

A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES
OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA DUE TO DEPORTATION CAUSING SEPARATION
AMONG MEXICAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN INDIVIDUALS,
COUPLES, AND FAMILIES

A DISSERTATION

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BY

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DEDICATION

To our ancestors that endured the suffering of displacement and to the future generations who will continue with the struggle. To the over 70 million forced displaced people in the world escaping human rights violations, violation of individual political rights, collective culture rights, political conflict, and violence. To the millions of children facing family separation and life-threatening situations.

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ABSTRACT

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Through this thematic analysis study, this researcher examined the experiences of collective trauma as reported by Latina/os individuals, couples, and families separated due to deportation. In this study, four dissertations and one thesis, during the time range of 2013-2017, were reviewed to explore the meanings of the lived experiences of individuals, couples, and families facing the challenges of separation. This researcher explored the responses of persons whose origins were from Mexico and Central America and were affected by United States migratory legislation through the lens of phenomenology; the internal family systems theory (Schwartz, 1995); the Borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987); and, Anzaldúan epistemologies (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). The focus of the study was to understand the following: (1) the negative and psychological effects of persons experiencing oppression (Cudd, 2006); (2) the three concepts of social exclusion (Mathieson et al., 2008); and (3) the effect of trauma on the

brain, body and mind of the person as expressed through states of dissociation and shame (Kaufman, 1985; van der Hart, Nijenhuis, & Steele, 2006; van der Kolk, 2014).

Major Themes from Research Question 1: What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation? The three major themes identified for research question one were as followed: 1.1 *Fear: Existential threat toward Self and group*; Subtheme 1.1a: *Self and identity issues: In-between*; 1.2 *Painful detachments: Sudden loss of family member*; Subtheme 1.2a: *Shame and secrecy: Remain silent*; 1.3 *Economic hardships: Double burdens on the family*; Subtheme 1.3a: *Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission*. Major Themes from Research Question 2: How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation? The two major themes identified for research question two are as follows: 2.1 *Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in Canal City*; 2.2 *Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable*; Subtheme 2.2a: *Insecure attachments: Illegal love*. Major Themes from Research Question 3: How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation? The two major themes to research question three included: 3.1 *Family reunification: Mr. Coyote*; 3.2) *Social pain: Broken spirits*; Subtheme 3.2a: *Psychological homelessness: Open wound*.

The obligation to conduct research that centralized on transforming societal inequalities to produce positive social change was a genuine effort in sustaining humanity. The commitment in promoting research across cultural contexts involved interdisciplinary focus on the social levels, the mind, brain, and body. To address

inequalities and heal culture wounds in families required an advanced knowledge of the complexity of social realities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape (Anzaldua, 1987, Preface).

In this passage from the preface of her 1987 book, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldua described the geographical boundary of the border, her conflicting cultural identities, and the struggles in navigating the sociocultural constraints. She expressed the belief that her harsh oppressive environmental landscape was hostile and unsafe; this belief aligns with a statement by Kira, Alawneh, Aboumediene, Lewandowski and Laddis (2014) who emphasized that "Oppression is a trauma to a person's collective identity and a shared trauma with his affected group" (p. 386). Humans have a primal desire to belong and feel safe in their environment. When individuals receive support and have a sense of safety, they develop the ability to feel emotionally connected, experience positive emotions, pleasure and became more playful (Ogden & Fisher, 2015). According to van der Kolk (2014, p.79) this "reciprocity" is the best protector of our well-being and mental health.

Statement of the Problem

As presented in past research (Hamburger, 2018; Hirschberger, 2018; Kira et al., 2012), the memories of trauma when associated with social exclusion and oppressive environments have been shown to increase the feelings of threat to the group. Saul (2014) described collective trauma as a disruption in the connectedness of familial, communal, and societal relationships. Collective traumas are systemic events affecting the individual, families, communities, societies, and cultures (Shamai, 2016). The traumatic psychological distress experienced by immigrant families due to deportation and separation have resulted in a collective traumatic experience (Shamai, 2016). There has been a paucity of research that has explored the experience of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families who have experienced collective trauma and examined the mental health services delivered to that societal group.

Purpose of the Study

This thematic analysis explored the phenomena of collective trauma due to deportation and separation as experienced by Latina/o individuals, couples, and families. In this qualitative content analysis, I focused on the experiences of deportation and the separation of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families from origins of Mexico and Central America. The aim of this study explored those findings of the oppressive experiences as reported currently in qualitative journal articles, theses, and dissertations from 1990-2019 in terms of how the individuals, couples, and families have made meaning of these oppressive experiences and how they have managed the dehumanization and collective trauma that has been reported from their experiences. In

addition, this study explored and expand the current understanding of what mental health practices are most useful or are best practices in serving this population. The findings from this study expanded the systemic perspective in the literature that explains the experience and treatment of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families who have survived collective trauma. Collective trauma due to oppression is of growing concern to family therapists who seek to serve the oppressed through therapy and social change. This proposed research may benefit clinicians as they strive to develop appropriate treatment regimens to meet the needs of underserved, marginalized ethnic groups.

Research Questions

1. What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation?
2. How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation?
3. How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation?

Brief Review of the Literature

The following review of the literature will focus on the following topics: collective and historical trauma, negative psychological effects, social exclusion, social pain, body and brain after trauma, dissociation and trauma, intergroup violence, shame, and oppressive legislation. There will be a more detailed examination of these and other variables in Chapter II of this study.

Collective and Historical Trauma

As described by Hirschberger (2018), collective trauma can be experienced following a psychological wound or injury to a group of people from an entire society in the present or historically. Rinker and Lawler (2018) reported that little attention has been devoted to issues related to unresolved collective historical trauma or how this trauma has been reflected in much of the global conflict happening at this time. Much of the global conflict, in many areas of the world, is reflective of the unaddressed historical trauma and constitutes a considerable amount of social conflict and terror in the world today (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). Derezotes (2013) denoted that "sociohistorical trauma may be the most dangerous form of trauma" (p. 2). Sociohistorical trauma is considered dangerous because of the ongoing revengeful cycles of violence between groups that keep repeating throughout history (Derezotes, 2013).

Negative Psychological Effects

The lack of having "reciprocal regulation" (Montgomery, 2013, p. 40) describes the inability to connect with others and triggers emotional dysregulation (Schoore, 1994). Having others who are not like us in our community and not feeling accepted and heard can result in experiencing significant psychological damage (van der Kolk, 2014).

Goleman (2006, p. 11) wrote: "Our social interactions even play a role in reshaping our brain through "neuroplasticity," which means that repeated experiences sculpt the shape, size, and the number of neurons and their synaptic connections."

Several researchers studying the dynamics of oppression have reported that persons living in oppressive environments develop adverse psychological effects. Naidoo and

Rajab (2005) indicated that persons living under oppressive legislation experienced emotional distress, feelings of powerlessness, anger, and feelings of fear. Along with the research on the dynamics of oppression, in a recent study, individuals exposed to long periods of chronic social exclusion went through a resignation stage with feelings of alienation, unworthiness, helplessness, and depression (Riva, Montali, Wirth, Curioni, & Williams, 2017).

Social Exclusion

In a review of literature, Mathieson et al. (2008) addressed three critical concepts on the meaning of social exclusion as follows (p.21):

- 1) Multidimensional, encompassing social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operating at different social levels.
- 2) Dynamic, impacting in different ways to differing degrees at different social levels over time.
- 3) Relational perspective with two dimensions:
 - a. Focus on exclusion as the rupture of relationships between people and the society resulting in a lack of social participation, social protection, social integration, and power.
 - b. Alternatively, a relational perspective points to exclusion as the product of unequal social relationships characterized by differential power, i.e., the product of the way societies are organized.

Social exclusion, as stated above, is considered multidimensional, influencing at many societal levels disrupting the lives in families and communities. In this view, a central

feature regarding the origins of mental illness, according to Mechanic and McAlpine (2002), is the influence of many social factors, such as social institutions, gender, social class, and ethnicity. The lack of integration in society affects psychological and physical health (Williamson, Thomas, Eisenberger & Stanton, 2018). For instance, in studying the influence of mental illness and lack of social support, Lim, Gleeson, Alvarez-Jimenez, and Pen (2018) administered a study aimed at comprehending the link between persons experiencing psychosis and the relationship to loneliness and social factors. Lim et al. (2018) concluded that based on this study, having social support was an intervention that could positively help persons experiencing loneliness and suffering from psychosis.

Social Pain

Social pain as a result of social exclusion is felt in the body. In a neuroimaging study, the examination of the neural connections related to social exclusion was explored (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003). In this study, the hypothesis was tested to see what happened in the brain in response to being socially excluded and concluded that the images of the brain displayed social pain similar to what occurred in persons experiencing physical pain (Eisenberger et al., 2003). Also, other functional magnetic resonance imaging studies have concluded that social pain is experienced in situations, such as social threat, exclusion, rejection, or negative evaluation (Rotge et al., 2015).

Brain and Body After Trauma

Van der Kolk (2014) noted, the brain, mind, and body change following the experience of excruciating traumatic events. The minor signs of danger reactivate the afflicted brain circuitry structures releasing large amounts of hormones contributing to

strong unpleasant emotional states and impulsive behaviors (van der Kolk, 2014). Porges (2011) developed the polyvagal theory. Porges, a neurobiologist, introduced a new perspective on human evolution, the limbic system, and the significant role of the vagus nerve. In this theory, Porges explained how the autonomic nervous system unconsciously influences how people socially engage, develop trust in others, and bond in intimate relationships. The autonomic nervous system, controlled by the hypothalamus, consists of two opposing functions, the sympathetic system and the parasympathetic system; the hypothalamus belongs to a network that controlled defensive behaviors (Cezario, Ribeiro-Barbosa, Baldo, & Canteras, 2008; Kim, Lee, Yttredahl, Gomes-Rodriguez & Anderson, 2017).

Shame. Corrigan (2014) reported that social threats tend to activate defensive responses affecting mental and physiological arousal resulting in intrusive thoughts, avoiding situations, and triggering hyperarousal. Corrigan (2014) described that when distressing social situations threaten survival, humiliation is prompt. Humiliation, an injury to self, produces an acute high arousal stage of embarrassment leading to a lower arousal state of shame setting off a state of defeat or submission (Corrigan, 2014).

Kaufman (1985) mentioned that the root of shame first starts between significant interpersonal relationships, and later, after having prolonged exposure, the result is the internalization of shame by the affected individual. Once internalized, shame is activated at any time without the interactions of a person(s) or a specific event. Kaufman stated that after internalization, "shame can spread throughout the self, ultimately shaping our emerging identity" (1985, p. 8). Being able to embrace our worth becomes impossible

after the prolonged exposure to shame; instead, the feeling of worthlessness and defeat becomes the core of self (Kaufman, 1985).

Intergroup Violence

As mentioned in current studies on intergroup violence, between macro and micro levels (Kira, 2017; Kira, Lewandowski, Chiodo, & Ibrahim, 2014) persons living under oppressive legislation and social exclusion, experienced defensive behaviors found in the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A diagnosis of PTSD according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is used to diagnose individuals and not for groups of people experiencing a shared traumatic experience. While interventions concerning trauma primarily focus on past traumas inflicted by individuals onto other individuals, Kira, Alawneh, Aboumediene, Lewandowski and Laddis (2014) challenged this individualistic based paradigm when treating a shared trauma due to oppression involving intergroup conflict.

According to Kira, Alawneh, Aboumediene, Lewandowski and Laddis (2014), most research on oppression utilized an interpersonal violence framework and do not consider other identity-based variables involved in intergroup trauma. Also, Kira, Ashby, Lewandowski et al. compared the difference between interpersonal violence and intergroup violence, for example, oppression. This comparison pointed to intergroup trauma occurring between groups, which involved unjust force, aggressive force to dominate or annihilate a targeted marginalized group.

Oppressive Legislation

In the United States today, oppressive legislation has been enforced (Alvord, Menjivar, & Cervantes, 2018) through three executive orders President Trump signed during this first week in office: the Interior Enforcement Orders (Executive Order 13768, 2017), the Border Enforcement Order (Executive Order 13767, 2017), and the Seven Country ban (Executive Order 13769, 2017). Many authors believe that this type of legislation is dehumanizing and leads to violence toward targeted ethnic groups and has separated families leading to inflicted fear and anxiety (Anzaldúa, 1987; Alvord, Menjivar, & Cervantes, 2018; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1972; Kteily & Bruneau, 2017; Rector, 2014; Utych, 2018) and on their collective identity (Jenkins, 2014; Kira, Aboumediene, Lewandowski, & Laddis, 2014) for multigenerations to come (Alexander, 2016; Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser & Sztompka, 2004; Bowen, 1985; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Danieli, 1998; Stierlin, 1976).

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology Theory

The phenomenological perspective will guide this qualitative thematic analysis (Giorgi, Giorgi, & Morley 2017; Heidegger, 1962, 1982; Husserl, 1970, 1977, 1983). The research method of phenomenology has gained influence in the production of knowledge (Jones & Borbasi, 2004) as its primary objective is to understand the very core of a particular phenomenon being lived individually or shared with a group of people (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Internalized Family Systems

Richard Schwartz (1995) created the internal family system (IFS) model that is comprised of three paradigms: the concept of multiplicity of the mind, systems thinking, and the idea of a Self-leadership. The founder, Schwartz (1995), used the capital “S” to refer to the most sacred part of us called the Self. The IFS model created concepts to map out the personality system to understand the inner life of the Self in a healing and compassionate manner (Earley, 2009).

Schwartz (1995) considers the Self to be that part of the person that is not damaged and describes it as the seat of consciousness. The multiplicity of the mind consists of various sub-personalities, or parts. Schwartz indicated that as a person develops, these parts create an IFS. This IFS behave much like a family and the implementation of family therapy interventions and concepts are then applied to bring harmony to the system (Schwartz, 1995).

Borderland Theory

Gloria Anzaldua (1987), a Chicana, a Tejana, a lesbian, a feminist, a poet, and a writer developed the Borderland theory. The framework of this theory was set on the notion of the processes that lead to a liberation of the colonized self. Anzaldua (1987) used the lower case “b” to refer to the geographical border of the United States and Mexican border and used the capital “B” to refer to the ideology of the Borderland theory. The Borderland theory emphasizes how culture and political environments influence the formation of identity. Anzaldua (1987) addresses four types of borders: the geographical borders that separate two cultures, the political border, the economic border,

and the emotional border; these borders produce limits and decrease possibilities for the individual.

Anzaldua (1987) emphasized that all identities are socially constructed, and in her writing, she described her sense of self as a plural self, with many identities. These identities represented her many selves, where she was kept on the margins, "... keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim a new element, an 'alien element'" (Anzaldua, 1987, Preface). Anzaldua expressed being at home but not comfortable. She encouraged the colonized people to become educated about their past and to not allow others to assign their identities or dictate their history, instead she felt that people must act. The Borderland theory (Anzaldua, 1987) consists of the following concepts: the mestiza consciousness, *la facultad*, *nepantla*, *conocimientos*, *des-conocimientos* and *Coatlicue*. These concepts relate to an array of processes in reference to the social and racial self (Barber, McNeely, Olsen, Belli, & Doty, 2016; Fernandez, Saguy, & Halpern, 2015), sexual identities (Goldman, 2004; Hammad, 2010), social change, psychological and spiritual consciousness (Keating, 2006), and how culture and politics influence one's social self-concept (Zaytoun, 2006).

The use of metaphor and symbolism in Anzaldua (2002) writings was used to explain inter processes involving an "awaking consciousness-the potential of knowing within, (p. 540). The *knowing from within* was the motivation that guided the person to see reality from different perspectives to achieve a spiritual transformation. The knowledge gained from this transformation, according to Anzaldua, attributed to examining belief systems influenced by the larger structural systems. Anzaldua addressed

the limitations of identity and culture by only seeing reality from a specific lens. The focus in Anzaldua's writing was to gain the ability to see realities from many different perspectives and not just one.

Delimitations

Each journal article study, theses or dissertation selected for this study focused on individuals, couples, or families of Latina/o descent, but participants may have been born in either the United States, Mexico or Central America.

The article had to focus on collective trauma; the article could be written in English or Spanish.

There were no age or gender limits on the study samples.

Definitions

Collective trauma: This concept refers to a psychological wound or injury to a group of people of an entire society (Hirschberger, 2018).

Collective identity: This term is usually used in connection with social movements and is considered a process of creating an action system in a platform of opportunities and constraints (Barreira, 2011; Melucci, 1995). Melucci defined the term as having three major concepts: (1) plans for goals and strategies on a course of action in a specific environment; (2) having relationships among the group to communicate, comprise and make decisions; and (3) a process of creating an action system in a platform of opportunities and constraints.

Dissociative states: The state where the self is fragmented as the individual disconnects cognitively and emotionally from memories and identity (van der Hart, Nijenhuis, & Steele, 2006).

Oppression: Oppression is considered a state as well as a process involving power and privileged inequalities between groups of people (David & Derthick, 2018)

Social exclusion: The process of social exclusion refers to the experience of being refused legal rights, goods and services (Levitas et al., 2007). Levitas et al. (2007) stated that social exclusion denies persons the ability to maintain relationships and prohibits individuals from participating at different levels of the community or society, such as economically, socially, culturally or politically. The process of social exclusion, according to Levitas et al. (2007), not only diminishes the quality of life of the individual but also destroys the cohesiveness of the society.

Assumptions

1. The authors of the studies included in this thematic analysis will have accurately reported their findings.
2. The search for evidence-based, qualitative articles, chapters in books, theses, and dissertations was thoroughly completed.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis study is to focus on increasing our clinical understanding of the lived experiences of individuals, couples, and families confronting separation of family members due to deportation mandated by immigration

policy, and therefore facing oppressive environments resulting in collective trauma. The goal of this study is to better understand the experience of Latina/o individuals, couples, families, with origins of Mexico and Central Americans, experiencing collective trauma. Several concepts were explored through the lens of phenomenology, IFS (Schwartz, 1995) and the Borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987): 1) the negative and psychological effects of the experience of oppression on persons; 2) the four concepts of social exclusion (Cudd, 2006); and 3) the effect of trauma on the brain, body and mind of the person as expressed through states of dissociation and shame (Kaufman, 1985; van der Hart, Nijenhuis, & Steele 2006; van der Kolk, 2014). External events such as state or federal legislation will also be discussed per the effect of that legislation on the family.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this literature review, the following topics are discussed: 1) Latinas/os as a cultural group in the United States; 2) oppression and trauma; 3) the collective trauma experienced by Latinas/os as a cultural group; 4) the most useful or best practices mental health treatment delivered to those couples and families experiencing collective trauma; and 5) the theoretical framework for this study.

Theoretical Framework

The two theoretical frameworks used to explore the experience of collective trauma as reported by Latino/a individuals, couples, and families living in the United States are IFS therapy (Schwartz, 1995) and Borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Phenomenology, the research methodology for this study will be discussed in Chapter III.

Phenomenology Theory

“Phenomenology is the study of essences; the essence of perception.... the essence of consciousness,” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, Preface). Phenomenology is considered both a branch of philosophy (Heidegger, 1982; Husserl, 1970, 1977, 1983) and a method utilized to study the social world (Schutz, 1967). The method of phenomenology has been applied to investigate the perception of social realities (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Schutz, 1967). Schutz (1967) emphasized how the phenomenological perspective functioned in analyzing the structure of reality by

documenting how social relationships to the world influenced the process of meaning making. The approach of phenomenology was predominately expanded by Husserl (1970, 1977, 1983), Heidegger (1982), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Sartre (2010). The principles of phenomenology, in the method of analyzing psychological research, have been explicated by Fischer (2000), and Giorgi (2009). Wertz (2005) explained that the phenomenological approach was perceived as reflecting on objects as they existed and did not aim at forming theories or testing a hypothesis. Instead, in this approach, the goal was to grasp realities without any ideological conception and most importantly to respect the multiple realities experienced by persons in life and the world (Wertz, 2005).

The two theoretical frameworks used to explore the experience of collective trauma as reported by Latino/a individuals, couples, and families living in the United States are IFS therapy (Schwartz, 1995) and Borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Phenomenology, the research methodology for this study will be discussed in Chapter III.

Internal Family Systems

Richard Schwartz's IFS therapy came about from his work in treating adolescent girls dealing with bulimia (Schwartz, 1995). During his early training, Schwartz became interested in structural family therapy (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981) in particular, the concept within this theory stated that families were naturally a competent operating system. The challenge, when families encountered a problem, was due to the family structure (Minuchin, 1974). The goal within this theory was to change the family's structure in order to change the system. In order to bring forth families'

competencies, the family structure had to change (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

Schwartz (1995) also encompassed notions from strategic family therapy into his theory (Haley 1976; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974); for example, he included the notion of tracking and realized the importance of being able to understand how the repetitive sequences of interactions sustained pathological behaviors in families.

Schwartz also drew concepts from general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1973), such as the concepts of feedback loops and self-regulation. Schwartz (1995) integrated into his theory of IFS some of the notions from cybernetics (Ashby, 1956; Von Foerster, 1981) such as feedback regulation, homeostasis, and circular processes. For instance, according to Schwartz (1995), if a particular type of repeated regulation is occurring, this action will continue to block the ability to see different options such as when individuals are trapped in vicious cycles repeating the same sequence of interactions over and time again giving them the same results.

Schwartz (1995) merged two other concepts within IFS: the multiplicity of the mind and systems thinking. Using IFS, clinicians can fully grasp a representation of the individual's intrapsychic thought processes, as well as, the relational interconnectedness and interdependence of the family, community, culture, and society (Schwartz, 1995). Based on the IFS perspective, it is understood that both knowledge and self-leadership resides in each person. The significance of this leadership, according to Schwartz, was to heal and cultivate harmony, thus bringing forth the state of compassion, perspective and

confidence without judgment. This state of leadership was described as the seat of consciousness, the most inner core of the self, the soul within (Schwartz, 1999).

Schwartz (1995) articulated that the mind was made up of a system of subpersonalities or “parts,” referred to as an IFS. This internal system, as described by Schwartz, consisted of protector parts. These protector parts were the *managers* and *firefighters*. The *managers* were the ones active throughout our daily lives to control our bodies, environments and others. The *firefighters* were the impulsive and destructive parts; these, reactive parts, were protectors of the Self from the *exiles*. The *exiles* were the younger parts who carried the emotional pain and trauma (Schwartz, 1995).

As noted, IFS (Schwartz, 1999) is a model constructed of two paradigms: subpersonalities and systemic approaches that include concepts needed to develop a comprehensive synthesis to be applied in the relational arena. Relying on his model, Schwartz (1999) implemented the perspectives of IFS when working with couples. Out of this paradigm, the model of IFS was expanded to use with couples striving to achieve intimacy. One of the most critical tasks for the Self is to lead in a relationship and have the notion of feeling safe. Eliminating fear and convincing the parts that it was safe to connect and trust, the Self gradually extends beyond a certain transparency to participate actively in holding a true connection. Along with this true connection, the inner strength of the core Self was further developed to engage with confidence and acceptance (Schwartz, 1999).

Schwartz (1999) asserted that within this fluidity and harmonious essence of the Self's natural state was the place where the couple could create a connective environment

of being Self to Self. This soul to soul, Self to Self-connection was what comforts and nourished interpersonal relationships. Not only does this connection facilitate stability in the couple system but also serves as the catalytic function to generate a sense of safety within the couple and family system. Thus, consistently with what Schwartz (1999) has stated, experiencing a Self to Self-intimacy, within relationships, develops and flourishes into what he considers resilient intimacy. The outcome of this resiliency and trust becomes an internal systematic resource when the couple was experiencing extremely distressing life events (Schwartz, 1999).

Borderland Theory and Anzalduan Epistemologies

The Borderland theory (Anzaldua, 1987) consists of the following processes: the *mestiza consciousness*, *conocimientos*, *des-conocimientos*, *la facultad*, *Nepantla*, and *Coatlicue*. The *mestiza consciousness* is described as living with multiple identities and encourages the deconstruction of internalized racial oppression. Anzaldua asserted that social processes influence a person's development of their self-concept. The geographical concept of a *border*, according to Anzaldua, depicts the personal internal inner psychological domain and the external social outer boundary. Also, the border concept, involves the interconnectedness of the contextual physicality of the body and the spiritual dimension (Zaytoun, 2006). The concept of *conocimiento* is described by Anzaldua, as a journey to self-knowledge and self-awareness in being the physical world. Anzaldua (1987) described *conocimiento* as being the ability to "question conventional knowledge's current categories, classifications and contents" (p. 541). This keen awareness wakes a sense of responsibility, Anzaldua (2002) states that *conocimiento*

uncovers information: “Breaking out [of] your mental and emotional prison and deepening the range of perception enables you to link reflection and vision.... (p. 542). Anzaldua (1987) explained that *des-conocimientos* is the opposite of *conocimientos* and keeps persons in denial or unaware of their oppressive realities.

Anzaldua (1987) stated that when there are borders such as between the U.S. and Mexico, things and people are left out. As described by Anzaldua, the being *left out* and *outed*, is a painful process like an “open wound” (p. 25). Anzaldua uses the geographical border as a symbolic representation of one’s internalized limitations and boundaries where one feels invisible, “a veces no soy nade” (p. 85), which translates to, *at times I feel like I am no one*. According to Anzaldua, this is a difficult psychological process, it becomes “an endless cycle of making it worse, making it better, but always making meaning out of the experience, whatever it may be” (p. 95).

“La facultad” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 60) is considered, as explained by Anzaldua, an ability to see from different and deeper perspectives. This ability of having a keen awareness is stronger in marginalized peoples. *Nepantla*, according to Anzaldua, the space in-between while a person is in transition in the identity reformation stage. The *Coatlicue* (an indigenous goddess) state of being described by Anzaldua as the most painful of the processes. This process involves the ridding or deconstructing the colonized Self to reconstruct the uncolonized Self. The *Coatlicue* state is the state in which the individual confronts all the internalized identities, beliefs, and fears (Anzaldua, 1987, 2002).

Latinas/os as a Group in the United States

Hathaway (2008) indicated that the term *Latin American* was first coined by the French to differentiate the Catholic colonies who spoke the romance languages. The term *Latino*, in the United States has been used to identify those who speak Spanish and is used synonymously with the term *Hispanic*. *Hispanic* was a term first used by the 1970 U.S. Census Bureau to group Spanish-speaking people (Hathaway, 2008). Telles (2018) pointed out that the terms, both *Hispanic* and *Latino*, were terms originating in the United States.

According to the United Nations (United Nations, World Population Prospects, 2017 Revision), Latin America, including the Caribbean, consists of 33 countries. Central America, a part of Latin America, consists of seven countries: Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. In this thematic analysis, the research focused on the experiences of deportation and the separation of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families with origins of Mexico and Central America.

Oppression

The definition of oppression must take into consideration multiple systemic societal levels of interactions, for instance, the macro, which includes all institutions, the mesosystem consisting of the various intergroup contact and the microsystem, which includes the personal (Ugiabe & Eweka, 2014). According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the influence of these levels, on the developing person, depends greatly on the manner in which the interaction between the person and their environment takes place. Bronfenbrenner (2005) referred to the process of interaction between the developing

person and their environment as *proximal processes*. These processes affect human development, but vary depending on the characteristic of the person, the context, and the time period (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In the case of oppression, oppression is experienced at a personal level, a cultural level and on the social structure level (Ugiabe & Eweka, 2014).

Definitions of oppression have varied throughout history; for example, the Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1996) defined oppression as:

The exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel or unjust manner; an act or instance of oppressing; the state of being oppressed; the feeling of being heavily burdened mentally or physically, by troubles, adverse conditions, anxiety, [and others]. (p. 1359)

Caldwell and Leighton (2018) claimed that, "Oppression thus affects how we interact with others, how we conceptualize and internalize a sense of self, and what we learn to expect from our environment" (p. 25). From a feminist perspective, Cudd (2006) described the different forms of oppression and defined oppression as such: "a harm through which groups of persons are systematically and unfairly or unjustly constrained, burdened or reduced by any of several forces" (p. 26). Cudd listed four conditions to examine if a social group was experiencing oppression. These conditions are as follows:

- 1) The harm condition, indicated harm to the individual by institutional practice;
- (2) The social group, a person suffered due to belonging to a specific group;
- (3) The privilege condition was when one social group benefited from the institutional practices;

and (4) The coercion condition, where the practice of unjustified influence or intimidation brought harm (Cudd, 2006).

Trauma

Past and current research literature includes an array of definitions concerning trauma; for example, the word trauma has been used to describe a wound, an injury, or shock (Winnik, 1969). Benyakar, Kutz, Dasberg and Stern (1989) communicated that the clinical meaning of trauma must include “the notion of injury and discontinuity” (p. 433) and from a psychological perspective it must grasp the “sense of irreparable tear of self and reality” (p. 433). Levine (2010), a somatic trauma therapist, articulated that, "Trauma occurs when we are intensely frightened and are either physically restrained or perceive that we are trapped. We freeze in paralysis and/or collapse in overwhelming helplessness" (p. 48). Levine mentioned that this physical restraint or immobility served four survival strategies for all mammals. These four strategies included: (1) staying in a state of motionlessness and playing dead to distract a predator for survival; (2) staying immovable brought about invisibility; (3) staying immobile and attract predator to one and, thereby, guarantee social group survival; and (4) staying immobile to reach an altered state of numbness. At the state of numbness, the body naturally releases morphine-like hormones so, if attacked, the pain lessens; this state is referred to as dissociation, allowing the victim to bear intolerable situations (Levine, 2010). Levine (2010) went on to explain that being in this immobile dissociated state, many traumatized individuals experience what he describes as "body memories, psychosomatic or somatic dissociation symptoms (p. 52). Levine stated that these traumatized persons

continued to experience, not a physical paralysis, but instead go through daily life in an unclear anxious state, numbing states, experiencing dissociation, and depression. Persons experiencing such symptoms are able to function and work to make a living in a state of a "functional freeze" (p. 52), which limits their enjoyment in life (Levine, 2010).

Van der Hart, Nijenhuis and Steele (2006) stated that dissociation is a significant component in understanding traumatization. Van der Hart et al. sought to clarify that the word dissociation could be used to describe many different symptoms, such as a process, an intrapsychic structure, a defense mechanism, or a deficit. According to Van der Hart et al. (2006), therapists dealing with individuals suffering from chronic traumatization who also have various combinations of comorbidity can find it challenging to gather assessments and develop accurate treatment plans for their patients. With extensive literature from different disciplines on trauma, Van der Hart et al. (2006) reported that the core to understanding trauma was what they refer to as structural dissociation of the personality. Van der Hart et al.'s concept of the structural dissociation of the personality is rooted in the early work of Pierre Janet (1907), who stated that personality had a structure that consisted of multiple systems. Dissociation, according to Janet, involved the divisions of these personality structures.

From a social work perspective, Wilson and Sigman (2000), defined trauma by using eight dimensions and six specific distinctions. The eight dimensions consist of the following: (1) threat to life or a limb; (2) severe physical harm or injury, including sexual abuse; (3) receiving intentional injury or harm; (4) exposure to the grotesque; (5) violent, sudden loss of a loved one; (6) witnessing or learning of violence to a loved one; (7)

learning of exposure to a noxious agent; and, (8) causing death or severe harm to another. The six specific distinctions to explain the definition of trauma consist of the following: (1) physical trauma, (2) psychological trauma, (3) social trauma, (4) historical trauma, (5) ongoing trauma, and, (6) vicarious or secondary trauma (Wilson & Sigman, 2000).

The developmentally based stress and trauma framework (DBTF) was created by Kira (2019) and others to integrate the theoretical concepts of human development and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1968; Gilbert, 2000). The first dimension of DBTF addresses developmental based issues such as attachment traumas and identity traumas. Four types of identity traumas include: (1) personal identity traumas, (2) collective, social, or group identity trauma, (3) role identity or self-actualization trauma, and (4) physical identity traumas.

The second dimension in DBTF points out the degree or level of chronicity and severity that are represented in four types of trauma. Type I trauma is considered a single episode, such as a car accident. Complex traumas, Type II, are described as repeated similar traumatic episodes that were no longer happening. Type III traumas are events which are continuous, repeated and ongoing. Type IV traumas are described as cumulative trauma that include events that start in the past and continue throughout a lifetime, such as racism (Kira, Ashby, Lewandowski, Alawneh, Mohanesh, & Odenat, 2013).

Collective Trauma

Hirschberger (2018) described collective trauma as "a cataclysmic event that shatters the basic fabric of society" (p. 1). Hirschberger emphasized that not only do

people have to deal with the shocking loss of human lives and relationships, but people also have to cope with confronting their new reality and make meaning of the collective trauma. From the perspective view of developmental and ecological theories of human development, the impact of context is considered an active component in influencing the manifestations of the development and behavioral characteristics of the person (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983; Gergen, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) labeled five categorical levels to describe the different contexts in society. These categories include those environments in which the individual directly or indirectly interacts with, such as the family, school, social, cultural, and historical events. These nested systems are comprised of the microsystem (direct contact), the mesosystem (the relationship between systems), exosystem (external influences), the macro system (culture and social influences), and the chronosystem (changes in systems across time).

Collective trauma is characterized as multifaceted and complex since it involves the many interactions between the many different levels of the nested systems (Aarons & Berger, 2017; Shamai, 2016). Erikson (1976) first created the concept of "collective trauma" (p. 153). The substance of collective trauma points to the long-term suffering and the disintegration that goes to the essential core of cohesiveness in society (Erikson, 1976). Establishing meaning, therefore, is particularly important when individuals or groups encounter traumatic life experiences (Park, 2013). Sociologist Kai Erikson (1976) eloquently describes the similarities and differences between individual and collective trauma and their impact on the self:

By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. . .by collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it. . .[is] a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. . . ‘We no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body.

(Erikson, 1976, pp. 153–154)

The transmission of collective trauma, by unjust atrocities, does not disappear once the injustices come to a stop as the consequences live on (Rieder & Elbert, 2013). As stated by Rinker and Lawler (2018), collective historical trauma has contributed significantly to social conflicts currently happening in the world today. In this article, Rinker and Lawler indicated that much of the trauma experienced by people today is in one way or another related to a collective or historical trauma. Rinker and Lawler reported on their implementation of the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) model, which was used following the September 11, 2001 attack in New York. Rinker and Lawler (2018) investigated collective traumas as a circular process. In consideration with the systemic circular processes, Rinker and Lawler (2018) referred to psychological trauma in individuals, as collective pathological disease. The goal for Rinker and Lawler, a clinical psychologist and a peace and conflict studies (PACS)

expert, is to collaboratively analyze, with a trans-disciplinary research agenda, trauma as a collective disease defined as a rooted cause of *protracted social conflict* (PSC). Rinker and Lawler emphasize that past collective social traumas are a prime motivator for the ongoing PSC.

In an article by Azar, Juraidini, and McLaurin (1978), PSCs were described as hostile interactions extending over periods of time. These interactions occurred irregularly as eruptions of social conflicts with unpredictability in reoccurrence and coercion. Azar et al. stated that the high-risk social conflict situations include entire societies and behaved as representatives for defining the degree of national identity and social cohesiveness. The stretch between the violent outbreaks decreased at times, according to the research of Azar, Juraidini, and McLaurin (1978), but only temporarily and continued in time without a recognizable end to the conflict. The PSC transformed or faded away but these conflicts appeared unresolvable because these conflicts were not representatives of events or sets of events in history but, instead, PSC were identified as processes (Azar, Juraidini, & McLaurin, 1978). In dealing with the protracted conflict situation, according to Azar, Juraidini, and McLaurin (1978), the social conflict reverted to the platform for highlighting the social issues as the obstacle rather than coming up with a resolution. The conflict process developed into the focus and the overall reason for the problem, instead of reviewing the situation and seeing it as the outcome of a specific policy or lack of policy (Azar, Juraidini, & McLaurin, 1978).

In a study by Rinker and Lawler (2018), two case studies were introduced to analyze the conflictual interactions between officers of authority and citizens from

marginalized communities in the Palestine-Israel region and the relationship between African-Americans and the police. In this article, Rinker and Lawler (2018) referred to collective and historical violence as a transgenerational transmission of trauma from past colonization, structural inequalities, and cultural violence on specific groups of people. According to Rinker and Lawler (2018), trauma was seen by many clinicians and therapists, as an individual psychological injury to be treated in accordance with the medical model. Rinker and Lawler (2018) acknowledged that clinicians have limited guidance in treating collective and historical trauma since there exists almost no interdisciplinary efforts to bring the two concepts together. There exists a variety of effective interventions for healing traumatized people, but research has not expanded on how the impact of individual traumas have perturb the collective sphere and instead has allowed the ongoing production of protracted conflict dynamics to continue (Rinker & Lawler, 2018).

As specified by Rinker and Lawler (2018), currently, plenty of research has illustrated the physical and psychological effects trauma has on the individual was, but almost no research exists on how the traumatized individuals influence the collective domain. Rinker and Lawler (2018) stated that by conceiving trauma as a social disease, the possibilities increase to bring transformation to the most damaging societal conflicts encountered today. Considering trauma from this perspective is the initial step in recognizing that intrinsic human strength is required to prevail again injurious societal conflicts (Rinker & Lawler, 2018).

An essential requirement, based on Rinker and Lawler (2018), for societal transformation to occur is that individuals must have the ability to reevaluate and bring to awareness to how institutional power has maintained the past collective legacies of trauma in present realities. Rinker and Lawler examined two cases, one in the Palestine and Israel territory and the police and community interaction between the African American community and the police in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Negative Psychological Effects

In another study, Bauriedl-Schmid et al. (2017) examined how attachment orientation influences the regulation of emotions when persons were socially excluded. The results of this study indicated that subjects experiencing depression and displaying a disorganized attachment (insecure-dismissing, and insecure preoccupied) showed an increased motivation to engage in emotional dysregulation, such as passive behaviors and aggression. Furthermore, the disorganized individuals also reported feeling more socially alienated compared to the organized subjects with secure attachments who demonstrated high agency of self and more relational connectedness.

Shame

Siegel (2010) indicated that the lack of attunement with other individuals brought forth a sense of disconnection and a state of shame. Feelings of disconnection were triggered when individuals reported the following: (1) they were unable to connect to others, (2) they did not feel attuned with another person, and (3) they felt defective or like something was wrong with them. Scheff (2004), a social psychologist, wrote about how shame affects social bonding and how being in a state of shame interferes in close

interpersonal relationships, therefore, risking the ability to connect and feel connected. The risk of being in the state of shame affects individual attachment styles (Benau, 2017), which can lead to long-term health issues (Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2004); and disconnection and the lack of attunement between family members results in feeling isolated and neglected, therefore, experiencing relational trauma (Parnell, 2013). Being in a state of shame for a prolonged period was associated with an increase in inflammatory activity and levels of cortisol (Dickerson et al., 2004).

Body and Brain After Trauma

Porges (2011) coined the term *neuroception*, which involves the processing of information through the senses to scan environments for dangerous life-threatening situations. At the detection of fear, neural processes facilitate defensive behavior mechanisms, such as the fight, flight, or freeze response. This response of freeze or immobilization, produces physiological changes, such as slow heart rate, having trouble breathing, and low blood pressure. If the neuroception becomes faulty, persons experience the inability to detect danger or experience being in a constant state of high alert (Porges, 2011).

According to van der Kolk (2014), traumatic symptoms involve the alteration of neurological structures, and at the same time affect how the body processes the trauma. Van der Kolk (2014) consistently elaborates on how the body accounts for every trauma that is experienced. The body keeps the score, as van der Kolk emphasizes, pointing towards the dangers of stress and trauma on the body's cardio metabolic systems that can cause inflammatory disease. The exposure of repeated stress can play a fundamental role

in the implication of neuroendocrine and behavioral responses affecting the body's ability to heal (Derjik, van Leeuwen, Klock, & Zitman, 2008).

Dissociation and Trauma

Trauma results in the loss of self, leaving people feeling emotionally numb; it reorganizes the person's perception, keeps individuals stuck in an inescapable shock and, sadly enough, causes individuals to dissociate from life and replay the traumatic events time and time again. Van der Kolk (2014) added the following regarding dissociation:

Dissociation is the essence of trauma. The overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented, so that emotions, sounds, images, thoughts and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own. The sensory fragments of memory intrude into the present, where they are relived. As long as the trauma is not resolved, the stress hormones that the body secretes to protect itself keep circulating, and the defensive movements and emotional response keep getting replayed. (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 66)

Lanius (2014) stated that neuroscience research reports that dissociation is induced by the body's natural system of endogenous opioids depressing the central nervous system. This system plays a significant role in the stress-response and maintenance of homeostasis; escalation of this system, for instance, extreme fear, activates the parasympathetic regulatory functions. In a fight, flight, or freeze response, when a threat is overwhelming, the parasympathetic system takes over to reduce the hyperarousal response (Lanius, 2014). When a person feels threatened and in danger and

cannot escape, a massive release of endogenous opioids becomes activated, resulting in numbness, immobility, or a catatonic dissociative state (Lanius, 2014).

Oppressive Legislation

Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano (2002) defined *violence*, according to the World Health Organization, as: “The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that results injury death, psychological harm maldevelopment or deprivation” (p. 5). The racial violence currently inflicted on individuals or targeted ethnic groups and the separation of families has contributed to individuals experiencing traumatic symptomologies. According to Berger, Juster and Sarnyal (2015), ethnic groups experiencing racism and discrimination, due to social exclusion, had chronically increased levels of cortisol and a dysregulated hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (Berger, Juster, & Sarnyal, 2015).

The results of these negative experiences, mentioned above, can create devastating physiological effects for individuals, couples, and families (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2018). Danieli (1998) stated that this type of human suffering must not be denied and that these types of decisions, of racial violence, can become the legacies of the many unborn children yet to follow. Rieder and Elbert (2013) conducted a study on the after-effects of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Rieder and Elbert described the traumatic mental anguish experienced by the survivors and their children, as the result of the violent massacres. These lasting impressions of violence will continue across many future generations.

Collective Trauma Experienced by Latinos

Rubio-Hernandez and Ayon (2016) conducted a study to investigate the views of Latino immigrant parents ($N = 54$) facing anti-immigration policies and how the policy had emotionally affected their children residing in the state of Arizona. The parents participated in multiple semi-structured interviews at the time when the implementation of State Bill 1070 was in the earlier stages. Rubio-Hernandez and Ayon (2016) concluded that parents observed a variety of emotional behavioral changes in their children, such as fear and hypervigilance, which led parents to have a deep concern about the policies of that bill, but also, parents felt deep of responsibility for protecting their children. The researchers reported that parents also observed psychological disturbances in their children such as sadness and crying, and depression. Parents mentioned that their children reported feeling fearful and concerned over the unknown threat of possible deportation and that the family members might be separated. The parents stated that they noticed their children had an increased sense of responsibility for protecting and helping their family (Rubio-Hernandez & Ayon, 2016).

Garcia (2018) addressed the question of how not legal status having influenced the quality of mental health in immigrants and their families. Garcia (2018) indicated that, despite the negative mental outcomes, the research conducted on the experience of migration and stressors associated with legal status was limited. That author emphasized that immigrant families had a constant worry about deportation resulting in negative psychological mental stressors. Garcia explored the experiences of undocumented Mexican women from Houston, Texas. The 30 participants answered

questions in semi-structured in-depth interviews. The results indicated that undocumented Mexican immigrant women faced challenges in obtaining resources plus maintaining social relationships and their social roles in their community. Further findings demonstrated that living with the constant fearful threat of deportation created a distrust of authorities, caused conflictual family dynamics, and generated economic difficulties. Garcia highlighted that the fear of threatened deportation became a chronic stressor faced by undocumented Mexican women on a daily basis (Garcia, 2018).

Brabeck, Lykes, and Hershberg (2011) reported that since 1996, millions of non-citizens have been forcibly deported from the United States. The majority of these non-citizens migrated from Mexico and Central America in large numbers. Nevertheless, the research regarding how deportation has affected non-citizens from Central America is limited. Brabeck et al. (2011) performed a participatory action research (PAR) project together with a local immigrant organization to investigate the impact of the deportation policy on Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrant families. This study focused on how to develop effective services for these families. Interviews with 18 families were conducted to explore the experiences and meaning making of time spent in detention centers, the process of deportation, and forceful threats to their families. The interview responses demonstrated how participants constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed their meaning concerning their risk of deportation. The findings suggested taking into consideration the oppressive injustices confronted by Salvadoran and Guatemalan families and viewing the injustices from a totally different perspective. One suggestion

for therapists was to consider working with the strong communal cohesion and the shared history of the groups in contrast to an individualistic approach (Brabeck et al., 2011).

Best Practices in Mental Health Treatment for Collective Trauma

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) describes posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as an “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence...” (p. 271). Yehuda and Lehrner (2018) examined trauma from a communal perspective and addressed whether trauma, from a collective and communal stance, required different conceptual models. Yehuda and Lehrner questioned whether the effects of individual trauma, such as psychological, neuroendocrine, and neurological factors were the same as an exposure to collective traumatic events.

Suarez (2016) suggested that there exist limitations in popular trauma frameworks regarding the intersection of culture and contextual issues. Suarez (2016, p. 150) pointed to the perspective of developing an alternative model focused on an “interdisciplinary and multidimensional” perspective. This notion includes concepts from the feminist perspective, anthropological, indigenous, structural violence, and transcultural psychiatric theories. The main objective in integrating knowledge from different disciplines is to connect the trauma paradigm to an expanded globalized system, contextual processes, and social change. The framework includes six components consisting of resilience, protective factors, gender, culture, social structures, and social justice (Suarez, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 2009) emphasized the importance of considering the impact of adverse processes at the meso-level (community) and the macro-level (societal

levels). Therefore, according to Yehuda and Lehrner (2018), there must be some regard spent considering the negative effects of cultural trauma when including interdisciplinary and multilevel approaches. The challenge of integrating the interdisciplinary approach with the cultural trauma model had to do with taking into account the biological and the social processes; for instance, how to integrate the effects of transgenerational violent memories of past histories and how they were passed down to future generations (Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018).

Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez-Chavez, and Salas (2019) discussed the oppressive experiences of Latino immigrants living in the United States. Chavez-Dueñas et al. focused on the negative effects of systemic oppression endured by the immigrants resulting in psychological distress and “ethno-racial trauma” (p. 49). Chavez-Dueñas et al. referred to ethno-racial trauma as the experience or witnessing of discrimination, infliction of fear or harm, violence, and intimidation aimed at marginalized groups. Chavez-Dueñas et al. introduced a framework entitled HEART (Healing Ethno And Racial Trauma) that could be used to encourage healing. HEART is comprised of four phases and reflects on the principles of Liberation psychology and the concepts of trauma models. The four phases are described as (1) relief from the stressor, (2) awareness, reprocess and coping, (3) collective action and liberation, and (4) collective culture strengths using rituals and traditions. The purpose of this article was to call to action, to policy and research, to consider the integration of other disciplines, such as, in this case, intersectionality theory, trauma models, and Liberation psychology (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez-Chavez, & Salas, 2019).

Willerton, Dankoski, and Martir (2008) noted that the Latino population in the United States is increasing, but despite the growth, this population continues to be medically underserved. Willerton et al. (2008) suggested that an effective method for meeting the needs of Latinos could be by bringing in medical family therapists into a collaboration between the health care component and family therapists. Willerton et al. (2008) mentioned that there were four reasons why medical family therapists could greatly improve mental health care for Latinos in a medical setting, as follows: (a) physically being present in a medical facility would alleviate barriers in providing resources ; (b) family therapists work from a systemic perspective; (c) family therapists can collaborate with physicians to provide the optimal interventions for the family; and (d) culturally competent family therapists would influence the need of implementing the systemic approach, as well as, being mindful of contextual issues that impact Latino families (Willerton, et al., 2008) .

Treatment of Collective Trauma

In a review of literature Tankink and Bubenzer (2017) focus on an integrated approach to peace building, mental health, and psychosocial support. Tankink and Bubenzer reported that a limited amount of attention has been given to the research of intergenerational transmission of violence and trauma. According to Zerach, Levin, Aloni and Solomon (2017), war captivity is considered one of the most damaging human traumatic experience a person can endure. In this longitudinal study by Zerach et al. the results indicated that despite the passing of 40 years, the ex-POWs' adult offspring were at considerable risk for posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS). Based on the results of

this study, major interventions to consider, for policy and research, are to take into account the parent's relationship quality to decrease the negative effects on offspring (Zerarch, et al., 2017).

Neuroscience has much to offer in understanding the stages of human developmental and how negative environments and traumatic events contribute to a higher probability of experiencing mental health illness (Schoore, 1994; van der Kolk, 2014). Also, the field of epigenetics (Conrad et al., 2018; Yehuda, & Lehrner, 2018) appears to have a significant influence on the interdisciplinary studies of neurobiology and social injuries resulting in collective trauma. For instance, the neuroscience component of researching social trauma was explored by Ogawa and Otani (2014) examining how rapid eye movement (REM) sleep contributed to emotional brain regulation when experiencing social pain due to social exclusion.

The integration of the method of eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR) applications has been used throughout the world. Shapiro (2001), the developer of EMDR, stated in the special issue commemorating its 25th anniversary that EMDR therapy has brought effective treatment to many survivors experiencing trauma worldwide (Shapiro, 2016). In that same issue of the journal, Maxfield (2014) described how EMDR therapy has been used globally in North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin American and the Caribbean with individuals experiencing trauma resulting from social political adversities, to manmade and natural disasters.

Gone (2013) examined indigenous communities and the psychological distress related to historical trauma (HT). The researcher emphasized the differences of personal

traumata and complex concept of historical trauma. Gone (2013) mentioned how *First Nations* children were separated from family and community and forbidden from participation in cultural practices in order to influence their assimilation into mainstream society. A community treatment program, called *culture as treatment*, was implemented with the Manitoba First Nations reserve to show the significance of the participation of traditional cultural rituals for the healing of historical trauma (Gone, 2013).

Summary

In this literature review two theoretical frameworks, the IFS (Schwartz, 1995) and Borderland theory (Anzaldua, 1987), were described. These frameworks in this qualitative content analysis study will guide the researcher as she reviews studies concerning the lived experiences of collective trauma due to deportation and separation of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families with origins of Mexico and Central America. This chapter addressed the topics of oppression and trauma; the collective trauma experienced by Latinas/os as a cultural group; the most useful or best practices mental health treatments delivered to those individuals, couples, and families experiencing collective trauma; and treatments for collective trauma.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thematic analysis (TA) explored studies in theses, and dissertations using a phenomenology theoretical perspective. The goal for using the method of thematic analysis was to identify the themes from previously researched studies of Latina/o individuals, couples, and families of Mexican and Central American descent experiencing oppressive collective trauma. In the chapter below, the framework in doing a thematic analysis is described.

The research method of TA involves the searching of repeated patterns of meaning in text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method, according to Maguire and Delahunt (2017) describes, “the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” (p. 352). Braun and Clarke (2012) suggested that the research process for conducting a TA will consist of six phases: (1) getting familiar with the data, (2) creating the initial codes, (3) searching for the themes, (4) reviewing the themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Braun and Clarke (2012) suggested that a TA is a good entry method for a researcher and emphasizes that TA is a method of data analysis and not a specific approach for doing qualitative research. The TA method supports the entry-level researcher in learning the mechanics of doing the coding and analyzing qualitative data in a systematic manner (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Phenomenological Perspective

The phenomenological perspective guided the analysis for this TA. Heidegger developed the interpretive, or the hermeneutic, type of phenomenology (Connelly, 2015). According to Smith and Osborn (2007), the purpose of using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to examine, in great detail, how individuals make meaning of their reality regarding a particular phenomenon or situation. Smith and Osborn mentioned that this method is concerned with collecting data relating to personal experiences instead of drawing objective conclusions from the data collected.

Sample Recruitment

Windle (2010) explained that primary analysis is conducted when dealing with original first-hand studies, as opposed to secondary data analysis, where a different analysis of an existing study is approached with totally different research question/s to further research the data collected. Secondary sources include an array of research materials or collections of records providing descriptions, explanations, and interpretations (Windle, 2010).

In this TA, the sample was recruited by selecting published qualitative studies. The selection process, in researching for peer-reviewed journals, thesis and dissertations, utilized the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, CINAHL Complete Dissertation Abstracts Online & ProQuest Digital Dissertations, Dissertations and Theses at Texas Woman's University, ERIC/EBSCO, Family & Society Studies, Worldwide, GenderWatch, JSTOR, Medline with Full Text (EBSCO), Project Muse, ProQuest Databases, PsycARTICLES,

Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO PubMed, Sage Journals Online, SocINDEX with Full Text, SpringerLink, Women and Social Movements, Women and Social Movements International Women's Studies, Women's Studies International, WorldCat, and Google Scholar. The search key words and phrases to do the research for the topic, for this TA, included the terms: Latino, Hispanic, deportation and separation, immigrant Mexican children and deportation, Central American families and children, and deportation.

Research Strategy in Selection of Publications

The researcher searched for the published data in peer reviewed journal articles, theses, and dissertations to answer the research questions for this study. In reviewing the data for this study, the researcher became familiar with the publications and immersed herself into the data by repeatedly reading the content. The goal in doing this was to include those publications that best met the criteria to answer the research questions and excluded those publications that would not meet the criteria for this study. A form was used to complete this process (see Appendix A) The final total of 5 publications included a total of 51 participants: 16 males and 35 females ranging in age from 3 to 76 years old. These 5 publications are listed in Table 1 (see Appendix B).

Table 1

Five Selected Publications

First Publication: Enforced Separations: A Qualitative Examination of how Latino Youth Cope with Family Disruption Following the Deportation of a Parent

Publication Type	Author	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
Dissertation	Kristina K. Hermann	2017	1) How do Latino/a adolescents (ages 14-18 years old) experience forced family separation due to the deportation of an undocumented parent? 2) How do these youth and their remaining family members adjust to new family circumstances following a deportation? 3) How do social service systems respond to the needs of families who have experienced a deportation related family separation?	21F/6M	Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras	Y

Second Publication: Torn Apart: The Impact of Deportation Upon Family Members

Publication Type	Author	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
Dissertation	Norma Quintero	2016	The purpose of this study will be to describe the lived experience of family members after a deportation.	4F/2M	Mexico	Y

Third Publication: A Narrative Inquiry of the Stories of Mexican-American Families that Experienced Separation due to US Immigration Policies in the 21st Century

Publication Type	Author	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
Dissertation	Gabriela I. Nunez	2015	1) What are the experiences of 21st century mixed-legal status, Mexican-American, families that were separated due to US immigration policies and are now reunified? 2) How did their interactions with others influence their understanding of their immigration experience? 3) How did these families cope with their immigration barriers?	7F/5M	Mexican	Y

Fourth Publication: Perceptions of Parental Deportation on Adult Intimate Relationships

Publication Type	Author	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
Dissertation	Sandra Amada Espinoza	2015	4) What, if any, impact do participants believe that experiencing parental deportation has on their romantic relationship as adults?	3F/3F	Mexico, El Salvador	Y

Fifth Publication: The Effects of Deportation on the Family

Publication Type	Author	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
Thesis	Cynthia Denise Rodriguez	2013	1) How has your deportation affected your family in the United States? 2) How has your deportation affected you? 3) Would you like your children to return to Mexico with you? Why or why not? 4) Would you like your children to remain in the United States? Why or why not? 5) Do you think you are going to attempt to cross into the United States in the future? Why or why not?	M11/F11	Mexico	Y

Research Questions

1. What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation?
2. How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation?
3. How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation?

Procedures

Braun and Clarke (2012) suggested that the research process, when conducting a TA, is recursive and not linear. The researcher moved forward and back to review the data several times in the process of analyzing the data. Braun and Clarke provided six phases to use as a guide in conducting a TA. These phases include: (1) becoming acquainted with the data, (2) creating the initial codes, (3) searching for the themes, (4) reviewing the themes, (5) defining the theme, and (6) writing up the report. Braun and Clarke emphasize a thematic analysis is a flexible method to use because, as a method, it is used to analyze data and is not associated with a theoretical framework. Vaismoradi, Turinen, and Bondas (2013) noted that the TA approach was distinct from a content analysis (CA). That being in that a content analysis, the data analysis could take on a qualitative and/or a quantitative format. In a thematic analysis, the approach was purely qualitative and mostly abstract (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 1: Become Acquainted with the Data

First, I, the researcher, labeled the five publications with numbers: #1 Hermann (2017), #2 Quintero (2016), #3 Nunez (2015), #4 Espinoza (2015), and #5 Rodriguez

(2013). The numbered titles, with the authors on a separate sheet of paper were included in the development of the code booklet [I reviewed the data with a set of my research questions]. By having the research questions next to me, the approach enabled me to focus on data required to answer those questions. I read the research data in the selected thesis and dissertations multiple times to get familiar with the data. I, the researcher took on an active role and became a critical a tool in reading and investigating the content. I identified and distinguished what data best related in answering my research questions. In the process of gaining familiarity with the data, the dissertations and the thesis, I reminded myself that I was using an inductive approach. From an inductive approach, the researcher examined the data to generate interpretations from the close examination of the raw data (Krippendorff, 2019). In this case, the raw data would be participant responses to the interview questions in the published qualitative studies.

My research companion, a colleague, was the second coder for this TA. The second coder was instructed to audit and document my research decision processes. The second coder audited my process of getting familiar with the data, to ensure the triangulation of a variety of data to strengthen the probability final interpretations credible. I read the content and used colored highlighters to mark the passages within the text (on paper, the hard copy). The passages (the participant's responses) were marked to distinguish the text and were each given a code. The Saldana (2009) coding manual, Boyatzis (1998) thematic analysis and code development, and instructions and publications by Braun and Clarke (2012) were used in guiding the process of coding in this TA

To remember the reasoning behind the code applied to the data, I made descriptive notes on the margins, at that time. I read the content to differentiate the explicit visible expressions and aimed at making notes of the implicit hidden symbolic expressions. I documented how the data consisting of the marked passages related to the theories used in this TA. After highlighting the data, with a colored marker, and coding the text, in each selected publication, I created a list of possible codes to use in the continuation of the investigating of the data in this TA.

The second coder repeated the same process of getting familiar with the data. The second coder then highlighted the text with colored markers. To ensure *intercoder reliability* the coders was located at a different place. The second coder read and marked the passages appropriately with data related in answering the research questions. The second coder and I met once a week to compare our notes. I contacted my academic advisor throughout the coding process to approve the coded data. We, the second coder, my advisor, and I discussed any topics or questions related to the process or the data being reviewed. In a case of any disputes, about the coding process, the second coder and I brought the disputes to the attention of my academic advisor to clarify any disagreements in coding the data. The coding process was continuously discussed and was illustrated (paper hard copy) and approved by my dissertation academic advisor at every stage of the coding.

Phase 2: Creating the Initial Codes

After achieving *intercoder agreement* in agreeing on the codes selected to go forward, I consulted with my colleague (the second coder), and my academic advisor to

achieve *intercoder agreement* on the codes that were used, and which codes were to be eliminated. A code booklet was created. The booklet included the agreed codes from both first and second coders. The codebook was used to continue with the coding process. In continuing with the coding process, the marked text was transferred on to the coding form (see Table 2; see Appendix B).

Table 2

Coding Form Used in This Study

Title of publication	Author	Year	Methodology	Participants: Individuals, couples or families	Country of origin
Meaning unit	Page#	Condensed meaning unit	Code	Sub categories	Category theme

Note: Part of this table was adapted from Graneheim and Lundman (2004)

This next process was accomplished by electronically downloading the publication on a computer and having a hardcopy of the data available to locate the passage highlighted on the hard copy. The hard copy was the guide to which passages were transferred to the coding form. The coding form was completed by providing the information consisting of the following: the title of the publication, author, year, methodology, research questions, participants, and country of origin.

The researchers reviewed the data in how the *themes*, *subcategories*, and *categories* related to the *units of meaning* and the *condensed meaning unit*. Sadala and Adorno (2001) indicated that the researcher must convert and regenerate everyday conversations. The goal for the researcher was to interpret the daily conversations into

significant data to explain the phenomena to support the research questions. One important task, when arranging data into themes, was being aware of condensing or grouping themes if recognizable significant differences existed between the themes (Groenewald, 2004).

Next, the researchers focused on the *meaning unit*. Having the electronic version, of the publication, on the computer screen, the researchers conducted *copy* and *paste* the passage, onto the column *Meaning unit*, as well as, the page number. The next column, on the coding form, *condensed meaning unit*, was labeled with the *shorten meaning* of the *meaning unit*. With the information provided on the colored highlighted hardcopy, the coder transferred the code and any notes made, to the column *code*. Then, the *subcategories* were next, followed by the *category*. The last column included the *theme*.

Overall, my colleague (the second coder) audited the code generation process and documented all meetings and debriefing sessions conducted. I trained the second coder on how to label the text or passage on the hard copy. After both coders had completed all the coding on the hard copy, a code list was generated. My academic advisor, the second coder, and I agreed on the final codes used in answering the research questions. My academic advisor, the second coder, and I meet to discuss and review the code list, definitions, terminology, culture related concepts, and develop the codebook guide for this TA.

The second coder and I met frequently to discuss the intercoder agreement, or disagreements or inconsistencies that were encountered. Any confusion or misunderstandings regarding the definitions, terminology, or culture related concepts

were identified to assure that the data interpretation was coded and investigated accordingly. The intercoder agreement checks ensured that any questions regarding the coding process or any revisions or modifications were achieved to resolve any arising issues.

Phase 3: Search for the Themes

After all the data was coded and the codes were generated, the researcher reviewed the coding process and examined the hard copy publications with all the colored highlighting, the codes, and the descriptive notes. The researcher refocused, not so much on the codes, but, instead, on capturing the possible themes. I, the researcher, searched for themes and patterns that were significant and relevant to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that there were no specific rules in what made a theme, a *theme*. Rather it was the significance of the theme that mattered. Once again, I examined the codes and focused on the relationship of how they related to each other. The completed and final step in the search for themes was to arrange the themes into *broader themes* that were relevant to the research questions. It was at this point that I collected all the possible themes and subthemes, and the coded text related to those themes, and reviewed whether some themes needed to be combined or eliminated.

Phase 4: Review the Themes

I started this phase with the certain set of possible broader themes. At this phase, I determined if there was enough data to support the theme. I looked at all the themes and decided which theme was dissimilar to distinguish what was different and what was similar. Once again, I read the data creating the theme to determine if themes could be

combined, or if several themes would become one theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that the researcher ensured that the themes coming together created meaning when composed together, and the same time, that these themes could individually be distinguishable. The second coder, my academic advisor, and I were included in the process on combining themes with other themes. At some point, I decided to set them aside for the time being and came back at a later time to review the again.

In sum, I determined if the data selected were associated with the themes. I reviewed the themes and examined how they related to each other. I ensured that there was enough supportive data to the theme. I identified what themes merged or overlapped with each other. Braun and Clarke (2006) identified this process as being recursive. In developing the themes, I examined how the themes related to the data and how the data reflected the themes to tell the story of the data and how the themes related to the research questions.

Phase 5: Define the Themes

I defined each theme to determine what the theme was saying and if any of the themes had subthemes. Next, after defining and gathering more details of what the theme was about, I determined where it fit within the data, as a whole. I looked at the passages and their connection to the theme. I paraphrased the data extracts. I identified what and why the passages were important in the data. For each theme, I wrote a detailed paragraph about the theme. I identified the narrative of each theme. I made sure that the theme answered the research questions. I made sure that the theme stayed within the boundary of the question. I determined if any of themes could become subthemes. At this

stage, I named each theme by reviewing the data; after that, I connected a name to the theme. I asked, “What is the narrative behind this theme?” I also asked the second coder if there was more to the theme from her perspective. I finally gave each theme a name that explicated the story, the narrative, behind the theme. The name of the theme was meant to be powerful enough to represent the sets of data reviewed.

Phase 6: Write up the Findings

Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that writing up the final report of a TA included telling the story of the data to reflect the validity of the TA. The extracts selected must provide a narrative that told a story and how it related to the research questions.

Trustworthiness in Thematic Analysis

In conducting this qualitative research, it was imperative that the researcher delineated how the research was conducted and provide documentation that the research could be considered legitimate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that concept of trustworthiness be explained and that the author report how trustworthiness was achieved. Trustworthiness includes four concepts: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish trustworthiness in this study, I emerged myself in the data through the recruitment and coding process; I worked with a second coder from the beginning of the study and we worked together to establish a reliable interrater reliability of approximately 85% through the coding process. Finally, I triangulated the coding process by involving my dissertation advisor in checking the coding completed by the first two coders.

This TA included the involvement of the second coder, my academic advisor and I, the researcher, to achieve interrater reliability and intercoder agreement. According to Krippendorff (2019), to have *interrater reliability*, two coders in two different places, without any discussion about the data, select the same code for the same unit of meaning. Having *intercoder agreement* refers to two or more coders coming into an agreement and clearing any dispute or disagreements about a code (Krippendorff, 2019).

Self of Researcher

My role as a researcher, in this TA, was to give a voice to the hidden, to the implicit and to capture and identify the experiences of families being affected by separation due to deportation. The process of this research involved a second coder auditing the stages of this research, the goal for me as the researcher was to identify the *harmonic force* within the published data. The harmonic force represented here, was the tension created in recognizing the true nature in which the data could speak for itself. My role as a researcher was to be self-monitored on how much of my identity and beliefs affected the method. I practiced reflexivity as a process to re-evaluate the data and take responsibility for my position as the researcher and the trustworthiness of the research design selected for this TA. I used a reflective process, throughout this research, in where I debriefed with my colleague (second coder) and inquired about the participants' realities being represented in using this type of research design method. I asked myself if I was using a method that truly represented the data, in these studies, which would give the data a true voice of the *spirit* and *soul* of the sample? And most importantly, how would this design method of research allow the published data to produce social

knowledge to create social change in our societies, about very important humanistic social issues.

My academic advisor guided me to stay clear of, to *know what I truly was seeking* within the data. I applied the tool of interrater reliability in order to be confident that I was implementing the research in a trustworthy manner. I included the method of triangulation by seeking debriefing on my interpretation from the second coder and my academic advisor. A sample of the coded data was reviewed twice by my academic advisor to ensure the intercoder reliability and agreement in this TA. I reviewed and checked the finalized coding and theme creations numerous times to see how the themes represented the data.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how this study, a TA, was guided by the phenomenological perspective. This chapter explained how the sample recruitment was selected, in this case, the sample consisted of five publications that were reviewed and analyzed. The search strategy was discussed in how the publications were selected based on the criteria to answer the research questions. Next, the selected publications were listed along with the research questions. Then, the procedures, consisting of six phases, of this TA. The concepts of trustworthiness in qualitative work was described, as well, as the role of Self as a researcher was explained regarding the responsibility of that role.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this TA, the aim was to discover patterns of meanings and to explore the themes within the data of peer reviewed theses and dissertations published between 2013-2017. This research was guided through the theoretical lens of phenomenology. A benefit of using the TA method was its flexibility since it is not theory or epistemologically dependent (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this TA, two conceptual frameworks were used as a map of how the selected published data came together in getting a sense of the understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants, and their families facing separation due to deportation. The two theories included Schwartz's IFS theory and Borderland theory and Anzalduan epistemologies (Anzaldua, 1995; Anzaldua & Keating, 2002).

During this qualitative systematic review, the researcher found 4,728 publications, consisting of dissertations and theses, and 380 peer reviewed journal articles. A qualitative systematic review compared findings from qualitative studies and looked at themes across the studies (Grant & Booth, 2009). The utilization of search filters (known as hedges), a string of search items (Lefebvre et al., 2017), were used to reduce the large set studies. The researcher selected the data that qualified the criteria to answer the research questions. The researcher selected four dissertations and one thesis for this study and no peer reviewed journal articles. The researcher selected the dissertations and the

thesis for this TA based on the vast richness of the qualitative narratives within the publications.

Five Selected Publications in This Thematic Analysis

The first study, *Perceptions of Parental Deportation on Adult Intimate Relationships*, was selected for this TA. The study was a dissertation by Sandra Amada Espinoza (2015), a family therapist at Alliant International University from California School of Professional Psychology in Los Angeles, California. The researcher identified as a Mexican-American female and a daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico. Espinoza used the transcendental phenomenological method to guide her qualitative study in answering her central research question: What, if any, impact do participants believe that experiencing parental deportation has on their romantic relationship as adults? In addition, two theoretical frameworks, Attachment Theory and Ambiguous Loss Theory, were utilized in this study.

The interviews were conducted in English with U.S. born individuals ($N = 6$) who had experienced the deportation of a parent under the age of 17 years old and were currently in a romantic relationship. The six participants' responses were described with four major themes surfacing; these themes included the following, "(1) Ambiguous loss, (2) Inability to trust others, (3) Fear, and (4) Shame" (Espinoza, 2015, p.53). The study shed light on the importance of having a sense of security and having social services accessible to families facing separations.

The second study, *A Narrative Inquiry of the Stories of Mexican-American Families that Experienced Separation to U.S. Immigration in the 21st Century*, was a dissertation completed by Gabriela I. Nunez (2015) in the department of psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. The researcher identified herself as Mexican-American. The method of research, narrative inquiry, was used for this qualitative study. The research questions for this study were as stated:

(1) examine the experiences of 21st century mixed-legal status, Mexican American families that were separated due to immigration policies and now reunited; (2) Better understand how interactions of mixed-status family members with others influence their understanding of their immigration experience; and, (3) Inquire about how the families in my study coped with their immigration barriers (Nunez, 2015, p.28).

Three families, of Mexican origin, were interviewed with a total of 10 participants ($N = 10$) ranging from ages of 3 to 40s. The first and second families had husbands who were undocumented and had to stay in Mexico until the legal process was completed but were reunited at the time of the interview. The third family had a mother who was undocumented but was granted legal status to live in the United States. The interviews were conducted in English and in Spanish; original Spanish responses were included along with the translations.

Six themes were identified from the families' interviews, and identified as the following:

(1) Disruptions in family roles/identity (shift in dynamics); (2) Family partner conflict; (3) Chronic stress and mental health issues related to their separation; (4) Economic devastation and persistent financial burden from immigration officials; (5) Reliance on their social systems; and (6) Enduring adjustment stress after reunification in their family interactions. (Nunez, 2015, p. 64)

The researcher emphasized the importance of having culturally informed mental health professionals working with immigrant families in how to help the families cope with the absence of the family member, the ongoing stress of the uncertainties and the barriers of seeking social services.

The third study, *Torn Apart: The Impact of Deportation Upon Family Members* (2016), was carried out by Norma Quintero, a clinical social worker, in the department of clinical psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute. The goal of this study was to describe the lived experience of family members after a deportation. The phenomenological approach guided this qualitative study that included six participants who were immediate family members of the deportee. The participants ($N = 6$) were over 18 years of age and had had a family member deported seven years prior to the interview day and continued to live outside the United States at the time of interview. There was an option for the interviewees to conduct the interview in English or in Spanish, four were conducted in English and two were conducted in Spanish. The dissertation included the responses to all the interviews, but the English version was the one provided; the Spanish responses were not included in this publication.

Seven major themes identified were described as:

(a) Increased emotional, physical, and/or financial stress upon family members left behind; (b) Increased deportee's dependence on family members left behind; (c) Reorganization of family roles; (d) Deteriorating relationship between family members and deportees; (e) Tremendous fear and concern for the well-being of deportee; (f) Increased physical, emotional, and/or financial stress upon deportee; and (g) Ongoing and unfinished grief for all family members. (Quintero, 2016, p 69)

Five subthemes or individual themes were identified:

(h) Increased dependence on spirituality; (i) Hardship of being undocumented; (j) Interrupted family plans; (k) Increased dependence on spirituality; and, (l) Distrust of ICE and the police. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 69-70)

Quintero (2016) disclosed that doing this research was physically, emotionally and spiritually draining during the data collection. The author stated that deportation left behind permanent irreversible scars for everyone involved. Quintero addressed the importance of inclusion, which having a sense of belonging was critical to creating strong societies working together for families to be able to flourish. It was imperative that mental health clinicians have an understanding of the complexity of the impact of deportation on families (Quintero, 2016).

The fourth study, *Enforced Separations: A Qualitative Examination of how Latino Youth Cope with Family Disruption Following the Deportation of a Parent* (2017), was a

dissertation conducted by Kristina K. Hermann in the department of social welfare at the University of California in Los Angeles, California. This phenomenological qualitative study was theoretically directed by the utilization of the Bowen's FST and Boss's Ambiguous Loss theory. Eight families, including 8 youth (5 males and 3 females) and 8 caregivers (all females), were interviewed using in-depth, semi-structured interviews in English and in Spanish. In addition, 11 school personnel and social service providers were also interviewed for this study. The youth in this study were between the ages of 14 to 18 years of age and age of the caregivers was between the 41 to 53 years old.

Hermann (2017) stated that the overall goal of the study was to understand how immigrant youth adjust after the deportation of a parent. The following research questions guided the study:

- (1) How do Latino/a adolescents (ages 14-18 years old) experience forced family separation due to the deportation of an undocumented parent?;
- (2) How do these youth and their remaining family members adjust to new family circumstances following a deportation?;
- and (3) How do social services systems respond to the needs of families who have experienced a deportation related family separation (Hermann, 2017, p. 7)?

After analyzing the qualitative data, Hermann found three major themes of which the first theme identified the struggles the youth encountered when facing the loss of a parent to deportation. The factors causing the youth struggles were, "(1) experiencing trauma, (2) fearing additional family separation, (3) behavioral changes, and (4) academic

disruptions and challenges” (Hermann, 2017, p. 37). The second theme was described as youth having to adjust to the modification of the family structure. Factors contributing to this theme included, “(1) experiencing familial tensions, including drastically shrinking families’ social networks due to fear of further immigration enforcement; and (2) retreating from social life; (3) experiencing financial difficulties and housing instability; and (4) relying upon the support from extended family members” (Hermann, 2017, p. 43). The third theme, “rolling up our sleeves to fill in the gaps,” (p. 54) was reiterated in the interviews from the school staff and the social services providers. According to these professionals, the following factors were noted, “(1) overwhelmed and under-resourced: barriers to service delivery; (2) experiencing fear in accessing social support; and (3) avoiding social services and health care; (4) experiencing newfound social support. (Hermann, 2017, p. 54)

The results in this study indicated that families relied more on informal support networks and faith-based organization than services provided by governmental agencies. The author concluded that there was a need to develop culturally based practices for the field of social workers; making sure that social workers were trauma informed; taking into account the contextual issues when using assessments and intervention for youth being affected by deportation; and knowing what resources were available for these families.

The fifth study, *The Effects of Deportation on the Family*, was a thesis conducted by Cynthia Denise Rodriguez (2013) in the department of Latin studies at San Diego

State University. This qualitative study consisted of 22 interviews carried out with 11 males and 11 females, staying at two temporary shelters in Tijuana, Baja California. The theoretical framework used in this study included the Attachment Theory and the Ambiguous Loss Theory, as well as, the lens of trauma in describing the impact of deportation and linking symptoms to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The researcher, Rodriguez (2013), used the following interview questions to guide the study:

(1) How has your deportation affected your family in the United States?, (2) How has your deportation affected you?, (3) Would you like your children to return to Mexico with you? Why or why not?, (4) Would you like your children to remain in the United States? Why or why not?, and (5) Do you think you are going to attempt to cross into the United States in the future? Why or why not?

(Rodriguez, 2013, p.18)

In addressing the effects of deportation on the family, Rodriguez (2013) found seven themes in this study that related to the individual, as follows, (1) “Awareness of Deportation” (p. 30); (2) “Changes in Emotional Behavior” (p. 36); (3) “Changes in School Performance and School Behavior” (p. 40); and (4) “Missed Moments and Experiences” (p.42). The author, Rodriguez, (2013), found three themes in this study that reflected the effects of deportation on the family, (1) “Change in Family Structure” (p.45); (2) “Economic Effect on Family” (p.50); and (3) “The government Awareness of the Effects of Deportation” (p. 53). In conclusion, Rodriguez identified five themes that

revealed the effects of deportation on the deportees as followed: (1) “Feelings of Sadness and Depression” (p. 55); (2) “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder” (p. 58); (3) “Acculturation, Culture Shock, and Identity Confusion” (p. 60); (4) “Harassment by Mexican Police” (p. 65); and (5) “Lack of Income” (Rodriquez, 2013, p .65).

Rodriquez (2013) interviewed participants ($N = 22$) planning to cross the border to re-enter into the United States to reunite with their families and found that four were unsure, five said no, and 13 said yes. The researcher emphasized that the motivation to reunite with their families was priority and of great importance for these individuals, who were mostly men wanting to go back to help with the financial burden put on the family. A comment, by the author, pointed out that the current immigration policy was not effective because families had intense determination and strong family attachment ties to reunite and be together (Rodriguez, 2013).

Research Questions in This Current Study

1. What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation?
2. How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation?
3. How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation?

Major Themes and Subthemes

Major themes and subthemes were identified by reviewing and analyzing the published data from the five publications. These major themes and subtheme were used to answer the research questions listed above. A subtheme, according to Braun and

Clarke (2012), is a theme within a theme that provides structure and meaning to complex themes.

Major Themes from Research Question 1

What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation? The three major themes identified for research question one are as follows:

(1) 1.1 *Fear: Existential threat toward Self and group*

Subtheme 1.1a: *Self and identity issues: In-between*

(2) 1.2 *Painful detachments: Sudden loss of family member*

Subtheme 1.2a: *Shame and secrecy: Remain silent*

(3) 1.3 *Economic hardships: Double burdens on the family*

Subtheme 1.3a: *Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission.*

Major Themes from Research Question 2

How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation? The two major themes identified for research question two are as follows:

(2.1) *Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in Canal City*

(2.2) *Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable*

Subtheme 2.2a: *Insecure attachments: Illegal love*

Major Themes from Research Question 3

How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation? The two major themes to research question three included:

(3.1) *Family reunification: Mr. Coyote*

(3.2) *Social pain: Broken spirits*

Subtheme 3.2a: *Psychological homelessness: Open wound*

Findings that Support Each Theme

Support for each theme is provided from the five publications that were sampled for this thematic analysis study.

Research Question 1

What did Latina/o individuals describe as their experiences of deportation? This research question yielded three major themes: (1) Fear: Existential threat toward *Self* and group. The subtheme identified was: (1a) *Self and identity issues: In-between*.

Major theme 1.1: Fear: Existential threat toward *Self* and group. Quintero (2016) articulated that individuals left behind, after a family member was deported, endured life-threatening situations. The experiences of a 37-year-old female, born and raised in Mexico support this theme. The female participant had migrated to the United States with her ex-husband 15 years ago; her ex-husband had been deported five years before the interview. She and her ex-husband had three sons (ages 4, 6, and 8) when he was deported. She described her fear of the authorities, such as, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers. She claimed the following:

I feel terrified when I think of ICE. I feel fear, fear, and fear. I fear for my three boys. If they deport me, I have family in Mexico but what about

my boys? I have worked hard for them. I have sacrificed everything for my boys. That's the fear I have. (Quintero, 2016, p. 105)

A young male, interviewed by Espinoza (2015), identified as being undocumented was 8 years old when his parents brought him to United States. He was 17 years old when his parents were deported; he was interviewed at the age of 34 years old. This male described his experience as the following:

For me, there is no guarantee I am safe. I can't plan. I can't think about long term. I spend time strategizing about what will happen if I get deported. I'm always afraid. I'm afraid it will happen to me or to my parents again. I think that's been the hardest part, just living in fear. (Espinoza, 2015, p. 56)

Espinoza (2015) interviewed another male who also identified as being undocumented; he was 14 years old when his parents were deported and was 32 years old when he was interviewed. He described his experience of separation, due to his parents' deportation, as follows:

It was devastating. It is something that shaped my life forever. Even though I am legal now, I still feel like I am undocumented. It's hard for me to go to the airport or to be around police officers. I always make the connection of being undocumented. Sometimes I have nightmares or flashbacks. I am always aware of my surroundings. I can't help it. Going to church has helped but I can't really turn the fear off. (Espinoza, 2015, p. 57)

This same participant, when interviewed by Espinoza, reported that he had stayed away from his parents because he experienced flashbacks of those traumatic memories from his experience of when his parents were deported. He explained:

I have looked into therapy for some of my issues. I know that I need help. I used to find some peace in religion but I don't do that anymore. I feel like I need therapy for all of this because it always comes up. I'm always thinking of it. I've noticed it pulls me away from my parents too. I never call or check on them. I just feel like I rather avoid it all because of my fears. (Espinoza, 2015, p. 57)

A 40-year-old female, interviewed by Quintero (2016), who was born and raised in Mexico, lived with her husband and their three daughters (ages 12, 7, and 2) when her husband was deported. She described her experience after her husband's deportation, as follows:

It's very difficult to live here illegally. We're not wanted here by anyone, employers or the police. They always look at you like you're doing something wrong. I think maybe there are too many of us and they don't want more here. The ones who definitely don't want us are ICE agents. They definitely don't want any of us here... I know many families that intended to cross the border and they are detained or burglarized by thieves on the journey... It's very ugly. They're either cartels or thieves. I hear of people who were left to die in the desert. It's horrible. (Quintero, 2016, p. 94-95)

Rodriguez (2013) proposed that her interviewees had suffered severe trauma on their migration journey. Rodriguez discussed how these immigrants had decided to risk their lives to cross the border, to come to the United States, experienced traumatic events along the way. A male, age 37 years, was interviewed by Rodriguez at a temporary shelter in Tijuana. He said it had been 4 months since he had been deported. The participant described experiencing intense feelings of fear, re-living the events, and having severe levels of anxiety. He shared his experiences following his deportation (Rodriguez, 2013).

He explained he had tried to cross into the United States through the border of Texas, but was not successful, and ended up being deported to Ciudad Juarez in the state of Chihuahua. The participant spoke about a horrific incident he still remembers. He stated that that image continued to haunt him. He shared: I lived through an experience in Ciudad Juarez. There was an incident that happened that I still dream about. I witnessed a man being forced to get out of his truck along with his girlfriend. And they made him get out and they killed him and his girlfriend was pregnant and they stabbed her here with a knife [pointing to his stomach]—alive, alive. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 59)

Rodriguez (2013) interviewed a grandmother, 49 years of age living in the United States for 25 years, the participant was interviewed in a shelter on the border city of Tijuana. She was the guardian of her two grandchildren ages 11, also deported, and 5 years of age. She stated:

It's an experience—it's a trauma, to put it a better way, no? It's not something that one can recover from quickly because you start to get the impression that it's impossible to do so. . .It's a trauma where you could be sleeping and suddenly you wake up and you're always scared if there are police there, if there is security. And you have the fear that, 'Oh, they're going to arrest me. Oh, they're looking at me. "No it's like—you're living with fear."' (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 59)

Hermann (2017) described fearful experiences endured by a mother and her daughter. The mother remembered that she and her daughter had, at times, stayed in their basement with the no lights on to make it seem that no one was home. She described that it was necessary to hide and stay indoors; she went on to say:

Maybe I'm paranoid, but I don't feel like we can go out around town like we used to. I have spoken to a couple of my neighbors' and they told me, 'There's a checkpoint at the grocery store. They arrested fifty people last night. Don't open the door for anyone, it might be ICE!' The only place where it's safe to go is church. People I know actually stay there for days/weeks at a time. (Hermann, 2017, p. 51)

Another mother, interviewed by Hermann (2017), stated that it was not safe to be out, she explained that she was confined to her home after the arrest and detention of her husband. She explained:

We used to go to the park, to the mall, stores, and camping. Now we hardly go anywhere. We mostly stay inside the house and avoid certain areas because we are all aware of ICE. This tension that we feel causes one to get depressed. We don't want to go anywhere, and then the frustration begins to come out. Then fights begin with each other, among the kids especially because there is so much frustration because they cannot go outside and play. It's as if we are prisoners in our own home. But even like this, it is still better to be here than in Mexico. In my home town of Juarez, Mexico, there is so much violence, gangs, and drug warfare that no one feels safe. Everyone tries to leave Mexico. (Hermann, 2017, p. 50)

A female (age 28) was interviewed by Rodriguez (2013) while living at a temporary shelter in Tijuana; she had been residing in the United States for 16 years. She responded to the interviewer by stating:

... In that—the first few days I was here, I would wake up afraid, crying. Like when I would wake up, I was like, Ay! Where am I? I didn't even know where I was. Was I here or in jail or what is going on? Apart from all that, you become traumatized. Yes. You do become traumatized. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 60)

Subtheme 1.1a: Self and identity issues: In-between. Major theme one, *Fear: Existential threat toward Self and one's group*, has one subtheme: *Self and identity*

issues: In-between. Two participants, interviewed by the researcher Espinoza (2015), were undocumented at the time of their parental deportation. They both expressed that living undocumented was living with constant fear and doubt. One participant described how she perceived her situation and said that being undocumented was being treated as a “second class citizen” (p. 51). She, the interviewee, emphasized she felt like she had no basic human rights and was isolated, living in the “shadows” (Espinoza, 2015, p. 51).

Espinoza (2015) expressed that parental deportation affected the secure attachment between the parents and the children. This complex phenomenon had the potential to influence the very core of a person’s sense of self and their ability to connect with others as adults. Espinoza reported that for individuals who were, at some point, able to reunite with the parent who was deported, were extremely grateful. They cherished the opportunity to be able to reconnect with their parent (Espinoza, 2015).

On the contrary, according to Espinoza (2015), for those that did not have the opportunity to reunite, they were left with ambiguity and loss. The ambiguity, about the deportation, left the children holding on to unanswered questions, sorrow, and unresolved grief. Espinoza reported that the interviewees she encountered spoke about their earlier relationship, as a child, with the deported parent. They described a feeling of loss and an empty absence (Espinoza, 2015).

Espinoza (2015) stated that the experience of loss for these interviewees was embedded deeply within the individual’s core being. The hurt of not having the presence of the deported parent filled the children with loss, despair, and emptiness. Regardless if

the child was left to be cared by a biological parent, the child was left with a sense of wondering and the yearning for the presence and affection of the deported parent. Espinoza explained that this yearning for the unreciprocated love, left the child with the feeling of emptiness and hopelessness affecting the healthy development of self-worth. This yearning shaped the child's belief that he or she was unwanted and unlovable leaving the child with a sense of low self-worth and an inability to trust others. As adults, they had problems maintaining relationships and establishing close intimate relationship with others (Espinoza, 2015).

Major Theme 1.2: Painful detachments: Sudden loss of family member. The second major theme captured in the selected data also answers research question one; this theme describes the experiences of how the interviewees viewed their sudden detachments from their loved ones. The trauma of having someone present one day and gone the next was a threat to the participants' survival in so many levels. The terrorizing threat of uncertainty, just the not knowing of what would happen in the future kept the family in a continuous state of angst.

Hermann (2017) reported a situation confronted by a 14-year-old male, a high school freshman. Two years before this interview, when he was 12 years old, his parents were stopped and detained; later, when both of his parents were deported, he moved to live with an aunt and uncle. The youth explained that he was at a soccer tournament when he got a call from his mother. The young male remembered that horrific call and how terrifying that day was for him and his family. He said:

It still shakes me up every time I tell this story. A year ago, I received an unexpected phone call from my mom and could barely understand what she was saying because she was crying so much. She told me that she and my father were picked up by border patrol and couldn't come back [to the U.S.] because of their undocumented status. I was trembling and crying too, and then like a week later, the shock set in that they were not coming back. I had to move in with my aunt and uncle in Los Angeles. It was so hard. I had to change schools and leave my entire life behind. I was scared and sad and couldn't tell any of my friends what had happened. I still have flashbacks to that day; to that phone call, and I still have a hard time sleeping. (Hermann, 2017, p. 38)

Espinoza (2015) reported that youth dealing with not knowing the details of what happened at the time of the deportation, suffered from the ambiguity of the loss. These youth found it difficult to move on and psychologically process the separation. The sudden separation, due to the deportation, left the children with scared memories continuing to disrupt their life. A U.S. born citizen, adult male, now 30 years old, was 15 years old when his father was deported; he described his experience as complicated and confusing. He stated:

One day he was just gone. I mean, we didn't have the best relationship before this but it still helped to see him once in a while. Then I just find out that he is in jail and then after that finding out that he was in Mexico. It was just unexpected. I asked myself like "what happened?" "what did you do that was so bad that you

had to go to Mexico?" I had so many questions and couldn't get any answers.

(Espinoza, 2015, p. 54)

Espinoza (2015) described the situation of a young U.S. born female, now 26 years old, who was two years old when her mother, a housekeeper from Central America, was deported. The young female barely remembered the details of her mother's deportation. She was given up for adoption and was adopted by two attorneys. She disclosed that growing up she did not know why she was put up for adoption. She stated:

The most difficult part was the questions, wondering what happened and why did she make that choice or what choices did she make leading up to that, like why did she get deported? (Espinoza, 2015, p. 36)

Quintero (2016) described the story of an 18-year-old male born in the United States. Both of his parents were undocumented. His father was deported three years before the interview. The young male explained how confusing it was for him about why his father was deported. He believed his father was wrongly accused of domestic violence. He described his experience of the sudden separation from his father as the following:

It was pretty sad cause he was always the one, like, pushing me. (crying) For everything, to work, to play, to go out, even with tennis. I didn't want to play (crying for several minutes), sorry I didn't expect this, it was like, I was always the kid who didn't want to do anything. He was like, "Come on, just do it." And I was like, "No." I would whine and like, just kinda be a brat about it. So when he

was gone, I didn't have that (crying). So, in my head I was like what am I going to do? I don't have the drive he has. I just don't have the motivation. Who is gonna push me now? My dad was kinda like my coach. The one you don't want but need. (Quintero, 2016, p. 72)

Quintero (2016) stated that the relationships between the deportee and the family members left behind started to deteriorate and connections were lost after time passed. The same male mentioned above, expressed how he felt after seeing his father after three years being separated. He explained:

Like when he left, I saw him that day and then three years later. He didn't...he's not the guy, he doesn't show like when things phase him...so...when I saw him...we had to be quick cause we were on the bus...we had to go...so I wasn't...it wasn't like in the movies you saw each other you ran and you hugged you know. He looked so...I guess the same but so different. He got skinnier...and he kinda looked like me. (Quintero, 2016, p. 73)

Quintero (2016) interviewed a 38-year-old male, who worked as a gardener. He was born and raised in Oaxaca, Mexico and had lived in the United States since he was 16 years old. His brother, married to U.S. born citizen, had been deported four years ago. He had to take in his brother's wife and their three children to live with his family. He described how he felt after his brother was deported and disclosed the following:

I was very much affected when he was deported. I felt depressed and struggled because I couldn't do anything to get him back here. His wife got it the worse. (Quintero, 2016, p. 76)

The participant above, interviewed by Quintero (2016), continued by explaining how his sister-in-law was psychologically and physically affected by her husband's separation. He stated the following:

One day, I arrived from work and my sister-in-law was cooking for my niece, the baby. The baby started to cry and my sister-in-law started screaming, "This can't be happening to me!" She started yelling and screaming and she fainted. The ambulance came and they took her to the hospital. She didn't come back home until three days later. So, she returned but with problems in her head. She wasn't the same person. She still isn't the same person. She's a bit better but she still has problems. My sister-in-law stopped eating. (Quintero, 2016, p. 77)

Rodriguez (2013) interviewed a mother staying at a temporary shelter in Tijuana. Her children were all U.S. born citizens. The mother described how her children witnessed the way the authorities came to her home and took her. The interviewee claimed her children witnessed her being taken by the Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) agents. The mother described how her children reacted seeing her being taken away. She reported:

They yelled at my kids in a really ugly way, that they needed to be quiet and that they needed to go inside. . .My young kids saw everything. [stops and begins to

cry] They told me to tell my daughter to be quiet. . .And my daughter saw them and began to scream—she cried and cried—she is two years old. . .My kids, [one] is seven years old, the other nine, said [to the ICE agents], “Don’t take my mommy! Don’t take her like that!” And they [the ICE agents] told them that it didn’t matter, that they should be quiet and go inside. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 39)

Hermann (2017) described one of her interviewees as a quiet 16-year-old high school sophomore. When he was 14 years old, he experienced the loss of both of his parents due to deportation. He revealed that his parents were deported because they did not have the legal documents to work in the United States. He shared what he remembered about their deportation, he stated:

Both of my parents got sent back to El Salvador. I could have gone with them but they told me I couldn’t because of all the gangs and violence back home. So, I went to live with my tia in Los Angeles. After it all happened, I remember having these intense reactions, like it felt like I was going to die. It felt like my whole world just crashed. I panicked without my parents. Like, everything that made me feel safe in the world – my family and home was now gone. I had headaches all the time and lost so much weight. I looked like I was barely there. (Hermann, 2017, pp. 39-40)

Hermann (2017) explained how families lived in constant fear of any additional family separations. Following the separation of a parent, usually the father, the children became extremely fearful that something would happen to their mother. The children

feared that their mother would be deported as well. A young female age 17-years old, a high school senior, explained that she had problems concentrating in school. She had started having problems after her father had been detained and deported two years ago. She described the following: “I’m always worried about what is going on with my mom. She might be at work or at the store and you don’t know what is going to happen (Hermann, 2017, p. 40).”

Hermann (2017) interviewed another young male, aged 18, whose father was deported two years ago; he commented: “It’s like when you’re calling your mom and she is not answering the phone. I get a feeling inside, like something is wrong, and my mind starts racing, what if my mom was arrested (p. 40)?”

The adolescent participants in the study conducted by Hermann (2017) expressed their fears and concerns about ending up in the foster care system or being homeless. They worried if their undocumented mothers also would be deported what would happen to them (Hermann, 2017).

For instance, a 17-year-old male, had recently experienced the deportation of his father just a year ago. He stated the following: “My dad was barely deported a year ago, and my mom is also undocumented. I always worry, could I be deported too? It’s so confusing...” (Hermann, 2017, p. 40). Hermann (2017) explained that this youth, mentioned above, had constant thoughts of fear pertaining to the loss of his mother and the fear of being deported himself. Ironically, he had a status of a U.S. citizen, but was

always on alert and fearful that he could be separated from his mother due to her undocumented status (Hermann, 2017).

Subtheme 1.2a: Shame and secrecy: Remain silent. A sub theme for major theme two, was that of *Shame and secrecy: Remain silent*. Espinoza (2015) described that within the families, there existed intense silence, about the deportation. The family members were forced to keep the event of the deportation a secret. The silence and secrecy left the family members with a sense of shame. Espinoza explained that the shame and the secrecy affected the relationships within the family. Espinoza wrote about how these children, now adults, had internalized the shame. The participants, interviewed by Espinoza, explained that the deportation made them feel like they had done something wrong and felt embarrassed to talk about it. According to Espinoza, in this study, the internalized shame impacted the children, now the adults being interviewed, from developing a healthy sense of self. The interviewees displayed a lack of confidence to know that they were worthy of being loved (Espinoza, 2015).

Rodriguez (2013) mentioned that individuals, interviewed at a shelter, did not want to tell their children about their deportation. The parents wanted to protect their children from the devastation and, at the same time, some felt guilty for causing pain to their children. A father being interviewed shared a conversation he had with his children:

Daddy, when are you coming? When are you coming, Daddy?" "Look," I tell them, "I'm working. But when I get home, I'm going to bring you all something." And they say, "Daddy, I want to see you." They miss me. . . I try to tell them

that—that I’m going to go back, that I’m working, and that I’m going to bring back money. But they don’t know that I’m [here] And I also don’t want to tell them. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 33)

A mother, also interviewed at a shelter in Tijuana, stated:

...but they do not know that I am here. No, they think that I am working, so as not to traumatize them. They only ask me, “Where are you, Mommy?” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 33).

A male, interviewed at the age of 30, was 15 years old when his father was deported, he disclosed:

I didn’t want anyone to know. I kept it a secret and I still keep it a secret from people unless they really start asking about him. I usually just say “Oh he lives in Mexico” and I’ll end it there. It’s embarrassing. He did something criminal and got caught. Why would I want anyone to know that? (Espinoza, 2015, p. 58)

A young female, at the age of 14, experienced her father’s deportation. She was interviewed at the age of 27 years old and shared the following:

I didn’t want to tell people about my situation. I didn’t think they would understand. With my friends, yeah, I was embarrassed. How was I supposed to explain what happened? I didn’t think they would get it. I didn’t know who to talk to about it. My mom was helpful but she was also angry. I couldn’t tell my friends. I couldn’t share this part of my life. (Espinoza, 2015, p. 58)

Espinoza (2015) expressed how shame isolated the youth, mentioned above, from her peers and friends. Interviewing another participant, the researcher pointed out that shame affected this young female who was experiencing feelings of sadness due to her father's deportation. Espinoza mentioned that the young female was unable to relate to her peers and kept her sadness to herself in isolation. She was too embarrassed to share her loss, about her father and his deportation. The author described how the young female felt confused in what to do. The participant shared her feelings with the interviewer and said:

I guess the fact that I could never see him again, it was kind of weird, it made me feel sad, I also just felt embarrassed to tell friends about it, it's not something that I share, it was difficult enough to tell them that my relationship was not stable, and now to say, he is never "coming back." (Espinoza, 2015, p. 37)

Espinoza (2015) expressed that the young female being interviewed disclosed that she remembered craving and wanting a father figure in her life. Something she thought, was never going to be possible. The young female explained that her father was unreliable, and he was unable to commit. She stated, "I never really had a positive relationship with another male before. I had a stepdad in between when my mother remarried but he was also very unstable" (pp. 37-38).

Espinoza (2015) interviewed a psychology graduate student living in Los Angeles. In 1980, her parents had immigrated to the United States, from a small town in Mexico. The participant stated she was an only child and had a close relationship with

both of her parents. At the age of 8 years old, she recalled when her father was deported.

She shared her story and said:

He was working at a company where he would cut up fruit that would be packaged and sold in grocery markets. Somehow his boss found out that he wasn't legal so they reported him to immigration. One day he never came home from work and that was it. I didn't see him until I was 13.

(Espinoza, 2015, p. 41)

Espinoza (2015) interviewed a mother of a young student. The mother prohibited her daughter to share any of the details about her father's deportation with family or friends. She, the mother, advised her daughter to keep her father's deportation a secret. Espinoza reported that the interviewee remembered how she had to lie about her father's whereabouts and told her friends her dad was living in another state for work, the daughter explained:

I didn't want to make my mom upset so I didn't tell my friends. After that I just kind of started feeling embarrassed about it too. I didn't want them to know that my dad was illegal. (pp. 41-42)

Espinoza (2015) interviewed a young male, age 32, who at 14 years of age experienced the deportation of both of his parents. He came to the United States as a child and did not realize that he was undocumented until his parent's deportation. The young male lived in a neighborhood that was predominantly Latino and fit in with the other children around him (Espinoza, 2015).

Espinoza (2015) reported that the interviewee, mentioned above, revealed negative beliefs about himself because of his illegal status. His self-concept changed after his parent's the deportation. He experienced shame and embarrassment because of his illegal status. He would often hide his status from his friends and became hyper-vigilant and paranoid that others would know he was in this country illegally. Espinoza stated, that the young male, disclosed he started having self-esteem issues and performed poorly in school. Education did not seem important anymore. Constantly being afraid that others would know about his status, he only dated other undocumented females. Having to reveal his status to his partner was a fear he did not want to confront. His desire was to have a girlfriend, but instead he stayed away from any commitments so no one would find out his secret (Espinoza, 2015).

Major theme 1.3: Economic hardships: Double burdens put on family. The third major theme, generated by research question one, is *Economic hardships: Double Burdens put on family*. These economic hardships referred to the additional burdens the families had to endure due to one of the parents, or family member, being deported. The burden of having to find ways to survive were left to the mothers and family members left behind. It was usually the father who was deported; mothers had to find ways to survive. With these publications (Espinoza, 2015; Hermann, 2017; Nunez, 2015; Quintero, 2016; Rodriguez, 2013), the data captured the double burdens for mothers. With the sudden removal of the father, the mother had to make a living and also care for

her children. The deportation of the father brought tremendous stress to the family left behind.

Hermann (2017) addressed the problematic situation for the mothers and wives left behind to support the family. These women were forced to manage economic difficulties and at the same time the challenging task of having to care for their children. The loss of the spouse, due to deportation, increased the psychological and physical stress for these women. Hermann described how these women, being interviewed, had solely relied on their husbands to take care of the demands outside the home, such as, the finances and transportation. The mother of an eighteen-year-old male shared her devastating experience of not knowing what to do or how to get around, she explained:

I don't have a driver's license and have difficulty figuring out the Metro in Los Angeles, so just getting around town is hard. My husband was in charge of the money for the house. At first, I didn't have access to the bank account either and couldn't leave the house. It was so horrible; I just cried all the time because I felt so alone and helpless. (Hermann, 2017, p. 52)

Herman (2017) explained that the lives of these women abruptly changed overnight. After their husband's deportation many families lost their homes and had to stay with relatives. Hermann stated that for some women the separation, due to the deportation, left them experiencing depression, isolation, and confusion, lacking the ability to make every day decisions. Not knowing how their future would play out, the families questioned their safety and fearful of the future (Hermann, 2017).

Espinoza (2015) described the dilemma, of economic hardships, as a “double burden” (p. 43) to single mothers left with the task to make a living and care for their children. Espinoza explained that after the deportation of their husbands, the wives not only were left with the painful detachment from their partners, but also had to confront the financial struggles left for them to face in order to survive. Undocumented single mothers did not have many options out in the workforce, the only work available to them were low paying jobs (Espinoza, 2015).

Espinoza (2015) interviewed a young female, age 30 years old, who was 8 when her father was deported; the participant explained how her mother struggled financially. The young female recalled how her mother wanted her husband to return home and saved money to pay for *coyote*, to help her husband cross the border. The fee for the coyotes, at that time was \$700.00. When her father was able to return home, due to his illegal status, the young female reported, it was difficult for him to get a decent paying job. She commented that her family continued to struggle financially and lived in extreme poverty with limited resources (Espinoza, 2015).

Quintero (2016) interviewed a housewife, age 37 years of age, whose husband had been deported when she lived in Idaho. The participant explained the difficulties she confronted when her husband was deported. She said:

It’s a horrible thing because many of us who suffered because of a deportation were mothers. We were mothers with children. Those who stayed back in Idaho were families. We are left alone with our children. Most of us don’t drive and just

going to the supermarket to buy groceries is hard. It's a struggle to find someone who would give you a ride to buy food. (Quintero, 2016, p. 101)

Quintero (2016) continued with this same interviewee and described how the mother felt isolated and left to struggle to care for the family on her own. This interviewee expressed the following:

If my kids needed a dental visit, the closest dentist was 25 minutes driving distance. I didn't drive. I had to learn to drive. It was very scary but I needed to. I was alone with three kids, I needed to go to the school if they called or to the doctor. I remember my kids would say, "There's a cop over there, there's a cop." I was scared but I needed to drive. I didn't have a license. (Quintero, 2016, p. 101)

Quintero (2016) explained that for the women and children, left behind due to the deportation of a partner, everything changed in order for the family to survive. The reorganization of the family roles was a dynamic in the family that happened quickly and abruptly leaving the young children to care for each other while the mother was out working. A mother, with young children, described her difficulties when she had to be at work. She stated the following:

I didn't know what to do anymore. It was so sad and difficult. I even had to leave my kids alone a few times because I didn't have a babysitter for them. My cousin would offer to care for them but he arrived when he was finished with school. He was a student. I had to work, what was I gonna do? I would suddenly panic at

work, worried about my kids. I would call them and ask if they were okay, if the sitter had arrived, if they had eaten. I would get these horrible images about my kids being in danger and not being able to care for them because I was at work. I would tell the eldest to make sure all doors and windows were locked. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 102-103)

The same participant, interviewed by Quintero (2016), spoke about her fears having to leave her children, 4, 6, and 8 years of age, alone at home. This mother had her oldest son take care of the younger children. She recalled what she would say to her son:

To make sure he kept his brothers inside at all times. The hard part about it is I worked the night shift. I worked 10 hours, seven days a week. I was making every effort to survive with my kids. I worked hard. I prayed hard too. Only God and the Virgin Mary would help me and care for my kids because just the thought that the police could arrive and take my kids from me would haunt me. We had to eat! What could I do? My oldest son was in charge of waking up the kids and getting them to school. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 102-103).

A wife interviewed by Nunez (2015) described how she was working up to 80 hours a week. In her case, her husband deported back to Mexico did not have the means to make a living. His wife, here in the United States, was responsible for having to support two households, her own and her husband's in Mexico. The interviewee spoke about her long hours at work and shared the following:

I worked 80 hours per week to maintain two households. I was stressed and left school and got a thyroid problem. From all the stress, you know? I was always busy and worried about bills, going from one job to another. I worked full-time at one job and part time at the other. I had no time for nothing. My mom and dad worried about me sometimes but they knew I had to do what I had to do. (Nunez, 2015, pp. 51-52)

Nunez (2015) described the financial stress of a United States born female, age 31 years of age, whose husband had been deported, currently, having to care for her children, ages 3, 4, 7 and 16 years. The mother described the financial pressures she experienced while her husband was away. The interviewer asked her the following question, “For people that do not understand the process what is your advice?” The interviewee stated:

The financial burden...it’s hard. I worked a lot. I worked like 60 hours a week. I would pick up extra shifts and stay late at work. I worked 12 hours a day just to make money to pay for bills. He used to work too so it helped but with him gone it was all on me. (Nunez, 2015, p. 56)

Nunez (2015) mentioned that a common struggle for her interviewees was the mother’s experiencing physical and mental work exhaustion. Regarding the participant mentioned above, her oldest 16-year-old daughter commented on how difficult it was for her to care for younger siblings and how much she missed her mother. The mother shared the following regarding her job and her daughter, after the interviewer asked her the

following question, “What was the most challenging thing about the experience?” The mother answered by saying:

Working 60 hours a week...one job, 12-hour shifts. I had to provide for my kids. Sometimes she would get mad that I worked so much and she would say, “Mom, quit your job already. Come home.” I’d tell her, “I can’t.” She was always mad and wanted me to stop working but I couldn’t. I needed to pay bills. I think she took it the hardest. She helped a lot but I think she was depressed. She just shut down and wouldn’t talk or nothing. (Nunez, 2015, p. 57)

Nunez (2015) interviewed the 16-year-old daughter, who took care of her younger siblings, while her mother worked, and shared the following about her mother:

Taking care of the kids. I just helped watch television with them and eat dinner together. Food my mom left. She only cared about the little ones though, and I felt she didn’t care about me. (Nunez, 2015, p.58)

When Nunez (2015) interviewed the mother of the 16-year old daughter, the mother stated:

I don’t know what I would do without her. She helped a lot with the kids. She would help take care of them after school and I was often rushed. She woke up early and gave me no trouble, helped get the kids ready for school. (Nunez, 2015, p. 60)

Rodriguez (2013) emphasized that a male’s deportation created devastating economic burdens affecting the family’s household. The author interviewed 22

participants, living at a temporary shelter. They shared how their families were struggling financially after they had been deported. Eleven males were interviewed, eight of these deportees described how their family had been financially affected by their deportation. Rodriguez interviewed a couple, parents of U.S. born children ages 6, 8, 9 years, who had been deported for almost three weeks. The children were being cared for by their maternal grandmother. The couple explained how their deportation had affected their family. The wife, age 33 years of age, disclosed that following their deportation they had lost everything. She shared the following:

Well, they were able to take everything out of the house and we lost everything. I mean, our things, some things we were able to recuperate. But not the apartment because it, we were renting it and they terminated our lease. And the cars, well, my husband was paying those off and so the dealer took them back. But, yeah. Everything—we lost everything. Everything is gone. (Rodriguez, 2013, p.51)

Rodriguez (2013) interviewed a 47-year-old male, who had lived in the United States for 19 years and was now at a shelter in Tijuana. The interviewee shared how his extended family got involved in helping his family gain financial stability. Rodriguez asked the participant the following question: “How has your deportation affected your home? The interviewee gave the following response: “Very badly. There are many problems” (p.52).

The researcher asked, “Can you elaborate a bit about which types of problems?”

The participant stated:

Money for rent, for bills. They've offered us help, but it's been very little. It hasn't been enough to pay rent. They can pay rent but just, just barely. Yeah. (pauses) My wife tells me that I need to come back, that there isn't any more money to pay the bills, the rent. She says, "Come back. Come back however you can, but come back because I need you here." Yes, the situation is very bad over there. (Rodriguez, 2013, pp. 52-53)

Subtheme 1.3a: Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission. A subtheme for major theme three, *Economic hardships: Burdens put on family*, was that of *Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission*.

Quintero (2016) interviewed families saying that the deportee reported being traumatized when arriving to their country of origin. Wives, partners, or extended family members had to economically support the deportee after deportation. Quintero reported that most deportees had not been to their country of origin for many years. The deportees were alone with no family or friends, no money, no job, a foreigner in their own land, for some, not knowing the language. Many deportees depended on their wives or partners, and sometimes their extended family, to help them survive to stay alive (Quintero, 2016).

Quintero (2016) interviewed a 76-year-old female. She was born and raised in Nayarit, Mexico and had lived undocumented in the United States for more than forty years. She married and had 10 children. At the time of the interview, her youngest son had been deported and living in Tijuana. The participant currently was living with one of her sons. She was diagnosed with cancer. She expressed her sorrow and worries about her

son barely surviving in Mexico. Quintero reported that after the interview she passed away without having the opportunity to see her son again. The interviewee said the following regarding her son:

He lives in a little place in Tijuana. Tijuana is very dangerous. There are many murders, robberies, and kidnappings. I live in fear. I pray God doesn't allow something horrible to happen to him. I worry a lot about him. I worry because there are so many atrocities that happen there.

(Quintero, 2016, p. 97)

She continued by expressing the following:

It's a rough place to live. If you have a little bit of money, you can rent a small room somewhere. Otherwise, you sleep outside with a cardboard box over you. It's such a sad place there. There are so many deported people, so many. People are desperate there. If they see that someone from here (USA) takes something to another deportee, food or clothes, they will attack the person. They want things too. They will ask for part of it and if they (recipient) don't give it, they will get attacked. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 97-98)

The participant continued by saying:

The cops (Mexican) don't care. If they see you and don't recognize you, they detain you. If they see you have something good like a gold chain or something, they'll ask you for it. If you drive a car and get stopped, the cops ask for money.

They tell you that if you don't give them a certain amount of money they will take away your car. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 97-98)

Rodriguez (2013) interviewed a participant in Tijuana, who had just been deported eight days before. The deportee spoke about the cultural challenges he was confronting in adjusting to the life in Mexico. The young male, age 34 years of age, had resided in the United States for 30 years. He described how he felt unwanted and unaccepted in Tijuana. Rodriguez described the interviewee as having visible tattoos and a shaved head. The deportee shared the following statement where he was made to feel different. He said:

The other day me and four other guys were standing there [outside] talking and, and they were just passing by and then I say to the woman [who was out in the street], "Why are you laughing? What are you laughing at?" She said, "You all look really crazy." And I said, "In what way?" "You all look like you're not Mexican." "How so? How? Why do you think we are here?" "No," she said, "you have different mannerisms. You're different." (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 61)

Research Question 2

How did Latino couples describe their experiences of separation due to deportation? Two major themes were identified, plus one subtheme, to answer Research Question Two. These themes consisted of:

(2.1) *Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in Canal City*

(2.2) *Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable*

Subtheme 2.2a: *Insecure attachments: Illegal love*

Major theme 2.1: Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in canal

city. After the deportees arrived at their country of origin many had nowhere to go, Quintero (2016) interviewed a brother reporting how terrible it was to see his brother live under horrible living conditions, he stated:

... long time my brother lived on the canal in Tijuana. I don't wish that upon anybody. It's a very dirty place, with a lot of drug use, gang violence, and prostitution. They all live in underground tunnels. They make a hole and place wooden planks above. Only one person fits and can live in these tunnels. It's where the city drains the sewage. People live there. (Quintero, 2016, p. 80)

A mother spoke about her son living in these underground canals where many deportees end up when they had nowhere to go. The mother expressed her sadness when seeing her son live in these living conditions. She said:

Believe me, it is a very sad situation for my son to be separate from us. When we cross the border, we see many, many deportees who await their family members' visits. It's so sad to me to see them cry. Many kids visit their fathers probably. It's sad to see them hug their fathers. Right below the border crossing, there are canals. These are filled with people. Some live on cardboard boxes and they just walk around there. It's a horrible and sad sight to see. It's the same thing with my son. He cries when I leave ... (Quintero, 2016, p. 99)

A mother described her trips to Mexico to go see her husband. She described how exhausting it was, when her daughters and her visited her husband. She explained:

It's hard though because it takes us at least three hours to cross the border back. We stand in line for about an hour on the way to Mexico and the return takes us longer. We need to help him so he can pay his rent. We need to help him so he can at least live under a roof and not on the canal where everyone else lives.

(Quintero, 2016, p. 97)

Rodriguez interviewed a male participant in a shelter in Tijuana, Baja California. He was 42 years of age and had lived in the US for 20 years. It had been 6 months since his deportation to Mexico. He disclosed the following:

I'm ashamed to call my wife and tell her—even though she tells me, “If you need money, tell me. I will send it to you.” I tell her that I don't need it. Even though I do need it, I don't know what to tell her. That I do need it? And all the while knowing that this money can help the kids? Right? Because she's over there by herself with the kids. So, I tell her that I don't need any money, even though in reality I do need it. But I tell her I don't. I tell her that I am working, that I am saving money, and that I am going to return soon. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 75)

Nunez (2015) interviewed a couple who had reunited after the husband was deported. The wife shared that she felt lonely without her husband. The couple had put off having children. In the meantime, when he was gone, she devoted her time to do everything possible to arrange for her husband to come back legally. She worked closely

with the Mexican Consulate and worked long hours to pay for the expenses required to bring her husband back home. The wife described the following:

It was difficult. He was my best friend. I told him everything and though I had him, it wasn't the same. Sometimes I would just cry and be mad at him. I knew it wasn't his fault though. I just needed him. I love my parents but they could not help. I had no one. I missed him. I just kept telling myself, 'He will be back.' I went to visit him only once because I needed to cover the expenses for the consulate in Juarez. I also missed him but I could not take that much time off from work. I went only once for a few days then I came home. It was hard leaving him in Mexico. I wanted to stay with him but I knew our home was here.”

(Nunez, 2015, p. 53)

Her husband responded and stated:

I felt bad. I wanted to see her and I couldn't. I also wanted to support her and help her with money but there was no money and no work. I wanted to see my wife and I felt bad but I remained hopeful. I spoke a lot to her and I provided support to her and I told her we would pull through. She cried and well, I felt bad but I told her we would see each other soon. I wanted to see my wife and have what we had when we first met. (Nunez, 2015, p. 54)

Nunez (2015) interviewed a wife disclosing how stressed she was not having her husband around to help with finances. She shared the following:

I used to fight with him because he was not here. 'I need help!' I would tell him. We had more partner conflict. I was always stressed and I just needed him, you know. We would argue about money, about plans, and other things. (Nunez, 2015, p. 60)

Quintero (2016) described how wives expressed how excited they were to go see their husband only to return feeling empty and sad. The wives shared, with the interviewer, how they longed for their husbands to return. Quintero stated that they described how they grieved the loss and absence of their loved ones, especially at family reunions and holidays. A brother-in-law described how his sister-in-law managed and said the following:

His wife got it bad. She got depressed. I think it was the weight of having to figure out what to do with her kids. She now had to figure out how to work for food, how to pay rent, how to keep going without him. (Quintero, 2016, p. 78)

The same participant continued by stating the following regarding the husbands wanting to come back. He said:

Most of them want to come back with their families but most of them can't. I know two women whose husbands died trying to cross the border again. It's tragic. I mean, imagine that the morgue calls them and tells them they have their husbands. Imagine the pain of that. (Quintero, 2016, p. 79)

Major theme 2.2: Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable. Quintero (2016) pointed out that the communication, between the deportee and the spouse, started

to deteriorate after the separation. After time, the couple was left with a sense of disconnection. The following statement reflected how a wife felt after not seeing her husband in a while:

We talk much less than before. So many things have happened you know?
...Sometimes I think of leaving him. I mean, he's there and I'm here. He doesn't support me with anything related to the girls you see? I have found a way to raise the girls here alone. He used to ask me about them all the time, a lot more. He doesn't as much now...Things aren't the same anymore. He and I argue a lot. I mean, I don't know who he might be with. His friends visit him but I don't know who he spends his time with...I've wondered if he has another woman...Things have changed so much you know? He is the father to my daughters but he isn't here. (Quintero, 2016, p. 90)

The 40-year-old female, the participant above, continued to describe her solitude and discontentment by adding the following:

There are many ways in which I was affected that I never imagined I would be. I remember that I would go out with my daughters and I would see couples and I would feel really bad. I would feel very sad. I felt incomplete because I would I would see kids with their fathers and I would see my kids without their father. (Quintero, 2016, p. 93)

Quintero (2016) emphasized the hopelessness felt by the interviewee regarding her relationship with her absent husband. The wife stated:

It was just me and I would feel really bad. I continue to be alone and I think this is how I'm going to stay. Thing is, if he comes back and they detain him, he will be punished and will spend many years incarcerated. There were many days and even months that I didn't want to leave my bedroom. I didn't want to get out of bed. Life was so different when he was here. I need him but it's not like when my husband was here. I do feel that I may stay alone forever. I feel sad, I feel lonely. (Quintero, 2016, pp. 93-94)

Subtheme 2.2a: Insecure attachments: Illegal love. Nunez (2015) indicated that there was limited research in the literature regarding the impact on how separation, due to deportation, affected adult intimate relationships. Nunez (2015) reported that the separation endured by children influenced their interpersonal relationships as adults.

Nunez (2015) interviewed a male participant age 34 years of age who was 17 years of age when his father was deported. According to Nunez, this participant was affected in having the ability to trust others. In his romantic relationships, he disclosed he was not able to have long-term relationships unless there was some kind guarantee that he would not be abandoned. During the time of the interview, the participant shared that he was in a long-term relationship and working out his trusts issues with someone he considered lovable, strong and secure. Nunez indicated that the interviewee reported that when his wife and he were apart, he suffered from catastrophic thinking and pulled away from the relationship. He mentioned that his biggest fear was that his wife would someday abandon him and found it difficult to experience feeling secure (Nunez, 2015).

Nunez (2015) stated that the separation, due to deportation, resulted in a devastating disruption of attachment with the caregiver that lingered on into adulthood. The long-lasting effects were displayed in the statement made by the interviewee mentioned above. He described his fear as followed:

People tend to remember certain things that validate their fears or their world view. So, I tend to remember stories I hear from people who have been deported on the news or through the community. For me, there is no guarantee I am safe. I can't plan. I can't think about long term. I spend time strategizing about what will happen if I get deported. I'm always afraid. I'm afraid it will happen to me or to my parents again. I think that's been the hardest part, just living in fear. (Nunez, 2015, p. 56)

Nunez (2015) discussed the situation of a 30-year-old female who was 8 years old when her father was deported. The participant described her difficulty in her having romantic relationships as an adult. She explained that she often had intrusive thoughts of infidelity and perceived herself as being "needy" (p. 50). Nunez indicated that the participant disclosed that she had arguments with her partner accusing him of cheating without reasons. The interviewee reported the following:

I don't know how to explain it. It's like I trust him because I know he loves me and obviously we are still together. But I still freak out if I can't find out where he is or what he is doing. I call a lot or whatever and he gets mad but I can't help it. I just feel like I need to talk to him or he's going to stop loving me or something...

I've been this way for a long time. I have done it with other boyfriends too. It is like I can't trust that someone is going to be with me and love me forever.

(Nunez, 2016, p. 55)

Nunez (2015) commented that some participants needed to be in close proximity to their partners, in addition to having frequent communication. For others, it was the opposite. They became avoidant and dismissive. A young male stated the following:

I can't think of forming a family and getting married. I know cousins who grew up with both parents and maybe they're able to think about that because they had that. But I can't, my brother can't either. We don't think about getting married when we date, instead I just want to focus on my career and make good money. I think it may have to do with my dad, I don't know. I just feel like there is a good chance it won't work out. I don't want to end up going through what my mom did. I just tell girls right off the bat that I don't want that and can't give them that.

(Nunez, 2015, p. 56)

Research Question 3

Regarding Research Question Three: *How did family members process and construct meaning when experiencing separation due to deportation?* Two major themes and one subtheme were identified in the data. These major themes included: (3.1) *Family reunification: Mr. Coyote* and (3.2) *Social pain: Broken spirits*, and one subtheme, (3.2a) *Psychological homelessness: Open wound*.

Major theme 3.1: Family reunification: Mr. Coyote. Once deported, these individuals lost the opportunity to gain legalization in the United States, leaving them no option but to recross the border illegally, to reunite with their families (Menjivar & Lakhani, 2016). A young female described how her mother worked to save money to pay a coyote to bring her father back. The mother worked to pay for a coyote costing her about \$700, back then, at that time (Espinoza, 2015).

Rodriguez (2013) spoke to a male saying, “he was the one who worked and now who is going to support his family? ... then, no. They want to recross again—to pay a coyote, but we don’t have the money to pay to recross” (p. 82).

For undocumented immigrants, the process to legalization becomes extremely costly and took many years (Menjivar & Lakhani, 2016). One of the participants, interviewed by Nunez (2015), described her situation in getting legalization in order to bring her daughter, an American citizen, to get medical treatment in the United States. Her husband had petitioned for her to become legalized but during the process, of 8 years, he had an accident at work and died. The accident at work, an explosion killed her husband. The process of legalization stopped due to his death. All the time, 8 years of waiting, and the money spent, was lost because he was no longer alive to finish the process for her. The interviewee reported that she had to start the process again and had to hire an immigration attorney to help her. The participant shared her struggles by saying:

I asked the Mexican Consulate for help. I went to the consulate in San Antonio and they sent me to Austin. The consulate in Laredo also helped me. They gave me permission to bring my daughter to the doctor and also helped me to attend my husband's funeral. After his death, the process ended because he was sponsoring me and well without him everything got lost. The money and time lost and I had to start the process over. She was my angel. Because of her I am here. The lawyer helped me a lot. She told me what to do. I had to start the process over. (Nunez, 2015, pp. 62-63)

Family reunification was a goal for many of the families experiencing separation. A young female age 28 years of age was 2 years old when her mother was deported. She searched for her mother as a teenager and found her by using social media. Come to find out, she had a half-sister and was able to meet together with her biological mother. The participant stated she remembered their reunification to be emotional and tearful (Espinoza, 2015).

Rodriguez (2013) discussed that for family members deported to Mexico, many were making plans to return to reunify with their families. Due to the complexity of the U.S. immigration laws, one of the options left for them was to cross the border illegally. Rodriguez wanted to make a point, reporting that out of the 22 participants, she interviewed, only five said they did not anticipate reentering the country by crossing the border. The rest of the interviewees, were making future plans to return back with their families. Rodriguez mentioned that the majority of male participants, 8 out of the 11 male

participants, reported that they were crossing back to the United States. The male parent had a tremendous responsibility on alleviating the financial hardships caused by their deportation. One of the participants, interviewed at a shelter said the following:

Well, my deportation—well, in every way. Because there is no one there to pay the bills every eight days. Basically, the man isn't there. The man is the one that works, and that's me. My wife, um, she had to apply for welfare—that's what she told me—because I'm not there. And more than anything, well, she's struggling to pay the bills. Well, in reality everything is collapsing. Everything that I have achieved in ten years has collapsed. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 52)

Another participant, 47 years of age, had lived in the United States for 22 years, and had children, ages 9 and 6-years-old back home. He expressed to the researcher this statement:

Look, I'm, I'm going to tell you a reason and I don't know if you're going to understand it. . .I don't want to take away their [his kids'] identities. . .Even though I, I don't know, I don't know how I'm going to do it but I want them to stay over there. . .I don't want them to suffer like I have suffered. Do you understand? . . .You see how difficult life is here. . . (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 87)

The researcher asked the interviewee, “So then what are your plans for the next few days? The participant (pauses) “I plan on re-crossing to the United States” (p. 87).

A mother, age 34 years of age, had lived in the United States for 12 years and had a three-year-old son back home, and had plans to cross border, explained the following:

I want my son to study over there. I want him to make a life for himself over there and when he is older, if I can't be over there anymore, then... But if there is a possibility—well now you have to risk it for them” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 88).

A male interviewed by Rodriguez (2013) stated he was planning to attempt, for the second time to cross the border back to California. The one goal he had, was to get back to his family, he explained:

Right now my family is over there. I can't—about 15 days ago I tried [to recross] alone. I tried going alone through Otay. I jumped the fence ...I'm scared to do it like that again and have them catch me. Can you imagine? And then without, without my family? In jail all because I cross illegally? So what I want to do, what I'm trying to, is save what little I can here and see if it is enough to pay for a coyote so that I can cross more securely. Because they say that a coyote is more guaranteed. With a coyote the police won't catch me. . . (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 92).

Major theme 3.2: Social pain: Broken spirits. Hermann (2017) interviewed youth who reported being fearful and feeling intimidated by authority figures, such as, the police, sheriffs, and for some also firefighters. A sixteen-year-old young male described his fear of police and how he perceived them as a threat rather someone to protect him. Hermann described how, when the youth was 13 years old, his parents were both detained by the police. His parents were arrested for speeding and his father was

deported. The youth interviewed, in this study, described how they panicked at the sight of authority figures, especially ICE. One young male shared the following:

One time when I was younger, we were at the park when I heard sirens. I didn't know what was going on and just said, "Run, Mommy run!" We crawled under a picnic table I remember saying, "Quick, get down, hide!" I realized it was actually just a police car driving by, but it was scary and so messed up because we should feel safe and protected by the police but instead, we have to hide.

(Hermann, 2017, pp. 41-42)

Hermann (2017) indicated that families were terrified to leave their homes. A mother, 48 years of age, decided to keep her children at home and did not allow them to attend school to protect her children from ICE. The mother shared:

I used to pick them up from school, now since we have to hide from ICE, I worry that if my son goes to school, maybe they [ICE] will find us, so sometimes when we hear from our neighbors that ICE is in our neighborhood, and my son stays home from school. (Hermann, 2017, p. 50)

Espinoza (2015) interviewed a young male, who was attending high school when both of his parents were deported. He said:

It was unexpected. It happened while they were at work. My parents would come home at 4:00pm every day and the night fell and they didn't come home. I didn't think much of it because there were days when my parents would hang out with coworkers. They would either call us and let us know, but this time, they didn't

call. When I found out, I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know what to feel.

(Espinoza, 2015, p. 38)

Espinoza (2015) reported that the parents of the young male were both working at a sewing factory. ICE raided the factory looking for undocumented workers. His parents settled and agreed to leave the country voluntarily. Months later, they crossed back to the United States. Unfortunately, with their re-entry being illegal, this made it impossible to ever get legal status in the future. The student said the following:

The most difficult part has been the fact that their chances of fixing their legal status is gone. I have hope that someday my parents will be normal people. I want them to not have to live in the shadows, there are so many things that hold my parents back from doing normal things. (Espinoza, 2015, pp. 38-39)

Espinoza (2015) explained that his parent's deportation left him feeling fearful for his parents and his own status due to him being in the US illegally. He internalized his parent's deportation and was fearful for his own safety. The young male explained:

My parents became very scared, vigilant and paranoid. I began to feel that way too and so did my brothers and sisters. I was scared to find a job. I was always afraid. I felt like I had a huge thing impeding me from succeeding in life.

(Espinoza, 2015, p. 39)

He expressed that his stress and anxiety, about his situation, became an everyday struggle and recalled how he had daunting feeling of not being welcome in this country.

“Every time I hear the news about these deportations, it is hard to see and hear it, it just brings flashbacks. I identify myself with them, even though I am legal now. It is really hard” (Espinoza, 2015, p. 39).

Espinoza (2015) reported that he became distracted in school and failed many classes; he regretted not attending college. His fear and paranoia, about his own deportation, isolated him from his friends and school functions.

“I felt like I can’t do much because of my legal status so I stopped caring. What for? I’m illegal” (Espinoza, 2015, p. 39).

Subtheme 3.2a: Psychological homelessness: Open wound. Quintero (2016) described the experience of a 38-year-old male, who came to the US at the age of 16, whose brother had been deported. He stated:

One lives with fear! Fear that on any given day, they will arrive and arrest you. Fear that they will realize you are living here. It’s a daily fear one lives with. Let me tell you something, the undocumented people have a very hard life here. Mostly because they are greatly discriminated against, they don’t have benefits that a legal resident of citizen may have. One has to live in the shadows, hiding, and being very careful with the police. It’s a very different life as an undocumented person because you are as they say, in the shadows of this country. Nobody knows you exist but you. I’m a legal resident and I don’t feel safe in this country. The residency isn’t a pass to stay in this country. It’s a permit but at any

day and time that they wish, they can deport me for whatever little reason.

(Quintero, 2016, p. 81)

Rodriguez (2013) viewed the situation the immigrants faced similar to those of refugees. As refugees, immigrants experienced sadness and depression. Not having family support, some immigrants reported dealing with sadness by using unhealthy outlets. A young male, age 28 years of age, who had lived in the US for 23 years and was living in a shelter, stated the following:

When I first got here, I was—I was drinking a lot. I was out in the street, as if—I don't know. I felt like I couldn't go back over there [the United States] anymore. And, um, I felt very sad, very alone. (p. 55)

In the same study, conducted by (Rodriguez 2013), the researcher interviewed a 35-year-old, living in a shelter in Tijuana. He was brought to the US when he was three months old, he had lived all his life in United States. He said:

I don't want to stay here at all. I have to get back. I won't make it, you know. Being here, I'll probably commit suicide! . . . I don't think I can make it out here. Not the way I'm used to living over there. It's hard. I can't make it out here...I'm not used to living over here. (begins to weep) I can't make it out here. Especially (sobbing), I don't have nobody over here...I'm a survivor over there. But here? It's hard and (begins to cry harder) I won't make it here. (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 56).

Summary

This chapter included the themes identified when this researcher used five publications to answer the research questions. The major themes included these topics: fear, economic hardships, lack of support from the deportee, painful detachments, family reunification, and social pain. The themes were captured by reviewing and analyzing four dissertations and one thesis. These studies were all qualitative studies with responses from participants experiencing separation due to deportation. The narration of the participants' response identified the repeated patterns within the data, getting a sense of the understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants, and their families facing separation due to deportation.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The final sample for this TA consisted of five publications produced from 2015 to 2019 that focused on describing the lived experiences of men, women, and children who suffered separation due to deportation. This researcher has concluded that families experiencing separation due to deportation suffered collective traumas; the evidence for this finding is based on the narratives constructed in this TA. The themes below are constructed by using the participants' quotes, reflected in the themes displayed in the table below (see Table 3).

Summary of Themes

Table 3 below illustrates the major themes and subthemes identified by this researcher from the five publications in the sample (see Appendix C).

Table 3

Themes Based on Three Research Questions

Research Question 1

Theme 1.1 Fear: Existential threat toward Self and group

Subtheme: Self and identity issues: In-between

Theme 1.2 Painful Detachments: Sudden loss of family member

Subtheme: Shame and secrecy: Remain silent

Theme 1.3 Economic hardships: Double burden on the family

Subtheme: Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission

Research Question 2

Theme 2.1 Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in Canal City

Theme 2.2 Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable

Subtheme: Insecure attachments: Illegal love

Research Question 3

Theme 3.1 Family reunification: Mr. Coyote

Theme 3.2 Social pain: Broken spirit

Subtheme: Psychological homelessness: Open wound

Themes

Fear: Existential Threat toward Self and Group (Theme 1.1) RQ1

The element of *fear* was evident in the data reviewed. The descriptions of how the families, who had loved ones deported, experienced fear was not merely that of a *psychological fear*, but rather, it activated an *anxiety* type of alarm producing a life-threatening situation. Participants in these studies revealed and described their feelings of fear as a state of nonbeing as described by Tillich (1952). According to Tillich, this fear is not like a pathological psychological perspective, but more like the state of an individual becoming aware of the possibility of not existing or “of nonbeing” (Tillich, 1952, p. 32). For instance, a statement made by a woman after her husband was deported suggests this statement: “...you wake up and you’re always scared” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 59). This state of nonbeing is described by Corrigan (2014) as the neurobiology of defense responses to threats. These threat responses, according to Corrigan, involve being vigilant, responding by either the fight, flight or freeze response, or wanting to hide, cringe or be submissive. Further, social threats activate these same responses when a person is being physically threatened (Corrigan, 2014).

Van der Kolk (2014) depicted the amygdala as the “brain’s smoke detector” (p. 60), which functions to identify any danger that threatens our survival. Van der Kolk explained that the sequential physical processes involving the amygdala, the hypothalamus and thalamus alerting danger, operate at a much faster pace than the

frontal lobes. Instantly, the body releases powerful stress hormones, such as, cortisol and adrenaline causing a racing heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and breathing (van der Kolk, 2014).

Van der Kolk (2014) noted that when the body lacks the ability to return to normal, the person displays agitation and anger. Van der Kolk specified that the influence of trauma on the brain's ability leads the brain to misinterpret a safe or dangerous situation and, therefore, interferes with the development of healthy interpersonal relationships and increases painful misunderstandings. The frontal lobes, the "watchtower" (van der Kolk, 2014, p.62), are designed to help individuals form conscious and rational thoughts; the frontal lobes play a crucial part in our thinking and analysis of a situation. When the brain's alarm system is affected by trauma, then an individual becomes susceptible to having a faulty alarm system that dominates that person's brain processes, resulting in the person going directly to a fight-flight, mode when fearful or anxious (Van der Kolk, 2014).

Van der Kolk (2014) explained that when persons suffer from PTSD, there is a continuous and radical shift between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, making it difficult for those persons to control their intense emotions and impulses. Van der Kolk indicated that the conflict between these parts of the brain affects the person across their psychological and the physical domains. Examples of potential conflict between parts of the brain occurs when a person becomes enraged with a person that they love, or that person lives in constant fear of others, and/or that person

does not feel safe. Van der Kolk stated that the release of stress hormones replays the trauma over and over making it difficult to feel joy and the enjoyment of life. The overload of sensory stimuli causes a shut down within the thalamus causing depersonalization, a spitting off from self (Van der Kolk, 2014).

Reactions towards existential threat towards Self and group anxiety and fear differ, according to Tillich (1952). Tillich suggested that fear has a definite object to face while anxiety occurs in the face of something “objectless.” Tillich professed that this type of anxiety refers to *an existential* type of anxiety involving three domains: mortality, emptiness, and meaninglessness and guilt and condemnation. The domain of fate and death implies a threat to *nonbeing*, and “the basic self-affirmation of a being in its simple existence” (Tillich, 1952, p. 42). The domain emptiness and meaninglessness concern the nonbeing of man and his spiritual self-affirmation, “... loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meaning” (Tillich, 1952, p. 47). The domain of the guilt and condemnation involves a threat to one’s self -esteem and morals, “...profound ambiguity between good and evil permeates everything he does...” (Tillich, 1952, p. 52).

In the studies reviewed by this researcher collective trauma happens when existential threat toward Self and group, is expressed in the sudden changes in families (Hirschberger, Ein-Dor, Leider, & Saguy, 2016); when at least one family member is forced to depart from their loved ones. These individuals are forced to construct meaning to extreme terrorizing adversity, in this case separations due to

deportation. These disruptions damage the inner self and destructs and fragments communities and societies (Hirschberger et al., 2016). A participant who reported living in fear said that "...seeing all the ICE raids on television... I hope they don't come here" (Quintero, 2016, p.105). That level of fear affects the person's human defensive behaviors. Porges (2011) outlined the three stages of development of the autonomic nervous system underscoring that behavioral neural circuits exist at each of these three stages that are related to ways humans adapt to frightening situations. According to Porges (2011), there are three adaptive behaviors: (1) "Immobilization" (p. 16), play dead; (2) "Mobilization" (p. 16), fight, flight response; and (3) "Social communication or social engagement.... facial expression, vocalization, listening" (p. 16).

As stated by Porges (2011), van der Hart (2006), and van der Kolk (2014), developing children and adults need healthy social environments to appropriately engage to form secure attachments and positive social bonds. Porges (2011) indicates that the root to numerous psychiatric mental disorders points to the disabled ability of *neuroception*, a developmentally acquired ability to identify whether the environment is safe and/or if people around are trustworthy.

Self and identity: In between (Subtheme 1.1a). Chandra (2012) described *an identity* as a category that classifies an individual as having certain attributes that qualify that person for membership in a specific group. The author indicates that all identities have rules for the membership. These rules are what differentiate members from non-

members; the membership rule typically requires that members have one or several attributes. Chandra stated that identity categories look different depending on the context in which they are activated and they are further distinguished between *chosen* or *assigned* identities. The chosen identity is a self-identity made by the individual while an assigned identity is one that is given by others. An ethnic identity is collective and a group shares that group's consciousness (Chandra, 2012).

Anzaldua (2002) wrote about the journey to the path of *conocimiento*, where an individual confronts their shadow side and their social programming. Anzaldua delineated the seven stages of *conocimiento*, that are expected in order to reach a state of *knowing*. These stages are painful and cause fragmentation of the self because they challenge one's core beliefs. During this process, the labels and identities assigned to the individual no longer have the power to dominate thoughts and behaviors. *Nepantla*, as described by Anzaldua, was the space between different awareness and perceptions, the *being in-between*. Self-identity was the primary focus when being in the space of *Nepantla*. This site of transformation created conflict between perspectives and questioning inherited identities. Anzaldua referred to *Nepantla* as the space we called "home" (p. 548). This zone was the space between, "changes where you struggled to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it" (Anzaldua, 2002, p. 549).

Painful Detachments: Sudden Loss of Family Member (Theme 1.2)

According to Schore (1996, 2003, 2012, 2013), extensive research has stressed that insecure attachments play a prominent role in the psychological neuropathogenesis of all psychiatric disorders. The separation of an attachment figure in early developing children can result in the disruption of right brain development (Schore, 2013). The right brain, according to Schore (2013), is responsible for implicit, nonverbal, intuitive processing relating to emotional information and social engagements. An example of this disruption appears in Rodriguez's (2013) study when a father reported that his young daughter was resentful even "angry because I am not with them...almost like I don't want to be there..." (p. 38).

Watt (2003) emphasized the importance of studying attachment from the neuroscience perspective. Watt reported that attachment events are responsible for forming neurodevelopmental foundations as well as supporting the development of portion of the cortical and the prefrontal systems. Watt commented, "If children grow up with dominant experiences of separation, distress, fear, and rage, then they will go down a bad pathogenic developmental pathway, and it's not just a bad psychological pathway but a bad neurological pathway" (Watt, 2003, p. 109).

Shame and secrecy: Remain silent (Subtheme 1.2a). In the review of the data, social isolation was a significant factor for many of the families represented in this study who were living without a status. Herman (2011) reported that a sense of shame is experienced when people feel isolated and excluded. Another researcher studying the

psychological effects of shame, Talbot (1995) indicated that a sense of shame is not only experienced as a traumatic event but also in how people view who they are. A young adolescent in Espinoza's study shared what it was like not to have a legal status: "I felt like I was categorized in ways where there were certain places I could go and not go..." (p. 40).

Gilbert and Andrew (1998) outlined the behaviors associated in dealing with shame. The behaviors include: (1) behaviors of arousal to the shame response, such as feeling hot; (2) behaviors displayed to cope or conceal shame as it happens; (3) behaviors to prevent being shamed or shame being exposed; and (4) behaviors put in place to repair the shame. Gilbert and Andrew specified that one method of dealing with shame was keeping it a secret. The secrecy could occur at different levels, at the individual level, at family or a societal level (Piazza, & Bering, 2010). Gilbert and Andrew conveyed that disregarding shame inhibited reparation to self. In an effort to repair shame, there must be forgiveness of the self and the forgiveness of others (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998).

President Donald Trump, while campaigning, claimed that there were millions of "criminal aliens" (CBS, 2016) living illegally in the United States. In the speech, he stated, "... we have a lot of these people, probably two million, it could be even three million, we are getting them out of our country" (CBS, 2016). The internalization of the political climate was reflected by one participant who lacked motivation for working or going to college or focusing on any future plans: "I can't do much because of my legal status so I stopped caring...I'm illegal" (Espinoza, 2015, p. 39). Deported parents

expressed shame at sharing this information with their children; one parent had not told her children as “...they think that I am working” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 33).

Economic Hardships: Double Burden on the Family (Theme 1.3)

The families separated, due to deportation, suffered devastating economic hardships leaving challenges for the mothers/wives and the children. Deportees, living back in their country of origin had difficulties making a living. The father in these studies was typically the deported family members they commented that they felt isolated and with no one to help them, they felt *invisible* and socially excluded as if living in the “shadows” (Espinoza, 2015, p. 81). According to Mathieson et al. (2008), the economic component is related to social exclusion and encompasses three critical concepts: (1) Multidimensional (social, political, economic and cultural), (2) Dynamic (affecting the person at different social levels across time), and (3) Relational perspective (separation of relationships between people and society, lack of protection, participation, power and integration). A deportee who had returned to the United States from Mexico shared about his struggles to find work as Mexico was dangerous due to crime – “another reality over there” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 52). The social political climate in the deportees’ country of origin made it impossible for deportees to help their families back in the United States. Mothers had the heaviest responsibility as they supported two households; their older children had to take care of the younger siblings, which usually affected their grades (Hermann, 2017; Quintero, 2016).

Social exclusion occurred at all levels for the family members in these studies; these levels included the multidimensional, the dynamic, and the relational. The multidimensional level involves the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions. One school professional in this study found it difficult to help the immigrant students with social exclusion because “in the past, we’ve offered support groups for recent immigrants and children of immigrants, but it seems like we need to provide something different for kids who have gone through this type of parental loss” [deportation] (Hermann, 2017, p. 58).

Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission (Subtheme 1.3a). The concept of enculturation came from the discipline of anthropology; the term was coined by Herskovits (1948), who described *enculturation* as a process that was not deliberately learned. Herskovits claimed that enculturation is an implicit process of unconsciously internalizing one’s culture. Hall (1977) indicated that culture could not be understood by focusing on its parts; but rather, to understand culture, one had to know how the parts came together and how they interrelated to each other. Hall stated that the most important parts of culture are those hidden, unconsciously buried deeply. This implicit awareness is what some participants described when they were deported to their country of origin. These deportees had no knowledge of how to be in their native culture. A son reported that it was “scary” that his father who had originally left his country due to civil war 25 years before was now forced to live there again (Hermann, 2017, p. 49).

The newly arrived deportees struggled to engage in their native culture even though they identified as Mexican because “...one learns the—the ways, the ways of living over there” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 64). Due to the uneasiness of feeling lost in a different country and not knowing the culture, family members, usually fathers, described the terrifying confusion of their new identity as Mexican citizens (Rodriguez, 2013).

Lack of Economic Support from Deportee: Living in Canal City (Theme 2.1) RQ2

When the deportee was the father, the financial burden was left to the mothers and the children. The deportees explained how difficult it was for them to survive in their country of origin, living homeless in the overcrowded canals surrounded by violence and other deportees who were also unable to make a living. Deportees, desperate to get a job, described their poor living conditions affecting their mental and physical health. On the other hand, one wife living in America noted that she was thinking about leaving her deported husband because of his lack of support and because “he’s there and I’m here” (Hermann, 2017, p. 91).

Berger, Juster and Sarnyal (2015) indicated that individuals experiencing discrimination, due to social exclusion, had increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol and a dysregulated hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. Quintero (2016) stated that deportees reported an increased amount of stress, and dealing with health issues, such as, diabetes, blood pressure, issues, and cancer. Interviewers mentioned deportees reported experiencing physical and psychological negative effects, such as

depression, anxiety, emotional outbursts, decrease in motivation, weight changes, and abuse of alcohol and tobacco (Quintero, 2016).

Parnell (2013) defined relational trauma "... as trauma that occurs in the context of a relationship ... something that happened or did not happen to the client that caused him or her harm" (p.6). The author explained that not having the guidance of a father, abandonment of a parent, not feeling protected by the caregiver were examples of relational trauma.

The relational trauma endured by the children in these immigrant families affected by deportation kept the daily interactions with their parents at a minimal. The burden put on mothers contributed to the loss of intimacy between the children and their mothers. These emotional sacrifices shaped the children's ability to develop safety attachments. Alford (2017, p.11) described intergenerational trauma as a phantom, where the past haunted the present; further stating that "intergenerational trauma is always about attachment." The continuity of the transmission of multigenerational traumas will continue to affect future generations to come (Danieli, 1998).

Disconnection in the Relationship: Unbridgeable (Theme 2.2)

The participants described the disconnection in the relationship, not only with the family member deported, but also within the nuclear family system. In these studies (Espinoza, 2015; Hermann, 2017; Nunez, 2015; Quintero, 2016; Rodriguez, 2013), the authors described how the detachments and disconnections affected the mothers being

able to emotionally connect with their children. The adolescents shared that they were less interested in school and felt isolated (Hermann, 2017).

Lanius (2014) indicated that our external world and our attachment relationships affect our autonomic regulation and that certain neurotransmitters will release depending on the situation. The early attachment experiences that a person has will affect neural systems creating a template that will dictate to the autonomic nervous system how to respond when under stress (Lanius, 2014). Corrigan, Wilson, and Fay (2014) revealed that the main predictor of pathological dissociation was attachment disorganization occurring during early development. Additional traumatic events, when displaying a disorganized style of attachment, result in a major disorder of structural dissociation (Lyons-Ruth, Duta, Schuder, & Bianchi, 2006).

Insecure attachments: Illegal love (Subtheme 2.2a). Attachment quality, during the developmental years, predicted personality traits and social bonds via internal neural working models of self and others (Catherall, 2004). Espinoza (2015) described the experience of an adopted 26-year female, whose mother was deported when she two years old. The interviewee stated that her adopted parents were “giving” but “not-affectionate” (p. 36). As an adult now, she looked back at her upbringing and remembered feeling the lack of affection from her adopted parents. The participant expressed that she continues to be “needy” (p. 36) and anxious in her current relationship. She claimed that she experienced high levels of anxiety and ended up calling her partner numerous times, perhaps “100 times” trying to reach him (Espinoza, 2015, p. 36).

Catherall (2004) mentioned that adults having an avoidant attachment tended to have a negative view of self and had less committed relationships. A young male, whose father was deported when he was 15 years of age, shared that even though other kids had two parents “I didn’t have that, so I don’t want that” (Espinoza, 2015, p. 36). Individuals having a negative view of self often feel unworthy of love and doubt their abilities to have successful relationships (Catherall, 2004).

Family Reunification: Mr. Coyote (Theme 3.1) RQ3

Nadeau (1998) explained that, “*family meaning-making* is defined as the social act whereby family members interpret stimuli in the context of the family and represent the situation to themselves and each other in symbolic terms” (p.15). To answer Research Question Three, the goal was to find how family members made sense of their situation of separation, due to deportation.

Ortmeyer and Quinn (2012) indicated that with the complex U.S. migration legislation, many families relied on a *coyote*, a person who helped others to cross the border illegally, to make the crossing possible. Ortmeyer and Quinn explained that the cost of a coyote had increased significantly; before 1986, the average cost for a coyote was \$325, in the 1990s, it went up to \$1,121 and after the year 2000, the average went up to \$1,674. The increased cost in getting help from a coyote put major burdens for immigrants and their families to pay (Ortmeyer, & Quinn, 2012).

Within these studies, (Espinoza, 2015; Hermann, 2017; Nunez, 2015; Quintero, 2016; Rodriguez, 2013), the one goal the families had, was to reunite together as a family

once more. Spirituality was a primary motive in having hope the family would reunite. One mother shared this about her son: “We prayed that he would come home soon (Espinoza, 2015, p.70). A father, living in a shelter in Mexico reported, “More than anything, I’ve been focusing on how I’m going to go back” (Rodriguez, 2013, p.80)

Falicov (2014) suggested that *transnational families*, families who resided in different nations, invested in maintaining a strong connection between the family members. Falicov explained that these multinational families stayed connected and committed at different levels. The families’ long-distance attachments continued to stay psychologically connected regardless of the distance; problems or tensions became part of this psychological context. The loyalties and commitment, to the family, not only joined the systems, but was also symbolic of containing future hopes and dreams yet to fulfill (Falicov, 2014). The experience for families in these studies was not so positive.

Rodriguez (2013) interviewed a woman who was told shortly after her arrival at a shelter in Mexico that “it’s not the end of the world...you can reunite with your children” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 84). The passage above illustrated the intense longing for these deportees to be reunited with their families. Despite the obstacles and the distance, these deportees had hope that they would be back with their families. Rodriguez (2013) stated that current immigration laws would not be effective because the families would find a way to be reunited.

Tillich (1952) explained that humans, to have courage, must affirm the self. Tillich claimed that self-affirmation was achieved by connecting to a higher being. In

these quotes of the family members' responses, many relied on spirituality to get through the difficult separations. The difficulty for these deportees, to affirm self is due to the lack of acknowledgment of their presence by others. This lack of feeling that they did exist or were seen results in the dissolution of self, feeling disintegrated from society, and feeling annihilated (Wilson, 2004).

Social pain: Broken spirits (Theme 3.2)

Wilson (2004) wrote that, "We live in a world where broken human spirits abound and surround us with silent cries and unspoken loneliness" (p. 109). In this quote, Wilson is referring to people who are uprooted from their country of origin as they seek a better life. Wilson used the metaphor of *a broken spirit* to describe the soul, self and identity as fractured. The social injuries, inflicted by man, so violently affect the very soul of an individual that it "breaks" the spirit of the seeker (p. 110). The concept of having a broken spirit points to how the self then fragments into parts resulting in loss of agency and hope on the continuation of a future (Wilson, 2004).

The data reviewed in this TA revealed the inner world of the traumatization of the families who stayed behind, as well as, for the deportee who arrived in a different country with limited resources. The psychological injuries endured by these individuals reflected, what Wilson (2004) referred to as, broken spirits, in a world of desperation. As stated by van der Kolk (2014), trauma alters the brain, "... the world is experienced with a different nervous system...the survivor focused on suppressing inner chaos, at expense of spontaneous involvement in their life." (p. 53)

Nickerson (2017) mentioned how individuals internalize cultural stigmas and other traumatic injuries to self, resulting in unresolved social trauma memories. Shapiro (2005b, 2016) conducted an eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR) exercise by the name of a *two-hand interweave* as a method to rid clients of societal and cultural messages. Shapiro (2005a) referred to this process as *culturectomy*, which is designed to rid the clients of negative societal messages to self. This exercise was used with individuals conflicted with two different ideas about self; the therapist asked the client to put one idea in one hand and the other idea in the other hand. Nickerson stated that the therapist then did the eye movements or bilateral stimulations while the client focused on these two conflicting forces. The idea in conducting this exercise was to separate the authentic self from the oppressive internalized societal and cultural messages (Nickerson, 2017).

This TA increased the understanding of the psychological and psychosocial injuries of complex traumas experienced by the family members in these studies. To therapeutically understand how to attend families in the midst of what Anzaldua (1987) described as, “Living in the borders and in the margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element” (Anzaldua, 1987, preface).

Psychological homelessness: Open wound (Subtheme 3.2a). The subtheme, *Psychological Homelessness*, was described by Gaines and Reed (1995) as a phenomenon during personality development. Psychological homelessness displayed a

variety of feelings, such as, detachment, and not feeling at home in one's own community or country. Gaines and Reed proposed that psychological homelessness was a concept similar to marginalization. While marginalization was perceived to be coming from an external factor, psychological homelessness were feelings or experiences generated from within. These feelings reflected rejection and having the sense of not belonging within one's own culture. (Gaines & Reed, 1995)

Negy, Reig-Ferrer, Gaborit, and Ferguson (2014) described psychological homelessness as a construct where individuals experience being devalued or unaccepted within their own community. Rodriguez (2013) explained the situation for deportees arriving at their country of origin without any form of identification, neither an American identification or a Mexican one, which often resulted in police violence. Since most of the deportees were removed from their American homes suddenly, they arrived with no documents in their country of origin. Mexican police harassed and arrested them if they did not have their identification. In addition, which left many family members homeless (Rodriguez, 2013).

The exclusion of not belonging to any specific country, living in limbo, as Anzaldua (1987) wrote about the "una herida abierta," meaning an *open wound* (p. 25). Anzaldua described the pain of not belonging, as an open wound, bleeding unable to heal. In therapy, Wilson (2004) emphasized that to be able to reach such inner scars of the psyche and self, it requires more than having empathy and understanding of a traumatic event. Wilson (2004 and Schwartz (1995), elaborated on the importance of a therapist

having the ability to facilitate the client's sense of Self. The healing does not stop at the level of therapy, instead, the community component is also a major influence in the restoration of Self; the collective had the potential of mending the most damaged part of Self (Wilson, 2004).

Conceptual Framework

In this TA, two conceptual frameworks were used as a map of guide how the selected published data came together to increase our sense of the understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants and their families facing separation due to deportation. The two theories included Schwartz's (1995) IFS theory and the Borderland theory and Anzalduan epistemologies (Anzaldua, 1987; Anzaldua & Keating, 2002).

Internal Family Systems

The IFS theory (Schwartz, 1995) is the integration of three paradigms: the multiplicity of the mind, systems thinking, and Self leadership, also known as the spirit or the soul. The lived experiences of the family members in this thematic analysis illustrate how protector parts are present to help the family members survive their painful exclusion by and within the majority society. In IFS, when a protector part, such as the emotion of shame, dominates other behaviors, the result is to withdraw and emotionally disconnect. The responses of the family members in this study demonstrate the multiple facets of their personalities; mothers had to adopt their new Self as they created their new role as the provider for the family, the children learned new aspects of Self as they carried out adult responsibilities, and fathers lost Self when they were no longer were

able to provide. The change of roles in the family triggered protector parts to dominate behaviors in order for members to survive their life-threatening situations.

Borderland Theory and Anzalduan Epistemologies

Anzaldua's Borderland theory and Anzaldua's epistemologies specify the set of psychological processes needed to confront the psychological fears that influence how we perceive our environment. The data reviewed for this study indicates how immigrants live in constant fear when they do not have legal status of any kind in the United States. Anzaldua referred to the "world is not a safe place...barely keeping the panic below the surface of the skin...daily drinking shock ..." (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 42). As noted by Porges (2011), it appears that these immigrants experience *neuroception* as their neurological system is on a constant on a fight – flight – freeze response due to multiple life-threatening situations. Consistently, the participants in the five publications in this study noted how certain frightening situations left their families unable to feel safe outside their homes or their social world.

Anzaldua (1987) described shame, and how she escaped her "inadequacy...I have split from and disowned those parts of myself..." (p. 67). The experiences reported from the family members in this study indicated how, without a status, they lacked self-confidence and self-worth. Living in a state of not knowing and what obstacles were waiting for them, created a traumatizing loop on a daily basis.

Limitations

- (1) The small samples of qualitative studies limit the generalizability of the findings.
- (2) The thesis and the dissertations selected for analysis had participants from Mexico and Central America. It is possible that if other countries had been represented, then different themes might have been captured.
- (3) Geographically, these interviews were conducted in Texas and California and one study in Tijuana Baja, California. Other areas might have produced different response capturing different themes.
- (4) The participants were of a lower social economic status having economic challenges. Participants with higher social economic status may have different experiences of separation due to deportation.
- (5) All the researchers/interviewers were females; if male interviewers had been used, there might have had different responses considering the culture and males showing vulnerability and emotions during the interviews.
- (6) There was a wide age range from three years old to 76 years old; limiting to a certain age range might have resulted in different responses.
- (7) The variety of participants within this TA were at different levels of acculturation with some being fluent in English and some only fluent in Spanish.

Implications

The purpose of this TA was to explore and analyze repeating patterns in the published data regarding forced separations due to deportation policies. The issues concerning what makes trauma, a *collective trauma*, was a topic needing more research. Definitions for collective trauma differ depending on the context and the time and when and where the content was published. What was gathered from this TA gives light to familiar themes in specific contexts. Themes highlighted in this TA will add to research in how to develop interventions for families in communities caught in conflictual sociopolitical systems. This TA identified themes relate to the needs of families facing separation due to deportation.

To therapeutically approach the reestablishment of bringing stability to affective dysregulation, more extensive research is needed to consider the *dissolution of self* and having interventions to reconstruct the *Self structure* with populations in violent sociopolitical contexts.

Advocacy

Advocacy for families affected by deportation is needed more than ever. According to the American Immigration Council (2019), more than 256,000 people have been deported from the United States in 2018. The increase in deportations is due to President Trump administration's choice to double efforts on the administration's "Zero Tolerance Policy" (Dreyer, 2019, p. 1196) and immigration policies (Gallucci, 2018).

Immigration enforcement actions and the ceaseless threat of enforcement action create significant economic, physical, developmental, and emotional implications for millions left behind across the country. These consequences affect not only families, but entire communities and the entire country (American Immigration Council, 2019). Thankfully, organizations such as Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services and Kids in Need of Defense ensure immigrant families have access to free or affordable legal assistance (Gallucci, 2018). Others like Border Angels, American Civil Liberties Union, and The Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project connect those affected by deportation with much needed resources.

Reflection

Being a Mexican American woman, my belief prior to embarking on this journey was that I would identify with the struggles of this population. In the aftermath of writing this dissertation, since I am not an immigrant, instead, I feel undeserving of writing it. My struggles are not the same, I feel privileged, I feel free to navigate the system and I feel fortunate to speak both languages. I am educated, I feel hopeful to have endless opportunities that deportees and their families may have less attainability to acquire. My aspirations, as I go forward, is to convert my shame and embarrassment with humility, motivation and action to further conduct research that can bring about sensitive immigration policies, transformation of inequalities, and positive social change. My view of immigrants and those affected by displacement and deportation are bound to change my perspective in which I see other peoples' realities and daily struggles.

Conclusion

This TA identified themes found in the data of four dissertations and one thesis describing the injustices and atrocities endured by this population. The separations, due to deportations, created negative physical and psychological effects for the individuals, couples, and families. Living in constant fear and the uncertainty of what will happen next to the family disrupted human and family developmental stages. The themes captured illustrated how the separations impacted short and long-term effects on attachments, mental health, finances and the overall wellbeing of the family system.

The functioning of the family system in immigrants being affected by separation due to deportation displayed how the family was affected by the larger social systems, in this case, was the immigration legislative policy. Mental health professionals attending to immigrant mental health need to recognize the implications of insufficient methodological systematic interventions to facilitate immigrant families with appropriate care. The use of traditional assessments for traumatic stressful events, such as the separation of families due to deportation, may not capture the severity of the collective trauma experienced by immigrant families. The limitation of these traditional assessments lacked the recognition of the effects of marginalization and social exclusion.

As noted in this TA, collective trauma due to political violence was seen at several levels. The forms of political violence for immigrant families were experienced directly and for others the form of violence was indirectly, vicariously affecting the family members. Using traditional assessments may result in the misinterpretation of the

symptomology and will not provide an adequate therapeutic treatment plan. For appropriate treatment plans to be developed, researchers and mental health professionals must take into account the multiple context in which immigrant families exist. Research conducted to bring about social change and justice for inequalities must have a transdisciplinary approach to examine the intersection of the complexity of the personal and social realities of immigrant families experiencing collective trauma due to the immigration legislative policies.

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APPENDIX A

Form Used to Select Publications

Publication:

Publication Type	Author/s	Year	Research Question/s	N=M/F	Country of Origin	Y/N
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APPENDIX B

Coding Form Used in This Study

Coding Form

Title of publication	Author	Year	Methodology	Participants: Individuals, couples or families	Country of origin
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Meaning unit	Page#	Condensed meaning unit	Code	Sub categories	Category theme
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Note: Part of the table was adapted from Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004).

Appendix C

Themes Based on Three Research Questions

Themes Based on Three Research Questions

Research Question 1

Theme 1.1 Fear: Existential threat toward Self and group

Subtheme: Self and identity issues: In-between

Theme 1.2 Painful Detachments: Sudden loss of family member

Subtheme: Shame and secrecy: Remain silent

Theme 1.3 Economic hardships: Double burden on the family

Subtheme: Enculturation trauma: Lost in transmission

Research Question 2

Theme 2.1 Lack of economic support from deportee: Living in Canal City

Theme 2.2 Disconnection in the relationship: Unbridgeable

Subtheme: Insecure attachments: Illegal love

Research Question 3

Theme 3.1 Family reunification: Mr. Coyote

Theme 3.2 Social pain: Broken spirit

Subtheme: Psychological homelessness: Open wound