

Both Cuba and the United States have a long history of inflicting unrelenting travel restrictions that have caused the forced separation of Cuban families (Valido Alou, 2017). During the different waves of Cuban immigration to the United States, some immigrants were not able to return to Cuba based on their political views or their reasoning for leaving their country (Leogrande, 2017). The Cuban separation of families created a unique disdain for their motivation for leaving the country (Sanz Abad & García-Moreno, 2016).

Marginalization

Marginalization comprises those processes by which immigrants are relegated in political, social, and economic status, and their opportunities for success are excluded or limited (Thronson, 2011). Marginalization is important and controversial for most immigrants in the United States. In some cases, immigrants are perceived as a threat economically, socially, and politically; however, these perceptions are not accurate in many cases. Cuban immigrants work hard in the United States to achieve success and financial stability to help their family in Cuba and within the United States. Still, Cubans fall victim to marginalization because some perceive Cuban immigrants as taking away jobs from members of the host country. In most cases, immigrants are looking for a better way of life. Racial conflicts exist even within each ethnic and cultural background, which causes members within ethnic and cultural groups to feel unequal while living in the United States. The Cuban immigrant struggles with (a) the unfairness of having to work alongside those who are less educated and (b) being paid less, despite being professionals in their home country. Many Cuban immigrants with professional careers in Cuba are not allowed to progress in the United States due to language barriers (Lopez et al., 2018).

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress can be described as a psychological impact of adaptation to a new culture. A paucity of prior literature discusses the stressors that become emotional and lifelong experiences for Cuban immigrants in the United States. Immigrants often experience unique stressors resulting from immigration, family separation, and the process of navigating multiple distinct cultural contexts (Driscoll & Torres, 2020). These unique stressors are referred to as acculturative stress. Acculturative stress refers to immigrants' specific stress reactions in response to their acculturation. Acculturative stress can be described as a result of lack of food, unstable living arrangements, socioeconomic hardships, language problems, or social isolation, which prevents the acquisition of additional resources (Cooper et al., 2020; Molina & Alcántara, 2013). In many instances, acculturative stress will impact an immigrant's psychological well-being (Berry, 2006; Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014). Immigrants often experience acculturative stress due to the challenges in adapting to new customs, culture, and values of their new country (Vidal de Haymes et al., 2011). Acculturative stress may also cause physical and mental health concerns for Cuban immigrants. The types of stressors vary but can include symptoms of loneliness, depressive moods, and anxiety. Latino/a immigrants' stress could decrease with a proper support system to deal with the life events associated with immigration and the acculturation process (Kahar & Negroni, 2020).

Acculturative Stress Due to Financial Strain

For example, financial strain impedes Latino/a immigrants from financial stability due to lack of employment, absence of the English language, transportation, and lack of financial family support (Thomson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009). These instabilities will often lead to acculturative stress without proper support. Velcoff et al. (2010) discovered that participants with less

interaction with United States culture had limited English skills, which caused increased acculturative stress and impacted Latino/a immigrants employment opportunities. Latino/a immigrants fear deportation, and the pressure of losing the financial support in the United States to help their families back home is an example of how acculturative stress increases for Latino/a immigrants (Lee et al., 2013).

Acculturative Stress and Overall Well-Being

Another consideration that the Latino/a immigrants face is a decline with their well-being while acculturating in the United States. The well-being state of Latino/a immigrants in the United States varies widely. Latino/a immigrants experience challenges including difficulties adjusting to life in the United States, navigating immigration processes, facing language barriers, and lack of employment and educational opportunities, all of which also affect mental and physical well-being. Buckingham and Suarez-Pedraza (2019) conducted a study to understand the relationship between acculturation and well-being. Buckingham and Suarez-Pedraza collected data from Latino/a immigrants in the United States using a well-being path model and found that Latino/a immigrants who acculturated in their preferred way—meaning that they were able to adapt using their cultural norms—demonstrated better well-being and lower acculturative stress levels.

Psychological Distress. In some cases, Latino/a immigrants face fear and mistrust when they immigrate to the United States. Before immigrating to the United States, stressors included poverty, violence, family separation, and a traumatic immigration travel period. As a result, Latino/a immigrants can experience emotional and physical distress as they settle in the United States. The impact of premigration, unplanned, and postmigration circumstances is associated with psychological distress among Latino/a immigrants (Landale et al., 2014). Torres and

Wallace (2013) conducted a study to show that unplanned migration for Puerto Rican and Cuban men was associated with increased psychological distress. In contrast, Puerto Rican and Cuban women experience poorer physical health and increased distress during acculturation (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998).

Latino/a immigrants experience severe difficulty in overcoming the barriers and adapting to American norms and customs. Latino/a immigrants who maintain high acculturation levels can lower emotional levels by understanding the relationship between psychological symptoms, acculturation, and emotional adjustment during their acculturation and acceptance process in the United States (Archuleta, 2015). Orozco and Vargas (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore Latino/a women's immigration and acculturation struggles in leaving their country for better economic conditions. Feelings of nostalgia, fear of being deported, adaptation to the American culture, lack of family support, employment, and language barriers created acculturation stress. The study established a greater understanding of the difficulties associated with Latino/a immigrants and emphasized that a support system reduces the stress associated with the immigration process (Orozco & Vargas, 2015). In addition, Latino/a immigrants may experience discrimination, including criticism for speaking their native language. Thus, Latino/a in the United States may feel discriminated against as they go through the United States' acculturation process and often struggle to acculturate to the dominant culture and maintain their ethnic and racial identity (Baldwin-White, 2017; Lu et al., 2010). Examples can include applying for jobs or not being proficient in speaking English. Bekteshi et al. (2015) studied how acculturative stress and psychological distress affect Puerto Rican Latino/a women residing in the United States. Bekteshi et al. found that racial discrimination and lack of English language

skills created psychological distress, making it harder for Puerto Rican Latino/a women to acclimate in the United States.

Cultural and Contextual Factors. In their study, Ertl et al. (2019) examined Latina women's gender role beliefs (i.e., *marianismo*) and acculturative stress. Results suggested that "marianismo" beliefs caused acculturative stress due to feelings of responsibility for the family's unity during acculturation (Ertl et al., 2019).

Contextual factors impact acculturative stress and psychological distress among Latinas from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Bekteshi et al. (2017) found that discrimination is a critical factor for acculturative stress and psychological distress among Latinas. Bekteshi et al. asserted that Latina immigrants' decision to immigrate to the United States was based on lower social economic levels and therefore compounded acculturative stress; however, increasing family connections decreased psychological distress. As with other Latino/a immigrants, Cuban immigrants who are less oriented towards U.S. culture are most likely to report acculturative stress and ethnic discrimination, causing a disconnect as they adapt in the United States (Wang et al., 2010).

Coping and Coping Strategies

Upon arriving in the United States, Latino/a immigrants may feel emotional and may fear the prospect of a new life that may look different in terms of people, living arrangements, culture, food, music, economics, faith, transportation, family social norms, and social culture. Immigrants can use their coping strategies to manage acculturation stress. Coping strategies include a wide array of approaches, including avoidance, defense, escape, religion, and social and family support (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2008). As a coping strategy, psychosocial services, family support, cultural connections, and community support are available and can reduce

acculturative stress among the immigrant population (Held et al., 2018b; Lanesskog, 2018; Rios Casas et al., 2020). Social support is considered a coping skill to reduce stress during the immigration and acculturation process (Vaughn et al., 2019). For instance, Latino/a immigrants can use social media to stay in touch with their family back home and feel less nostalgic. Furthermore, Dillon et al. (2019) noted that participants who used social media showed lower acculturative stress signs. Additionally, less psychological distress was noted among Latina immigrants who practiced their heritage culture while adjusting to American culture (Dillon et al., 2019).

Not all coping strategies are healthy or beneficial. For example, Latino/a immigrants may use alcohol as a coping strategy. Acculturation, and acculturative stress in particular, has been linked to using alcohol as a coping skill (Sanchez et. al., 2015). In their study, Jankowski et al. (2020) described how alcohol is used as a coping mechanism during acculturative stress for Mexican, Cuban, and other immigrants. Latino/a immigrants are at increased risk for poor mental health due to immigration-related stressors that occur when their cultural norms or support are not available.

Religion as Coping Strategy

Latino/a immigrants attend church to pray and retain a religion weaved with culture and the services and information they need to adjust to life in the United States (Comas-Diaz, 2013). Latino/a immigrants suggest that religious coping, such as prayer, church, and faith in God, is a protective factor during immigration to the United States. Latino/a's may come from a country where religion is persecuted, but upon arriving in the United States, they gain strength by using their faith as a coping mechanism (Caplan, 2019). Religious and spiritual coping may decrease high acculturation stress and anxiety (DiPierro et al., 2018) and religious coping may play a

particularly positive role in the acculturative stress and alcohol-use behaviors of recent Latino/a immigrants (Sanchez et al., 2015). Furthermore, Latino/as find that reading books of prayer or praying and receiving pastoral counseling is an effective coping strategy for acculturation stress (Moreno et al., 2017).

Religion plays a notable role in Latino/a culture and is considered an influential resource during difficult life transitions, such as those experienced during the immigration and acculturation process. Escobar et al. (2019) described the use of religious resources, family and friends, and social service agencies as coping strategies for adapting to the United States' standard culture. Moreno et al. (2017) explored Latino/as' relationship between religiosity and beliefs towards professional mental health services. Moreno et al.'s results showed that religiosity served as resolute coping skill but participants negatively viewed the option of accepting mental health services (Jankowski et al., 2020). Similarly, Sanchez et al. (2015) sampled Latino/a immigrants who made difficult life transitions while immigrating to the United States. Sanchez et al.'s results showed that immigrants who used positive religious coping skills experienced less acculturation stress.

Noyola et al. (2020) collected data on religiosity and mental well-being among Mexican-origin Latino/as. The results indicated that more Mexican-born participants reported the use of religious coping strategies during their acculturation process. The findings also revealed that Latino/a immigrants reported attending church, praying, and reading the Bible as a coping strategy. Noyola et al. concluded the immigrants who used religious coping strategies experienced less fear and felt more supported. Similarly, Steffen and Merrill (2011) sought to examine the influence of religious affiliation on acculturation. Steffen and Merrill's study included spirituality measures related to coping and the researchers found that religious practices

benefited acculturation and adaptation. Furthermore, Santos and Kalibatseva (2019) explained how Latino/a immigrants use religious faiths to support their acculturation distress. In a study with Latino/a immigrants, Santos and Kalibatseva examined participants' religious beliefs during acculturation. Santos and Kalibatseva study results revealed that Latino/a immigrants who participated in spiritual treatments had a more positive acculturation experience than those who did not (Santos & Kalibatseva, 2019). Latino/a immigrants in rural areas endure work-related stress due to the demands, language barriers, and work-family conflict, thus putting themselves at health and mental risk in order to support their families. Although the majority of Cubans are Roman Catholic Christians, the country itself is officially an atheist state with 12% of the population practicing Santeria, a traditional African practice (Chepkemai, 2018). Regardless of religious affiliation, Cubans turn to religion for support and attend church, read the bible, and pray and meditate as coping skills to reduce work-related stressors making it easier to adapt to their current immigration situation (Flores et al., 2011).

Family Support

Mental health disadvantages exist among Latino/a immigrants who lack family support during their acculturation experience (Bulut & Gayman, 2020). Social support as a coping mechanism for Latino/a immigrants during their acculturation process significantly reduced acculturative stress (Menon & Harter, 2012). Latino/a immigrants struggle with leaving their support system behind when they immigrate to the United States. This support system includes extended families, folk healers, in-laws, close friends of the family, godparents, curanderos, and santeros. Ayón and Naddy (2013) conducted a study with Latino/a immigrant participants to explore the sources of support available to Latino/a immigrant families when they immigrate to the United States. The results indicated that Latino/as rely heavily on their family, friends,

neighbors, and community entities for emotional, moral, and financial support. It was strongly suggested that sources of advocacy for Latino/a immigrants are needed upon arrival to the United States (Ayón & Naddy, 2013).

Espeleta et al. (2019) clarified the association between acculturation and retention of traditional values and family. Espeleta et al. found that increasing family resources and social support resulted in fewer depressive symptoms for Latina mothers during their immigration process. Leong et al. (2013) explored how Latino/a immigrant status affects psychological disorders among Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban immigrants. Leong et al. asserted that high family attachment levels serve as protective factors against depressive disorders and anxiety during immigration. Similarly, Vidal de Haymes et al. (2011) examined the relationship between acculturative stress and family cohesion among Mexican immigrants. Vidal de Haymes et al. concluded that greater levels of family satisfaction result in lower levels of acculturative stress.

Therapy/Counseling

Latino/a immigrants experience acculturative stress, and some do not access mental health services due to stigma or culture acceptance. On the other hand, Latino/as with higher acculturation levels embrace mental health with positive attitudes toward seeking psychotherapy (Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Collado et al. (2019) examined how mental health stigma among depressed Latino/a immigrants contributes to mental health treatment disparities. The results demonstrated that mental health stigma reduced when counseling offers a supportive mechanism to Latino/as suffering from mental illness (Collado et al., 2019). Assessing Latino/a immigrants to understand their acceptance towards seeking professional therapy is essential—especially in the Latino/a community—and counseling can assist Latino/a immigrants in having a better acculturation experience. Rojas-Vilches et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine if Puerto Ricans' and

Cuban Americans' views about mental illnesses link to the stances toward seeking professional mental health help. The results suggested that Latino/a immigrants consider mental health a social stigma and would not consider seeking professional mental health help as an initial option during their immigration process (Rojas-Vilches et al., 2011). Additionally, undocumented Latino/a women face many psychosocial stressors such as familial separation, economic hardship, assault, and fear of deportation during immigration. Ramos-Sánchez et al. identified that immigration has a psychological impact on undocumented Latino/a women's well-being and posited that mental health services and community resources could improve this population's mental health outcomes. Latino/a immigrants experience issues with trust and stigma issues when offered mental health services during the acculturation period. Fripp and Carlson (2017) explored Latino/a immigrants' understanding of stigma and seeking mental health services during immigration. The results revealed that stigma creates an adverse reaction to seeking counseling and reduces positive well-being during acculturation; therefore, fewer Latino/a immigrants seek professional counseling (Fripp & Carlson, 2017).

Latina/o college students experience cultural stressors that negatively impact their mental health. Corona (2017) explored how Latina/o college students determined their cultural values and adverse effects on mental health symptoms. The results revealed a significant association between cultural stressors and mental health symptoms and found a notable negative correlation between acculturative stress and the use of psychotherapy for Latino/a immigrants (Corona et al., 2017; Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Latino/a immigrants demonstrate stigma toward mental illness and disclosure to family and friends, which negatively affects their options to seek mental health during the acculturation process. Eghaneyan and Murphy (2020) conducted a study to measure

mental illness stigma among Latino/a immigrants. The results demonstrated critical barriers to mental health care, including stigma among Latino/a immigrants (Eghaneyan & Murphy, 2020).

Cultural Identity Development Model. The Cultural Identity Development Model (CIDM) is a conceptual framework to help counselors understand that some ethnically and culturally diverse clients struggle to understand their oppression experience within their own culture (Tan, 2014). The relationship between one's own culture and the dominant culture leads to conformity, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness. Conformity—the first stage of CIDM—is when the minority group identifies with the dominant race. The second stage, resistance, is demonstrated when the Cuban immigrant begins to appreciate their culture and develop empathy for the dominant culture or other minority groups. During the third stage, introspection, Cuban immigrants are more concerned with welcoming their own culture and trying to unite their culture with the dominant culture without discrediting any regard of their own culture. During the final stage, integrative awareness, Cuban immigrants appear to understand other minority cultures but bestow careful responsiveness to the dominant culture. Counselors must understand their clients' beliefs and attitudes to help their clients (Sue et al., 2019). Attitudes and beliefs are an integral part of identity and impact how immigrants perceive themselves and their comparison with conformity in the United States.

Counselors must focus and emphasize clients' views and beliefs that cannot be minimized when working across various immigrant cultures. Sue et al. (2019) stated that “Cultural differences, such as the degree of assimilation socioeconomic background, family experiences and educational level affect each individual in a unique manner” (p. 26). The ability to provide competent counseling interventions with Cuban immigrants is most useful when counselors are continually working to develop cultural competence qualities.

Organizational and Community Support

Support from family or friends is helpful to immigrants experiencing the immigration and acculturation process (Doshi et al., 2020). Service providers and community agencies help create Latino/a immigrant families' social networks by linking families who have gone through the acculturation process with new immigrants (Ayón & Naddy, 2013). Vaughn and Suarez (2019) used community partnerships to teach coping strategies to Latino/a immigrants' experiencing sociocultural adaptations during immigration. Furthermore, Held et al. (2018b) asserted that communities that address challenges with newly arrived immigrants can strengthen the gaps of services provided to Latino/a immigrants. The support sources included family system strengths, Latino/a community churches, and formal service organizations (Held et al., 2018b).

Latino/a immigrants endure negative immigration experiences that affect their mental health; however, community-based organizations can provide social relationship strategies to help immigrants reduce adverse mental health during acculturation (Vasquez-Guzman et al., 2020). For instance, Espeleta et al. (2019) examined acculturation and depression among Latina women and determined that increased social support and community resources can reduce depressive symptoms during the acculturation and immigration process.

Cariello et al. (2020) researched Latino/a immigrants in the United States to determine how discrimination and acculturative stress affect Latino/a immigrants' mental and physical health. The results indicated that psychologists recommend assessing the impact of stressors and providing community services when providing care for the Latino/a population during their acculturation process (Cariello et al., 2020). Moreover, Vidal de Haymes et al. (2011) concluded that Latino/a immigrants with greater family satisfaction levels have lower acculturative stress levels during the immigration process.

What We Do Not Know

Prior literature does not address (a) how immigration and multicultural stress affects the mental health of the Cuban immigrant population and (b) what resources—such as counseling, education, community resources, and religion—can help with Cuban immigrants’ transition to the United States (Cervantes et al., 2019).

Research studies on acculturation and mental health among Cuban immigrants are few or nonexistent. The current study includes interviews with the Cuban immigrant population, the findings related to this population, and an analysis of how factors such as country of origin, age, gender, years lived in the United States, education, and income affected Cubans’ immigration to the United States. The current study was based on the potential factors driving different outcomes based on the acculturative distress among the Cuban immigrant population. The current study explores how external factors such as immigration and occupational stress, as well as internal factors such as marital, family acculturation gaps, language, education, and mental health, are examples of diverse aspects of acculturation processing that affect Cubans’ mental health. The study explored which coping skills Cuban immigrants have used to survive the acculturation process and live a better quality of life in the United States. The present study reveals Cuban immigrants’ views and openness to counseling and mental health education. Additionally, the researcher used the study data to assess how counselors can use multicultural diverse techniques and skills when working with the Cuban population.

Summary

In the literature review, the researcher discussed acculturation, acculturative stress, and the coping skills that Latino/a and Cuban immigrant use when acculturating and adapting to the United States. This chapter reviewed the extant literature, particularly Berry’s conceptual

framework, related studies, and the knowledge gap, which inspired the researcher to carry out this study. The literature review also presented an examination of the cultural, social, familial, and economic factors that affect how Latino/a and Cuban immigrants acculturate and adapt to the United States. Additionally, the researcher explored the coping mechanisms Latino/a immigrants' use when adapting to the United States. Finally, the literature review revealed how family support, mental health counseling, and community support can enhance Latino/a immigrants' experience. There is currently not enough research or literature that explores how Cuban immigrants specifically acculturate and adapt to the United States. This study adds to the literature by describing the coping skills or mechanisms that Cuban immigrants use to acclimate, adapt, and improve their mental health and well-being during the acculturation process.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the need to further study Cuban immigration and acculturation to learn more about the possible similarities or differences in Cuban immigrants' adaptation to daily customs in the United States. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review on Cuban immigration and other Latino/a acculturation methods that immigrants use to cope during the acculturation process. The first notable discussion regarding the literature gap related to Cuban immigrants' motivation and acculturation process. In Chapter 3, the researcher will (a) describe the basis for the phenomenological approach and design selected for this study and (b) detail the analysis that will be used to determine Cuban immigrants' acculturation and coping skills used during the acculturation process. Chapter 3 provides an explanation for the phenomenological research design, qualitative research methods, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, criteria used to audit the study, and the design credibility, trustworthiness, confirmability, and dependability.

Research Design

The researcher used a phenomenological qualitative methodology approach to better understand the experience of Cuban immigrants and their acculturation process (Frost, 2011). The primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people around a specific phenomenon and understand human behavior through the eyes of the participants in the study (Christensen et al., 2010; Creswell, 2018). A phenomenologist's worldview aligns with the belief that all perceptions and constructions are ultimately grounded in a particular perspective in time and

space. Phenomenology does not begin with a theory, but instead begins with a phenomenon under consideration (Donalek, 2004).

The value of this methodology approach gives insight into an experience that is not clearly understood, and the data collection process develops based on personal beliefs, understanding, and experiences (Ivey, 2013). The phenomenon in this study was to better understand how Cuban immigrants acculturate in the United States and what coping skills helped them acculturate. The study participants were Cuban immigrants because this population was best prepared to answer the research questions (Frost, 2011).

Qualitative Research Methodology

The qualitative research approach provides timeliness to explore the experiences of Cuban immigrants. The researcher used the qualitative research approach to fill the research gaps for this population, provide future researchers an opportunity to understand the participants' lived experiences, and develop a deeper understanding of how Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process and how their use of coping skills added to their adaption in the United States (Pagano, 2014).

Scholarly research and literature on Cuban immigration and acculturation are scarce; thus, the researcher used a phenomenological qualitative approach to provide data using the Cuban immigrant participants' interviews responses. Participants shared their personal experience in immigration, acculturation, and coping skills used to adapt to the United States.

One must be aware of the individual experience to understand acculturation (Berry, 1997). In this study, the researcher used Berry's (1997) phenomenological qualitative approach to understand Cuban immigrants individual acculturation experience. Berry's conceptual

framework helped guide the researcher's understanding of acculturation during the immigrant's group and individual acculturation process.

Considering the deficiency of scholarly research and literature on Cuban immigration and coping skills used during acculturation, using a phenomenological qualitative approach was considered the optimal choice for gathering data and learning more about the social and cultural adaptation in the United States for this population. The researcher sought to identify common themes in a shared experience by the participants; this focus was especially compelling because Cuban immigration is a unique event that affects Cuban immigrants' lives in both their birth country and in the United States (Corona et al., 2012).

Qualitative research relies on the inductive component of the scientific method and is used to create or enate a new hypothesis or theory. Qualitative research is exploratory and often used when little is known about a particular topic or when an inductive approach is more appropriate (Saldana, 2011). A qualitative methodology approach was appropriate for this study because it added more depth, context, and data to produce a better understanding of Cuban immigrants' experience with their acculturation in the United States (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Qualitative research requires a thorough understanding that can only be established by talking directly with people and allowing them to tell their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data gathering in qualitative research provides evidence for the experience the researcher is investigating (Polkinghorne, 2005). Qualitative research provided the researcher an opportunity to explore the experiences of Cuban immigrants to fill the gap in the literature review. The researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at National Louis University before commencing any research.

Research Questions

The researcher used the study results to build a theory to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process to the United States?

RQ2: How do Cubans cope during their acculturation process in the United States?

Population

It was estimated that more than 1.3 million Cubans resided in the United States at the end of the 2018 fiscal year. An estimated 766,000 Cuban immigrants reside in South Florida (Batalova et al., 2020). This study included Cuban immigrants who immigrated during the post-Soviet wave. This study's target population was Cuban immigrants who migrated to the United States within the past 10 years.

Participant Inclusion Criteria

The researcher selected a total of 23 Cuban immigrants using a nonprobability, purposive sampling approach. The researcher asked potential participants demographic questions to ensure they were qualified for the interview. To participate in the interview, participants had to (a) self-identify as a Cuban immigrant, (b) have immigrated to the United States within the last 10 years, (c) be between the ages of 18 and 65, and (d) live in South Florida. The researcher aimed to interview participants from diverse demographic backgrounds to explore distinct and valuable experiences among participants. The researcher chose a small sample size because a phenomenological qualitative study uses small sample sizes to allow for more details during the interviews and a comprehensive data analysis (Pérez-Rojas, 2019). The researcher looked for

saturation during the interview data collection process and continued to conduct interviews until no new insights or concepts for the study were uncovered (Creswell, 2018).

The researcher randomly assigned participants to either the individual interview group or the focus group. The researcher also stratified the samples to support diversity by age, time in the United States, gender, and marital status in each group while conducting the interview process. The researcher recruited participants from private practices that worked with this population and from the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at a South Florida University.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher contacted private practice counselors in South Florida who serve the Cuban population and the ESL program at a South Florida University (see Appendix A). The private practice counselors shared the information with their eligible clients (see Appendix B) and provided links to an informational Zoom recording. Clients who were interested in participating in the study were provided a SurveyMonkey link to the informed consent and demographics questionnaire. Instructors for the ESL program at the university showed the Zoom informational recording that provided an overview of the study to each of their ESL classes, and students who were interested in participating were given the SurveyMonkey link to proceed with the informed consent and demographics questionnaire. Interview participants were randomly assigned to either the individual interview group or the focus group. Participation was completely voluntary, and the participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher used pseudonyms to ensure participants were not identified and their responses were stated in participants' own words while maintaining confidentiality.

The researcher made every effort to ensure confidentiality. The demographics questionnaire and transcripts used a coding procedure for identification. The study data were

kept in a secured locked filing cabinet that only the primary researcher could access. All information remains confidential but may be used in future publications and presentations. Personal identifying information were removed from any data disclosed.

The researcher used the participant's responses to the 11-item demographic survey questionnaire to randomly assign the participant to either an individual interview or a focus group. The participants reported their in-depth opinions and views toward the phenomenon using an interviewing process.

The researcher contacted participants assigned to a personal interview to schedule a 1-hour to 90-minute interview. The interview consisted of approximately eight open-ended questions that explored Cuban immigrant participants' immigration and acculturation experience. The researcher conducted and recorded interviews using Zoom, which were later transcribed. The researcher provided a link to a scheduled Zoom meeting (60- to 90-minutes in length) to participants who were assigned to the focus group. In the focus group, findings from the participants' interviews were shared for comments by participants as part of the focus group. The researcher analyzed participants' comments to identify any revisions or additions to the original findings.

The researcher selected samples based on random selection. The researcher depended on expertise by using interviewing and observation with the selected participants. In this study, not all population members had an equal chance of participating in the study. Each member of the population had a known chance of being selected in this study and was considered a smaller sample (Christensen et al., 2010). Random sampling use is appropriate when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of research design and aims and objectives (Christensen et al., 2010).

Instrumentation or Sources of Data

The researcher collected data using a semistructured interview questionnaire. The interview included questions such as “Tell me about your immigration experience” or “What motivated to immigrate to the United States?” (see Appendix C). The interview guide was based on Berry’s (1997) acculturation conceptual framework. The semistructured interview addressed the following factors:

- Demographics, including:
 - Age
 - Years in the United States
 - Marital status
 - Family members who the participant immigrated with
 - Region of origin in Cuba
 - Current city
 - Gender
 - Level of education and employment in Cuba
 - Level of education and employment in the United States
- Cuban immigrants’ perspectives in Cuba
- Cuban perspective on the United States
- Acculturation experience (life events)
- Appraisal of experience (stressors)
- Strategies used for coping
- Immediate effects (stress)
- Long-term outcomes (adaptation)

Addressing Bias and Supporting Trustworthiness

The researcher achieved trustworthiness through intensive listening during the interview and careful probing to obtain rich and comprehensive data. The researcher ensured the integrity of the study results by collecting the data and developing an accurate understanding of the study participants' culture, language, and views to test for misinformation and ensure saturation of essential categories. The researcher precisely documented the study methods to ensure the research methods' validity. The researcher recorded all research steps using a systematic method to reach the goals of the research study. The researcher also shared the individual participant findings with the focus group to validate, refute, or add to the individual interview findings to ensure trustworthiness.

The researcher performed data triangulation to ensure credibility using prior literature, personal clinical experience, and interview data regarding how the Cuban interviewees managed and coped with the immigration and acculturation process. The researcher aimed to ensure that the research findings were robust, valuable, comprehensive, and well-developed. Additionally, the researcher looked at her background and position related to the study to see how her personal experience could influence the research questions and process.

The study findings were based on participants' responses and did not have any biases or personal motivations. This study can be replicated within other settings such as a university and mental health agencies to account for dependability. Counselors who work with the Cuban population can use the study findings to improve counseling skills in the clinical mental health communities. The researcher thoroughly documented the research data; thus, confidence can be improved over time by repetitive analysis of the same conclusion and questioning the Cuban

population about significant issues based on the acculturation process, allowing for confirmability.

Qualitative researchers can use an audit trail to ensure consistency and dependability. The reader or participants can confirm the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher. An audit trail in a qualitative study describes how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the data analysis (Merriam et al., 2019).

The researcher sought clarification from five participants after the initial interview. The identified themes and relationships between themes from the individual interviews were shared with the focus group in a 60- to 90-minute Zoom session to increase the validity and authenticity of the research findings.

Data Set Focus

A total of 17 interviews were conducted with four female participants and 13 male participants. The interviews were conducted in the participant's preferred language. A total of 15 interviews were completed in Spanish and two interviews were completed in English. The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 65, with the average participant being 39 years old. Of the participants, 28.6% had received a high school or GED diploma in Cuba, 4.8% of the participants received higher education degrees in Cuba, and the remainder of the participants (4.8%) received a bachelor's or master's degree in the United States. Of the participants, 76.2% were employed in Cuba, 23.8% were not employed in Cuba, and 100% participants were employed in South Florida. Nineteen percent of participants were enrolled in higher education to pursue a bachelor's or master's degree in the United States.

Data Collection and Management

The information gathered from the interviews were added to the existing literature pertaining to Cuban immigrants and their acculturation and coping skills while adapting in the United States.

Survey

Once informed consent was provided (see Appendix D), the study participants filled out an 11-item demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E) using Survey Monkey that was used to randomly assign participants to either an individual interview or a focus group. The researcher contacted the participants who are assigned to a personal interview to schedule a 60- to 90-minute interview.

Interview

The interview consisted of approximately eight open-ended questions (see Appendix C) that explored the participant's immigration and acculturation experience. The interview was conducted through Zoom or phone, recorded, and later transcribed. The researcher provided correspondence and consent forms in both English and Spanish. The open-ended nature of the interview questions helped the researcher stimulate conversation with the participants (Baker, 2012). The researcher began the interviews by asking broad, open-ended questions about participants' immigration experience and the acculturation process in the United States. Next, the researcher asked more intensive questions with the intent to gather in-depth data on the motivation and coping skills participants' used during their acculturation process. The interview continued with additional open-ended questions that are framed to invite more in-depth responses regarding (a) the coping skills used by the participants or (b) the experience of participants who did not use any coping skills while going through the acculturation process. At

the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any questions or if additional information needed to be added to the interview responses.

Focus Group

The researcher shared the identified themes and relationships between themes from the individual interviews in a 70-minute Zoom session with the participants assigned to a focus group. This method increased the validity and authenticity of the research findings. The focus group was comprised of six individuals and were dependent on the total participant volunteers. The researcher presented the research findings to the group and asked three questions at the end of the presentation:

1. How do the findings align with your experience?
2. How do the findings disagree with your experience?
3. What can you contribute to these findings based on your experience?

Consent Form and Confidentiality

The consent form (see Appendix D) included an acknowledgment that the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw anytime. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session. The researcher was solely responsible for the access and security of the interview transcripts. The researcher used clean verbatim transcription to transcribe the interviews. All data is kept in a secure, encrypted, electronic format or in a locked cabinet. The data will be kept for 7 years after the completion of this study and will then be destroyed. It is possible that the study data will be used for future publication and presentation; however, confidentiality will be maintained. The participants' names or other identifying information will not appear on any materials.

Field Notes

The researcher took notes during each part of the study to ensure that the interview process' quality was reflected accurately and without bias. The field notes provided the researcher's perspective on participants' lives, which added to the research questions and provided useful future data.

The participants' locations and demographics were relevant to the study's phenomenon and field notes added particular details. For example, some participants immigrated to the United States in various ways (crossing borders, air flights, buses, trains, or walking), and participants faced various difficulties in obtaining helpful resources to address physical or emotional needs.

The researcher noted participants' demeanor and nonverbal behaviors to expand on the related research questions. The researcher noted pertinent details during the interview to better understand the narrative from both the participant's and the interviewer's perspective. The note-taking process allowed for critical review and will help future researchers who will analyze the study results. The researcher referenced the field notes that described participants' emotions to further understand the reality of the themes that emerged from the study findings. For example, Participant 1 was nervous about the interview and spoke cautiously in order to avoid offending and to describe his experience accurately. He mentioned, "I still feel some precaution when speaking about Cuba and so I am nervous about this interview." The researcher noted this participant's emotions to better understand the participant's perspective on the topic of freedom of speech in the United States. The researcher also used field notes to describe the emotions of Participant 11, who described his inability and struggles using technology when he first arrived in the United States. The researcher considered participants' feelings of struggle to (a) better

understand participants' experience in the United States and (b) avoid making assumptions of participants' based on the researcher's experience in the United States.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher used a phenomenological approach to gain a more thorough understanding of how Cuban immigrants acculturate and what coping skills they used to adapt in the United States. A phenomenology and qualitative approach were used to focus on the similarities of a particular group's lived experience (Creswell, 2018). This approach was appropriate for investigating how Cuban immigrants coped and adapted during their acculturation in the United States.

The researcher transcribed the Zoom recordings of the interviews. Next, the researcher created a codebook and analyzed the transcription and translations from Spanish to English using a deductive and inductive approach. The researcher used a deductive approach by categorizing the participants' responses to each of the 15 constructs: (a) Idea of the American Dream, (b) Home Ownership, (c) Expectation for Cuba from within the United States, (d) Entrepreneurship in United States, (e) Higher Education Goals in United States, (f) Community Agency and Government Support, (g) Other Support Services Received, (h) Support Not Received, (i) Positive Experience, (j) Hindering or Negative Experience, (k) Difficulty in Adaptation in the United States, (l) Family, (m) Stress Related to Life Situations, (n) Economics, and (o) Physical Health.

The transcripts were coded in the order of the interviews conducted using a number sequence to protect the participant's identity. This method allowed the researcher to reflect and edit the interview questions as theories began to emerge from the data. The researcher used coding to better understand the participants' perspectives and to analyze participants' combined

experiences. Coding the transcriptions allowed the researcher to break down the transcripts into meaningful, manageable, and relevant data. Additionally, the researcher used coding to focus the interview analysis on the participants' experience in a structured way. Coding also prevented the researcher from overstating any part of the interviewee's reflections to ensure the transcription was thorough and accurate.

The researcher conducted an analysis to answer the two research questions. The researcher also identified themes that emerged from the stories participants shared during the interview.

Summary

Chapter 3 detailed the research design, sample population, instrumentation and sources of data, and the researcher's method of data collection, management, and analysis. Chapter 4 will discuss the study procedures and study results.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In Chapter 1, the researcher introduced the topic of Cuban immigrants and their difficulties during their acculturation process. The researcher also explored the coping skills Cuban immigrants use to adapt to the United States. Chapter 2 explored the research available in more detail, comparing the acculturation process of Latino(a) immigrants and Cuban immigrants. In Chapter 3, the researcher proposed the study's details by showing the design, research questions, participants, procedures, and method of analysis. The findings of this study are presented in this chapter.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process to the United States?

RQ2: How do Cubans cope during their acculturation process in the United States?

Participants

The researcher recruited participants using an invitation letter (see Appendix B) that was sent to the ESL program at a South Florida University and to private practice counselors in South Florida who serve the Cuban population. The private practice counselors shared the information with their eligible clients and provided links to an informational Zoom recording. Clients who were interested in participating in the study were provided a SurveyMonkey link to the informed consent and demographics questionnaire. Instructors for the ESL program at the university showed the Zoom informational recording that provided an overview of the study to each of their ESL classes, and students who were interested in participating were given the SurveyMonkey link to proceed with the informed consent and demographics questionnaire. Interview

participants were randomly assigned to either the individual interview group or the focus group. A total of 23 people contacted the researcher to express interest in participating, with a total of 17 participants completing the semistructured interview. The researcher selected six people to participate in the focus group interview.

All 23 participants met the inclusion criteria of being between the ages of 18 and 65 years old; The mean age was 39 and the range was between 21 to 61. This study only included Cuban immigrants who immigrated within the last 10 years and currently reside in the state of Florida. Fourteen males (60.9%) and nine females (39.1%) participated in the study. Ten participants reported a marital status of single (52.2%), nine reported being married (39.1%), three reported being separated (.18%), one reported being divorced (.6%), and four participants immigrated with children (17.4%). In reporting education level, nine reported completed high school (30.4%), four did not complete high school (17.3%), seven reported having a bachelor's degree (17.2%), two reported having a medical degree (.09%), and one reported having an associate degree (.4%). The mean number of years in the United States for the 23 participants was 5 years with a range of 1–9 years.

Five participants lived in a province called Pinar del Rio, Cuba (21.6%). The researcher considered this locality information to be important because responses from these participants were impacted by extreme hardships such as no running water, no electric or transportation, and lack of resources such as food, medical care, and basic necessities. These participants in particular had a heightened motivation to immigrate to the United States.

Table 1*Participant Demographic Table*

Participant #	Interview language (S = Spanish, E = English)	Age	Marital status	Gender (M = Male, F = Female)	Years in US	Immigrated with	Region of origin in Cuba	Level of education (Cuba)	Level of education (US)	Employment position (Cuba)	Employment position (US)
001	S	43	Married	M	9	Spouse	Havana	10 th grade	None	Refrigeration tech	Electrician
002	S	33	Single	M	4	Self	Pinar del Rio	High school degree	Plumbing certification	None	Self-employed plumber
003	S	29	Married	M	5	Spouse	Banes, Holguin	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor of accounting	Quality specialist	Accountant
004	E	23	Single	M	4	Parent	Granma	High school degree	Bachelor's degree biomedical	None	Medical assistant
005	S	65	Divorced	M	9	Self	Havana	Associate degree naval	Professional development	Naval mechanic	Electrician
006	S	53	Married	M	8	Spouse	La Havana	Bachelor's degree languages	None	Travel agent	Uber Driver/DJ/ESL instructor
007	S	23	Single	F	3.6	Parent	Villa Clara	High school degree	ESL course	None	Pet resort technician
008	S	38	Single	F	5	Self	Havana	High school degree	Associate degree accounting	Professional dancer	Bookkeeper
009	S	45	Single	M	5	Self	Havana	Bachelor's degree civil engineering	Technician in civil construction	Cuenta propista	Self-employed electrician
010	S	21	Single	F	3.6	Parent	Villa Clara	High school degree	ESL course	None	Pet resort technician

Participant #	Interview language (S = Spanish, E = English)	Age	Marital status	Gender (M = Male, F = Female)	Years in US	Immigrated with	Region of origin in Cuba	Level of education (Cuba)	Level of education (US)	Employment position (Cuba)	Employment position (US)
011	S	45	Separated	M	8	Friend	Pinar del Rio	9 th grade	None	Agriculture	Petroleum truck driver
012	S	37	Separated	M	2	Self	Pinar del Rio (Mantua)	9 th grade	None	Farmer	Construction
013	S	30	Married	M	1	Self	Pinar del Rio (Santa Lucia)	High school degree	None	Ranch equine specialist	Labor pool
014	S	36	Married	F	8	Spouse	Havana	Bachelor's degree information	Professional development	Software developer	Software developer
015	S	48	Single	M	4	Friend	Isla de la Juventud	High school degree	None	Naval military captain	Ship restoration captain
016	S	36	Married	F	4	Children (2)	Pinar del Rio	Bachelor's degree nursing	Dialysis technician	RN	Dialysis technician
017	E	21	Single	M	5	Parent	Havana (Artemisa)	9 th grade	Some college	None	System analyst
018	S	49	Separated	M	5	Family member	Havana	Associate degree art	Management training	Artist	Framer
019	S	37	Single	F	6	Children (2)	Havana	Bachelor's degree psychology	Master's degree mental health	Psychologist	Registered mental health counselor
020	S	61	Single	F	4	Self	Havana	High school degree	None	Warehouse manager	Fast food cook
021	S	46	Married	F	4	Children (2)	Ciego de Ávila	Medical doctor	Radiologist technician	Radiologist	Radiology technician
022	S	40	Married	F	4	Children (2)	Artemisa	Bachelor's degree education	None	Teacher	Custodian
023	S	45	Married	M	4	Children (2)	San Cristobal	High school degree	None	Laborer	Plumber

Procedures

To conduct this research study on the lived experience of Cuban immigrants, the researcher applied a phenomenology and qualitative approach to gain a more thorough understanding of how Cuban immigrants acculturate and what coping skills they used to adapt in the United States (Creswell, 2018).

Preparation for Semistructured Interviews

In preparation for conducting the study interviews, the researcher conducted a review of literature on the topic of Latino(a) acculturation and identified a gap in understanding the lived experience of Cuban immigrants, their acculturation process, and what coping skills they use to acculturate. Based on the literature review, the researcher generated eight semistructured interview questions (see Appendix C). After gaining approval by the IRB, the researcher proceeded with recruitment for the study and conducted 17 semistructured interviews. Eight interviews were conducted via Zoom and nine interviews were conducted over the telephone at the participant's request. Additionally, the researcher included a focus group of six participants to share the individual participants' findings. The focus group participants validated, refuted, or added to the individual interview findings to ensure trustworthiness.

Analysis

The researcher transcribed each semistructured interview. Two interviews were conducted in English and 15 interviews were conducted in Spanish. The Spanish transcripts were translated into English by the researcher and the interviews were proofread by an external Spanish to English translator. The researcher proofread each of the interviews a second time for accuracy, made journal entries about interview observations, and created a list of observed themes for each interview. The researcher created a list of themes from the interviews and used a

software called Dedoose for coding and analysis for each interview. This process continued for each of the 17 interviews and a master list of emerging themes was created.

Results

The themes described below were common across the various types of Cuban acculturation processes described by participants. All 17 participants described how various aspects of their acculturation process and coping skills influenced their acculturation experiences. Participants 1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15 emphasized how their need for freedom and a better life was worth the survival of crossing between nine and 11 borders, some by land and some by sea. Participants cited faith, hope, and resilience as top influences for their immigration to the United States along with their desire to seek a better life for themselves and their family.

For instance, Participant 1 shared how deciding to leave Cuba sparked his passion to fight for his freedom and the Cuban people left behind:

I felt nostalgic about the possibility of never seeing my family again. I close my eyes and can see every corner of my house in Cuba, every rock around the house, listen to people that visited the house and people around the neighborhood. When I first got here, I would work as much as I could to not think about my family in Cuba and how much I missed them. I love living in the United States, and I am grateful, but I will not stop thinking about how I can help my family and Cuba's people. If even Cuba were free tomorrow, I would be grateful for the United States, which is now my country. I am fortunate to have my home country where I was born and the country I live in and respect and value, the United States. I am now a citizen of the United States, and I know I am in a free land, and I can dream and make my goals and dreams come true.

Research Question 1 Themes

RQ1: How do Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process to the United States?

The data analysis revealed the following themes and subthemes that correlate with Research Question 1: (a) expectations (subthemes: American Dream, home ownership, expectation for Cuba within the United States, entrepreneurship in the United States, higher education goals in the United States); (b) United States acculturation support (subthemes: community support, support received, support not received); (c) experience in the United States (subthemes: positive experience, hindering or negative experience, difficulty adaptation in the United States), and (d) Stress in the United States (subthemes family, mental health, economics, and physical health).

Table 2

Acculturation

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
Expectations	Idea of the American Dream		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different historical perspective about US and Cuba upon arrival 	65%	11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom and possibilities for success 	59%	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work hard and live a good life 	53%	9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live the American Dream 	41%	7
	Home ownership in US		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy a home instead of renting Live independently (stop living with family and friends; different than Cuba) 	47%	8
		24%	4

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
	Expectation for Cuba within US		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support in Cuba by being in US 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better options for reunification with family in Cuba 	12%	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom in Cuba with the help of the US 	.06	1
	Entrepreneurship in US		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of owning a businesses in US 	41%	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of expanding current business in US 	18%	3
	Higher education goals in US		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never finished school in Cuba; better opportunities in US 	76%	13
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education opportunities for better career in US 	24%	4
US support services received	Community agency and government support		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of children and family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monetary funding ○ Food stamps 	82%	14
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food stamps 	76%	13
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Charities (clothing, English classes, temporary housing, food, immigration services) 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lutheran Services 	47%	8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid 	.06%	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat for Humanity 	.06%	1

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
	Other support services received (non-governmental or agency)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary housing (self-acquired, local community listings, apartment, living with sponsors of immigration partners) 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious support (Bible study classes, church attendance for prayer, church pastoral support, referrals for other support) 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support received from family 	82%	14
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family support in adapting to new culture and socially 	65%	11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English classes/educational programs at high school or agency programs 	53% (started not finished) 24% (completed)	9 (started not finished) 4 (completed)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community food pantry 	41%	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends (financial support and other assistance) 	35%	6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loans (personal loans through banks or credit unions) 	12%	2
	Support not received		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counseling (mental health) 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to American culture 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigration orientation (based on Cuban immigration) 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and support without use of technology* 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from Cuban community 	41%	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translators 	29%	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent housing 	12%	2
Experience	Positive experience		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better quality of life for family and children in US 	94%	16

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
	Positive experience (continued)		
	• Better work opportunities available compared to Cuba	94%	16
	• US economy (pay, money, banking, ATM, loans, ease of transference) more positive than Cuba	94%	16
	• Freedom to travel the US – Vacation (not allowed in Cuba without permission)	94%	16
	• Freedom (land, speech, religion, expression, work, education)	88%	15
	• Options for learning English (job training and better job opportunities)	82%	14
	• US citizenship opportunity	82%	14
	Positive experience (continued)		
	• Child sports and activities – Daycare, sports camps, school assistance improved in US	24%	4
	• Better school and therapy options for special needs child in US	24%	4
	Hindering or negative experiences		
	• Lack of technology experience (family and children) *	82%	14
	• Lack of English language – communication needed to survive (adults and children)	76%	13
	• Hard to find work at first (no work permit or lack of experience, driver’s license, transportation)	59%	10
	• Living with family and friends can strain relationships with family and friends in US	35%	6
	• COVID-19 virus in US and Cuba	29%	5
	• Embarrassment (not fitting in due to culture)	24%	4

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
	Hindering or negative experiences (continued)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disoriented (first 6 months) 	18%	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear related to trauma (immigration, deportation, not making it in US) 	18	3
	Difficulty in adaptation in US		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in adjusting to American culture (social narratives, ideologies, practices, tastes, values, and norms compared to Cuba) 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social acceptance/socially inadequate (making friends) 	41%	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School adaptation (children) 	24%	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct discrimination 	18%	
Stress in US	Family		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation of family (daily worry about family in Cuba) 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worry about how to support family in Cuba without work in the US 	94%	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions if/when returning to Cuba to visit family 	35%	6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children needs in the US (time, support, extracurricular activities, special needs) 	24%	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marriage struggle in US and Cuba (some participants have wives, husbands, and children in Cuba) 	18%	19
	Mental health		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grief and loss (family separation) 	88%	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxiety (constant worry and stress due to life situations) 	65%	11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marriage – Couples adaptation to marriage culture in US 	18%	3

Topics	Themes and subthemes	Percentage of participants who discussed subtheme	Number of participants who discussed subtheme
	Mental health (continued)		
	• Depression (sadness upon arriving in US)	12%	2
	• Children's emotional well-being in new environment	12%	2
	Economics		
	• Economic situation in US (paying bills and making ends meet)	76%	13
	• Losing work and school due to COVID-19	71%	12
	• Loss of work opportunities due to language	76%	13
	• Lack of money for cell phone and computer (both needed in US for adaptation)	53%	9
	• Housing (independent living style, maximum number of tenants hard on family and friends)	24%	4
	Physical health		
	• Medical health upon arrival to the US (less medical care in Cuba prior to immigration)	.06%	1

Note. *Technology: Cuban immigrants do not have access to computers, cell phones, text messages.

Expectations. The first theme that emerged was expectations. The subthemes described below represent participants' experiences living in the United States, including the acculturation processes participants experienced when aiming to be successful with housing, career, and expectations of Cuba.

Idea of the American Dream. The American dream is seen as endless positive possibilities, such as a good job, owning a home, and in many cases, safety from war or persecution. Cuban immigrants associate the American dream with being in a country where you

can achieve success and prosperity through dreaming, determination, hard work, and never giving up hope (Hill & Torres, 2010).

All 17 participants reported that arriving in the United States was an opportunity to better their lives and their family back home in Cuba. Additionally, participants reported how they felt betrayed and deceived by the Cuban government to believe that the United States is a terrible place, and that Cuba is the land of opportunity. Participant 3 shared that, “I feel blessed being in the United States, and it is the land of opportunity because I have experienced it with my own life.”

In speaking of their overall experiences, several participants noted happiness, relief, contentment, and gratefulness in the United States. For example, Participant 1 described his overall experiences with making it to the United States as “This is the best country in the world, and I can do anything I want with my life.” Several other participants described their experiences as being free, including Participant 2, who said, “I feel a sense of accomplishment in my life, and I would not have been able to do what I have done in Cuba, ever.”

Some participants had mixed emotions and lack of trust when arriving in the United States based on living a life of fear and repression before arriving in the United States. Participant 9 stated, “I feel the United States is the best country for opportunities and to live your dream.” On the other hand, Participant 11 stated, “I did not know what to expect when I got here and the truth is, I had to relearn some of the history of Cuba, and it was painful.” The researcher clarified Participant 11’s statement using additional questions, which revealed that the participant’s response was based on the lack of technology in Cuba and no access to worldwide news or history, which made it difficult to learn a comprehensive history of Cuba. Once in the

United States, Cuban immigrants can use technology and other resources to research history that may be contradictive to history learned in Cuba.

Participant 14 stated the following when asked to describe their expectations of living in the United States.

We are grateful for the opportunity of living in the United States and having what we have achieved so far. There is no way we would live the life we live here in Cuba. It is a modest life, and we have to work hard every day, but we will get paid at the end of the week and have what we need and want for our family.

Some participants felt angry when reminiscing about the many years of their life wasted with false expectations. Participants shared that they have been able to accomplish a lot in the United States. Participant 3 shared the following:

I was mad when I left Cuba, and I am still mad knowing that my family back in Cuba continues to live under a government that will not change when I think about it, it hurts because there is nothing, I can do about it.

Seventy-one percent of the participants agreed that their experience in the United States met or exceeded their expectations.

Home Ownership in United States. Cuban immigrants often dream about owning their own home after living in the United States for a short time. Eighteen percent of the participants shared how families in Cuba do not own property because no housing is available or because housing is too expensive. Cubans are accustomed to living with their parents, in-laws, or other family members. Cuban children are raised together with the grandparents and Cuban couples have no privacy or time for intimacy. Some Cuban immigrants have to travel a long distance to get to work, and the only transportation options are walking, riding the bus, or getting a ride.

Cubans who immigrate to the United States live with family or friends at first but yearn for their own independence. The expectation of owning a home is a dream, and 82% of participants shared that this dream was only attainable in the United States. Participant 1 shared that “after four years in the United States, we were able to buy a home where my wife and daughter live.” Similarly, Participant 3 shared, “I got married in the United States and bought a home. That ‘logro’ [accomplishment] would not have happened in Cuba no matter if you worked the rest of your life.” Participant 9 discussing home-owning expectations: “The expectation was real, and as long as you work hard, you can do anything with your life in the United States including buying a home which is what I am working for.” Fifty-three percent of the participants agreed that they met their expectation for housing or would enter the home-buying process within the next 2 years.

Expectation for Cuba from within the United States. Eighty-eight percent of the participants stated that they would like to see a free Cuba. These participants shared their desire to travel to their family anytime they want. Participants shared how they want to see a Cuba that provides its citizens with work and a better way of life, a possibility of owning a home or starting a business, and a democracy with human rights and no repression and discrimination.

The participants hope for a Cuba where Cuban citizens do not have to struggle or immigrate to a foreign country. Forty-seven percent of study participants shared that it is difficult to make daily, simple decisions in Cuba due to constant obstacles. Participants work hard in the United States to financially support their families in Cuba; however, participants shared that their family in Cuba still cannot obtain the necessary food or medicine even with this extra financial support.

Most of the participants expected that Cuba would become a free country eventually.

Participant 1 shared:

I live for the day when Cuba is free, and I can visit Cuba. I am one of those Cuban immigrants who are not allowed back in Cuba because of my government's opposition. I miss my family like you have no idea, and I hope I can see them again before they die.

In contrast, Participant 11 shared, "I feel that Cuba will never change, and my family will have to continue to suffer along with other Cuban people." Participant 15 shared that, in Cuba, "from the time you start school, you are being deceived about the truth, and you have no choice to believe it because the only books that exist about Cuban history are the ones communism created."

Participant 15 posited that, "You get to know the real truth when you get to the United States and start speaking to people and reading history books." Participant 16 shared: "I expect my family in Cuba to live a better life while being here in the United States." Forty-seven percent of the participants expected to be able to help their family more from the United States and agree that the separation of family is one of the hardest things to get through when they immigrated.

Entrepreneurship in the United States. Some participants discussed how owning a business or even having a better position would help them be successful in the United States. Thirty-five percent of the participants shared how having their own business would show that they achieved the American Dream. Entrepreneurship is considered an outstanding achievement in Cuba. Participants shared how they intended to start their own business in Cuba; however, this was mostly a short-term goal because owning a business is illegal and business-owners are always being watched and fined. Participants shared some examples of businesses in Cuba, including renting movies, doing construction including plumbing, electricity, and building an

addition onto a home, or having a home bakery where women have to barter for eggs, flour, milk, and other ingredients.

Participants 1, 2, 9, 15, 18, and 19—41% of all participants—had started their business or will soon in the United States. Participant 1 shared, “I have my own electrician company” and Participant 2 shared, “I have my plumbing business after four years of being in this country.” Participant 9 stated that, “Thanks to this country and working hard, I have a tile business, and I am working on my contractor’s license.” Participant 15, “I was a captain of a ship in Cuba, and today I am an owner and captain of my boat.” Participant 19 shared that “I was a psychologist in Cuba, and I have completed my master’s degree here and plan on opening my own counseling office next year. I could not have done this in Cuba.”

Higher Education Goals in the United States. Acquiring a higher education in the United States is associated with economic success, social status, better health, family stability, and life opportunities. A few participants shared their educational experiences in Cuba. Some completed high school and later wanted to pursue a higher education degree. These participants consistently explained that they were not allowed to select what they wanted to study in Cuba; rather, an area of study is selected for you while you are completing high school. Men are automatically registered to serve in the military for a mandatory 2-year period; after 2 years, men can go on to get an education. Cubans are given three options for a career based on Cuba’s needs at the time. Participant 3 was an engineer in Cuba; however, they never got to work as an engineer:

I am what you call a frustrated, educated person, where you studied and sacrificed your time in Cuba to study a career with many obstacles, and you were deprived of that option.

I was able to get into a university here in the United States, where I received my associate

degree, bachelor's degree, and now I am working on completing my master's degree in accounting.

Participant 4 also discussed their educational experience in Cuba:

I wanted to study medicine in Cuba but was not allowed, so when I got to this country, I decided to go back to school, and I got my associate degree in medical assistant. My dream is to be a doctor.

Participant discussed their occupation in Cuba versus their occupation after immigrating to the United States:

I am a psychologist in Cuba and want to be one in the United States. It would take me too long to pursue that degree. I decided to get a master's degree in mental health counseling, and currently, I am a registered intern. I plan on opening up my practice within the next two years.

Participant 21 discussed the differences in working conditions between Cuba and the United States.

I am a radiologist in Cuba and what I studied and worked at is my passion. In Cuba, I was making \$25.00 a month and could not support myself or my family. You study a long time and love what you do but you are constantly feeling the pain of not having anything. The working conditions in Cuba are terrible and I was not able to help a lot of patients due to not having the equipment, supplies I needed. Unfortunately, I am not able to practice here unless I complete the board of medicine. I feel that starting over with a family would be too much of a sacrifice. I want to be a nurse because the medical field is what I enjoy. In the meantime, I got certified as a radiologist technician at an excellent medical center and will continue to work there until I get my nursing degree.

Twenty four percent of the participants wanted to pursue a higher education in the United States.

United States Support Services Received. The second theme that emerged in correlation with Research Question 1 was United States acculturation support. The subthemes for this theme are described below.

Community Agency and Government Support. Community support provided Cuban immigrants with positive emotional experiences, and some participants explained that community support helped them to better acclimate to life in the United States; for instance, participants used community support to learn U.S. customs and traditions, thus reducing the stress of immigration and allowing the participant to adapt more quickly. Community support is temporary; it is a transactional process between the Cuban immigrants and their environment, leading to increased perceived support. Community support helps at a deeper level because most Cuban immigrants will live, work, and socialize in their communities.

Participants expressed that most Cubans have a hard time asking for or accepting help. Cuban immigrants are used to solving problems independently because in Cuba, it is part of their survival skills. All participants shared that they are grateful for their family, friends, and community who helped them during the most challenging time in their life. Participants 11, 12, and 13 shared that immigrating to a new country is difficult despite the fact that many people in Miami are Cuban and speak Spanish. It is all new to the Cuban immigrant who has lived in a shell for most of their lives.

Seventy-six percent of participants were grateful for the community help they received from Catholic Charities, the Department of Children and Families, Lutheran Services, and other family and friends. Participant 1 shared, “Habitat for Humanity helped my family and me with

the dream of buying a home. I will always be grateful to Catholic Charities for their help and support.” Similarly, Participant 6 shared: “Friends supported us with information about getting started with social security card, work permit, bus information and where things were located in the community. Participant 12 shared: “I felt like a fish out of water most of the days and having community and family support was helpful during my transition.” Participant 8 shared how Lutheran Services assisted their family:

Lutheran Services showed us how to find work and introduced us to career services. We were able to learn how to apply for a job and helped us financially through a sponsor for a month. They also helped us find therapy help for my son, who is a special needs child. I was so lost in a country that is so different from Cuba and having services available is a Godsend.

Participant 9 shared that “[the] Department of Children and Family provided us with food stamps through for three months. When we did not know if we were going to make it, the money helped us start. We are grateful and will never forget.” Participants 4 and 17 shared similar comments that schoolteachers and school counselors were helpful and encouraging during their transition to the United States. All of the participants were helped by family and friends. Participant 9 shared that the following about living with and helping family and friends:

It is challenging to take a friend or family into your home when you are already struggling. However, culturally, we take care of each other, and most Cuban immigrants help out someone in the future that lands in the United States.

Other Support Services Received. Communities provide Cuban immigrants with initial support, ranging from housing to medical support. Many participants received support from nonprofit organizations that work together with communities to assist newly arrived immigrants.

Seventy-six percent of the participants needed or used one or more of the following categories: career services, counseling (such as therapy for a special needs child), employment preparation training, English classes (paid), small loans, medical assistance (Medicaid), money, religious support (bibles, church services, and pastoral help), permanent housing, temporary funding, temporary housing, and temporary transportation (bus passes and rides). Participant 16 shared, “I am so grateful to be here with my husband and children. The help we received without asking is something I could never pay back.” Participant 18 shared that “I am glad to be in the United States which has given me more opportunity and I can continue to do my art more freely and I can make my own decisions.”

Support Not Received. Communities assist Cuban immigrants initially and through their assimilation process; this assistance is dependent on the community or organization’s insufficiencies. The study data revealed some areas of community support areas that are currently lacking but would be helpful to future Cuban immigrants.

The first lack of support that participants discussed was in the area of technology. Participants shared that Cuban immigrants lack technology skills because most things are done manually at a slower pace in Cuba. The participants did not have access to cell phones, computers, tablets, or gaming while in Cuba. The participants shared that one of the biggest struggles when first arriving in the United States is that everything is automated and people communicate quickly. Not knowing the English language and having no technical skills was a huge hurdle and detriment for most participants. Eighty-two percent of participants found technology as a deficit and hardship when immigrating to the United States.

Participant 6 shared that “Technology was a big setback.” Similarly, Participant 8 shared that “Not having any computer skills makes it hard to navigate the available systems you have

here in the United States for help.” Participant 9 stated that “Providing resources for ‘How to’ using Technology would have been helpful.” Additionally, Participant 12 shared that “It would have been helpful to learn the technology you use in the United States. Learning how to use social media to communicate with friends and stay connected with family would have been helpful upon arrival.”

Participant 15 shared that “Everything was offered electronically, and I did not have access to any technology in Cuba.” Participant 16 stated that “It would have been helpful to get the information in a more manageable format, and something where we could stay in contact with the person to answer questions.” Participant 18 discussed their unfamiliarity with technology: “I came from Cuba where there is no technology or easy anything.” Participant 19 shared that “If technology would have been available and the resources in an easier format, it would have helped me adjust sooner.”

Participant 1 shared a potential solution to Cuban immigrants’ lack of technological experience:

After being part of this research, I realize that I could create an app that can help Cuban immigrants navigate to a simpler system that has things in categories based on needs with topics that are needed when you first arrive and are trying to get acclimated. It was one of my biggest frustration and I am sure it is for other people as well.

Participants also shared that they lacked emotional support after immigrating. Some of the participants were traumatized while immigrating to the United States, and Participants 3, 9, 15, 17, 19 shared the difficulties of not having someone to talk to who would culturally understand their experience. Participant 2 shared that “I have still have nightmares about my

crossing borders to get to the United States.” Participant 18 stated that “Counseling or someone to talk to about our emotions would have been helpful.”

Additionally, the U.S. immigration process is complicated and can be overwhelming considering the language barriers and different customs and culture. Participant 1 shared that “someone needed to explain the immigration process”. Similarly, Participant 6 shared, “having someone explain the immigration process would have been helpful. They provided me with the information, but I did not have a translator and had to rely on my family, which they didn't speak good English.” Participant 15 stated that “I did not understand what they were trying to help me with, and it was overwhelming.”

Some participants agreed that having access to other Cuban immigrants with more experience would have been helpful. The participants found that family and friends did not always have the latest information and accidentally misguided based on their experiences, which set participants back when acclimating. For example, Participant 11 stated that “My cousin tried to show me things when I first got here, and some of the steps he wanted me to do were not helpful and were no longer valid.”

Lastly, Participants 9, 13, and 19 found housing to be a challenge during the first 6 months after immigrating to the United States. The participants shared that living with family and friends is positive at first but feels like a burden over time.

Experience in the United States. The experiences when a Cuban immigrant arrives in the United States can be positive, negative, or both. The researcher explored participants’ positive and negative experiences and how participants navigated the immigration and acculturation process in the United States.

Positive Experience. Eighty-eight percent of the participants had a positive experience while immigrating and adapting to the United States. Participant 1 said “I am grateful to the United States for what I have been able to achieve here.” Participant 2 shared that:

I felt something unexplainable, to have the freedom of speech and expression and not go to jail or interrogated. It feels very strange the first couple of months because you still are hesitant and feel like you are not free as if, it is too good to be true.

Participant 4 discussed being grateful for freedom in the United States.

I don't think people understand how hard it is to immigrate especially to a country that is so different than Cuba . . . The word freedom means so much here in the United States. I mean different in culture, language, politics, school, work, people. I am grateful for everyone that helped me find out what we needed to get ahead during our acculturation process.

Participant 12 also discussed their gratitude: “I am grateful to the United States for allowing me to be in their country.” Participant 12 discussed why Cubans immigrate:

I feel like I have a whole new world to learn and that it was exciting, but I was nervous as well. It seems Cuban immigrants finally get adapted to the United States and later returned to Cuba only to realize how bad things were when they were living in Cuba but that it progressively gets worse. The choice of immigrating seems complicated, but without things changing in Cuba, the Cuban people are willing to sacrifice everything to have a better life.

Participant 14 shared that “After a couple of months, we began to feel more comfortable.”

Hindering or Negative Experience. In speaking of their overall experiences, 76% noted that the English language was a huge barrier in adjusting with work, school, daily functions such

as going to the market or anything having to do with basic necessities. For example, Participant 1 described his overall experience with the English language as “I wish I could have learned English before coming to the U.S.” Participant 3 also discussed difficulty with learning English:

As a new immigrant you have to choose working over learning English knowing that you will never advance if you do not learn English. The synchronicity and system in the United States is totally different in the United States and it can take a while to understand.

Fifty-four percent of the participants found that they had a negative experience with finding work, living arrangements, and understanding American culture when it comes to daily life and work ethics. Participant 13 shared feeling “embarrassed in asking for help and felt discriminated against for just doing my job and making the extra effort, not asking for things when you needed them at the store or at work.” Similarly, Participant 16 stated “because of my language and not speaking English made it hard for me to find work.” Participant 13 shared how he struggled to get assistance in the United States:

I am not going to lie. It has been really hard because I am not like other Cubans that came here in a time where the Wet-Foot, Dry-Foot was still available. I was not able to get all of the help initially to stabilize in the United States . . . I struggled more because I could not get asylum.

Difficulty in Adaptation in the United States. Adapting to a new country and culture can have consequences that affect Cuban immigrants’ physical and emotional well-being.

Immigrants’ amount of stress depends on how they immigrated to the United States and the circumstances in which they find themselves upon arrival. For some, adjusting to a new culture, lifestyle, community, and language can be stressful, and the time to adapt varies from person to

person. Many Cuban immigrants redefine their lives and adjust to society until they acclimate and adapt.

All of the participants shared that getting acclimated was difficult but understanding the American culture was the hardest. Participant 2 shared that “everything is so fast-paced here compared to Cuba, and no one has time for spending time together outside of the weekend.” Many participants generally spoke of music, food, smells, and language as being different. Participant 5 shared that “acclimating socially was hard for a long time and it is still difficult at time especially with work situations.” Participant 8 discussed differences in social culture:

The social culture was very different from the way we are as Cubans. We are used to be united all the time and it was hard to adjust to limited time together . . . There is no training for that when you get to the United States.

Participant 9 shared that “It was difficult because everything was so different, and I felt that I was in a strange place.” Participant 11 stated “It has taken time to adjust.” Participant 14 posited that “You are pulled into so many directions with things being explained so differently based on how other Cubans adjusted in the past and things have changed, and it was hard.” Participant 17 discussed how “When I first got the United States it was hard, and I had a bit of time to get adjusted to the ways of this country and how people interacted with me.” Similarly, Participant 19 said “I was disoriented for quite a long time. I felt like I wanted to go back to Cuba because I missed my family, my culture, my people and land.” Ninety-four percent of participants found that adapting to the United States and the American Culture was very difficult, particularly socially. Participants found it difficult to make new friends due to their work schedule and or were challenged when socializing outside of work or with family.

Stress in the United States. The last theme that emerged in relation to Research Question 1 was stress in the United States. Immigrating to the United States is challenging and stressful, and Cuban immigrants use their resilience from many years of living in poor conditions to overcome the stresses. Specifically, Cuban immigrants struggle with family, mental health, economic stress both in the United States and in Cuba, along with physical stress that ensues after immigrating to a new country. The subthemes discussed below represent participants' experiences with stress while acclimating to the United States.

Family. Cuban immigrants stress about the family they left behind as well as the family that immigrated with them to the United States. Participants shared how family is a constant worry, and Cuban immigrants must adjust to U.S. culture before they can have enough time to visit Cuba and see the family. Additionally, some participants had sanctions and are never allowed to go back to visit Cuba, which caused more stress and guilt of leaving family behind.

Participant 1 shared that they were “happy to be here but feel guilty for leaving my parents and stress every week when I need to make sure I have enough money to send to them.” Similarly, Participant 2 said “I worry about not knowing when I will see my family again in Cuba. Sometimes you get sanctioned or you are not let into Cuba after you leave.” Participant 4 shared: “I am always thinking about my family in Cuba, mainly thinking and if they were able to eat well.” Participant 6 stated that immigrants “live in constant fear and agony not knowing if you will ever see your family again.”

Mental Health. A few participants shared more of their thoughts and experiences with stress and mental health in Cuba. Most commented that mental health counseling in Cuba is taboo. If you see a therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist, you are considered crazy by the community. Cubans rely on their family and Santeria, *Babala'wo* (spiritual title that denotes a

priest of the Ifá oracle) healers for help. In Cuba, the Afro-Cuban religion is more acceptable now than Christianity, although it has become easier for Cubans to practice Christianity in some areas.

Participant 18 discussed the mental health issues that their mother experienced:

My mom arrived from Cuba and she is doing poorly mentally. She grieves every day for our family. She had to leave her son behind and parents who are older. She cannot seem to accept and adjust in this country. The nostalgia is hard for her and her desire is to go back no matter how hard her life would be in Cuba. She has spent 60 years of her life in Cuba and trying to learn a new way of life is hard and she is falling into a depression. I have found her a counselor that speaks Spanish but does not understand my mother and that this change means to her.”

Participant 19 discussed feeling worried about their marriage.

I worry about my marriage because our culture is different and in Cuba, “machismo” is part of the male dominance mentality and the rushed life we live in the United States compels you to be more independent and time is limited with family and homemaker duties.

Economics. Cuban immigrants are concerned about the economy in the United States because they must work in order to help their families in Cuba. The participants explained how supporting their family in both Cuba and the United States is part of their culture. The contact between countries is not always the best due to the lack of technology and communication; thus, participants had to rely on their family in Cuba to share how they are doing. Participants shared how family members in Cuba may not be honest in order to not worry their family in the United States. Participant 1 shared the following:

I was afraid of not finding work when I first got here. I did not know the working system and the construction in Cuba is different than in the United States. After the struggle to step foot on this land and not knowing if I was going to make money to support myself and my family in Cuba was stressful.

Participant 2 also shared their worries about money:

When I do not make money, I cannot help my family here or in Cuba. A lot of Cuban immigrants have debts that they owe for getting to the United States such as family or friends that paid for your travel to the United States. It is a lot of money that have to put upfront. My cost was \$13,500.00 to come into the United States.

Participant 5 stated “I worry about making money and supporting myself because work is slow.” Similarly, Participant 9 shared, “I stress about money, paying the rent, providing for my children especially one that has special needs.” Participant 12 stated feeling “emotionally drained on a daily basis worried about my family in Cuba. You know the struggles of living there even though you leave Cuba.” Participant 14 discussed their concerns with the Covid-19 pandemic: “I fear about the current situation with Covid-19 and the fear of losing my job which I work with clients in person.” Participant 16 shared feeling “stress[ed] and anxious about getting a nursing degree to better my income and help my family here and in Cuba.”

Physical Health. Some participants felt that finding good health care was difficult in Cuba. Participants shared that, in Cuba, they would pay for doctor visits with chickens, eggs, or something practical; however, this proved difficult because so many things, including food, are scarce in Cuba. Participant 6 worried about the Covid-19 pandemic: “COVID19 and my family in Cuba where they have a hard time finding masks and sanitizer in a country where hygiene is almost non-existent while adding a \$1,200.00 fine for not having a mask.” Participant 13 also

shared their worry: “I worry about my health and now with the COVID19 even worse.” Forty-one percent of the participants stated feeling stressed about COVID19 both in the United States and in Cuba. Participant 19 discussed how Cubans bring doctors gifts as a way to show support: “It is a way of our culture for patients to come to the clinics with a gift because they know doctors' salaries are low, and they also have to support their family.”

Research Question 2 Themes

RQ2: How do Cubans cope during their acculturation process in the United States?

The data analysis revealed the following themes and subthemes that correlate with Research Question 2: (a) coping skills (subthemes: technology, family, religion, personal coping skills, friends, career services, mental health, and English) and (b) counseling experience (subthemes: future counseling and counseling in Cuba). Table 3 details participants’ coping strategies.

Table 3

Coping Strategies

Themes	Corresponding strategies	Percentage of participants who used strategy	Number of participants who used strategy
Benefit of technology use in US	Cell phone access in US used as a positive coping strategy to communicate with family in Cuba	88%	15
	Coworkers teaching the use of social media	82%	14
	Community support (training of phone and computer use)	41%	7

Themes	Corresponding strategies	Percentage of participants who used strategy	Number of participants who used strategy
Benefit of technology use in US (continued)	Attendance of computer classes (high school and university)	29%	5
	Family and friends personal training for use of cell phone and computers	18%	3
Family	Emotional support from family in Cuba to support adaptation in US (letters, phone calls)	88%	15
	Family support in US – Reducing nostalgia (stories, customs, staying in touch with family in Cuba)	76%	13
	Monetary support provided by family in US to help with finances	71%	12
	Housing support provided by family in US (up to 1 year)	35%	6
	Transportation support by family in US (family loans cars, gives rides)	35%	6
Religion	Faith and hope (internal coping mechanism)	82%	14
	Church (attendance, church members, sponsors)	59%	10
	Religion support from Cuba (Afro-Cuban religion)	29%	5
	Religious support using the Bible and spiritual affirmations for coping during transition	24%	4
Personal coping strategies	Determination to succeed (self-internal process)	94%	16
	Empowerment feeling (self-internal process) – Positive US possibilities compared to Cuba	88%	15
	Positive attitude (self-internal process) used while adapting in the US	76%	13
	Value peaking to other Cuban families that have immigrated recently	29%	5
	Survival and persistence (internal thought process) - Fear of not wanting to return to Cuba	29%	5
Friends	Support from friends who have previously immigrated from Cuba	76%	13
	Friend providing living arrangement support (1–6 months)	35%	6

Themes	Corresponding strategies	Percentage of participants who used strategy	Number of participants who used strategy
Friends (continued)	Coworker support with adjusting to the job and work ethics in US	18%	3
	Friend in US helping with childcare while Cuban immigrant is working	12%	2
Career services	Career services (resume, application, interview practice, interview techniques)	35%	6
Mental health	School counselor support	12%	2
	Medication (anxiety and stress)	12%	2
	Child individual therapy (special needs child)	.06%	1
	Counseling (group therapy) assistance in adjustment to US	.06%	1
	Adult individual counseling therapy (anxiety and depression)	.06%	1
	Use of self-help and positive affirmation books to help increasing mood	.06%	1
English	English classes- Hodges University, local high school, personal tutoring, community resources	35%	6
	Children, family, and friends helping teach the language	12%	2

Coping Skills. The first theme that emerged in correlation with Research Question 2 was coping skills. The subthemes are discussed below and provide further detail on this theme.

Benefit of Technology Use in United States. Cuba is a country that, due to the repression and control, has limited access to the internet, cell phones, and social media for most Cubans on the island. Cuban immigrants find it difficult to adjust when they first immigrate because everything that is helpful is provided with technology, and Cuban immigrants do not have the technical skills or knowledge early on during their acculturation process. Most participants have shared this knowledge and have admitted to not having a computer, cell phone, Internet, or social media in Cuba. A great majority of work in Cuba is done manually, making it difficult and time-

consuming to get documents of any kind. Additionally, all documents are monitored by the government.

Participant 19 discussed how difficult it is to retrieve official documents in Cuba:

As a doctor in Cuba, you have your degree and grades certified at the province where you graduated. If you immigrate to the United States, it is almost impossible for you to get a certified copy. If you find someone that can locate it, you have to pay approximately \$600 to get it sent to you and by regular mail or someone that brings it to you. The Cuban government makes it very difficult and punishes Cuban documents for immigrating to the United States. In fact, sometimes you are sanctioned 8 to 10 years before you can leave even if you have a visa permit. The reason professionals try to get their education documents from Cuba is because they can have a service that provides Foreign credential evaluation to determine the U.S. academic equivalent of studies completed outside the United States. This allows you to have more opportunities to get a certified equivalent degree to work in a job better related to the field of study you completed in Cuba. The alternative, like many Cuban immigrants that are professionals like doctors, surgeons, attorneys, engineers, and they are working in labor pools, maids, custodians, or any job that can help pay the bills.

Eighty-eight percent of participants used technology as a positive coping mechanism for reaching out to family in Cuba; connection through technology relieved the stress and nostalgia of not seeing family. Participant 1 shared that “I had friends teach me how to use a cell phone and was able to eventually communicate with my family in Cuba. My family and girlfriend taught me how to use social media.” Participant 2 also had assistance in learning technology:

My cousin bought me a cell phone after a month of being in the United States and from there he was able to show me some of the things I needed immediately to find work, reach the family and friends and make appointments.

Participant 3 shared that “Catholic Charities helped me learn how to use YouTube to learn how to do interviews. It was not until three weeks upon arriving that I got a cell phone.” Participant 6 learned how to use a computer and cellphone after arriving in Florida:

I was shown by friends the basics of using the computer and a cell phone and that it took a lot for me to get used to that in Miami, no one really has communication only by text and phone call. It was hard to adjust and missed the way we visited in Cuba where we always had time for family and friends.

Participant 8 stated that they were “able to take computer courses to help with the use of computers and later to pursue my accounting degree.” Participant 15, 18, and 19 were bought a cell phone by friends and family and learned how to use the computer at home. Participant 16 discussed feeling displaced:

I feel so displaced not knowing something like the use of a cell phone that is a basic commodity for Americans. It was a shock to see how young kids use the cell phones and computers at a very young age.

Family. Seventy-five percent of participants used the support of their family in the United States and back in Cuba to cope with feelings of loss, confusion, and misplacement while trying to adapt in the United States. Family is considered an essential part of Cuban culture. Most participants felt that leaving their family destroyed them emotionally and felt overwhelmed by the constant separation. Participant 2 discussed receiving support from their family.

I am very close to mother and leaving her was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. She has been my support and pushed me when I first got here to keep going because I wanted to go back to Cuba feeling the nostalgia. People here do not understand what it means to be separated and not knowing how long it will be before I can see my mother again. My family, especially my cousin has been here to guide me and provided support financially with the crossing of borders and helping me find a job early on.

Participant 5 also received support from family:

I felt lost without my family in Cuba, but my family here knew what I was going through as Cuban immigrants themselves and were emotionally supportive as well as financially. I was able to live with them for 3 months until I could find my own place.

Participant 8 discussed receiving support from a friend:

My friend taught me how to drive and I got my license. Two years later, I bought a car. I had to take the bus while I was pregnant because I had no transportation and my friends and family had to work.

Participant 15 also shared how they received support from family: “My family helped me acclimate to the ways of living the American culture and helped me find work and a place to live after living with them for six months.”

Religion. Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, and 19 all believed that their faith in God and other saints helped them through the immigration process and adjusting to the United States. Participant 1 shared that “Catholic Charities gifted me a Bible and gave me resources for attending church with my wife and daughter. I still have the Bible and preserve it as reminder of my initial struggles in the United States.” Participant 15 stated: “I have God in my life and my faith never leaves me.” Some participants proclaimed that their religious priest

within their religious beliefs protected them as they journeyed by land and sea to the United States.

Personal Coping Skills. Coping involves adjusting to negative or emotional situations. Many emotions contribute to stress when one is immigrating to the United States. Some immigrants feel limited when adapting to a situation where they feel stress, loss, nostalgia, anger, fear, or even trauma from major life changes. Participant 1 and 3 enjoyed relaxing on the weekend even when their conversations always ended up being about the family in Cuba. Participant 8 used meditation to relax: “I used meditation that I found on YouTube and also started doing yoga because my friend from school told me it was a way to relax. Good early on when I was pregnant.” Participant 9 discussed how starting a business helped them to cope with stress:

I found that starting a business helped me not think about my family all the time and it kept me busy. I was able to start my own business after that happened and began to make more income to help my family here and in Cuba.

Participant 11 discussed how remembering the persistence of family helped them to cope:

I never forgot my culture and because we are a persistent family that is what kept me going when at first, I wanted to go back to what was usual for me. I missed my family in Cuba so much.

Participant 19 shared how they felt empowered by the support of friends and by self-help books at the library:

I felt empowered when I got here and knew there was not turning back for me and my family. I had the support of my friend in this new country. I was also introduced to the

library where I found a lot of self-help books that helped me during my search for work and school.

Friends. Participants 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16 had friends who supported them with living arrangements, food, learning technology, and finding work. Participant 1 shared: “My wife was able to have her friend watch out daughter while we were looking for work.”

Participant 17 had a friend who provided support:

I was able to use my friend’s car for a while since they had two cars. I am so grateful to him because they were having financial problems at the time that I got here. and her husband were struggling financially.

Career Services. Lutheran Services provided career services to 53% of participants. Participants found career services to be helpful in searching for work, interviewing, and securing a job. Lutheran Services provided a training related to getting acclimated to work in the United States, provided a “dress for success” event, and conducted mock interviews. Participant 4 shared: “I worked with Lutheran Services for a short time helping other Cuban immigrants with finding jobs and working on resumes. I was able to speak a little English.”

Mental Health. Thirty-five percent of participants found that the use of mental health therapy was helpful. Participant 8 discussed receiving help for a child with special needs:

I am grateful for the support we received for our child who has special needs. We also receive help from the school and speech therapists. That is not something we could have done in Cuba. You have so many options here in the United States.

Participant 19 discussed how therapy was helpful:

I had postpartum depression with my second child, and I was able to get therapy for myself. I also attended group therapy and found it helpful as well. I could not have handled the depression and help supporting my family without an adjustment.

English. Fifteen percent of participants shared how they were able to get a better job and felt less confined or embarrassed about using the English language after learning English at a university.

Future Counseling. The second theme that emerged in relation to Research Question 2 was counseling experience. Table 4 and the subsequent sections detail the themes and subthemes related to participants’ experience with counseling in Cuba and the United States.

Table 4

Counseling Experience

Theme	Subtheme	Percentage of participants with this experience	Number of participants with this experience
Future counseling	Therapy a benefit for Cuban Immigrants during the immigration and acculturation process. Participants experienced assimilation, adaptation, anxiety, cultural shock, depression, family therapy, fear, grief and loss during immigration and acculturation, PTSD, separation of family, and trauma.	76%	13
Counseling in Cuba	Received counseling in Cuba for postpartum depression	.06%	1

Counseling a Benefit for Cuban Immigrants. Participants shared that many Cuban immigrants immigrate to the United States in various forms, such as by land, air, or sea. Cuba

immigrants who return to Cuba to visit family fear being detained and imprisoned. For instance, Participant 2 further discussed these fears:

You are no longer seen as a Cuban citizen but as a traitor and are followed as soon as you arrive on the island . . . The indoctrination is instilled in you as a child and although you may have acclimated to the United States . . . Your past is not forgotten and when you visit Cuba you are right back in their system.

Participant 9 shared how counseling would have been beneficial during the acculturation process:

We are misunderstood when we get here and no offense to those that helped us initially, but our emotional states caused us to be nervous and anxious and all we wanted was to know what was going to happen and we did not communicate well. It would have been helpful to have someone that was more experienced in working with an emotional person rather than a person who wanted to help but it was about the paperwork.

Eighty-two percent of participants agreed that providing counseling to Cuban immigrants during the acculturation process would be helpful to those who may feel fear, trauma, anxiety, grief, and loss from separation of family, as discussed by Participant 1:

I never will forget how I was raised in Cuba where I was indoctrinated to believe only in one thing while I was in school at 6 years old causing fear and panic even when there is no reason. I still have a hard time expressing what I feel about Cuba because I am not allowed to go back. I feel that having a person that could relate or walk us through the feelings we are feeling when we first get here would help.

Participant 2 detailed the trauma they sustained during the immigration process:

I crossed nine borders to get to the United States and that experience is the worst in my life, and I would not desire it on my worst enemy. I was lost in jungles in countries I did not know, no food or drink, exposed to danger daily. I still cannot sleep at night.

Participant 15 also shared their immigration process:

I was at sea for 11 days on a handmade raft and saw my darkest hours until I landed in Mexico. Although, it was a risk to go out to sea, I would rather die out at sea than return and die in Cuba without freedom having done nothing with my life.

Counseling in Cuba. Counseling in Cuba is available and used primarily to employ government workers. Counseling is considered a second option before seeing a family member, priest, friend or healer. Participant 19 shared their experience of receiving therapy and working as a therapist in Cuba:

I fell into a depression when I had my daughter in Cuba. I was able to recognize my symptoms, being that I am a psychologist in Cuba. I saw a therapist in Cuba. The work that I did as a counselor and psychologist in Cuba was very rewarding. I worked at the only clinic that was available from one town to the next. I saw many cases, and the way that counseling was introduced to clients or patients was through employment. Once they understood what things could be done to help people, the Cuban community became more acceptable. It is interesting how much stigma is attached to mental health in the United States. I can see where stigma was a major component in getting help in Cuba, but I am amazed at the hesitation in getting therapy here.

Focus Group Response Analysis

The researcher shared the identified themes and relationships between themes from the individual interviews in a Zoom session with the six participants assigned to a focus group; the

size of the focus group was dependent on the total participant volunteers. The focus group demographics are detailed in Table 6. The use of a focus group increased the validity and authenticity of the research findings. The researcher presented the research findings to the group and asked three questions at the end of the presentation:

1. How do the findings align with your experience?
2. How do the findings disagree with your experience?
3. What can you contribute to these findings based on your experience?

The results of the focus group can be found in Table 7.

Table 5

Focus Group Demographics

Participant #	Interview language (S = Spanish)	Age	Marital status	Gender (M = male, F = female)	Years in US	Immigrated with	City currently living in	Level of education (Cuba)	Employment position in Cuba	Employment position in US
007	S	23	Single	F	3.6	Parent	Cape Coral	High school degree	None	Pet resort technician
010	S	21	Single	F	3.6	Parent	Cape Coral	High school degree	None	Pet resort technician
014	S	36	Married	F	8	Spouse	Naples	Bachelor's degree information technology	Software developer	Software developer
020	S	61	Single	F	4	Self	Naples	High school degree	Warehouse manager	Fast food cook
022	S	40	Married	F	4	Children (2)	Miami	Bachelor's degree education	Teacher	Custodian
023	S	45	Married	M	4	Children (2)	Miami	High school degree	Laborer	Plumber

Table 6*Focus Group Averages*

Focus Group		
Number of participants		6
Average Age		38
Average years in the United States		4.5
Immigrated with children		2
Marital status	Single	3
	Married	3
Gender	Female	5
	Male	1
Level of education in Cuba	High school	4
	Bachelor	2

Table 7*Results of Focus Group*

How do the findings align with your experience?	How do the findings disagree with your experience?	What can you contribute to these findings based on your experience?
Separation of Family (100%) All participants agreed what leaving their family was very difficult and it is still something they have trouble adjusting to.	“Found transportation to be a bigger barrier than English because work was a priority for me and my family. (Participant 22)	All participants added that improving the initial process when arriving in this country based on emotional needs would be helpful. “Depending on how you immigrate into this country, your needs will be different. I don’t believe this is properly assessed when you arrive in the US.” (Participant 20) Some of us feel many emotions that we never get to get over and leaving your family and not knowing when you will see them again is extremely hard.” (Participant 23)

How do the findings align with your experience?	How do the findings disagree with your experience?	What can you contribute to these findings based on your experience?
<p>Adaptation to the American Culture (100%) Some of us come to the United States without knowing anything about the American culture and it takes time to get to know their culture and ways. I felt it was a struggle to adapt. (Participant 20)</p> <p>Sometimes it was hard for me to go out and try to talk to people.” (Participant 22)</p>	<p>Found Higher Education to be of more importance and the lack of possibilities to practice medicine or a teacher in this country causes major setback for family and personal detriment in sacrificing your life physically and emotionally. (Participant 14, 22)</p>	<p>If maybe the people who are helping us knew more about Cuba and the current situation, it would help in deciding what would be most helpful and when. When you get here, everything is very confusing, and you don’t know what you need at first. (Participant 20, 22, 23)</p>
<p>English language (83%)</p>		
<p>Technology (83%) “Getting used to using the cell phone, tablet and how things were mostly automated was intimidating and scary.” (Participant 20, 21, 22)</p>		
<p>Counseling options for Cuban Immigrants (83%) Most agreed that having a counselor or person they can talk to about things they are thinking or going through would be helpful and not have so much fear.”</p>		
<p>Lack of Social Skills (66%)</p>		

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to report the data analysis results of the interviews with 17 Cuban immigrants to answer the identified research questions. Important reflections, experiences, and recommendations surfaced from participants’ descriptions of their immigration

and acculturation process. The results of the focus group also provided additional insight into the 17 participants' interview responses.

Cuban immigrants experience stress and mental health issues while acculturating in the United States; however, the negative and positive impacts revealed through this study indicate that Cuban immigrants have strength and resilience. For example, Participant 2 lived in the mountains for 2 weeks to mentally and physically prepare for the journey of crossing 11 borders to get to the United States: "It was the worse experience of my life, but I am free now."

The analysis data analysis revealed that the participants had internal and external coping skills that contributed to their resilience. Participants' used internal coping skills such as optimism, adjustability, pursuance, religion, faith, and hope. External factors that assisted participants in coping included social support systems such as family, friends, counselors, church, and community.

The researcher will further discuss the themes and study results in Chapter 5. Additionally, the researcher will discuss how the study results add to the limited literature on Cuban immigration, the acculturation process, and coping skills that Cuban immigrants use when adapting to the United States. The research limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research will be suggested following the discussion of these results.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In Chapter 1, the researcher introduced the topic of Cuban immigrants, challenges that Cuban immigrants' face during their acculturation process, and the coping skills that Cuban immigrants use to adapt to the United States. Chapter 2 detailed prior research and presented a comparison of the acculturation process among Latino(a) and Cuban immigrants. In Chapter 3, the researcher proposed the study's details by showing the design, research questions, participants, procedures, and analysis method. In Chapter 4, the researcher presented the findings of the study. In this chapter, the researcher presents conclusions, discussion, and associations of the results, including a discussion that compares and contrasts the study results with previous literature.

Cuban immigrants face significant and specific barriers when immigrating to the United States. Cubans are motivated to immigrate to the United States; however, Cubans are often unable to prepare for the barriers they face after arriving in the United States. This study's purpose was exploratory, and the researcher aimed to understand (a) how Cuban immigrants acculturate in the United States and (b) which coping skills immigrants' use to acclimate and adapt. Specifically, this study was conducted to address a gap in the scholarly literature on Cuban immigrants' acculturation. Additionally, the researcher explored how mental health counseling can improve the outcomes of Cuban immigrants' acculturation experience.

The researcher used a phenomenology and qualitative approach to identify themes across the shared lived experiences of 17 Cuban immigrants. In this chapter, the results of the current study will be correlated with related existing knowledge. The discussion is organized by participants' descriptions of their acculturation and coping skills experience. The researcher also discusses the participants' acculturation and coping process and the additional influences that

impacted participants' overall lived experiences during their acculturation process in the United States. Lastly, the researcher will address the current study's limitations and implications for practice, research, and education.

Acculturation Challenges

Scholarly literature on Cuban immigrants' acculturation and coping skills is limited. Additionally, counseling education and mental health counselors' readiness to work with Cuban immigrants is also limited. Several researchers have examined Latino(a) immigrants' needs and experience during immigration and acculturation; however, there is limited research regarding the Cuban immigrant population and their experience. To understand the study results within the context of existing knowledge, the themes that emerged from this research are discussed in relation to scholarly literature on Cuban immigrant expectations, acculturation support (resource and services received or lacked), stress, and mental health needs during the acculturation process.

Mental and Physical Well-Being

The study participants reported that Cuban immigrants encounter barriers when adapting to U.S. culture. Participants' expectations and experiences with immigration increases the risk of stress and mental health issues. It is important to distinguish the coping skills that participants used to improve acculturation-related stress so that future Cuban immigrants can adapt more quickly. The most prominent acculturation concerns in the study were related to employment, family, economics, housing, language barriers, technology, stress, and mental health. Cuban immigrants' motivation is highly complex when compared to other Latino(a) immigrants. Cuban immigrants experience nostalgia, which externalizes as grief and loss symptoms, anxiety and depression, and being disoriented during the first 6 months after arriving in the United States.

The majority of the participants stated that their acculturation process lasted up to 2 years. Immigrants' nostalgia, grief and loss symptoms, and depression reduce once adaptation occurs and most become acclimated to American culture.

For example, one participant in the study who had been in the United States for 4 years reported suffering from depression because she had not been able to adapt due to family separation; she missed her children and parents in Cuba. Although the participant started therapy, her interview responses indicated that the counseling connection was not a good fit based on culture and language. Additionally, the participant was not offered counseling immediately after immigrating; thus, some of the mental health concerns or symptoms could have been internalized.

Prior literature indicated that Latino(a) immigrants' fear of being deported, employment and language barriers, financial strain, lack of family support, and transportation created acculturation stress; thus, Latino(a) immigrants must overcome some of the same barriers as Cuban immigrants. Prior literature revealed that immigrants adapt to American norms and customs over time, which increases immigrant's acculturation levels and lowers their emotional levels (Archuleta, 2015; Orozco & Vargas, 2015; Thomson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009). The instabilities mentioned above combined with lack of proper support can affect immigrants' mental and physical well-being (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019).

English Proficiency

Seventy-six percent of the study participants shared how the lack of understanding the English language strained their ability to (a) find employment and improve in their work environment, (b) make friends, and (c) help younger children with schoolwork and participation in school. Lack of English proficiency also minimized their ability to pursue higher education or

revalidate educational degrees in the United States. For example, participants who were a doctor in Cuba had to take the board exams in the English language after immigrating to the United States. This language deficiency is a tremendous setback for immigrants who are trying to find a job that meets their education and employment experience. No existing literature has compared the language barrier in professional fields and work experience.

Technology Proficiency

Additionally, 82% of the study participants explained that lack of technology experience was a considerable and unexpected setback. Although participants were provided with initial services upon arriving in the United States, participants' lack of experience with technology made it challenging for participants to use the resources provided. Specifically, participants who did not have a cellphone or computer found it challenging to find work. Other challenges included banking, differences in currency, credit cards, direct deposit, and ATMs, a foreign concept to Cubans.

The study findings indicated that the lack of English and technology proficiency can prevent progress for Cuban immigrants; some may avoid learning English and sacrifice fulfilling their dreams and work goals because making money is an immediate need when immigrating to a new country. Some study participants shared how they waited years to find the time to go back to school. Others discussed waiting too long to return back to school; these participants either felt they were too old to return to school or had started a family, making the balance of work, family, and life expectations seem impossible.

Challenges Unique to Cuban Immigrants

Cuban immigrants experience the fear of being deported and suffer consequences and even repression when they do not make it in the United States and are consequently sent back to

Cuba; this experience is unique to Cuban immigrants. The Wet-Foot Dry-Foot policy was removed on January 17, 2017 by President Obama. This policy pertained to Cubans intercepted at sea while on route to the United States and those who physically set foot on U.S. soil. The Wet-Foot Dry-Foot policy was enacted during a time when the United States was reluctant to send people back to the communist dictatorship ruled by Castro (Mass, 2020).

The study participants emphasized how their need for freedom, human rights, stability, improved economics, and a better life for themselves and their family in the United States and in Cuba was worth the survival of crossing multiple borders and other challenges in getting to the United States. Many participants felt that, upon arriving to the United States, American culture added to their stress, barriers, and traumatic experiences. Many participants redefined their lives and adjusted to society until they acclimated and adapted. Participants indicated that 54% of their negative or hindering experiences included getting acclimated. Participants found understanding American culture to be the most challenging obstacle.

COVID-19

Forty-one percent of the participants were stressed about COVID-19 both in the United States and in Cuba. Participants shared how COVID-19 affected their livelihood and economics in the United States and discussed the devastation of not being able to provide help to their family in Cuba. Participants discussed how work has been challenging to maintain with layoffs, causing fear. The participants also worried about the lack of food and resources in Cuba, a country that already has limited resources. Participant 21 spoke about this:

As a doctor, the pandemic is a big concern for my family here and in Cuba and me.

However, as a doctor, I feel there will be a solution, and more people around the world will get help, which helps reduce stress and worry.

Concerns about COVID-19 added a level of fear during the acculturation process. Currently, no available literature discusses how COVID-19 affects Latino(a) immigrants and Cuban immigrants. Participant 21 added that Cuban immigrants may have more signs of depression and anxiety due to COVID-19; therefore, having a counselor and medical staff to address these mental health issues would be a beneficial for Cuban immigrants arriving in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acculturation Support

The study results indicated that the increase in participants' mood or acculturation levels were dependent on the amount of support participants received initially; the timing of each, mood and acculturation level was crucial to participants' success. Furthermore, participants indicated that resources received were helpful but would have been more effective if participants had been asked what they needed at a particular moment in time. Participants collectively suggested that Cuban immigrants should be provided mental health assistance that incorporates immigrants' personal needs; otherwise, resources could be damaging and immigrants' adaptation time and mental health symptoms will continue to increase.

The researcher concluded that participants' negative experiences resulted from their lack of understanding of U.S. culture. Immigrants experience confusion when first arriving to the United States because the language, living arrangements, transportation, food, sounds, wildlife, education, and work is very different than Cuban culture. Additionally, the resources provided did not always meet participants' expectations and needs. Participants discussed different resources that would be helpful when immigrating to a country that is so different than their own.

Organizational and Community Support

Prior researchers studied Latino(a) immigrants who received assistance from service providers and community agencies, including family support and social networks to support during their acculturation process. These prior research findings supported the concept that greater family satisfaction levels and support result in lower acculturative stress levels during the immigration process (Ayón & Naddy, 2013; Vidal de Haymes et al., 2011). Similarly, 71% of study participants felt they received positive support upon arrival to the United States. Support received included receiving clothing, English classes, work-related educational programs, and financial support from churches and community organizations. Food and monetary options helped participants who had just arrived in the United States.

Family and Friends. Participants shared that getting assistance from family and friends is helpful; however, participants also stated feeling like a financial burden to their family members who are helping them. Most participants stated that they appreciate family and friends' help but want to be independent. Additionally, Cuban immigrants cannot help their family in the United States and in Cuba until they get a job and earn money, causing more stress. The study participants agreed that their stress levels heightened when they arrived in the United States due to their concern with the unknown. Participants added that feelings of embarrassment and not fitting in also occurred during the adaptation process.

Mental Health Support. Most of the participants agreed that support for mental health needs and trauma-related symptoms related to immigrating from a communist country would help reduce the stress and emotional effects associated with the immigration process. Participants' mental health symptoms included grief, loss, and nostalgia related to family separation along with other traumas.

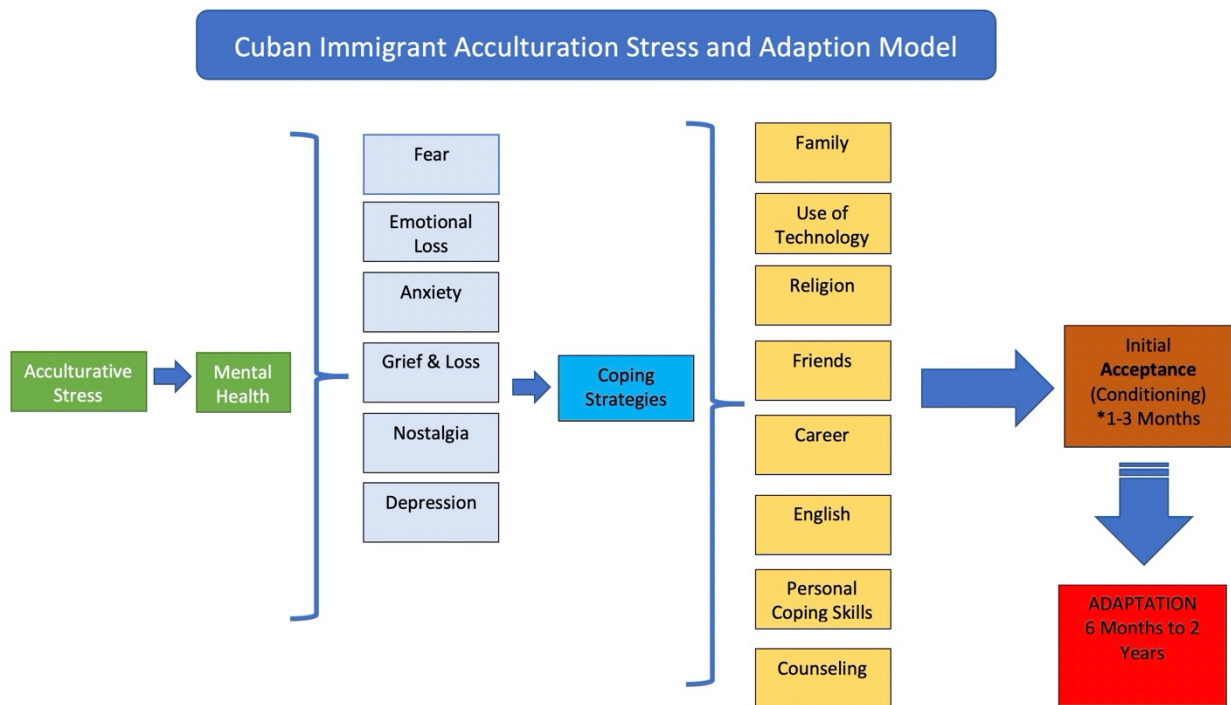
Financial and Employment Support. The study participants had difficulties finding employment due to lack of a work permit or driver's license, work experience deficiency, and no transportation. However, those who adapted reported finding work after receiving their driver's license and work permit. These participants eventually moved up in positions or started their businesses; as a result, these participants found more ways to financially help their family in Cuba. This finding supports research by Thomson and Hoffman-Goetz (2009), who posited that financial strain such as lack of employment, absence of the English language, lack of transportation, and lack of family support impedes Latino(a) immigrants from receiving financial stability.

Language and Educational Support. Participants who received support from the community through Lutheran Services, taking English classes, and participating in work-related educational programs were able to increase their language proficiency. Some of these participants reached higher educational goals and better employment positions in the United States and were successful in acclimating to the United States. Similarly, prior literature revealed that many Latino(a) immigrants endure negative experiences associated with lack of English proficiency, including negative effects on employment, social and daily living, and mental health. Community-based organizations can provide English classes at high schools along with social relationship strategies to improve immigrants' language and work barriers and reduce adverse mental health symptoms during acculturation (Orozco & Vargas, 2015; Vasquez-Guzman et al., 2020). Prior researchers also found that social media can help Latino(a) immigrants stay in touch with their family back home and feel less nostalgia. Dillon et al. (2019) noted that participants who used social media showed lower acculturative stress signs when practicing their heritage culture while adjusting to the American culture (Dillon et al., 2019).

Similarly, the study participants shared how they were able to use social media to communicate with other family in the United States and in Cuba with friends and family that had cell phones. One of the most common applications used for communicating with loved ones in Cuba today are Messenger or WhatsApp, Telegram or Twitter, Sijú, and Nauta mail. Communication through these applications allow Cuban immigrants to feel more connected to their family in Cuba, thus decreasing their acculturative stress. Figure 2 illustrates the Cuban immigrants' acculturation and coping process.

Figure 2

Cuban Immigrant Acculturation Stress and Adaption Model



Coping Strategies

Cuban immigrants used various coping skills during their acculturation and assimilation process. The researcher aimed to develop a more profound understanding of the specific coping

skills Cuban immigrants use, including mental health counseling. The researcher also explored the decision-making process immigrants used when declining mental health services.

Psychosocial services, family support, cultural connections, and community support are coping skills that can help to reduce acculturative stress (Held et al., 2018b; Lanesskog, 2018; Rios Casas et al., 2020). The following subsections discuss these coping skills in relation to the current study.

Family

Seventy-five percent of study participants used emotional support from family as a coping skill during their acculturation process. The study participants reported that keeping with Cuban cultures and daily customs and staying in touch with the family in Cuba helped reduce the nostalgia and feeling of loss. Many of the participants played Domino as a way to connect with their Cuban heritage part of Cuba and reminisce about their family in Cuba. For some participants, writing letters, receiving letters, and receiving phone calls from family members in Cuba served as a coping mechanism. This finding supports prior literature that indicated that community-based social relationship strategies help reduce stress and increase adaptation during the acculturation process (Vasquez-Guzman et al., 2020). Practicing Cuban traditions and maintaining communication with family back home reduces stress and nostalgia and, as a result, increases the hope and expectations of reunification and a better life for the people of Cuba.

Participants shared how housing, monetary, and transportation support within Cuban families and friends varies depending on the economic situation and how many family members live in the house. Cuban immigrants typically do not like to impose or bother anyone. Although the custom in Cuba is to live together with family most of one's life, participants who acclimate in the United States want to be independent.

Twenty-four percent of the participants lived with their family or friends for 6 months to 1 year. These participants found it helpful to stay with family who had a cultural connection with Cuba. Church mission or other community partners typically work with organizations in other states to help the Cuban immigrant population. These organizations believe that Cuban immigrants should stay with other Cubans after arriving to the United States; this way, immigrants are staying with others who can relate to their experience. Similarly, Menon and Harter (2012) found that social support is a helpful coping mechanism for Latino(a) immigrants. Menon and Harter posited that social support significantly reduces the acculturative stress that Latino(a) immigrants experience after immigrating to the United States.

The study findings also supported findings by Ayón and Naddy (2013), who explored the sources of support available to Latino(a) immigrant families when they immigrate to the United States. Ayón and Naddy concluded that Latino(a) immigrants rely heavily on traditional values and family, friends, neighbors, and community entities for emotional, moral, and financial support. Similarly, Espeleta et al. (2019) found that increasing family resources and social support resulted in fewer depressive symptoms for Latino(a) immigrants during the immigration process. Sources of advocacy for Latino(a) immigrants must be provided upon immigrants' arrival to the United States (Ayón & Naddy, 2013; Espeleta et al. 2019).

The study participants discussed other types of support that helped participants cope with feelings of family loss and nostalgia. These supports included extended family, *curranderos* (folk healers), in-laws, close friends of the family, godparents, and *santeros*. Family is the one source of support that both Latino(a) and Cuban immigrants have in common.

Religion

Sanchez et al.'s (2015) study findings demonstrated that religious coping may play a particularly positive role in the acculturative stress of recent Latino(a) immigrants. Sanchez et al. explored religion as a coping skill and discovered that positive religious coping skills such as attending church, praying, and reading the Bible decreased acculturation stress. Faith and hope were among the highest used form of coping for study participants. Twenty-nine percent of the participants reached out to their Afro-Cuban religious priests and other religions affiliations for answers to questions and to receive support during their acculturation to the United States. Other valuable coping skills cited by participants were internal coping mechanisms such as faith, prayer, and spiritual affirmations. Twenty-four percent of the participants use Bible study to cope while finding other mechanisms to help adapt socially and culturally.

Personal Coping Strategies

Most of the participants discussed their determination to succeed in the United States. This determination comes from participants' experience of struggle while living in Cuba and Cuban immigrants to ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain. Participant 19 felt she has an opportunity to empower others through her experience and education: "Keeping a positive attitude has gotten me where I am today with my family and new life in the United States." Cuban immigrants also rely on the personal coping strategy of speaking to other families who have immigrated. This strategy helps Cuban immigrants to learn about the positive and negatives of their acculturation process with the hope of helping others that arrive in the future, particularly other family members. Participant 1 shared that "There is a cultural part of our determination and we are willing to fight for our newfound freedom before having to go back to Cuba." Some

participants suggested that most Cubans have struggled for what they have, and that finally making it to the United States offers Cubans an opportunity to better their life.

Friends

Seventy-six percent of participants received support by friends who had immigrated in the past. Thirty-five percent of participants received living arrangement support from friends for between 1 and 6 months after initially arriving in the United States. Additionally, 18% of participants received support from coworkers who helped participants adjust to the U.S. workforce, especially in relation to ethics and job culture. Participants who arrived with children were provided childcare at home by friends. Friends also helped participants register their children in the public school system. Generally speaking, the participants found that having friends who understood the acculturation process was helpful and stated that the acculturation process may have taken longer without support from friends. Well-adjusted Cuban immigrants in the United States can provide reliable resources to newly arriving Cuban immigrants, thus making the acculturation process more meaningful and profound.

Career Services

Many study participants cited Lutheran Services as providing positive coping skills related to searching for jobs, practicing interviewing, learning to dress for interviews, and learning basic living and employment skills. The study results indicated that participants struggled with technology at first because they lacked technological skill; however, participants were able to find jobs and rely less on the family and community support after learning how to use cellphones and downloading applications. One participant was given a job at Lutheran Services where he received the initial immigration support and later became a support person for

other Cuban immigrants. This participant used his lived experience to prepare and further assist Cuban immigrants who were having a hard time adapting in their new country.

Mental Health

Participants who immigrated with children received some support from school counselors. Participant 8, a parent to a special needs child, shared that her child was provided counseling support that proved helpful during the adaptation period. Two participants found that mental health support, including the use of medication, helped them to cope with nostalgia, anxiety, depression, and feelings of grief and loss when adapting to the United States. Some participants received additional mental health support through individual counseling and group counseling aimed to assist immigrants in their adjustment to the United States. One participant found that reading self-help and positive affirmation books helped to increase her mood.

English

Study participants shared how their children helped them learn English language. Most Cuban immigrant parents rely on the help of their children to translate school homework, parent teacher conferences, and activities at school and in sports. Additionally, Cuban immigrants find many resources when they start making friends at work or at school. Cuban immigrants often learn English with other Cuban immigrants or higher education school candidates who have already completed their ESL programs. Some Cuban immigrants also seek tutors at the local high schools or through private organizations. The study participants shared that tutoring is a rare option financially, especially when taking care of a family. The study participants found that using English even if they have a translator is a form of coping to better their life and opportunities to speak English.

Although the English language is a barrier, most Cuban immigrants will find alternative ways to simplify the English language if they cannot attend a formal class. Cuban immigrants also opt to watch television programs in English or have their children only speak English to them at home. Immigrants who are proficient with technology will mainly use the translators on their phones. The use of text messages and translators help immigrants improve the use of English; however, immigrants still find it difficult to understand and practice English. In Cuba, Spanish words have only one meaning or spelling, whereas English words can be spelled the same but have different meanings. This struggle was discussed by most study participants. Additionally, participants shared how they had a hard time gathering the words in their heads when they were trying to speak English because they were thinking in Spanish and occasionally used the wrong verb tenses.

Counseling Experience

Study participants indicated that counseling is not the first resource they used upon immigrating to the United States because counseling is considered taboo in Cuba. Additionally, mental health awareness and training about the benefits and purpose of counseling is not readily available in Cuba or during the immigration process. Some Cuban immigrants learn about counseling when their children are referred to a school counselor or when an individual has mental concerns that are severe enough to seek out counseling.

The prior literature indicated that Latino(a) immigrants with higher acculturation levels embrace mental health counseling and have positive attitudes toward seeking psychotherapy. Additionally, mental health stigma is reduced when counseling offers a supportive mechanism to Latino(a) individuals suffering from mental illness as a result of immigration (Collado et al., 2019; Rogers-Sirin, 2013). To the contrary, depressed Latino(a) immigrants face mental health

treatment disparities because culture promotes counseling as a negative option or taboo. Rojas-Vilches et al. (2011) examined whether Puerto Ricans' and Cuban Americans' views about mental illness were linked to their stances toward seeking professional mental health help. Rojas-Vilches et al.'s findings suggested that Latino(a) immigrants consider mental health to be a social stigma and would thus not consider professional help as an initial option during their immigration process. Similarly, Eghaneyan and Murphy (2020) measured mental illness stigma among Latino(a) immigrants. The results demonstrated critical barriers to mental health care, including stigma among Latino(a) immigrants (Eghaneyan & Murphy, 2020).

Counseling in Cuba

Only one participant in the study (.06%) had received mental health therapy in Cuba after experiencing with postpartum depression. As a psychologist in Cuba, this participant understood the importance of therapy and added that having mental health counseling as part of the acculturation process is important for the well-being of the Cuban immigrants as they acclimate to the United States.

Future Counseling for Cuban Immigrants

Seventy-eight percent of study participants shared that therapy would be tremendously beneficial for Cuban immigrants during their acculturation process. The adaptation process creates anxiety that induces a cultural shock for some. Many participants reported that they fell into a depression upon immigrating and grieved the loss of their family, as if they are not going to see their family again. Participants shared that the impact and culture shock felt during the first 2 years after immigrating led to concerning mental health issues. Some of the participants were emotional during their interview; for instance, participants expressed their need to tell their story and how the decision to leave Cuba was equally difficult for the person leaving and the

ones who stay behind. Cuban immigrants will not cross borders unless it is out of desperation, and Cuban immigrants get the sensation of freedom once in another country and before arriving in the United States. Cuban immigration is different than immigration in other countries because the number of crossings are smaller and Cubans sometimes stay in different countries to work and make money to continue on their journey. Some Cuban immigrants are part of the “mission,” where doctors in Cuba trade medical care and medicine for money in countries such as Venezuela, Russia, and Africa. Often, Cubans who have transferred to different countries for work purposes later decide to immigrate and begin the process of crossing borders; these individuals report that would not have the same privilege if they still lived in Cuba. Participants shared how they were in survival mode after arriving in the United States and how they did not have someone to talk to about these feelings. Additionally, some of the participants experienced traumatic events when crossing multiple borders to get to the United States. Others were sanctioned and can never return to Cuba, representing the sacrifices made during immigration. Experiences unique to Cubans are important criteria that should be evaluated and treated when someone immigrates from Cuba.

As mentioned above, Cuban immigration is traumatic in many aspects of an immigrant’s life. For some, the immigration assistance process is not readily available, vague, or misinformative. No acculturation template guides one through the immigration process, and some immigrants fall short on time, money, and community resources while becoming acclimated to the United States. In some cases, refugee programs—such as the Refugee Relief Program for Cuban immigrants that assists immigrants with the initial and ongoing processes—include a 5-year time limit in education for those who want to learn English or further their

career by enrolling in higher education or technical schools. It takes approximately 2 years for a Cuban immigrant to adjust to the life and American culture in the United States.

Many Cuban immigrants feel a considerable responsibility for their family back home and the family in the host country. This study revealed the importance of having culturally diverse and self-aware counselors who are sensitive to the culture and real-time needs of the Cuban population. Often, Cuban immigrants will not seek counseling services due to feelings of disconnect with their counselor. As with most clients, trust and building rapport are important; however, education and self-awareness are also highly important when counseling the Cuban population.

Implications for Counseling

The researcher is an American Cuban counselor and educator; thus, her motivation for this research is of a personal and passionate nature. It is imperative that counselors, educators, and supervisors understand immigrants' first-hand struggles concerning their motivation for migrating to a foreign country. Immigrating to a foreign country is the ultimate sacrifice immigrants make. Cuban immigrants typically leave their birth country due to economic, political, repression, or religious reasons, oftentimes under extreme situations. Most Cuban immigrants come to the United States after years of waiting, investigation, and continual paperwork, impediment, and regulations, all at the mercy of the receiving country.

Counselors who work with Cuban clients should use clinical techniques based on a combination of common theoretical orientations, clinical methods, and Latino(a) and Cuban cultural traits. Being aware of one's personal worldview and its impact on the counseling process is helpful when working with Cuban immigrants. Counselors need the knowledge and skill of working with Cuban immigrant families; thus, the researcher encourages counselors to recognize

the generational status, languages spoken, socioeconomic status, and educational achievements of Cuban immigrants. Counselors working with Cuban immigrants must establish “Confianza” (trust), which must be earned. Clients who establish trust with their counselor may feel that they have developed a personal bond; thus, it is important and necessary to set and boundaries. As demonstrated in the study findings, Cuban immigrants may have never used counseling services and some consider counseling a taboo or reference counseling as being “loco” or crazy. Additionally, participants shared that they typically solve problems within the help of their close family circle and spiritual consultants such as a santero.

The study results showed that many Cuban immigrants struggle with English proficiency. Thus, counselors working with Cuban clients should integrate Spanish into the counseling, especially when discussing extremely emotional issues. Additionally, counselors who allow Cuban clients to share experiences and who observe both verbal and nonverbal cues can better understand their clients’ emotions and symptoms. Because counseling is considered taboo in Cuba, it is important to reserve more time for sessions with Cuban clients; Cuban clients who feel rushed will not be willing to open up in a session and may not return to counseling as a result.

Participants 1, 2 and 9 discussed the struggles they experiences when crossing 9 to 11 borders and the fear and unsettling feelings they still experience as a result. Thus, it is important for counselors to build a foundation based on awareness and understanding because many Cuban immigrants suffer from mental disorders as a result of their traumatic migration to the United States. Additionally, there is a scarce amount of counseling supervisors in the United States; therefore, more interns should be assigned to work with the Cuban immigrant population. This implication is reinforced by Participant 1—a psychologist in Cuba and a registered intern in the

United States—who agreed that counseling would be an important part of healing for Cuban immigrants who have not received counseling in the past. Participant 1 posited that counseling would reduce the stigma and pain Cuban immigrants experienced through the immigrant and acculturation process.

Posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, child trauma, separation anxiety, and attachment disorders are some of the diagnoses that can be considered when working with the Cuban immigrant population. Individual counseling with an unbiased counselor can offer Cuban immigrants an opportunity to question the norms of anxiety, depression, and trauma-based memories related to their acculturation and assimilation process. Immigrants have different cultures; therefore, it can be a comfort to learn how frequent or expected their issues are as a Cuban immigrant. Counselors who are knowledgeable of culturally sensitive theories can activate their clients to use available information that might help the client address anxiety and fear related to the acculturation and acclimation process (Torrez-Rivera et al., 2004).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitation

Assumptions

One of the key assumptions was that Cuban immigrants would be willing to participate in the study. The researcher expected that some immigrants—particularly those who might still be undocumented—may be reluctant to participate in the study. However, Cuban immigrants were recruited from private counseling practices or university environment; thus, the researcher predicted that these individuals would be more inclined to participate. A second assumption was that the participants would be honest and not provide socially desirable responses; however, the participants may have been inclined to give socially desirable responses or to be dishonest due to

feeling embarrassed to share some of their stories or struggles of acculturating in the United States.

Limitations

The limitations of this study largely centered around the sampling approaches. The researcher used a nonprobability sampling approach to select a relatively small sample size.

Delimitations

This study only included Cuban immigrants between the ages of 18 and 65 to increase the possibility of including participants of various ages. The study also included Cuban immigrants who arrived in the United States during the last 10 years. The researcher selected this population to embrace the last wave of Cuban immigrants (post-Soviet migration). The selection allowed for a more focused understanding of Cuban immigrants during a significant time in Cuban immigration history where changes occurred in the United States concerning Cuban immigration.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher selected this particular research topic because the researcher's goal is to teach in higher education and to continue counseling with the Cuban population. The researcher also aims to be an advocate for future counselors who will work with the Cuban population. This is echoed by Aladağ (2013), who stated the following:

It is expected that effective counselors should be qualified in each skill dimension and integrate this competence with his/her work successfully. In this respect, the most important work of counselor educators is to teach these skills to the novice counselors. (p. 73)

Future researchers should study Cuban immigrants who have lived in the United States for longer to gather more information related to generational experiences among Cuban

immigrants and to provide information about the differences in acculturation and coping needs depending on age or generation. Exploring Cuban immigrants time period of adjustment could provide insight into how much time Cuban immigrants need to adapt in the United States, what goals were not met and for what reason, and how these needs and goals differ depending on age. Studying Cuban immigration across generations would (a) provide a better understanding of how children who immigrate with their parents adapt and experience acculturation and (b) help determine which support services contributed to the success of children who immigrate to and grow up in the United States.

More research is needed to determine the strong personal, social, familial, and community resiliency factors that can reduce the impact of negative acculturation stressors and increase positive assimilation with the Cuban population. More studies of personal and family resilience as a counselor of Cuban immigrants and mental health are also needed. Additional research should address how to improve the counseling services initially offered to Cuban immigrants. Improved counseling services could decrease the amount of time it takes Cuban immigrants to adapt.

Future community support for Cuban immigrants should also include an introduction to technology to reduce acculturation stress. Introducing technology would also increase the use of resources that pertain to immigrants' specific situation and serve as a future access point for Cuban immigrants. One study participant shared his interest in creating a computer program or application that would include categories related to Cuban immigration in a step-by-step format. The first step would include the resources needed and provide an overview of technology and cellphone use. The participant shared that presenting basic information in an easier format would decrease the acculturation stress associated with using new technology.

Summary

In sum, the findings revealed significant topics that are important to Cuban immigrants who are trying to adapt to the United States. The first and most important need among Cuban immigrants is an assessment of their level of distress related to the actual immigration process. Secondly, Cuban immigrants are highly concerned with checking their family's well-being in the United States and in Cuba. Third, Cuban immigrants find it important to secure housing, plan for the future, and have discussions about credit, loans, insurance, and other financial responsibilities. Most of the participants shared that they were not told about the importance of credit in the United States, which deprived them of building the credit needed to buy or rent a home or becoming independent otherwise.

In addition, participants shared that learning technology skills is essential for acculturation. Cuban immigrants come from a country with no technology to the United States, wherein the majority of things are automated. Cuban immigrants find it hard to adapt initially in the United States, especially when conducting job searches, due to the use of technology. Additionally, Cuban immigrants should be taught the English language early on during immigration. English proficiency allows immigrants to pursue job promotions and follow career goals that align with their expectations of living in the United States.

It is also essential to remark on Cuban immigrants' motivations for leaving Cuba. These motivations are notably different than the motivations of Latino(a) immigrants, specifically regarding freedom of speech, humanitarian reasons, repression, separation of the family including sanctions, and communism.

Finally, those supporting Cuban immigrants should also bring awareness to mental health issues and offer counseling. Abandonment trauma, anxiety, depression, grief, loss, and social

anxiety were typical symptoms cited by the study participants. For most, their willingness to sacrifice everything—including putting themselves in life-threatening danger by crossing borders or heading to sea—resulted in incurring the symptoms mentioned above. Providing solutions to mental health problems early during the acculturation process will reduce immigrants’ stress and facilitate the adaptation process.

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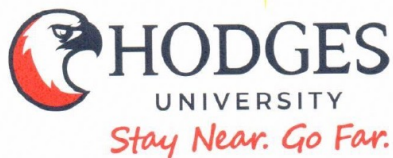
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APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTERS TO PROFESSIONALS

A1. University Participation Invitation Letter



Lavern Norris Gaynor
President's Chair

September 17, 2020

Lourdes Araujo, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate, National Luis University, Tampa Campus
Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Programs
Share: Dr. Joffrey S. Suprina

RE: Lourdes Araujo Dissertation Research Project

Dear Dr. Suprina,

Please consider this letter of support for Ms. Araujo's request to work with Hodges University's ESL student population on her qualitative study on the acculturation process as experienced by Cuban immigrants to the US. Subject to IRB approval of the proposed project, I am both delighted for and appreciative of her plan to work with our students.

Should you require any additional information or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email at jmeyer@hodges.edu or by phone at 239-598-6232.

Sincerely,

John D. Myer, DBA
President

A2. Private Practice Participation Invitation Letter

Dear Private Practice Invitee,

My name is Lourdes Araujo. I am a doctoral candidate at National Louis University's College of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences. I am kindly requesting your assistance as a private practice mental health professional in sharing information to potential participants about my doctoral dissertation research study titled: A Qualitative Phenomenology Study of Cuban immigrants' experience with acculturation and coping in the United States.

I am seeking participants who have immigrated from Cuba to the USA within the last 10 years, are currently between the ages of 18 and 65 and living in South Florida. Participation in this research will involve reviewing an Informed Consent, filling out an 11-item demographic survey questionnaire that will be used to randomly assign them to either an individual interview or a focus group. Those assigned to a personal interview will be contacted by the researcher to schedule a 1 hour to 90-minute interview. The interviews can be completed in English or Spanish. The interview will consist of approximately 8 open-ended questions exploring their immigration and acculturation experience. For example: "Tell me about your immigration to the United States."; "What kind of stress have you been feeling since immigrating to the United States?"; and "How have you coped during the acculturation process?". The interview will be conducted through Zoom, recorded, transcribed and analyzed. If assigned to the focus group, the researcher will provide a link to a scheduled Zoom meeting (60 to 90 minutes in length) in which findings from the interviews will be shared for comments by participants as part of the focus group. At any time, participants can withdraw from the study for either participation activity. Every effort will be taken to ensure confidentiality. All information will remain confidential but may be used in future publications and presentations.

If your client is interested in finding out more about this study, please have them select the Zoom Dissertation Participation Information Recording:

Link: <https://hodges.zoom.us/rec/share/lc32TdrzNzRrtfN4W6ZkA8OZ96dMp9XK7nHTScuukgitNBlI7OZyBfVXIGGZ-mMV.Q3eALyLF14rZCgR1> **Passcode:** .wGrHK6J

or they can proceed directly to the Survey Monkey link that will provide a complete Informed consent and access to the Demographic Questionnaire. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Cuban-Immigrant-Research-Study-Information>

Your client's participation in the research may help us discover how Cuban immigrants acculturate in the United States and how they cope and adapt. In addition, participation in this study may help future counselors be informed about the Cuban immigrant's acculturation experiences and positively benefit future Cuban immigrants' counseling experience.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at laraujo@my.nl.edu.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Lourdes Araujo, National Louis University Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B: INVITATION LETTERS FOR PARTICIPANTS

B1. Invitation Letter (English)

CUBAN ACCULTURATION AND COPING RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LETTER

I am a Doctoral candidate in the College of Psychology and Behavior Sciences at National Louis University. My research dissertation is centered on how Cuban immigrants acculturate in the United States and what do they use to cope as they acculturate. I will be speaking to Cuban immigrants who have immigrated to the United States within the last 10 years and are between the ages of 18 and 65 years old. My interest is about understanding what coping strategies Cuban immigrants have used to acculturate and adapt to the United States.

As a volunteer participant, you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The interview will consist of completing an interview about your experiences with your Cuban immigration to the United States and how you coped during the acculturation process. During this interview, you will be asked to speak honestly about your Cuban immigration experience.

The interview will be audiotaped or recorded in a Zoom meeting and later transcribed. These audiotapes or Zoom recordings will be deleted once they are transcribed. Your identification or any other identifying information will not be used on the questionnaire, transcripts, or final written materials. I will use codes to register information, and all materials will be kept confidential and secured in a locked filing cabinet that only the primary researcher will have access to. The data will be kept for seven years after the completion of this study and will then be destroyed. It is possible that information for the study will be used for future publication and presentation; however, your confidentiality will be maintained. Your name or other identifying information will not appear on any materials.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you chose not to discuss a topic during the interview, you are free to decline to speak about it. You may refuse to answer any questions during the interview. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time or request the withdrawal of your data from the study during or after the interview, without consequences.

Participation in this study is unlikely to provide any direct benefit to you. However, some people have found that engaging in the interview process allows them the opportunity to express their opinion and, in doing so, to appreciate and get a greater understanding of their own experiences. In addition, the knowledge gained through understanding your experience may contribute to a more meaningful understanding of the Cuban immigration process and help other counselors that work with this population in the future. The risk to you as a result of participating in this research are likely to be nonexistent or minimal. If discussing your immigration and acculturation experiences should bring up any uncomfortable reactions for you, should you choose to seek counseling during this process, I will assist you in finding a counselor. I will also provide a list of resources prior to starting the interview process. Your confidentiality will be protected; however, there are exceptional circumstances that require me to break confidentiality. These situations are as follows: a) If you indicate that you are going to hurt yourself or others, b) If you express

knowledge of a child being abused or neglected or in danger of being hurt; c) If you report that you were or are being sexually abused. If you are willing to participate in this study, you are requested to please complete the consent form. A copy of this form will be given to you. Any questions about this study may be addressed to the contacts listed below. Thank you.

Lourdes Araujo, Researcher 239-641-9007

Dr. Joffrey S. Suprina, Committee Chair – 800-366-6581

Dr. Angiemil Pérez Peña, Committee Member – 800-366-6581

B2. Invitation Letter (Spanish)

Título: Cómo los Cubanos experimentan el proceso de inmigración y aculturación en los Estados Unidos

Querido Participante,

Los invito a participar en un estudio de investigación titulado Cómo los cubanos experimentan el proceso de inmigración y aculturación en los Estados Unidos. Actualmente estoy inscrita en el Programa de Doctorado en Consejería, Educación y Supervisión de la Universidad National Louis en Tampa, Florida, y estoy en el proceso de redactar mi tesis.

El propósito de la investigación es determinar el proceso de aculturación y el éxito de los inmigrantes Cubanos después de utilizar las habilidades de afrontamiento para asimilarse en los Estados Unidos.

Su participación en este proyecto de investigación es totalmente voluntario. Puede rechazar por completo o dejar en blanco cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. No se conocen riesgos para la participación más allá de los que se encuentran en la vida cotidiana. Sin embargo, si encuentra algo con lo que no se siente cómodo durante la entrevista, se le proporcionará una referencia.

Sus respuestas permanecerán confidenciales y anónimas. Los datos de esta investigación se mantendrán bajo llave y se informarán solo como un total combinado colectivo. Nadie más que los investigadores conocerá sus respuestas individuales a la data. Si acepta participar en este proyecto, un entrevistador realizará una entrevista individual para abordar preguntas específicas relacionadas con el estudio. Debería tardar aproximadamente una hora en completarse.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proyecto, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo, Lourdes Araujo, LMHC, M.S. al 239-641-9007 o laraujo@my.nl.edu. La información sobre los derechos de los sujetos humanos en la investigación está disponible a través de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de NLU en la Universidad Nacional de Louis 5110 Sunforest Dr, Suite 102, Tampa, FL 33634; sitio web; www.ndnu.edu/academics/research; Presidente del IRB y número de contacto tel:+1-312-261-3526.

Gracias por su ayuda en este importante esfuerzo.

Sinceramente,
Lourdes Araujo, LMHC, M.S.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A Qualitative Phenomenology Study of Cubans Immigrant's Experience with

Acculturation and Coping in the United States.

Study - Participant Interview Guide

Your Interview Questions Below:

1) Tell me about how you immigrated to the U.S.?

- a) What motivated you to immigrate to the U.S.?
- a) What kind of stress did you have before leaving Cuba?
- b) How did you feel about Cuba when you left?
- c) How do you feel about Cuba now?

2) Tell me about your experience in the U.S.?

- a) What kind of job did you have in Cuba prior to immigrating to the U.S.?
- b) If employed now, how does your job compare to your work in Cuba?
- c) What kind of education did you have in Cuba prior to immigrating to the U.S.?
- d) If pursuing an education now, how does it compare to your education in Cuba?
- e) How was your experience in finding work in the U.S.?
- f) What has been your experience with your living arrangements?
 - i) Who do you currently live with in the U.S.?
 - ii) How long have you been in your current living arrangement?
- g) How has your experience changed with your children and family?

3) What was your expectation about the U.S. before you left Cuba?

- a) How do you feel now about the expectations in the U.S.?

4) What kind of stress have you been feeling since immigrating to the U.S.?

5) What do you consider barriers in adjusting U.S?

a) What do you consider has been the hardest barrier in adjusting to the U.S.?

6) How have you coped during the acculturation process?

a) What systems or organizations helped you since arriving in the U.S.?

b) What systems did you not receive that might have been helpful since arriving in the U.S.?

c) What counseling experience did you have prior to immigrating to the U.S.?

d) What counseling experience did you received since immigrating to the U.S.

7) Is there anything else I need to know about your experience in immigrating to the U.S.?

8) What might be important to include about your acculturation experience in this study?

If the participant shows emotional triggering or discomfort use the resources below.

Helpful Resources

National Alliance on Mental Health

The NAMI HelpLine 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org
<https://www.nami.org/find-support/nami-helpline>

Mental Health Crisis Line - 888-910-0416

<https://www.crisisconnections.org/24-hour-crisis-line/>

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Local Hospital or Emergency Room: Dial 911

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

C1. English Informed Consent

CUBAN ACCULTURATION AND COPING

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I have been invited to participate in Lourdes Araujo's dissertation study. I understand that she is a doctoral candidate with National Louis University (NLU), and this study has received approval from the NLU Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore how Cuban immigrants experience the acculturation process and how they cope during the acculturation process in the United States. Interviews will be conducted with Cuban immigrants who immigrated from Cuba to the United States within the past 10 years, are between the ages of 18 to 65, and who currently reside in South Florida. I have been identified as a possible participant.

If I choose to participate in this research study, I will be randomly assigned to either an individual interview with the researcher or to a final focus group with 5-9 other participants.

If assigned to the individual interview, I understand that I will be asked to talk about my experiences regarding my immigration to the United States and how I coped during the process of adapting to life in the United States. The interview will consist of approximately 11 open-ended questions exploring my immigration and acculturation experience. Examples of questions I will be asked include: "Tell me about your immigration to the United States."; "What kind of stress have you been feeling since immigrating to the United States?"; and "How have you coped during the acculturation process?". The interview will be conducted through Zoom, recorded, and later transcribed. Responses will be analyzed to identify themes and relationships of those themes.

If selected for the final focus group, I will join with 5-9 other participants in a 60-90-minute Zoom meeting with the researcher who will share the identified themes and relationships of those themes from the individual interviews with the goal to validate those findings. After the researcher shares the findings I and the other members of the group will be asked 3 questions:

1. "How do the findings align with your experience?"
2. "How do the findings disagree with your experience?"
3. "What can you contribute to these findings based on your experience?"

My voluntary responses will be recorded along with the other members of the focus group, transcribed and analyzed to validate, refute or add to the individual interview findings.

All correspondence and consent forms will be provided in both English and Spanish depending on what I request. All data will be kept in a secure encrypted electronic format or in a locked cabinet. As outlined above, every effort will be taken to ensure my confidentiality. The

demographics questionnaire and transcripts will use a coding procedure for identification so that my name does not appear on any documents. If I am selected to participate in the individual interviews, no personal identifying information such as my name or names of my family or friends will be included in transcribed material. If I am selected to participate in the focus group, all group participants are asked not to disclose any content or participant information outside of the Focus Group. However, the researcher cannot prevent group members from disclosure outside the group. Therefore, a guarantee of confidentiality cannot be made. To support confidentiality, I will be asked to only use first names and I can opt not to share my video image if I so choose. The researcher will also discuss confidentiality at the beginning and end of the session. What is transcribed will not contain my name or names of my family or friends. Once transcribed all Zoom recordings will be destroyed. The rest of the anonymous data will be kept for seven years after the completion of this study and will then be destroyed. It is possible that information for the study will be used for future publication and presentation; however, confidentiality will be maintained. My name or other identifying information will not appear on any materials.

I am aware that I will not receive any compensation for my participation; however, some individuals find sharing their personal experiences empowering. I am also aware that I can request a copy of this research's results by contacting the researcher. In addition, my participation in this study may help future counselors be informed about the Cuban immigrant's acculturation experiences and positively benefit future Cuban immigrants' counseling experience.

Although there are no known risks to my participation beyond those encountered in everyday life, it is possible that talking about my experiences may bring out emotional reactions in either the individual interviews or by hearing findings and sharing my experiences in the focus group. If I get upset by this process and was recruited from the University, I can access the University's counseling hotline & referral service at 239-262-7227, Office of Student Experience at 239-938-7730, Peaceful Mind Therapy of Florida at (239) 302-7801, or Good Therapy at <https://www.goodtherapy.org> to process my experience. If I was referred from private practice, I can reach out to the counselor who referred me to the study, Peaceful Mind Therapy of Florida at (239) 302-780, or Good Therapy <https://www.goodtherapy.org> for assistance in processing my experience.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process. However, should I reveal to the researcher any of the following: a) If I am planning on hurting myself or someone else; b) If I report child abuse or neglect or the danger of such; c) If I reveal any sexual abuse, as a mandated reporter, the researcher will be obligated to break confidentiality and contact the appropriate authority.

My participation in this research is strictly voluntary. I may terminate my involvement at any time and/or withdraw my data from the study without consequences. If I do not wish to discuss any topic or answer any questions, I am free to do so.

If I have any questions related to the above information, I can reach out to those listed at the end of the consent form.

I have read the above information and asked for any clarification needed. I feel I understand the study well enough to decide about my involvement. By signing below, I understand and agree to participate in this study based upon the terms described above.

Participant: _____

Date Signed: _____

Preferred Contact information: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Lourdes Araujo, M.S., National Louis University Doctoral Candidate, Researcher 239-641-9007

Dr. Joffrey S. Suprina, Committee Chair – 800-366-6581

Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D., IRB Chair - shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, (312) 261-3526

Kathleen Cornett, Ph.D., IRB Co-Chair - kcornett@nl.edu, 844-380-5001

C2. Spanish Informed Consent

ACULTURACIÓN Y ENFRENTAMIENTO CUBANOS ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Me han invitado a participar en el estudio de tesis de Lourdes Araujo. Entiendo que ella es candidata a doctorado en la Universidad Nacional Louis (NLU) y este estudio ha recibido la aprobación de la Junta de Revisión Institucional (IRB) de NLU. El propósito de este estudio fenomenológico cualitativo es explorar cómo los inmigrantes cubanos experimentan el proceso de aculturación y cómo se enfrentan durante el proceso de aculturación en Estados Unidos. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo con inmigrantes cubanos que emigraron de Cuba a los Estados Unidos en los últimos 10 años, tienen entre 18 y 65 años y actualmente residen en el sur de Florida. Me han identificado como posible participante.

Si elijo participar en este estudio de investigación, se me asignará aleatoriamente a una entrevista individual con la investigadora o en un grupo de enfoque final con otros 5-9 participantes.

Si me asignan a la entrevista individual, entiendo que se me pedirá que hable sobre mis experiencias con respecto a mi inmigración a los Estados Unidos y cómo me las arreglé durante el proceso de adaptación a la vida en los Estados Unidos. La entrevista constará de aproximadamente 11 preguntas abiertas que exploran mi experiencia de inmigración y aculturación. Algunos ejemplos de preguntas que me harán son: "Cuénteme sobre su inmigración a los Estados Unidos"; "¿Qué tipo de estrés ha estado sintiendo desde que emigró a los Estados Unidos?"; y "¿Cómo ha afrontado el proceso de aculturación?" La entrevista se realizará a través de Zoom, se grabará y luego se transcribirá, se analizarán las respuestas para identificar los temas y relaciones de esos temas.

Si soy seleccionado(a) para el grupo de enfoque final, me uniré a otros 5-9 participantes en una reunión de Zoom de 60-90 minutos con el investigador, quien compartirá los temas identificados y las relaciones de esos temas de las entrevistas individuales con el objetivo de validarlos y recomendaciones. Después de que la investigadora comparta los hallazgos, a mí y a los otros miembros del grupo se les harán 3 preguntas:

1. "¿Cómo se alinean los hallazgos con su experiencia?"
2. "¿En qué difieren los resultados de su experiencia?"
3. "¿Qué puedes aportar a estos hallazgos en función de tu experiencia?"

Mis respuestas voluntarias se registrarán junto con los otros miembros del grupo focal, se transcribirán y analizarán para validar, refutar o agregar a los hallazgos de la entrevista individual.

Toda la correspondencia y los formularios de consentimiento se proporcionarán tanto en inglés como en español, según lo que solicite. Todos los datos se guardarán en un formato electrónico cifrado seguro o en un armario cerrado con llave. Como se describió anteriormente, se hará todo lo posible para garantizar mi confidencialidad. El cuestionario demográfico y las transcripciones utilizarán un procedimiento de codificación para la identificación de modo que mi nombre no

aparezca en ningún documento. Si soy seleccionado para participar en las entrevistas individuales, no se incluirá en el material transcrito ninguna información de identificación personal, como mi nombre o los nombres de mi familia o amigos. Si soy seleccionado para participar en el grupo de enfoque, se les pide a todos los participantes del grupo que no divulguen ningún contenido o información de los participantes fuera del grupo de enfoque. Sin embargo, el investigador no puede evitar que los miembros del grupo se revelen fuera del grupo. Por tanto, no se puede garantizar la confidencialidad. Para respaldar la confidencialidad, se me pedirá que use solo mi primer nombre y puedo optar por no compartir mi imagen de video si así lo deseo. El investigador también discutirá la confidencialidad al principio y al final de la sesión. Lo que se transcribe no contendrá mi nombre ni los nombres de mi familia o amigos. Una vez transcritas, todas las grabaciones de Zoom serán destruidas. El resto de los datos anónimos se conservarán durante siete años después de la finalización de este estudio y luego se destruirán. Es posible que la información del estudio se utilice para futuras publicaciones y presentaciones; sin embargo, se mantendrá la confidencialidad. Mi nombre u otra información de identificación no aparecerán en ningún material.

Soy consciente de que no recibiré ninguna compensación por mi participación; sin embargo, algunas personas encuentran empoderante compartir sus experiencias personales. También soy consciente de que puedo solicitar una copia de los resultados de esta investigación poniéndome en contacto con el investigador. Además, mi participación en este estudio puede ayudar a los futuros consejeros a estar informados sobre las experiencias de aculturación del inmigrante cubano y beneficiar positivamente la experiencia de consejería de los futuros inmigrantes cubanos.

Aunque no existen riesgos conocidos para mi participación más allá de los que se encuentran en la vida cotidiana, es posible que hablar sobre mis experiencias pueda provocar reacciones emocionales, ya sea en las entrevistas individuales o al escuchar los hallazgos y compartir mis experiencias en el grupo focal. Si me molesta este proceso y fui reclutado de la Universidad, puedo acceder a la línea directa de asesoramiento y al servicio de referencia de la Universidad al 239-262-7227, Oficina de Experiencia Estudiantil al 239-938-7730, Terapia Mental Pacífica de Florida al (239) 302-7801, o Good Therapy en <https://www.goodtherapy.org> para procesar mi experiencia. Si fui derivado de una práctica privada, puedo comunicarme con el consejero que me refirió al estudio, Peaceful Mind Therapy of Florida al (239) 302-780, o Good Therapy <https://www.goodtherapy.org> para obtener ayuda en procesando mi experiencia.

Entiendo que se mantendrá la confidencialidad durante este proceso. Sin embargo, ¿debo revelarle al investigador alguno de los siguientes: a) Si planeo hacerme daño a mí mismo o a otra persona; b) Si denuncio abuso o negligencia infantil o el peligro de tal; c) Si revelo cualquier abuso sexual, como informante por mandato, el investigador estará obligado a romper la confidencialidad y contactar a la autoridad apropiada.

Mi participación en esta investigación es estrictamente voluntaria. Puedo terminar mi participación en cualquier momento y / o retirar mis datos del estudio sin consecuencias. Si no deseo discutir ningún tema o responder alguna pregunta, soy libre de hacerlo. Si tengo alguna pregunta relacionada con la información anterior, puedo comunicarme con las que se enumeran al final del formulario de consentimiento.

He leído la información anterior y solicité cualquier aclaración necesaria. Siento que entiendo el estudio lo suficientemente bien como para decidir sobre mi participación. Al firmar a continuación, comprendo y acepto participar en este estudio de acuerdo con los términos descritos anteriormente.

Participante: _____

Fecha: _____

Información de Contacto: _____

Email: _____

Telefono: _____

Lourdes Araujo, M.S., National Louis University Doctoral Candidate, Researcher 239-641-9007
Dr. Joffrey S. Suprina, Committee Chair – 800-366-6581
Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D., IRB Chair - shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, (312) 261-3526
Kathleen Cornett, Ph.D., IRB Co-Chair - kcornett@nl.edu, 844-380-5001

APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

D1. English Version

Age or Date of Birth:

Years in the United States:

Marital Status:

Immigrated with (Spouse, Children, Other Family Member):

Region of Origin in Cuba:

City currently living in:

Gender:

Level of Education Cuba:

Level of Education US:

Employment or Position in Cuba:

Employment Status or Position in US:

D2. Spanish Version

DEMOGRAFÍAS PRELIMINARES

Edad o fecha de nacimiento:

Años en los Estados Unidos:

Estado civil (Casado, Separado,
Divorciado, Otro):

Región de origen en Cuba:

Ciudad donde vive en Florida:

Género:

Nivel de educación en Cuba:

Nivel de educación en los US:

Empleo en Cuba:

Empleo en los US: