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INTERSECTING REALITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE  
EXPERIENCES OF STRESS AND COPING AMONG TRANSGENDER LATINX  
IMMIGRANTS

by

Silvia P. Salas

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Educational Psychology

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

August 2019

## ABSTRACT

### INTERSECTING REALITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF STRESS AND COPING AMONG TRANSGENDER LATINX IMMIGRANTS

by

Silvia P. Salas

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2019  
Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Shannon Chavez-Korell

Research on Trans immigrant communities of Latinx descent is underdeveloped, with even less emphasis on how this community experiences and copes with the stressors associated with their membership in multiple oppressed social groups (e.g., ethnicity, gender identity, and immigration status). Nativism, ethnocentrism, and cissexism all impact Trans Latinx immigrants, heightening their risk of being targets of community violence, hate crimes, and discrimination associated with their ethnicity, gender identity, and immigration status. These stressors and violence may be experienced by this community from within and outside their respective communities (e.g., Trans Community, Latinx Community, and Broader U.S. Community). The few available research studies have not considered the experiences of this community from both a strong (focus on interlocking systems of oppression) and weak (focus on multiple identities) intersectionality framework, failing to consider the complexity associated with Trans Latinx immigrants' unique social position.

Given that the Trans Latinx immigrant community has a long-standing history of systemic and institutional discrimination, a collaborative partnership was established with a social worker who was the intermediary between this community and the primary student investigator. This partnership was housed under a community health center that provides services to the Latinx community and served to: (1) establish trust with Trans Latinx immigrants,

and (2) recruit participants for this study. A Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) paradigm was used to explore the ways in which nine Trans Latinx immigrants navigated their multiple social group memberships and how these influenced their negotiation of experiences with both individual and systemic oppression. A total of four domains emerged via the data analysis process each with a set of categories including: (1) the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants in different lands (*categories*: pre-migration to the U.S.; post-migration to the U.S.), (2) benefits experienced by Trans Latinx immigrants (*categories*: rewards related to ethnicity; rewards related to being an immigrant; rewards related to being Trans; rewards related to belonging in multiple social groups), (3) challenges experienced by Trans Latinx immigrants (*categories*: disadvantages related to ethnicity; disadvantages related to being an immigrant; disadvantages related to being Trans; disadvantages related to belonging in multiple social groups), and (4) how Trans Latinx immigrants manage their challenges (*categories*: societal; familial; personal). Within each of these categories several subcategories further describing the experiences of this community also emerged (see Table 4.2). The participants in this study conveyed a myriad of challenges that mirror those faced by their broader Latinx, immigrant, and Trans communities, while simultaneously emphasizing a difficult narrative associated with their distinctive experience related to belonging to multiple oppressed social groups. In response to their challenges, this community voiced the sources of strength they draw from to survive and maintain their spirit.

Silvia P. Salas

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Student Signature

August 8, 2019

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Date

*Dedicado con orgullo y amor a mi familia* [with pride and love, I dedicate this to my family].

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented demographic change occurring in the United States (U.S.), coined the “Browning of America,” suggests that ethnic minorities will be the collective majority in many states, cities, and regions of the country (White & Henderson, 2008, p. 17). As the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S., Latinx are one of the contributing groups to this shift (Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, & Organista, 2016; Zong & Batalova, 2016). Moreover, Latinx immigrants represent a large subgroup from this growing and heterogeneous population in the U.S. (Zong & Batalova, 2016). Currently, a significant portion of the psychological literature on Latinx emphasizes the role of culture and ethnicity play in the psychotherapeutic work with this community (Falicov, 2014; Organista, 2007; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). While emphasis on the role of culture in psychotherapy with Latinx has had increased attention, a lack of emphasis placed on research that considers within-group differences (e.g., gender identity, immigration status) among this heterogeneous population exists. For instance, less is known about the experiences of gender and sexually diverse immigrants of Latinx descent (Cerezo, Morales, Quintero, & Rothman, 2014), with the Trans immigrant community being one of the most understudied groups. This dearth of literature leaves mental health professionals short of understanding the ways in which both culture and gender affirming care can be integrated into psychotherapeutic work with the Trans Latinx immigrant community.

With the surge of the current sociopolitical discord for both immigrant and Trans communities of Latinx descent, a need for increased visibility and awareness of their experiences is high. During a White House event on June 24, 2015 that focused on celebrating the progress made by the gender and sexually diverse community, Jennicet Gutiérrez, a Trans immigrant

woman and immigrant rights activist, interrupted President Obama during his speech (Gutiérrez, 2016). In her remarks, she demanded the release of all gender and sexually diverse immigrants from detention centers, where currently one out of every 500 people in detention identifies as Trans, but accounts for one out of five confirmed sexual abuse cases in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody (Gutiérrez, 2016; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2016). Ms. Gutiérrez' interruption did not "just draw attention to the plight of [trans] immigrants imprisoned by ICE, it also revealed the rift between the gay rights and Trans rights movements" (Gutiérrez, 2016, para. 7), which has often left gender diverse rights out of the sexually diverse agenda. Since then, the community has observed an increase in the ongoing epidemic of anti-immigrant rhetoric, violence, hate crimes intersection of cissexism, nativism, and ethnocentrism (Pradon, 2015; Pradon & Salcedo, n.d.) as a result of their membership in Trans, immigrant, and ethnic groups. Since the election of the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S., the systems of oppression have been strengthened (Chavez-Dueñas & Adames, 2016), making the Latinx, immigrant, and Trans communities more vulnerable to hate crimes. To demonstrate, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) reports that almost 800 hate crimes were committed against perceived Latinx immigrants, Black Americans, members of the gender and sexually diverse community, among other groups in the past year since the election began. Regrettably, these statistics fail to show the overall experience and how individuals who are members of multiple oppressed social groups are targeted by hate crimes and violence. For Trans Latinx immigrants these experiences remain unexamined.

While research on Trans immigrant communities of Latinx descent is scant (Cerezo et al., 2014), even less emphasis exists on how they experience their membership in multiple oppressed social groups (e.g., ethnic, gender, immigrant). In general, much of the literature focused on the



Latinx community concentrates on studying single facets of social group membership. For example, a significant amount of research exists focusing on ethnic identity (e.g., Acevedo-Polakovich, Chavez-Korell, & Umaña-Taylor, 2014; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004), immigration issues (e.g, American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, [APA, PTFI], 2012; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2009), with much growth needed for gender diverse individuals who are also Latinx (Cerezo et al., 2014). Given the increase in the negative socio-political rhetoric in the U.S. targeting immigrants, Latinx and Trans individuals, understanding the intersectional experiences of this community is critical.

The research on Trans individuals has underscored that in the U.S., this community experiences disproportionately high rates of sexual assault in confinement facilities including: jails, prisons, and in civil immigration detention facilities (HRW, 2016). Moreover, several studies have found that Trans Women of Color and those who are poor or undocumented often experience severe verbal, physical, and sexual abuse while held in police custody (Grant et al., 2011). The targeted police profiling has contributed to the disproportionate involvement in the criminal justice system or the civil immigration centers for undocumented Trans Latinx immigrants (HRW, 2016). Similarly, the landscape of experiences in the U.S. is akin to that of Latin America for Trans individuals. Smallman (2007) contends that Trans individuals from Latin America flee their countries for several reasons including limited resources, social inequities, lack of employment opportunities, as well as discriminatory experiences as a result of their gender identity. Despite their hopes of finding a better life in the U.S., Trans immigrants from Latin America may find that their new country mirrors the countries from which they fled.

In the U.S., Trans Latinx immigrants may experience additional stresses including the loss of family and support networks, and the exposure to trauma that many immigrants

experience in the before, during, and after migration process to the U.S. (APA, PTFI, 2012; Cervantes, Mejia, & Mena, 2010). The complex adjustment process associated with immigration to the U.S., coupled with experiences of prejudice, bias, and discrimination may be compounded by their previous discriminatory experiences, all of which has been associated with psychological stress (Berry, 1997, 1980; Masuda, Lin, & Tazuma, 1980). Trans Latinx also experience discrimination and poor health outcomes at much higher levels than the general population (Auldridge et al., 2012). In a survey study conducted with 6,450 Trans individuals, it was found that Trans Latinxs experience 20% unemployment rate, 28% live in extreme poverty (less than \$10,000/year), one in 12 Latinx respondents were HIV-positive with some individuals not knowing their status, and 47% reported having attempted suicide (Grant et al., 2011). Social and economic marginalization compound health disparities for Trans Latinx individuals. Trans Latinx individuals report the highest rate of unequal care among any ethnic or racial group, with some research indicating that undocumented Trans Latinx individuals are often the most vulnerable to violence and abuse within these settings (Auldridge et al., 2012). Among these increasing and disparaging statistics the research on minority stress is one way to help make sense of the experiences faced by this community, including their methods used to coping.

The research on minority stress has been essential to highlighting how social oppression can take a toll on the overall health and psychological well-being of gender and sexually diverse individuals (Bockting et al., 2013; Meyer, 2003). For Trans individuals, the limited research on minority stress reveals that stigma significantly impacts the lives and well-being of this community. For instance, several studies have found that stigma was associated with psychological distress, mental health issues, low self-esteem, and extraordinarily high rates of suicide attempts (Bockting et al., 2013; Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Katz, 2006). However, the

minority stress model has failed to indicate how intersecting social group memberships might be dealt with in research, simultaneously, given its assumption that oppression is experienced as an additive process. Hence, in addition to the minority stress model, the intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1991) was used to conceptualize how multiple forms of social oppression interact, construct one another, and influence the lives of Trans Latinx immigrants in this study.

A growing number of scholars have argued for the need to view and understand the experiences of diverse others through an intersectional lens (Bowleg, 2013; Collins, 2000; Granka, 2014; Warner & Shields, 2013). bell hooks (1994) highlights that when various social factors and the intricacies of multiple social group memberships such as ethnicity, gender identity, and immigration status are ignored, including the systemic forces operating against these (i.e., nativism, ethnocentrism, cissexism), interlocking systems of “White supremacist capitalist patriarchy” domination is reinforced. In this phrase, hooks (1994) communicates how different external social factors (e.g., nativism) and multiple identities (e.g., ethnicity) are always functioning simultaneously. Mental health professionals have an ethical obligation to consider the ways in which multiple social group memberships create complex and multifaceted experiences in society and within clinical encounters (Nettles & Balter, 2011) to provide culturally and gender-affirming care for Trans Latinx immigrants.

Mental health professionals also have an ethical commitment to social justice advocacy and the responsibility to use their platforms to advocate for change for Trans Latinx immigrants. *The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People* (TGNC; American Psychological Association [APA], 2015) provide clinicians with the guidance to provide trans-affirmative mental health care to this community and assist researchers on conducting research with members from this community. Researchers contend that a lack of

research with the Trans community creates an invisibility that “fails to draw attention to the needs of Trans populations that experience the greatest health disparities” (APA, 2015, p. 851). As a group who has faced historical oppression in the U.S., Trans individuals who are also Latinx immigrants experience a plethora of compounded layers of marginalization that are not fully represented in the current available empirical literature.

In closing, the purpose of this study was to explore, understand, and describe how membership in multiple oppressed social groups might influence stress and coping among Trans immigrants of Latinx descent. In order to address this goal and the current gaps in the empirical literature on minority stress and coping, a Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, & Hess, 2012) method of inquiry was used. Semi-structured interviews were collected and analyzed via CQR to explore how Trans Latinx immigrants construct their worlds, interpret their experiences, and appreciate what meaning they attribute to these experiences. Within the U.S., systems of oppression including nativism, ethnocentrism, and cissexism may mask the complexity of oppressed communities’ struggles and blind individuals to the conditions that create these (Perez-Huber, 2009). With a blend of both a constructivist and post-positivist epistemologies, CQR provided this study with both a rigorous method to analyze the unique narratives of Trans Latinx immigrants’ lived experiences, and with the necessary flexibility to explore the complexities of these within a cultural context. The intersectionality framework and the minority stress model were considered in the construction of questions and used to both conceptualize and describe the experiences described by Trans Latinx immigrants.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Social psychological research has been concerned with the effects of various facets of social identity on various psychological outcomes, including psychological well-being (Cole, 2009). Research provides evidence on the positive association between psychological well-being and several factors including ethnic identity (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2014), immigration status (Casas & Cabrera, 2011; Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas, Spitznagel, 2007), and gender identity (Barr, Budge, & Adelson, 2016). Yet, the examination of these variables together, along with their associated experiences related to membership in multiple oppressed social groups remains underdeveloped with most research conducted in a uni-dimensional manner. To demonstrate this notion, Acevedo-Polakovich et al., (2014) posit that “most ethnic identity research is cross-sectional and at a univariate level” (p. 160), which limits the opportunity to investigate how social group memberships influence one another, jointly, for meaning and complexity for those members of society who experience significant marginalization. As a result, the nuanced inequities and barriers faced by oppressed communities, whose lives have also been struck with the historical denial of systemic and institutional power, are made invisible, deemphasized or misrepresented in the mainstream record, including research (Bowleg, 2008; Collins, 1990; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; VanDaalen & Santos, 2017). In this study, multiple social group memberships for the Trans Latinx immigrant community was conceptualized using both a weak and strong intersectionality framework to address the current conceptual gaps in the empirical literature. Research using the minority stress model will also be presented, described, and critiqued to also underscore the current gaps in empirical research. Overall, this chapter will provide a review of the literature illustrating the significance of using an intersectionality

framework and minority stress model to conceptualize the stress and management strategies associated with membership in multiple oppressed social groups. This chapter will also provide the historical and socio-cultural implications of empirical research on Trans Latinx immigrants.

## **Intersectionality**

**Brief History of Intersectionality.** Identifying when the intersectionality framework emerged has been difficult (Bowleg, 2012; Grzanka, 2014). Historical references point to 1851, when Sojourner Truth interrogated the intersections of race and gender in her famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speech at the Women’s Convention in Akron, Ohio as a reference to the emergence of intersectionality (Bowleg, 2012). Presently, credit is given to the legal studies scholar Crenshaw (1991) for coining the term *intersectionality* to describe the exclusion of Black Women from White feminist discourse (i.e., equated women with White) and antiracist discourse (i.e., equated Black with men; Bowleg, 2012; Cole, 2009). Other feminist Women of Color scholars have drawn attention to the limitations of analyses that isolate one variable of identity as the prime category of “identity, difference, or disadvantage” (Cole, 2009, p. 171). Throughout U.S. history, Black Women and Women of Color have recognized and resisted their invisibility in historical narratives, cultural representations, interest-group politics, anti-discrimination legal frameworks, and in research (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Lewis & Neville, 2015).

The invisibility and isolation resulting from Black Women and Women of Color’s membership in both oppressed racial and gender groups was termed *intersectional invisibility* in the empirical literature (Purdie-Vaughns & Einbach, 2008). The term intersectional invisibility denotes the experience of individuals with membership in multiple oppressed social groups such as those of Black women due to gender and race (Thomas, Dovidio, & West, 2014; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Siesko and Biernat (2010) clarify that the term

‘invisibility’ does not ‘literally’ mean that individuals do not see, for example, Black women. Instead, they suggest that Black women “may experience a qualitatively different form of discrimination” (p.360), in which their constituent groups and larger U.S. society fail to fully recognize and acknowledge their unique gendered racial experiences (Siesko & Biernat, 2010). Crenshaw (1989) originally posited that sometimes Black women experience oppression in ways that are nearly identical to Black men, and other times, their oppression is similar to that of White women. However, Black women often experience discrimination as Black women, not the sum of racism or sexism (race + gender), “but as Black women whose identity and social location are not simply a derivative of White women’s and Black men’s lives” (Grzanka, 2014, p.xv).

Failure to acknowledge Black women’s experiences with gendered racism perpetuates their invisibility in U.S. society and in psychological research, which in turn leads to failing acknowledgement of the dire consequences of such invisibility (Bowleg, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991). The few available studies that consider the experiences of gendered racism in Black women’s lives, suggest that the internalization of discriminatory experiences stemming from societal racism and sexism may result in negative self-perceptions and decreased self-esteem, which may influence health outcomes, decrease mental health wellness (e.g., increase depressive symptoms), and lower overall life satisfaction for Black women (Lamber, Herman, Smith-Bynun, & Ialongo, 2009). Acknowledging that Black Women have long been aware of the necessity to interrogate their intersectional invisibility is imperative. Black Women have long recognized the significance of passing the ancestral immunities (Akbar, 1998) that they have acquired to survive the pervasive racism and sexism in their lives to other Communities of Color. Given the dearth of empirical literature exemplifying the experiences of membership in

multiple oppressed social groups for Trans Latinx immigrants, the empirical literature exemplifying the gendered racial intersecting experiences of Black women, provided a conceptual guiding framework for this study. Because traversing the difficult terrains of the U.S. as members of two or more oppressed social groups can significantly impact an individual's overall health and well-being, research to increase the visibility of marginalized communities must employ an intersectionality framework to fully acknowledge their unique experiences.

**Intersectionality Framework Defined.** Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that conceptualizes systems of oppression and their implications on the lives of individuals who hold membership in multiple oppressed socially constructed group categories (Bowleg, 2012; Grzanka, 2014). A unique and important aspect of intersectionality is that it is not primarily an explanatory theory, but a critical approach that concentrates on identifying and describing the strategies of resistance employed by individuals, social groups, and organizations facing oppression to cultivate social justice, also referred to as *political intersectionality* (Grzanka, 2014). The framework also centers on conducting a sophisticated analysis and critique of the formation and maintenance of social inequities, or the material consequences of intersectional oppression termed as *structural intersectionality* (Grzanka, 2014). Hence, the intersectionality framework is not simplified to a focus on the diversity and multiple forms of identity in theory, research, and practice otherwise known as *weak intersectionality* (Dill & Kohlman, 2011; Grzanka, 2014). Instead, it argues that “identities and the politics thereof are the products of historically entrenched, institutional systems of domination and violence” (Grzanka, 2014, p. XV), also known as *strong intersectionality*. Strong intersectionality seeks to highlight how systems of inequity uniquely impact individuals who hold membership in multiple oppressed social groups (Dill & Kohlman, 2011; Grzanka, 2014). While strong intersectionality has been



used primarily in critical legal studies, sociology, and Black women's studies, a few scholars are beginning to integrate this framework into psychological theory, research, and practice (see Adames et al., 2016; Cerezo, Morales, Quintero, & Rothman, 2014; Cole, 2009; Lewis & Grzanka, 2015; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Owen et al., 2016; Vaan-Daalen & Santos, 2017). For example, Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, Sharma, and La Roche (2018) theorize that using both a weak (focus on multiple identities) and strong (focus on interlocking systems of oppression) intersectionality in psychotherapy can assist culturally responsive psychotherapists help "clients explore the sources of their difficulties and challenge assumptions about the same" (p. 74). The use of both a strong and weak intersectionality framework in research can capture the complexity of the lived experiences of oppressed communities.

In this study, both a weak and strong intersectionality framework were used to describe the complex experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants. The use of a strong intersectionality conceptual framework in research can produce a counter-narrative about the experiences of oppressed communities in the U.S. (Grzanka, 2014), as it considers the abnormal and oppressive environments oppressed individuals are subjugated to. Finally, a strong intersectionality conceptual framework encourages researchers to appreciate how individuals facing intersectional oppression not only resist oppression, but also cope with its associated stress.

### **Defining the Minority Stress and Coping Model in Research**

The minority stress model is a theoretical framework initially used to explain the adverse psychological outcomes and coping methods employed by sexually diverse individuals subjected to hostile environments as a result of their sexual minority status (Meyer, 1995, 2003). The model has also been used to explain the experiences of other oppressed groups. For instance, the model has been used in research with women (Wilson, Gilmore, Hodge, Kimberley, Kaysen, &

Debra, 2016), immigrants (Farley, Galves, Dickinson, & de Jesus Diaz Perez, 2005; Torres & Wallace, 2013), and impoverished racial and ethnic minorities (Krueger, Onge, & Chang, 2011). The model assumes that the experiences of minority individuals are unique (e.g., additive to general stressors), chronic (e.g., constantly present in social and cultural structures), and socially based (e.g., stem from social structures beyond the individual's control). Three processes are proposed by the model by which individuals with minority statuses are subjected to minority stress, or conflicting internal pressure between minority and dominant values (e.g., heteronormativity; Meyer, 1995). The first includes observable, objective, and socially based environmental events (e.g., threats of violence, discrimination) targeted at their membership in a minority group that create overt stress. The second is the anticipation and expectation that external stressful events will occur. The third includes processes by which an individual internalizes the negative attitudes and prejudices from society. The model suggests that this internalized sense of stigma (e.g., internalized homophobia) may be more harmful because an individual's ability to cope with external stressful events may be impacted (Meyer, 1995). The negative consequences of internalized stigma may contribute to psychopathology including increased substance use, mood and anxiety disorders, as well as suicidal ideation and attempts (Meyer, 2003). Conversely, Meyer (2003) also posits that not all effects of minority stress are negative. Minority groups can develop coping methods and resilience in the face of chronic hostility. For instance, by uniting around a minority identity, individuals can construct and gain group solidarity that may buffer and protect individuals from the adverse mental health effects of minority stress (Meyer, 1995, 2003). As a group, minority members may create a positive view of themselves that may counteract internalized stigma. The research that integrated the minority stress model has served to explicate the negative associated mental health consequences and

ways of coping with a focus on the sexually diverse community (see Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Erickson, 2008).

### **Research Evidence of Minority Stress Among the Sexually Diverse Community**

The identification of minority stress processes demonstrate that greater level of stress experienced by a minority individual is associated with increased mental health problems (Meyer, 2013). However, the dearth of research focused on the impact of minority stress and the mental health of sexually diverse individuals who are also members of other oppressed groups (e.g., ability status, ethnic, racial), complicates mental health professionals' knowledge surrounding the minority stress theory (Bowleg, 2003, 2008; Moradi et al., 2010).

The literature on minority stress theory presents important paradigms within the literature on sexually diverse People of Color (POC). For instance, the limited research literature on sexually diverse People of Color proposes the risk and resilience positions impacting this community (Moradi et al., 2010). On one end, the risk hypothesis suggests that in comparison to White sexually diverse individuals, sexually diverse-POC experience greater stress (e.g., racism, heterosexist stigma) associated with their membership in both sexual and racial minority groups (Moradi et al., 2010). As a result of rejection experienced by White sexually diverse communities and their constituent communities, sexually diverse-POC may receive less support to combat prejudice (Moradi et al., 2010). In fact, there is empirical evidence to support that sexually diverse-POC perceive higher levels of racism within the broader sexually diverse community. Scholars have coined this experience as the *double jeopardy hypothesis*. Beale (1970) first articulated the concept of *double jeopardy* to refer to the ways both racism and sexism affect the lived experiences of Women of Color. The psychologist Beverly Greene

(1994) later coined the term *triple jeopardy* based on Beale's (1970) conceptualization of double jeopardy to contend that Black lesbian women experience oppression based on the additive or multiplicative effects of their race, gender, and sexual orientation. Scholars in quantitative research (e.g., *additive* and *interactive* models) use these terms to emphasize the cumulative disadvantage that accrues for people with multiple oppressed-group identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Highlighting the significant additive risk and impact this poses on the mental health of individuals.

In contrast to the risk hypothesis, the resilience hypothesis posits that because of the experiences with racism prior to coming out, sexually diverse-POC are protected against the effects of stress related to homophobia and may fare better than White sexually diverse individuals (Moradi et al., 2010). Put differently, researchers contend that sexually diverse-POCs may be better equipped to cope with the cumulative minority stress factors as a result of having learned the necessary skills to cope with racism. However, Meyer (2003) emphasizes the cumulative and often devastating nature of minority stress, where the additive pressures of being a minority may lead to higher rates of mental health disorders. Although resilience exists in the face of adversity, the proposed resilience argument by Moradi and colleagues (2010) is difficult to follow given their lack of measurement on the research participants' positive view of their personal and collective identities. In the U.S. ethnic and racial identities are specific types of social group identities, which are aspects of the self that are important for People of Color (POC; Adames, & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Research on positive ethnic identity (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2014; Romeo, Edwards, Fryberg, & Orduña, 2014) and racial identity development (Neblett, & Carter, 2012) points in the direction of increased resilience in the face of discrimination and prejudice. Hence, the lack of a positive sense of self for a POC who

traverse the terrains of a racist society and as members of multiple oppressed social groups, may make it difficult for these individuals to develop resilience in the face of multiple forms of oppression. A dearth of research focused on sexually diverse-POCs' perceptions of heterosexist stigma or on posited associations of such stigma, including internalized homophobia and concealment of sexual orientation exists (Huang et al., 2010). Most of the research has focused on between-group variation, fewer studies have examined within-group variation, and even less have had a large enough sample of sexually diverse participants who are also POCs to examine the unique issues facing this community (Balsam et al., 2011). Accordingly, given that the focus of most research with sexually diverse-POCs is limited in quantity and scope, with most studies focusing on high-risk sexual behaviors and their disease correlates, such as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) (Huang et al., 2010), it is difficult to accept the argument that sexually diverse-POCs fare better than sexually diverse-White individuals. Although some studies show that sexually diverse-POC have no more mental health concerns when compared to White sexually diverse individuals (Moradi et al., 2010), by suggesting that previous experiences with oppression make individuals immune to new forms of oppression, is a disservice to the needs of the sexually diverse-POC community. Similarly, to the research with sexually diverse-POC, the minority stress research lacks focus on the experiences of Trans People of Color (TPOC).

**Minority Stress Among Trans Populations.** The public profile of gender identity and gender non-conformity has been raised by popular media, increasing the visibility and awareness of gender identity concerns for Trans individuals in recent years (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Rodriguez, Perez-Chavez, Cruz, 2016); yet, issues faced by this community are often conflated with sexual minority concerns (Witten, 2015) or altogether ignored in research. For instance,

and as previously noted, the minority stress model was developed for and tested among sexually diverse individuals (Bockting et al., 2013) perpetuating invisibility in the research literature for this community. Although several qualitative studies (Bockting, Robinson, & Rosser, 1998; Nemoto, Iwamoto, & Operario, 2003; Nemoto, Sausa, Operario, & Keatley, 2005) strongly suggest that stigma affects the mental health of Trans individuals, few studies have examined this relationship quantitatively (Bockting et al., 2013). Among the few quantitative studies available, high depression rates (Clements-Nolle et al., 2001, 2006), and gender-based discrimination predicted suicide attempts (Clements-Nolle et al., 2006) among Trans individuals. Furthermore, a longitudinal study provides evidence that gender-related abuse experienced by Trans women was strongly associated with depression in earlier stages of life and a decline in depression in the later stages of life, suggesting that the development of coping mechanisms exists throughout time for this community (Nuttbrock et al., 2010). Similarly, in a larger study of Trans individuals, social stigma was associated with psychological distress and a high prevalence of clinical depression, anxiety, and somatization (Bockting et al., 2013). While a myriad of mental health effects of minority stress is suggested in the literature for Trans populations, the most alarming statistics regard the exceptionally high rates of suicide attempts among this community (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). This is true for those who experience violence or other forms of victimization related to their Trans status, compared to those who do not experience such negative external events (Testa et al., 2012). For instance, suicide attempts have been associated with recent unemployment, forced sex or rape, verbal and physical victimization related to gender and low self-esteem (Clements-Nolle et al., 2006). Alarming, those who attempt suicide in the Trans community are at markedly higher risk for suicide completion than those who ideate about suicide but do not attempt (Joiner, 2010; Van Orden et al., 2010).

Together, these studies support the relationship between minority stress processes related to gender non-conformity and suggest that the minority stress model is appropriate to discuss the impact of prejudice and stigma targeting Trans individuals. However, the research focusing on minority stressors experienced by Trans individuals who are also People of Color is scant, with even less known knowledge about the various ethnic groups that make up the Trans Community of Color. For instance, to date, only a qualitative study focusing on the resiliency factors of TPOCs (White, 2013) has been conducted. This is troubling given that the community hate crimes, violence, and murders experienced by Trans individuals, particularly TPOCs, is on the rise (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2015, 2016). The lack of empirical research focused on the unique experiences and needs of such a diverse community are often unacknowledged and overlooked by mental health providers.

**Mental Health Professionals Utilizing the Minority Stress Model.** The increased visibility of Trans individuals has called on mental health professionals to provide evaluation and treatment services to this community, as they endure some of the most brutal systemic violence and associated stressors simply for living authentically (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). However, given the dearth of empirical literature and training to work with this community, such requests raise questions about whether mental health professionals are prepared and competent to deliver trans-affirmative mental health care services (American Psychological Association [APA], 2015). The limited minority stress research for Trans individuals ignores the significant mental health impact from the day-to-day stressors experienced by members of this community. Unfortunately, the voices and experiences of Trans individuals who belong to multiple oppressed social groups remain unheard and invisible, particularly those from Trans People of Color. As such, the lack of training and research calls into question whether mental health professionals'

can competently deliver trans-affirmative care and avoid causing harm to this community (Mikalson, Pardo, & Green, 2012; Xavier et al., 2012). The limited available literature points to routine encounters with an ill-prepared healthcare system that can competently affirm their gender identities and expressions, does not deny them treatment, and does not abuse or harass them (Auldridge, Tamar-Mattis, Kennedy, Ames, & Tobin, 2012).

Despite the limited psychological literature, the insights gleaned from research with the minority stress model may explain the communities' stressors associated with societal stigma and discrimination, and thus help mental health professionals understand an individuals' presenting concerns. For instance, TPOC may not only experience trans-negativity, but also racism, nativism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Mental health professionals are tasked with considering how facets of social group membership, jointly, impact mental health outcomes as a result of belonging to multiple oppressed social groups. The current available literature on minority stress is limited in how much it incorporates an intersectional lens underscoring how Trans Communities of Color cope with their invisibility, lack of access to resources, and hostile and stressful environments (Hendricks & Testa, 2012), from within and outside their respective communities. Utilizing both a minority stress and intersectionality framework is necessary to understand the complex experiences of Trans People of Color within a system that continues to protect White heterosexual cisgender male privilege (Helms, 2016) and plagues the lives of oppressed communities, including Trans Latinx immigrants.

**Minority Stress Model Critique.** Despite the utility of the minority stress framework in research, discussing the limitations of its use and the need to incorporate the intersectionality framework when studying multiple oppressed social groups is important. A major critique of the minority stress model lies in its assumption that the experiences of minority individuals are



‘additive’ to general life stressors (Meyer, 2003), which contradicts the intersectionality frameworks’ assumption that individuals’ experiences with oppression occur simultaneously and are interconnected (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, conceptualizing stressors stemming from oppression as ‘additive’ is problematic for individuals who belong to multiple oppressed social groups as this approach attempts to separate and tease apart the experiences of these communities as if these individuals experienced their social group memberships in isolation and without context (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Intersectionality, specifically strong intersectionality, reminds researchers that multiple forms of oppression impacting social group membership are interrelated, built-in systems of power and inequity, and stem from a historically oppressive culture that continues to impact policies and communities’ access to resources (Bowleg, 2012). Furthermore, the minority stress model also fails to acknowledge that these power and privilege structures impact an individual’s overall view of themselves (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017), their mental health, and omits to analyze the strategies oppressed communities employ to fight oppressive systems (Crenshaw, 1991). Moreover, both the intersectionality and minority stress framework fail to acknowledge that context determines which aspects (e.g., gender, ethnicity) of identity may become more salient at times (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) for the individual. However, the use of an intersectionality approach pushes researchers to complicate their understanding of the complexity of studying multiple categories of social group membership jointly (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). It would be a disservice to this community to conceptualize their experiences with oppression from an ‘additive’ perspective for this research study, given the complex experiences of this community. Given the heightened violence experienced by the immigrant, Latinx, and Trans communities due to the current socio-political climate, conducting research using this perspective has never been more important.

In a time when Trans issues are gaining visibility in mainstream media (Hendrick & Testa, 2012), and advocates are forcing the U.S. to confront systemic violence against People of Color (POC; HRC, 2015), particularly TPOC, the epidemic of violence experienced at the intersections of cissexism, nativism, and ethnocentrism by Trans Latinx immigrants, stemming from their membership in ethnic, gender, and immigrant oppressed groups is still rampant. Despite Trans Latinx immigrants' increased susceptibility to hate crimes and violence, the experiences of this community remain unexamined. Consequently, these are an issue that advocates, researchers, and mental health professionals can no longer afford to address separately. The psychological research conducted with the Trans Latinx immigrant community has yet to consider how their intersecting identities influence how they perceive the world around them, and more importantly, how they cope with the stigma and adversity from within and outside their respective communities (e.g., White Trans Community, Latinx Community, broader U.S. Community). Because the lives of trans Latinx immigrants are affected by structural inequities around ethnicity, gender identity, and immigration status, it is important to also consider how context and history (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) will impact their ability to cope with stress.

**Working Together: Intersectionality and Minority Stress Frameworks.** Together, the minority stress and intersectionality frameworks can be used to explain how one of the most disenfranchised communities in society copes with and resists the systemic violence and invisibility they endure. The frameworks may also help explain the rise in systemic violence and hate crimes committed targeting Trans communities in recent years, which only began being documented by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2013 (HRC, 2015). The intersectionality framework may also help conceptualize why most of the hate crimes targeting

this community impacts Trans People of Color (TPOC), with most murders experienced by Trans Women of Color (TWOC; The Advocate, 2015, 2016) and with few available statistics discussing the experiences of Trans Men of Color (TMOC). The invisibility experienced by the various ethnic groups that make up the Trans Community of Color, particularly Latinxs is astounding. Within the Latinx community, Trans individuals who are also immigrants remain invisible from the psychological literature, despite the demographic growth of Latinxs in the U.S. in recent years.

The invisibility of Trans Latinx immigrants in the literature, is alarming as the fundamental forces of exclusion, systems of oppression, and inequity have emboldened and strengthened since the election of the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. president (Chavez-Dueñas & Adames, 2016), and this community is susceptible increased violence. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) has noted that almost 800 hate crimes have been committed against perceived Latinx immigrants, Black Americans, members of the gender and sexually diverse community among other groups in the past year since the 2016 U.S. election began. The intersectionality framework can help highlight the susceptibility that this community experiences as members of multiple oppressed social groups, which without the integration of social group membership (i.e., Trans Latinx immigrants), their voices and experiences remain unheard. As a result, this community is at heightened risk for various forms of violence (e.g., insults, intimidation, threats of physical violence, and death) within and outside their respective communities (e.g., White Trans Community, Latinx Community, Broader U.S. Community), increasing their isolation and access to resources to help cope with stress.

As a result of the limited research on the intersections of identity for Trans Latinx immigrants, inferences about their experiences were drawn from the current available research

from each of the constituent groups of this community and each was described. Following the description of each individual constituent group, information on the limited research that exists on Trans Latinx immigrants was provided. This review of the literature will focus on maintaining an intersectional lens and describing the mental health consequences and coping methods associated with the systemic violence that this community endures.

### **Intersecting Paths: The Latinx, Immigrant, and Trans Experience**

**Historical and Cultural Underpinnings for Latinxs.** The U.S. systemic violence that the Trans Latinx immigrant community endures cannot be understood without knowledge about how their culture “colors and shapes...their design for living and patterns for interpreting reality” (Parham, 2009, p. 6), and how their ethnicity socially positions them in relation to the social hierarchy of success, power, and social mobility and welfare in U.S. society (Organista, 2007). The literature indicates that ethnicity is one of the main sources that create most of the social inequities, including education, health, and socioeconomic status among Latinxs (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Thus, researchers contend that centering ethnicity in the study of Latinx social identities may enable researchers and practitioners to develop a more accurate, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of the Latinx experience (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2014; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Appreciating that the Latinx culture is a historical and collective narrative of rich ancestral roots and traditions, conquest, colonization, slavery, and perseverance (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Organista, 2014) is key because it has often failed to enter the mental health conceptualization of this community as they immigrate and establish themselves in the U.S. Latinxs are often described and represented as an entire ethnic group of individuals who can trace their descendants back to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008). However, the lumping of this

community under the ‘Latinx’ pan-ethnic label ignores that they are one of the most racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse groups in the U.S. (Organista, 2007), whose legacy of oppression and historical trauma resulting from colonization in Latin America continues to shape the lives of U.S. Latinxs today. Consequently, it is at the “deep-structural level of culture” (Parham, 2009, p. 6) and centering of ethnicity where the psychology of Latinxs can be understood, referenced, and interpreted.

Meeting the mental health needs of this complex, diverse, and resilient community is the task of the mental health professionals both in the field and in training. According to the American Psychological Association’s *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* (2003), psychologists have an obligation to understand the influence that historical, social, political, and economic context have on individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of diverse communities. Psychologists are also responsible for integrating their knowledge of traditional psychology in multicultural terms, or a non-White Western perspective, to work with diverse communities whether it was taught during their graduate experience or not (White & Henderson, 2008). Such progressive professional ethics provide ideals worth striving for, but they can be difficult to approximate in practice unless mental health professionals and trainees have a solid conceptual grasp of the complex nature of human oppression (Organista, 2007). However, most training institutions are still not providing suitable multicultural competency training for their students (Constantine, 1997; Constantine & Ladany, 2001; D’Andrea et al., 2001) that is specific to work with Latinxs. All of which lead to considerable diverse cultural, linguistic, and sociopolitical backgrounds, and consequent needs (Cerezo et al., 2014) as this group immigrates to the U.S.

**The Historical and Social Context of U.S. Latinx Immigration.** Throughout history, the U.S. has been well-known as a country of immigrants (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). At the same time, the U.S. has also had an extraneous history of intolerance and nativism, “a form of attitudinal, affective, and behavioral prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreign” (Yakushko, 2009, p. 43), with this hate particularly targeted toward non-White immigrants. In large, non-White immigrants have been “welcomed” to the U.S. only as a necessity in times of economic prosperity and rejected during economic recessions (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2009). These anti-immigrant sentiments and policies have been observed to increase with the waves of immigration becoming more demographically diverse (Yakushko, 2009).

A dramatic shift occurred in the region of origin among the immigrant population residing in the U.S. since the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2009). Where in 1960, 84% of immigrants living in the U.S. were from Europe or Canada, and only 6% were from Mexico, 3.8% from South and East Asia, 3.5% from the rest of Latin America and 2.7% from other areas (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2009; Yakushko, 2009). As of 2014, immigrant roots have changed drastically with Europeans and Canadians making up only 13.6% of the foreign-born population, while Mexican immigrants accounted for the largest share (27.7%), Asian immigrants made up 26.4% of immigrants, and other Latin Americans immigrants stood at 23.9%, and 8.3% were born in other regions (Brown & Stepler, 2016). This ‘Browning of America’ (White & Henderson, 2008), the gradual demographic and cultural change, has led to anti-immigrant policies affecting immigrant Communities of Color.

Since the 1980s, both documented and undocumented migration has been negatively viewed by politicians and the general public (Yakushko, 2009). As a result, the 1990

Immigration Act established a ceiling for the overall number of immigrants admitted to the country, easing immigration opportunities only for those who have high-demand work skills (e.g., scientists, engineers, and nurses; Daniels, 2002). Furthermore, tougher immigration policies (e.g., Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996) were established in order to deal with immigration (Daniels, 2004). Specifically, undocumented immigration to the U.S. has been a target in recent policies and cultural debates (Gabaccia, 2002). Furthermore, following the 9/11 attacks, a number of anti-immigrant reforms emerged (e.g., SB-1070 in Arizona; Rocha, Longoria, Wrinkle, Knoll, Polinard, & Wenzel, 2011), and policies (e.g., policies allowing local police to enforce immigration laws) were passed. The overall objectives of these anti-immigration policies are to (1) “secure” the southern U.S. border; (2) “control” the flow of undocumented immigrants trying to enter the U.S.; and (3) decrease the number of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. (Cornelius, 2009). In general, all immigration waves have eventually produced policies and/or legislative proposals of one kind or another (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). However, these policies have been particularly negative (i.e., deportations without due process of law) and biased (i.e., differential impact depending on ethnic and racial background of immigrant), which have only increased racial profiling and human rights violations against the undocumented community (Casas & Cabrera, 2011), particularly and disproportionately against the Latinx community. For instance, Latinxs are overrepresented in the number of individuals who are deported, and in 2013 reports showed that although 78% of undocumented immigrants were Latinx, 97.7% of individuals deported were of Latinx descent (Magaña -Salgado, 2014; Zong & Batalova, 2015). The criminalization of undocumented Latinx immigrants by the law, not only excludes but also instills fear in this community to seek critical and often necessary life-saving services (e.g., medical care, police assistance; Adames & Chavez-

Dueñas, 2017). These and new growing anti-immigration policies continue to plague the day-to-day lives of U.S. Latinx immigrants today. Table 2.1 provides examples of the immigration typology and definitions that were used throughout this study, in order to provide clarity about the specific use of terms.

Table 2.1  
*Immigration Typology and Definitions*

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
Immigrants and Foreign-Born Individuals	Terms used by the U.S. government, scholars, and media to refer to individuals who are seeking to live in the U.S. permanently, regardless of their legal status.
Legal Immigration	The process by which non-citizens are granted legal permanent residence or a “green card” by the U.S. federal government.
Undocumented Immigrant	An individual who resides in the U.S., but who is not a citizen, has not been admitted for permanent residence, and does not have specific authorized statuses permitting long-term residence and work. Additionally, undocumented immigrants lack voting rights and access to benefits, such as public entitlements.
Asylum Seeker	Refers to a protected legal status granted to individuals who have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or political opinion.
Latinx	Pronounced as ‘La-teen-ex,’ is a descriptor for individuals in the U.S. who have roots in Latin America which explicitly acknowledges diversity in forms of gender identity and expression via the use of ‘x’ in lieu of the gendered articles ‘a’ or ‘o.’

*Note:* Table informed by Castañeda, H. & Melo, M.A. 2014; Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2015; Pew Hispanic Center, 2005; Santos, C.E. 2017; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2016; U.S. Department of State, 2010; Yakushko, 2009.



**Latinxs Immigrants Remaking the Cultural Fabric of the U.S.** Despite the criminalizing policies and the inhumane treatment experienced by Latinxs in the U.S., the lasting demographic and cultural impact of this resilient community to the ‘Browning of America’ (White & Henderson, 2008) has been evident. Since the year 2000, the cultural and demographic transformation of the U.S. has been driven by the Latinx immigrant population (Krogstad & Lopez, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Yakushko & Morgan, 2012), making the U.S. was one of the most multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual societies in the world (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Moreover, the latest Bureau of the Census report (2011) indicated that the Latinx population continues to grow and has reached a population of 55.4 million, with an estimated projected population growth to 106 million by the year 2050 (Krogstad, 2014). In 2015, among U.S. Latinxs, 21.15 million were immigrants, a segment of the total 45-million immigrant (documented and undocumented) population that is projected to reach 78 million by 2065 (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015; Passel, 2015). However, in the past years, this group’s growth fell to zero resulting from deportations and deaths (particularly of Mexican immigrants), but recent reports indicate the period of zero net migration ended (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). For instance, from 2014 to 2015, a rebound was observed both in the number of Mexican immigrants, growing by 740,000 people, and in immigrants from countries in Latin America other than Mexico, with a growth of 449,000 people (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). Currently, nearly 7.8 million Mexican and Central American, 690,000 South Americans, and 260,000 Caribbean immigrants are undocumented (Zong & Batalova, 2016), representing a significant portion of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S. With the continued projected demographic growth of this population, the future of the U.S. as a country,

was tied to the overall well-being of the Latinx immigrant community (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017).

Despite continued Latinx immigrant population growth, the scholarship as well as clinical training on Latinx immigrants remains minimal. Yakushko and Morgan (2012) posit that, “counseling psychologists, like the general American public, are not well informed about issues and concerns that are specific to those who were born outside of the U.S., especially those who are recent arrivals to this country” (p. 473). Unfortunately, even less is known about the subgroups that make up the Latinx immigrant population, particularly among the sexual and gender diverse community.

**Gender and Sexually Diverse Latinx Immigrants.** Currently, no statistic exists on the exact number of immigrants who self-identify as gender and sexually diverse individuals (Center for American Progress [CAP], 2014); however, this number is estimated to be around one million, with at least 267,000 adult immigrants who are undocumented and gender and sexually diverse-identified (Burns, Garcia, & Wolgin, 2013). Furthermore, 189,000 or 71% of all gender and sexually diverse-identified undocumented immigrants are estimated to be Latinx (Burns, Garcia, & Wolgin, 2013). While scholarship on Latinx immigrants has increased in the last decade, very little research has been conducted on gender and sexually diverse immigrants (Morales, 2013; Yakushko & Morgan, 2012), and within the psychology field, even less is known about Trans Latinx immigrants (Cerezo, Morales, Quintero, & Rothman, 2014). This is troublesome because researchers posit that Trans individuals are more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities, and particularly from Latinx backgrounds (Flores, Brown, & Herman, 2016). Thus, their membership in multiple oppressed social groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and immigrant) makes them invisible in the literature, but hyper visible and susceptible to significant

risk factors within and outside their respective communities. Some of the associated contextual risk factors that this community face includes stigma, discrimination, nativism, limited employment opportunities, physical and sexual violence, and immigration issues that all contribute to a multitude of adversities related to mental health concerns, social isolation, incarceration (often due to engagement in commercial sex work), and the use of alcohol and other substances (Galvan & Keatley, 2012).

The varied legal and socioeconomic conditions that propel this community to immigrate to the U.S. are similar to those of the general Latinx immigrant population. For instance, the immigration process may encompass pre-, during, and post immigration experiences that may negatively affect their acculturation, health, education, and, more specifically, their self-concept and self-esteem; positive racial ethnic identity development; sense of security; ability to trust others; the capacity to plan; work for a brighter future; and impact on their overall adjustment in the U.S. (Casas & Cabrera, 2011; Yakushko & Morgan, 2012). However, the often-traumatic experiences associated with being Trans complicate the already complex immigration process and contributes to the myriad of sociopsychological problems that take a toll on Trans Latinx immigrants. Thus, mental health professionals must consider that Trans Latinx immigrants “cross [both] physical and psychological borders” (Morales, Corbin-Gutierrez, & Wang, 2013, p. 127), that continue to mirror the life of their countries of origin, and adds new threats to their life, safety, and humanity.

**Trans Latinx Asylum Seekers.** According to U.S. immigration law, Trans individuals who flee their Latin American countries for fear of persecution associated with their gender identity and gender expression may have a valid claim to asylum in the U.S. (HRW, 2016). Yet, it was not until September, 2015 where the case of *Avendano-Hernandez v. Lynch* presented to

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit revealed that the “U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) had failed to provide [an] undocumented Trans immigrant woman deportation relief under the Convention against Torture because it [had] failed to recognize the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation” (HRW, 2016 p. 6). In essence, this case represents the often horrifying and inhumane experiences of Trans immigrants from Latin America who are fleeing violence that targets their gender identity expression. In hopes of finding asylum in the U.S., Trans immigrants from Latin America encounter a discriminatory U.S. system that dehumanizes, invalidates, and humiliates them when Trans Latinx immigrants are placed in detention centers that do not match their gender identity (e.g., Transwoman in all male facility), only to increase the risk for sexual abuse, victimization, and even death.

Sadly, Trans individuals in Latin America are often faced with involuntary immigration in order to protect their lives from violence and potential death in their countries of origin (Palazzolo, Yamanis, De Jesus, Maguire-Marshall, & Barker, 2015). If they are not detained upon arrival to the U.S., they can attempt to apply for asylum status, Trans individuals are faced with significant stringent conditions that must be met that include: “applying within one year of arrival to the U.S., and proving that the applicant’s life would be in danger on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group” (Palazzolo et al., 2015, p. 2). Many associated psychological risk factors are endured by individuals who are forced to flee their countries of origin for safety reasons.

In the U.S. Trans Latinx immigrants continue to grapple with the impact of cissexism, while managing new layers of discrimination due to nativism and ethnocentrism. With the hope of achieving the “American Dream,” and escaping a violent reality in their Latin American countries, Trans Latinx immigrants encounter the reality of belonging to a significantly

marginalized and invisible community in the U.S. For the first time, in a foreign country, they may experience a new level of intersectional invisibility that heightens their risk for mental health concerns. Galvan and Keatly (2012) discern that the reason Trans individuals from Latin America immigrate to the U.S. is tied to their gender identity and limited employment opportunities in their Latin American countries. For example, Trans women view the propeller to their immigration, as a dire need to escape stigma and discrimination, often experienced in the form of violence (Prieur, 1998), murder (Sente, 2008), and often perpetuated by police authorities (Sotela, 2008). Furthermore, as a result of limited resources and employment opportunities, sex work becomes a way of gaining financial independence and economic survival (Smallman, 2007) for Trans women in Latin America. The despair that stems from social inequities as well as discrimination experienced by Trans individuals in Latin America, has been linked to substance abuse (Smallman, 2007). The immigration of Trans Latinx is accompanied with “rejection, stigma, discrimination, physical and emotional violence, and [experiences of] unemployment,” (Galvan & Keatley, 2012 p. 189), significant amounts of stress in the pre-, during-, post-immigration process (Yakushko & Morgan, 2012), which significantly mirrors the U.S. context of arrival.

In the U.S. Trans Latinx immigrants may experience loss of family, social support networks, exposure to trauma (e.g., before, during, and after immigration), compounded by an already complex acculturation (i.e., adaptation process to the new country’s culture) and adjustment process that is associated with psychological stress (Berry, 1980; Masuda, Lin, & Tazuma, 1980). Recently arrived immigrants face a wide range of risks, including poverty, discrimination, physically taxing occupations, fewer years of school, and social isolation (APA, PTFI, 2012). Thus, for Trans Latinx immigrants, the U.S. continues to mirror their previous

experiences in their countries of origin with immense levels of new stressors stemming from nativism and trans-negativity.

Upon arrival to the U.S., gender and sexually diverse immigrants, particularly those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, may not feel welcome in gender and sexually diverse mainstream environments, where many gender and sexually diverse individuals often seek support (Choudhury et al., 2009), further isolating them. Furthermore, although little research has focused its efforts on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants, some resources are beginning to shed some light on their experiences. For example, in the *National Transgender Discrimination Study: Employment and Economic Insecurity*, which is a survey of 6450 Trans people that was conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF; 2009) and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), found that 15% lived on \$10,000 per year or less (Grant et al., 2011). Additionally, forty-seven percent had negative job experiences such as being fired, not hired, or denied a promotion, and almost 97% of the sample reported being harassed or mistreated on the job, with 13% stating they were unemployed (Grant et al., 2011). Of particular interest, for the Trans Latinx participants, the unemployment rate was 18%, and from this sample, only 156 respondents identified as documented non-citizen, and 117 as undocumented non-citizen (Grant et al., 2011). Highlighting the social barriers that the Trans Latinx immigrants face upon arrival to the U.S., and only scratching the surface for the experiences of this community as Trans individuals.

### **Trans Social Group Membership**

**Latinx and Trans: Historical Underpinnings.** Many cultures in which Trans individuals were visible and existed were erased by colonization and westernization (Nanda, 1999). Particularly, for Indigenous people in Latin America, the conquest was “one of the most

violent periods in Latin American history resulting in [their] massacre, domination, and oppression” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p. 92). In Latin America, historians have alluded to the fact among Indigenous populations the third sex or two-spirit individuals were highly respected, but the binary rules imposed by the Spaniards during colonization changed the way in which gender identity was understood by the Indigenous communities (Kellogg, 2005). The imposition of the gender binary and gender norms by the Spaniards, has led Trans individuals to being subjected to significant amounts of violence (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) that continue to this day in Latin America. Despite the historical underpinnings of the highly regarded two-spirit gender identity in Latin America, to this day, this community continues to be one of the most marginalized, invisible, and misunderstood community in both Latin America and in the U.S.

### **Trans Definitions**

Socially constructed identities are both defined at the individual, group, and macrocosm social level (Sue & Sue, 2014). Much debate has risen with regard to the social construct of gender and gender identity. Many people believe that “gender identity—the subjective sense of being a man or a woman or both or neither—is rooted in biology, although the biological cause of gender identity has never been proven” (Stryker, 2008, p. 4). Thus, before beginning a discussion on particular experiences that Trans individuals may experience as a result of their membership in this social group, it is important to define terms that are related to the Trans community (Budge et al., 2013). Table 2.2 provides a list of Trans typology and definitions in an effort to provide an accurate conceptualization and use of terms for this study.

Table 2.2  
*Trans Typology and Definitions*

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
Sex (or biological or natal sex)	Encompasses the physiological (reproductive apparatus and secondary sex characteristics) and biological (e.g., chromosome composition, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia). It also refers to the complex relationship between hormonal, morphological, biochemical, and anatomical determinants that impact the physiology of the body and the sexual differentiation of the brain.
Gender	A social construct used to place individuals into a binary category of men or women that is assumed to derive from individual's external reproductive genitalia.
Gender Identity	An individual's self-concept of their gender (regardless of their biological sex).
Gender Variance	An umbrella term that describes gender as a continuum rather than as a dichotomous construct.
Transgender or Trans	The umbrella term used to describe a diverse group of individuals who cross, transcend, and challenge prescribed societal gender norms including but not limited to <i>female-to-male (FTM)</i> and <i>male-to-female (MTF)</i> , <i>transwoman</i> , <i>transman</i> , <i>transsexual</i> , <i>cross-dresser</i> , <i>gender-bender</i> , <i>genderqueer</i> .
Transsexual	A less frequently used, and sometimes, misunderstood term that may be considered by some to be outdated and possibly offensive. For others, it may uniquely applicable to them. It is a term describing people who believe that their physiological bodies do not represent their true sex. Among this group, gender may be expressed in various forms including changing their clothes, using hormone treatment, choosing sex and/or gender reassignment surgery, or choosing to do nothing to change their biological sex. Some people who may identify as Transsexual do not identify as Transgender and vice versa.
Cisgender	A term used to describe individuals whose gender identity and biological sex or birth assigned category are the same.



Trans Latinx Immigrants	Refers to Trans individuals who currently reside in the U.S. but were born in Latin America.
Nativism	Refers to the opposition toward ethnic minorities based on the belief that foreigners are “un-American” and are a threat to the purity of the national culture. It also suggests a preference for those considered “natives” and antipathy to everyone else. Nativist ideologies hold several cultural stereotypes about Latinx including: (1) immigrants who refuse to assimilate, (2) make little effort to learn English, (3) bring with them their inferior cultural values and practices, (4) contribute to budget deficits and higher taxes, (5) take jobs away, (6) abuse public social services, and (7) reside in the country without authorization.
Ethnocentrism	A belief that one’s own ethnic group’s beliefs, values, and practices are all superior to others.
Cissexism	The belief or assumption that cisgender people’s identities, expressions, and embodiments are more natural and legitimate than those of trans people.
Trans-negativity	A term used to represent the ‘anger’ and ‘disgust’ that appear to be central to cisgender people’s negative responses and attitudes toward Trans individuals. Research has failed to detect ‘fear’ and ‘anxiety’ responses embodied in the term transphobia. Transphobia is also informed by a clinical language that pathologizes and stigmatizes gender diverse identities. Replacing the term ‘phobia’ for ‘negativity’ can hold people accountable for their biases.
Transition	A term sometimes used to describe the process—social, legal, and/or medical—people undergo to discover and/or affirm their gender identity. This may, but does not always include taking hormones, having surgeries, and changing names, pronouns, identification documents.

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*Note:* Table informed by APA, 2015; Budge S.L., et al., 2013; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Korell, S.C. & Lorah, P., 2007; Lev, A.I., 2004; Padron & Salcedo, n.d.; Tebbe, E.A., et al., 2014; Rodriguez, Cruz, & Perez-Chavez, 2016.

The experience of gender identity development is different for everyone, and many Trans individuals have rejected the mainstream language used to describe their inner experience (Lev, 2004). For instance, some people may choose to label themselves as bi-gender or androgynous, encompassing several “male” and “female” traits (Lev, 2004). While other individuals may prefer to use language liberated from the gender binary with terms such as “genderqueer,” or “gender benders” (Lev, 2007). The developing research that has been conducted on identity development of Trans individuals has begun to shed light on their preference for gender labels. For the Trans Latinx immigrant community, the use of the above-mentioned mainstream language may not be representative of their gender identity; thus, it is important for mental health providers to familiarize themselves with the language of this community.

The labels and pronouns that Trans people use to identify themselves will vary within this community. Because many in the community have not had access to academic terms (e.g., Transgender) to express and define their gender, many continue to “identify as Gay, either as a way to defy concepts and terms that have been imposed on the community from outsiders, or because there is still not a term that clearly represents their identity” (Rodriguez, Cruz, & Perez-Chavez, 2016, p. 18). For instance, among Trans Latinx women, a variety of terms exists (Galvan & Keatley, 2012), in addition to Gay, others include *hombres muy afeminados* [very feminine men] and *mujeres completas* [complete women] (Infante, Sosa-Rubi, & Magali Cuadra, 2009), as well as *vestidas* [the ones who dress up] (Diaz, 1998; Prieur, 1998).

### **Trans Latinx Immigrant Research**

A dearth in the literature exists as it relates to the research focusing on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants. This lack of literature maintains a systemic invisibility of the experiences of the Trans Latinx immigrant community, and in the ways that mental health

professionals can intervene and support this community in both a trans-affirmative (APA, 2015) and culturally competent manner. To date, only three studies have been conducted focused specifically on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants (i.e., Cerezo et al., 2014; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2015). The three qualitative studies were briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

In an exploratory qualitative study conducted by Cerezo and colleagues (2014), 10 identified Trans women who were immigrants to the U.S. from Latin America were interviewed. The study was interested in understanding why Trans women immigrate to the U.S. and their negotiations of multiple culturally marked identities (e.g., transgender, immigrant) in two key institutions (i.e., workforce, health care settings). The study used intersectionality theory to conceptualize the data; a case study approach was employed to analyze the data. Four major themes along with subthemes were found including: 1) motivations to migrate (subthemes: freedom to express gender identity, transgender acceptance in the U.S., economic opportunity); 2) psychological distress (subthemes: lack of socioemotional supports, targets of violence, impact of discrimination on mental health); 3) employment challenges in the U.S. (subthemes: challenges with legal documentation, forced entry into survival work; 4) factors contributing to resiliency (subthemes: the healing power of faith, reliance on social support from family of origin and family of choice, civic engagement—drive to help others). Although this is one of the first studies focusing on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants, this study focused specifically on Trans identified women. Currently, no research on the experiences of Trans men have been conducted, and the incorporation of only Trans women was also identified as a limitation by the authors. In addition, the researchers failed to indicate the associated guiding research questions. Thus, it is difficult to discern what questions were driving this study.

Despite the study's limitations, this study has provided an important contribution to the literature to help to understand this underserved population.

Another qualitative study conducted by Palazzolo and colleagues (2015), focused on exploring the contextual factors that determine or mitigate HIV among Trans Latinx women in the Washington, D.C. area. In-depth life history interviews were conducted with a sample of eight Trans Latinx immigrant women (six declared undocumented status at some point; two out of the six participants were granted asylum and two were in the process of applying for asylum). The analysis of the interviews in this study showed eight domains describing: 1) day-to-day life, 2) social support, 3) migration history, 4) social discrimination, 5) service providers, 6) health, 7) sexual history, and 8) commercial sex work experiences among the participants. In general, the results showed that the majority of the participants had immigrated to the U.S. from Central America as a result of increased violence. More importantly, their results showed that four of the eight participants were in the process of receiving asylum, which relieved them from deportation, provided a sense of power in relationships where they engaged in commercial sex work (CSW), and empowered them to feel like they could leave their job. The authors suggest that their results provide evidence that legal status can be an HIV-related protective factor as asylum provides a sense of relief in feeling obligated to stay or engage in CSW as a means of survival. This is an important study that highlights the potential risk factors that may be associated with HIV contraction, such as undocumented status, for Trans Latina women. However, more research is needed to understand more about the complexity of associated risk factors impacting the Trans Latina community. The authors do address the fact that HIV risk is not increased only as a result of documentation status, but other social and systemic factors that affect Trans Women of Color.

Finally, in a qualitative study by Rhodes and colleagues (2015), conducted in the southeastern (e.g., North Carolina) part of the U.S provides further insight into the life experiences of Trans Latinx immigrant women. This study was guided by photovoice, a methodology that is said to be aligned with community based participatory research. The researchers discussed that rather than the researcher defining the focus of the research, the participants were given the option of defining the focus of the research question. Although the researchers did not explicitly state this question, they discussed that the focus of this study was to explore the needs, assets, and priorities of Trans Latinx women. The researchers interviewed a convenience sample of nine Trans Latinx immigrant women who were tasked with documenting their daily experiences through photography. These photos were then used to engage the participants in empowerment-based photo-discussions using guided questions (i.e., What do you see in this photo?; What does it make you feel?; What do you think about this?; What can we do about this?). The analysis of these interactions gave rise to 11 themes that emerged within 3 domains: 1) daily challenges (subthemes: health risks, uncertainty about the future, discrimination, and anxiety about family reactions); 2) needs and priorities (health and social services, emotional support, and collective action); 3) community strengths and assets (subthemes: supportive individuals and institutions, wisdom through lived experiences, and personal and professional goals). The researchers used the revised themes and their interpretation and were presented during a bilingual community forum to validate the findings that helped develop recommendations (e.g., community-and-policy-level actions; agency-level-actions; individual-level actions) to better address the needs of Trans Latinx immigrant women. This particular study provided an innovative way of engaging the research participants in sharing their stories to assess their needs. However, this study did not use an in-depth interview; thus,

failing to acknowledge each individual voice in the study, and failed to provide further data and insights into the needs, assets, and priorities of Trans Latinx immigrant women.

In summary, these three studies provide an initial view into the lives and experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants. It is noteworthy that the current available research uses qualitative methodology. Given the difficulty accessing the population, and due to the sensitivity of the topics explored (e.g., documentation status, HIV status) qualitative methodology was able to respectfully capture their narratives. Additionally, although the three studies provide rich information and insight into the lived experiences (e.g., motivation to immigrate, risk and resilience factors, role of documentation status in HIV risk, employment challenges) of Trans Latinx of immigrant women, the little research available does not currently consider how Trans Latinx immigrants manage their experiences as members of multiple oppressed social groups. Furthermore, only one study (see Cerezo et al., 2014) used an intersectionality framework to conceptualize the lives of Trans Latinx immigrant women. Although this was the case, it was difficult to discern how the authors conceptualized intersectionality theory in the interpretation of their results, although it was mentioned as a guiding framework in the research. It was unclear whether the study used a strong intersectionality framework, given that the authors appeared to be examining multiple forms of identity or using weak intersectionality. For future research on this segment of the population, it would be important to consider how this community might be conceptualized from a strong intersectionality framework. Additionally, future research can include Trans Latinx immigrant men, and consider how their experiences compare to those of Trans Latinx immigrant women as members of multiple oppressed social groups, with a focus on identifying both the collective and unique resilience of each group. Finally, it is important to

continue to use qualitative methods as a platform to allow this community to speak its truth, as well as continued use of an intersectionality framework to conceptualize research.

### **Current Study**

As discussed above, Trans Latinx immigrants are at an increased risk for trans-negativity, racism, nativism, and more once they are in the U.S. Added barriers to this population are the stringent qualifications to seek asylum which can be mitigated with more research advocating for policy change. For these reasons, it is important for mental health providers to be aware of the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants, as a myriad of social and contextual factor can influence the risk for mental health challenges among this community.

To this writer's knowledge, currently there is no qualitative study in existence where the focus is on understanding the role that membership in multiple oppressed social groups has on stress and coping among Trans Latinx immigrants. Given the current increase in hate crimes targeting the social groups that this community belongs to, it is important to understand how this community experiences this membership and manages the associated stressors. Hence, the focus of this study was to build on the current available empirical literature for the Trans Latinx immigrant community and understand how this marginalized community interprets and copes with their experiences associated with being members of multiple marginalized communities. In the following chapter, the methodological approach of accomplishing this goal is described.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

Considering how Trans Latinx immigrants experience and cope with the stressors associated with being members of multiple oppressed social groups is central to the delivery of culturally responsive and Trans Affirming mental health services to this community. Particularly because this community is impacted by nativism, ethnocentrism, and cissexism, increasing their susceptibility to being targets of discrimination and community violence, including hate crimes, associated with their ethnicity, gender identity, and immigration status (Casas, Salas, Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Moreover, this community may experience these forms of violence and discrimination from within and outside their respective Latinx, Trans, and broader U.S. communities (Casas, Salas, Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). While the psychological literature on Latinx has been growing and validating the role of culture in psychotherapy, for example, less emphasis has been placed on the within group differences (e.g., immigration status, gender identity) that exist among this heterogenous community (Adames et al., 2018). The growth in research on immigration within Latinx is promising, however, one of the communities that remains invisible are Trans individuals, with even less known about Trans immigrants that are also Latinx. The dearth of research on the experiences on this community, leaves mental health professionals without information on how to effectively use interventions that consider their social experiences, while honoring their sense of self. Additionally, the research exploring the experiences and unique narratives of how Trans Latinx immigrants cope with the stressors associated with their multiple oppressed social group memberships is scant.

In psychological research, a widely used framework to understand the adverse psychological outcomes and coping methods employed by groups with minority statuses has



been the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003). This body of empirical literature suggests that the discriminatory experiences, stemming from minority status, have significant mental health consequences that are often associated with negative self-perceptions, decreased self-esteem, and increased depressive symptoms (Meyer, 2003; Farley, Galves, Dickinson, & de Jesus Diaz Perez, 2005; Torres & Wallace, 2013). However, much of the minority stress empirical literature has failed to conceptualize and examine the experience of membership in multiple oppressed social groups. Instead, this body of empirical literature has examined the stress associated with having multiple minority statuses as an additive process. The underlying assumption with an ‘additive’ process is that the stress associated with an oppressed group status is an additive factor to an individual’s everyday burdens that is isolated from the influence of other minority status stressors. This conceptualization of the experience of holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups is problematic because it assumes that individuals who belong to these groups live fragmented lives, and that their discriminatory experiences do not influence, interact, or mutually construct one another. The minority stress model also fails to examine the systemic power structures that create the social diseases impacting oppressed communities. Thus, by examining the experiences of individuals who hold membership in multiple oppressed social groups by only using a uni-dimensional approach oversimplifies the complex and qualitatively distinct narratives of the individuals in these groups. In other words, without a sophisticated examination of the experiences provided by individuals who hold membership in multiple oppressed social groups and that also contextualizes their narratives, these individuals and their unique challenges remain invisible. Unfortunately, the quantitative empirical literature on minority stress has only been able to open a small window to the depth of the experience of having to navigate an oppressive

society as a member of multiple oppressed social groups, particularly for Trans individuals who also hold membership in Latinx and immigrant communities.

Consequently, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore, understand, and describe how membership in multiple oppressed social groups might influence stress and coping among Trans immigrants of Latinx descent who reside in the U.S. In order to address this goal and the current gaps in the empirical literature on minority stress and coping, a Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, & Hess, 2012) method of inquiry was used. CQR helped to explore how Trans Latinx immigrants construct their worlds, interpret their experiences, and appreciate what meaning they attribute to these experiences. With a blend of both a constructivist and post-positivist epistemologies, CQR provided the primary student investigator of this qualitative research study with a rigorous method to analyze the unique narratives from the Trans Latinx immigrant community.

### **History, Theoretical Foundation, and Rationale for CQR**

CQR emerged from the phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 1985), comprehensive process analysis (CPA; Elliot, 1989), and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which are noted as the first qualitative approaches developed and used within the field of psychology (Hill, 2012). CQR was developed as a result of the frustration from being unable to understand and implement “vague” qualitative approaches (Hill et al., 2005, p. 196). The goal was to create an approach that could be easily taught and used, but that also integrated the best aspects from each of the three already existing qualitative approaches (Hill, 2012).

CQR incorporates various essential elements from the three already existing qualitative methods of inquiry. For instance, from the phenomenological approach, CQR integrated its stance on the importance of contextualizing the data beyond the context from which it emerged

(Giorgi, 1985), to accurately reflect the life of the Participant. Grounded theory provided its iterative or repetitive approach to the coding of the data collected, an approach referred to as a constant comparative method of analyzing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, the use of a research team to reach consensus coupled with the methods of data analysis involving the systematic comparison of data across cases is common to both CPA and CQR (Elliot, 1989; Hill et al., 1997). However, a distinction exists between CPA and CQR, where CPA focuses on the interpretation of implicit meaning beyond what the participant has stated and CQR does not. Instead, CQR concentrates on the explicit meaning of participants' statements. With all of these elements combined, Hill (2012) asserts that CQR was designed with both rigor (e.g., observations are reported with some level of clarity, objectivity, and scientific merit), and relevance (e.g., participants unique stories are maintained with as much richness as possible) in mind.

CQR was developed to study in depth the inner experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals, allowing researchers to gain a rich and detailed understanding of a phenomenon, which is usually not possible with quantitative methods (Hill, 2012). From a philosophical stance, CQR is primarily constructivist but holds some post-positivist elements (Hill et al., 2005). The constructivist approach shapes how reality is understood in the study. In other words, CQR researchers acknowledge that each participant and their interactions with their environment create unique experiences, but also recognize that commonalities may exist across participants. From an epistemological perspective, CQR recognizes that the participant (e.g., phenomenon expert) and researcher (e.g., probes on Participant experience) influence one another. The CQR researcher learns about the phenomenon by centering the participants' subjective meanings, actions, and social contexts as understood by them, and helps

the participant explore their experience by using probes (Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott, & Davidson, 2009; Hill, 2012). The researcher achieves this by using a standard semi-structured interview protocol (a post-positivist component of the CQR epistemology) while exercising a flexibility to query the same types of information from each participant. Following data collection, the research team and the auditor work to reach the ‘truth’ about the phenomenon through consensus (Hill, 2012). Including auditors in the consensus reaching process controls for groupthink and provides an additional perspective that helps the team come closer to the ‘truth’ (Hill et al., 1997). The research team is encouraged to share their perspectives, which is also believed to bring the team closer to the ‘truth.’ The rigorous consensus reaching process is one of the features that differentiate CQR from other constructivist approaches such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which often relies on a single researcher’s understanding of the data. In line with a constructivist approach, CQR encourages the team members to explicitly discuss their biases, but uses the strategy of bracketing, or being aware of and setting aside their biases and expectations (Hill et al., 2005) to minimize their influence on the results. As a result of bracketing, the goal of CQR is to represent how participants (not the researchers) construct their world, interpret their experiences, and discuss what meaning they attribute to these experiences.

### **Research Design**

This qualitative research study utilized CQR to explore and describe the phenomenon of membership in multiple oppressed social groups in order to understand how Trans Latinx immigrants cope with the experience of this phenomenon. This phenomenon was conceptualized using the intersectionality framework and minority stress model. These frameworks guided the research questions, including the types of questions that the primary student investigator asked

participants in the semi-structured interview protocol for this qualitative research study. To make sense of the data, the primary student investigator used CQR in a systematic way to explore and understand the ways Trans Latinx immigrants navigated their multiple social group memberships and how these might impact them and their negotiation of relationships with other individuals and systems. The unique experiences that stem from navigating their oppressed gender identity, ethnic, and immigrant social groups were conceptualized using the intersectionality framework. Given the challenges that come with an oppressed status, the minority stress framework helped explain the adverse psychological outcomes and coping methods employed by Trans Latinx immigrants. Therefore, both the intersectionality and minority stress frameworks provide a conceptual paradigm where social group membership (e.g., ethnic, gender identity, and immigration status) were simultaneously explored and the associated experiences examined. Collectively, these conceptual frameworks and the CQR qualitative method of inquiry was used by the primary student investigator to consider various forms of oppression and to contextualize and make sense of Trans Latinx immigrant narratives.

To address this goal, an in-depth semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E) was developed. This interview protocol stems from the research questions guiding this qualitative research study. The research questions framing this qualitative research study were as follows:

- 1) What are the experiences that Trans Latinx immigrants have as a result of holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups?
- 2) How do Trans Latinx immigrants cope with their experiences as a result of holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups?

In this qualitative research study, the answers to these research questions stemmed from conducting semi-structured interviews across participants. The richness of the data came from both the semi-structured interview (see Appendix E) that includes open-ended questions, and the probes utilized by the primary student investigator to help the participants explore their experiences. The data was analyzed by the research team using CQR methods to explore the narratives of Trans Latinx immigrants.

### **Researchers**

The creation of a research team is an important aspect of CQR, because the objectivity, reduction of research bias, and the richness of the data obtained are in large part dependent on the functioning of the research team (Vivino, Thompson, & Hill, 2012). Following Hill and colleagues' (2012) suggestions for possible team structures (e.g., set or rotating teams), this qualitative research study utilized a set team. The set research team for this study included the primary student investigator, one team member, and an external auditor. The primary student investigator was in charge of recruiting the research team, training them in CQR methods, and informing them of all expectations.

In order to join the research team, individuals were considered if they had a number of criteria. The research team was selected based on the following criteria: 1) had some knowledge and interest in the phenomenon of study, 2) were bilingual (English and Spanish), and bicultural, and 4) had availability to engage in data analysis for over a few months. The other team member is a professional contact and has experience studying and presenting on Latinx culture. The external auditor was recruited from one of the community mental health centers where the primary student investigator recruited participants from.

**Primary Student Investigator.** The primary student investigator was in charge of all aspects of the study. In accordance to CQR these tasks included: 1) conducting the literature review, 2) developing the research questions, 3) constructing the research interview protocol, 4) recruiting and interviewing participants, 5) collecting the data, 6) recruiting and training team members, 7) managing and conducting all levels of data analysis with team members, and 8) submitting the data to the external auditor (Hill et al., 1997). Moreover, the primary student investigator was also responsible for the discussion of her personal social group memberships and the impact these may have on the research project. The primary student investigator is a Queer, Mexican immigrant, who is a doctoral candidate in a Counseling Psychology program at a Midwestern Public Urban Research University. She is also a cisgender woman who became aware of her own gender identity as a result of working alongside her cohort member, a White transman, in their doctoral program about 6 years ago. Furthermore, the primary student investigator received training in Latinx mental health during her master's program. She has advocated for the Latinx community through professional presentations at conferences on topics related to culture, race, immigration, and more recently, on gender identity. The primary student investigator has also used scholarly writing to advocate for the Latinx community. As part of the advocacy for this community, the primary student investigator's *positionality* and its impact on research was considered.

***Positionality.*** The nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument. Hence, the characteristics that encompass the primary student investigator's 'self' could not be separated from the research project. Consequently, considering how aspects of the primary student investigator's beliefs, political stance, social group memberships, and worldview may have influenced the research process was important. The primary student investigator's

personal aspects were carried into the research context, and the subjective experience of ‘self,’ of both the primary student investigator and the research participants interacted throughout the research process (Glesne, 2011). For this reason, the primary student investigator worked to increase her awareness of her “social, locational, and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in it” (Hay, 2005, p. 290) also known as positionality. In qualitative research, positionality represents a space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet (Bourke, 2014), and as Freire (2000) put it, the two exist in a “dialectic relationship” (Freire, 2000, p. 50). In CQR, this dialectic relationship openly discusses the positive or negative reactions to the data on the basis of their cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and direct and indirect experiences regarding the topic as it may hinder objective data analysis (Hill et al., 2005). Hence, the critical reflection of the primary student investigator was imperative.

The primary student investigator is a bicultural and bilingual (i.e., Spanish and English), Queer Mexican immigrant, who acknowledges that she shares both a collective culture as well as experiences of discrimination with the Trans Latinx immigrant participants of this study. As a cisgender woman and as someone with documentation status, these aspects both separate and add complexity to the experiences that were initially shared. It was important to acknowledge that even the length of time spent in the U.S. may separate the shared experiences and create blind spots that maintained the primary student investigator from fully appreciating the narratives of the participants of this study. Prior to embarking in this research study, the primary student investigator acknowledged that her interest in studying the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants is entrenched in her own experiences as a member of multiple oppressed social groups. Consequently, careful consideration was given to how the primary student investigator's social group memberships (e.g., cis-gender, Latinx, immigrant) shaped the primary student



investigators' interaction and conceptualization of society, as this influenced the interpretation of the narratives provided by the research participants in this study. This reflexivity is also largely informed by the primary student investigator's' epistemological positions.

As noted previously, in this research study the primary student investigator's epistemological position was informed by the experiences associated with her membership in multiple oppressed social groups. Although the primary student investigator shares some social group memberships with the participants of this study, the primary student investigator was diligent to try to understand the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants through their own lens. As a result, the critical reflexivity of the primary student investigator shaped the nature of the description, analysis, and the interpretation of the data. While, the primary student investigator can use the established research literature to distance herself from the experiences she shares with other Trans Latinx immigrants, the primary student investigator's own bias may always be reflected in the entirety of the research project. Therefore, examination of the primary student investigator's bias, and other team members, was ongoing and considered throughout the research process. Fortunately, one of the strengths of CQR lies in its design to have the research team act as a 'check-and-balance' for each of the team members' positionality through bracketing, which reduced the bias in the data analysis process. Moreover, a participant of this research study was asked to review the analysis of the study in order to counter the knowledge of the primary student investigator as a cisgender woman.

**Research Team Members.** The sensitive nature of conducting research with a highly stigmatized and marginalized population called for a thoughtful selection of team members for this qualitative research study. It is important to "consider the various possibilities of the team composition and be very careful in selecting team members, considering possible power

differences among group members, types of expertise, as well as level of commitment” (Heppner & Heppner, 2004, p. 158). Consequently, the primary student investigator reached out to professional contacts asking them to consider joining the research team if they were interested in the phenomenon of study, were bilingual (e.g., English and Spanish) and bicultural, and had experience and knowledge of the Latinx population through scholarship. Meeting the bilingual language criteria was important aspect for data analysis since the participants in this study were both monolingual Spanish speakers and bilingual (e.g., English and Spanish). Recruiting research team members who met all of these criteria was difficult; however, one individual joined the research team. This research team member is a bicultural and bilingual (i.e., Spanish and English) gender-nonconforming Queer Chicax, who is also cisgender. This research team member has experience working with and has knowledge of the U.S. Latinx population, has taken a master’s level course in Latinx Mental Health, and has some experience with both publishing and presenting on sexual and gender diversity among the Latinx community. The research team member supported the transcription of audiotapes, coding and analysis of this research project. The overall research team selection criteria ensured that a certain level of knowledge, sensitivity, and maturity was met to conduct research with this community.

In CQR, the consensus process is an integral aspect of its method (Hill et al., 1997), by relying on respect, equal involvement, and shared power by research team members. Moreover, the diversity of viewpoints is valued, honored, and protected, while a common understanding of the data is sought among individual research team members (Hill, 2012). The primary student investigator ensured that the other team member was able to contribute throughout the process and mediated conflicts when they arose. When conflict resolution was not possible, the primary student investigator defaulted any conflicting views of the data to the auditor to help the research

team reach consensus during the coding and data analyses process. Although conflicts are unavoidable, training of the research team was conducted to lessen any conflicts.

**Research Team Training.** Research team training is often necessary for researchers who are new to CQR (Hill, 2012). Prior to beginning the training process of the research team, the primary student investigator was in charge of reading the recommended exemplar studies to gain CQR competency (e.g., Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2003; Knox, Hess, Williams, & Hill, 2003; Ladany et al., 1997; Williams et al., 1998). Once the research team was created, the member was asked to read important material (e.g., Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 1997) describing CQR, along with articles focused on the Trans Latinx immigrant community (e.g., Cerezo et al., 2014; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2015). Prior to the coding and analysis process, the primary student investigator worked with the research team member to openly discuss their biases and expectations for this research project. Following this, the primary student investigator guided the coding and analysis process. The research team member was asked to code according to the language in which each interview was conducted to maintain the richness of the data. Following this, the core ideas were discussed and translated into English (as necessary) using the CQR consensus process. When the coding process brought up challenges for the research team, the team consulted with the auditor who is an experienced CQR researcher (Hill, 2012).

**Auditor.** The auditor in this research study received ongoing data updates and independently analyzed it to verify the accuracy of the results reached during the consensus process. The auditor provided ongoing feedback to the research team on their coding. In essence, the auditor reviewed the research team's work at each major step (i.e., developing domains, core ideas, categories, and cross-analysis; Hill, 2012). The purpose of utilizing an auditor in the data analysis process was to provide quality assurance, help the research team

reach consensus, assess the consistency of the results, and enhance trustworthiness. In this qualitative research study, the auditor was an experienced qualitative researcher with background knowledge and expertise in CQR methodology and a member of one of the community mental health centers from where the research participants were recruited from. The auditor was selected for their availability, their work with the Queer Latinx community, and their interest in supporting this research study. The auditor's clinical and advocacy work reflects in areas of multiculturalism and advocacy of oppressed groups, including Trans Latinx individuals.

### **Participant Selection**

Several considerations for recruitment of participants for this research study were employed. First, given that the Trans Latinx immigrant community has a long-standing history of systemic and institutional discrimination, a collaborative partnership was established with a social worker working in a community health center serving the Latinx community. The social worker was the intermediary between Trans Latinx immigrants and the primary student investigator. Second, working alongside a colleague, who is a Latinx Transman, also helped the primary student investigator find other avenues for recruitment. Both the partnership with the community social worker and a Trans Latinx colleague served to: (1) recruit participants for this study, and (2) establish trust with participants who met the inclusion criteria. A discussion of how these community members helped support the recruitment efforts of the primary student investigator will be discussed.

**Contacting Participants.** A snowball or 'word of mouth' recruitment strategy was employed with the help of a Trans Latinx colleague, who provides health services to and has personal contacts in the Trans and Latinx community who meet this study's participation criteria. With his help, the study's flyer was distributed among his contacts across the country, and one

individual was recruited through this effort. In a large Midwest City, the primary student investigator also sought out participants from community agencies where the monolingual Spanish-speaking Latinx community can find support and advocacy. The primary student investigator identified only one community agency with a support group for Trans Latinx individuals. A meeting was requested with the social worker in charge of this support group to establish a collaborative working relationship. The social worker agreed to support the primary student investigator's research efforts and invited her to the Trans Latinx support group meetings. On July 31, 2016, the primary student investigator attended her first group meeting and was introduced by the social worker to the group. During this first meeting, the primary student investigator briefly explained her research efforts to the members of the group, while being respectful, amiable, and validating when some of the individuals in the group questioned the intentions of the primary student researcher. The primary student researcher allowed individuals to ask as many questions as needed before they felt comfortable agreeing to participate. In fact, the primary student researcher continued her recruitment efforts in following support group meetings, where a convenience sampling method was used after meeting with the first participant recruited from the support group. The primary student researcher's search efforts and the relationship building with this mental health agency was ongoing.

The primary student investigator attended a total of five group meetings to avoid imposing on this community's safe space. During these meetings, flyers were passed out in both English and Spanish detailing the contact information (e.g., personal cellular number, email) of the primary student investigator, and information about how to become a participant in the study. Finally, in the flyer the participants were made aware that their participation in the study would be compensated with \$20 in cash or in a visa gift card after completion of the interview.

Participants who engaged in a face-to-face interview were awarded with the \$20 compensation immediately following their interview, and participants who engaged in an online face-to-face interview, received a \$20-dollar visa gift card that was mailed on the next business day. The associated criteria for participation in this study includes individuals who: 1) self-identify as Trans, 2) are immigrants from Latin America, 3) have a verbal fluency in English, Spanish, or both, and are 3) 18 years of age or older. A copy of the participation flyer (see Appendix A) and standardized recruitment email (see Appendix B) was used by the Trans Latinx colleague helping recruit participants. Flyers were left with the community agencies where many of the participants in this study came from, and also in agencies serving Trans individuals. The primary student investigator also sent the standardized email (See Appendix C) along with the participation flyer as an attachment to various Latinx organizations. The primary student investigator was in charge of scheduling screenings and interviews with everyone who indicated an interest in the study. The primary student investigator was also in charge of managing the study's ethical procedures.

From the above-mentioned recruitment efforts, a total of nine participants from various states across the country agreed to be interviewed for this study. The number of participants recruited was congruent with Hill and colleague's (2012) suggestion of using a small number of participants. All nine participants met the study's inclusion criteria and were Trans immigrants to the U.S. and of Latinx descent and at least 18 years of age. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 48 years ( $M=32$ ,  $SD=7.56$ ).

**Procedure.** Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed. The application submission included the following materials: a) flyer (see Appendix A), b) consent form (see Appendix B), c) demographic questionnaire (see Appendix

C), and d) interview questions (see Appendix D). Appendices A-E were also all translated into Spanish after IRB approval. Once the IRB was approved, the study began recruiting participants.

Because the sample of interest is a highly marginalized and invisible community, a snowball sampling method was used along with the recruitment efforts of a Latinx transman and the primary student investigator. The use of a convenience and snowball sampling method was vital for this study, where the information of the study and recruitment of new participants was done by ‘word-of-mouth’ from current participants and from recruitment efforts made by the primary student investigator and Latinx transman. These efforts reached members of this community, from across the country, who did not attend the Trans Latinx support group meetings.

The participants who expressed interest in this study were screened using the abovementioned selection criteria. For instance, when potential participants contacted the primary student investigator to schedule an interview appointment, a quick and brief screener asking them about their age and their group membership was completed immediately to confirm they met the study’s participation criteria. Once the screener was completed, an interview was scheduled. During the scheduled interview meeting, the primary student investigator discussed the consent form and addressed confidentiality. As suggested by the CQR ethical protocol, the participants were also provided with information regarding the minimal risk and benefits of the research, and the voluntary nature of participation in this study was emphasized (Hill, 2012). Following this, the participants had an opportunity to address any questions or concerns they had prior to completing the consent form, demographic questionnaire, and interview protocol. During the discussion of the informed consent, an outline of the interview process, as well as an

explanation of the use of the recording equipment was provided and the confidentiality issues associated with this were addressed in detail.

Each participant of this study was made aware of issues of confidentiality. For instance, each participant was provided with information about what the protocol to handle, store, and protect the information supplied by the participants was, including the informed consent and recorded interview. The participants were assured that in this study confidentiality was maintained by: 1) assigning a de-identified code to all of the questionnaires and transcribed data, 2) storing all questionnaires, transcribed data, and audio files in a locked office in the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of Enderis Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 3) storing all audio files on a password protected computer, 4) storing the data collected for three years, and 5) after three years, destroying all the information and data collected for this study. Essentially, all of the study participants were assured that all of the audio files and transcribed data were retained according to the American Psychological Association's (APA) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's security confidentiality mandates. Moreover, the participants were made aware that the results of this study may be used for future publications, but that any information used would be de-identified to protect their identities. After confidentiality was discussed, the consent form was signed, and the participants' questions were addressed, the interview proceeded.

The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted at various locations. For instance, in the community health agency where the primary student researcher established a relationship and via GoToMeeting, an online meeting and video conferencing software that enabled users to meet with other computer users in real time, in a secure manner. One of the participants agreed to meet in a library due to an inability to meet in the community health agency. Once the meeting location was agreed upon, data gathering information began. The



face-to-face interview began by gathering demographic information (see Appendix D) of each participant, which created a participant profile. The participants were informed that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes.

### **Data Collection**

As suggested by Burkard, Knox, and Hill (2012), a pilot interview was conducted to assess whether the interview questions actually elicited the sought-out data about the phenomenon of membership in multiple oppressed social groups. The pilot interview that was conducted with one participant who fulfills the participation criteria for this qualitative research study but will not be part of the final sample. The purpose of this procedure was to assess whether the study participants would understand the questions, the questions would produce data about the phenomenon in question, and whether the questions flow logically (Burkard, Knox, & Hill, 2012). Moreover, this process provided the primary student investigator with time to solicit feedback from the participant engaged in the pilot interview about the troublesome areas in the interview protocol. The primary student investigator used and incorporated this feedback into the current interview protocol (see Appendix E). Finally, the pilot interview gave the primary student investigator the opportunity to gain familiarity with the recording materials and the interview process. The edited interview protocol was utilized to conduct the face-to-face interviews with all of the participants recruited for this qualitative research study.

Conducting face-to-face interviews with a highly marginalized segment of the U.S. population offered access to nonverbal data (e.g., facial expressions, gestures) to enrich the meaning of the data, but also provided the opportunity for the primary student investigator to build the necessary rapport for the participants to feel comfortable in disclosing personal information. As suggested by Heppner and Heppner (2004), immediately following the

interviews, the primary student investigator documented her memos regarding the interactions that occurred during the interviews to add richness to the data. Following the completion of the interview they were transcribed.

**Interview Transcription.** Once the interviews are finalized, the primary student investigator was in charge of conducting the transcription of the interviews for this research study. Hill and colleagues (1997) suggested that interviews should be transcribed, verbatim, with any identifying information omitted and unnecessary language deleted (e.g., non-language statements “um” “ah”; fillers “you know”). Furthermore, the transcription of the interviews was transcribed in their original language (e.g., Spanish or English) to avoid losing rich content in the translation process. Finally, once the transcription process was completed, the research team member was recruited, trained, and tasked with data analysis of the transcripts.

### **Data Analysis**

The CQR method provides an outline of central steps that guided the data analysis of this qualitative research study (Hill et al., 2005). These central steps allowed researchers to examine the rich qualitative narratives from the participants, through a rigorous data analysis process. The CQR data analysis involved three central steps: 1) developing domains (i.e., topics used to group data); 2) developing core ideas (i.e., data summaries); and finally conducting, 3) a cross-analysis (i.e., developing categories that describe common themes; Hill et al., 2005). The three main steps to data analysis guided the research team as they immersed themselves in the data.

**Identifying Domains.** Once all interviews were transcribed, each individual transcript was broken into blocks of data (i.e., phrases, sentences, and paragraphs) that cover the same topic area (Hill et al., 2012). Following this process, each of the transcripts was distributed among independent coders (i.e., members of research team), so that these blocks of data was read

individually and coded for domains, or primary topic areas. Original domains were assumed by the questions that were asked in the interview (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). Domains identified from the data were discussed among team members in order to work toward a consensus on the cases (Hill et al., 2012).

**Core Ideas.** Following the identification of domains, the next step in the data analysis was to construct core ideas or summaries of the data that capture the essence of the participant's statements in fewer words (Hill et al., 2012). During this process, the core ideas were independently created by research team members using the exact wording, with an emphasis on remaining as close to the data (i.e., the participant's perspective and explicit meaning) as possible, in order to reduce redundancy and ensure that the core ideas are free of assumptions or interpretations (Hill et al., 2012). Following this independent coding process, the research team engaged in their own collective coding process that led to a consensus of identified core ideas (Hill et al., 2012).

**Audit of Core Ideas.** After each of the transcripts was analyzed using an individual and group coding consensus process, the identified core ideas were listed and categorized within domains. Throughout this process, the auditor reviewed the set of core ideas and domains (Hill et al., 2012). The auditor focused on verifying and/or clarifying the core ideas and domains identified by the research team (Hill et al., 2012). Following the audit process, the research team engaged in a cross-analysis of the data.

**Cross-Analysis.** During the cross analysis of the data, the research team moved into a higher level of abstraction in analyzing the data (Hill et al., 2012). As suggested by Hill et al., (1997), the cross-analysis was completed with the primary research team generating the categories as a group with a high level of agreement on wording for the categories and placement

of core ideas into the categories. Following the completion of the aforementioned process, the frequency of occurrence of the categories identified was characterized as: general (applies to all cases), typical (applies to half of the cases plus one), variant (applies to fewer than half of the cases), and rare (applies to one; Hill et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2005). In this study, the frequency labels were created by the research team members, and the auditor ensured their accuracy. Table 4.2, in the results section provides a visual representation and summary of all domains, categories, subcategories, and their associated frequency and classification codes.

While conducting all aspects of this study, including the data analysis process, ensuring trustworthiness was central. Williams and Morrow (2009) has suggested that researchers use 1) establishing the integrity of the data, 2) balancing the tension between subjectivity and reflexivity, and 3) clearly communicating the findings and their applicability to research and practice to evaluate trustworthiness. In this research study, the rigor of CQR helped balance the subjectivity and reflexivity of the process via the consensus reaching process in the data analysis, and with the help of the external auditor. All aspects of the process, from beginning to end have been fully described and any biases that may have emerged were both discussed and addressed. In the next chapter the results will be communicated, contextualized, and their transferability and limitations will be discussed. With all of these elements combined, the research team believes that this study has met the criteria for trustworthiness of the data.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter will begin detailing research team biases disclosed prior to recruiting participants and analyzing the data. Next, the results of the current study will be presented beginning with demographic information, followed by the domain and subcategories that emerged via the data analysis process. Definitions and quotes from the participants' interviews have been included for each domain, category, and subcategory.

#### **Biases**

During the initial team meeting, everyone had the opportunity to both discuss any expectations and biases that may influence the way in which they respond to the data during the analysis process. A total of two members, including the primary student investigator, were on the research team and were involved in every aspect of the data analysis process from transcribing audiotapes to finalizing domains, categories, and subcategories. The external auditor was involved in ensuring all steps of the data analysis process in CQR were followed, while providing invaluable feedback during the data analysis. As previously noted, the primary student investigator was involved in training the other research member, providing a comprehensive review of the literature, organizing all team meetings, and writing the final content of this dissertation document. Given the difficulty in being able find other team members who were both bicultural and bilingual, with knowledge on the trans Latinx population, and willing to commit for several months to the data analysis, one individual who met these criteria joined the research team. The other research team member was a bilingual and bicultural gender-nonconforming Queer Chicanx, who is also cisgender. This research team member also has experience working with and knowledge of the U.S. Latinx population, having taken a

master's level course in Latinx Mental Health, and with some scholarship experience both publishing and presenting on the gender and sexually diverse Latinx community.

While the second research team member received some information regarding gender diverse issues, the primary student investigator was the only individual with some experience presenting scholarly work on Trans Latinx community. The primary student investigator has had training specific to Latinx Mental Health and provided mental health services to the Latinx community in a community mental health setting for approximately four years. Using her connections to a community health center that provides services to the Latinx community, the primary student investigator established a relationship with a support group for Trans Latinx individuals, where some of the participants were recruited from.

The differing experiences in working with the Trans Latinx community between the primary student investigator and the other research team member had the potential to create power differentials. The potential for differences in perspectives and comfort with engaging in the consensus process regardless of knowledge or training background were brought to the forefront during the initial team meeting, and to other team meetings as necessary. Throughout the data analysis process, the research team continuously addressed differences in perspective as it pertained to the data and discussed the potential impact on the results. Additionally, our positionality as cisgender individuals was actively discussed and literature focused on Trans individuals was often reviewed to help address any blind spots in the understanding of the data.

Prior to training the other team member on CQR and discussing the literature on Trans Latinx immigrants, the primary student investigator and research team member discussed both biases and expectations for study. Both researchers engaged in an open dialogue about their understanding of the terms 'Trans, Transgender.' The research team member noted that

transgender is “being assigned into a gender binary that does not fit with how one identifies inside” and the primary student investigator defined being transgender as “an umbrella term used to describe individuals who transcend societal prescribed gender assigned at birth.” Additionally, both research team members described their understanding of Latinx and immigration, both agreeing that Latinx are a group of individuals with a shared history, culture, and values that shape their worldview and immigrated from Latin America. With regards to immigration, the primary student investigator and research team member discussed reasons why Trans individuals may immigrate from Latin America. The primary student investigator discussed an interest in safety gained in the U.S. as a Trans individual as the main reason for immigration, while the other research team member listed safety and economic opportunities.

As a team, both the primary student investigator and research team member reported having expectations that the participants in this study would significant life challenges. For instant, discrimination in all domains of their life including with family, employment opportunities, violence, and in accessing gender affirming services were described as expected results. Both the primary student investigator and research team member noted that stressors related to being a Latinx immigrant would also pose challenges related to their documentation status. Both team members also expected that all of the participants would discuss the ways in which they manage their challenges. The above-mentioned biases were continuously revisited throughout the data analysis process. After the data analysis process, all team members reported learning about the unique challenges this community faces. However, both team members noted a sense of surprise over how several of the results challenged the previously noted pre-conceived biases and expectations. After the data analysis was completed, the research team agreed to avoid imposing pseudonyms in Spanish that would reflect the participants’ Latinx heritage, in

order to avoid using gendered language as much as possible. Hence, both research team members agreed to use the term ‘participant’ with a number that was assigned to them to protect their identity. In the following paragraphs, the participants’ demographic background will be described.

### **Demographic Information**

A total of nine individuals participated in the current study. Five of the participants were recruited from professional listservs and word of mouth. Personal contacts of the primary student investigator also provided direct contact information of individuals who met the study’s criteria. The remaining four participants were recruited from a local community health center that provides health services to the Latinx community. A total of five interviews were conducted in person, with the remaining four conducted online via a secure video conferencing software. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to provide responses to a total of six demographic questions including: (1) Age, (2) Gender Identity, (2a) Pronouns, (3) Country of Origin, (4) Ethnicity, (5) Years Lived in the U.S., and (6) Formal Education. Each demographic question was phrased in an open-ended manner, allowing the participants to choose their own labels (see Appendix D). Due to its sensitive nature, immigration status was not a formal aspect of the Demographic Questionnaire. Regardless of this, all of the participants integrated their immigration status into their narrative throughout the interview. Additionally, all nine participants identified Spanish as their native language, the following five, however, conducted their interview in English: one, four, five, seven, and eight. participants two, three, six, and nine conducted their interviews in Spanish. Any quotes from the participants who conducted their interview in Spanish and presented in the results section were translated into English, and the English version of the data was back-translated into Spanish and audited by the research team for



quality assurance. Additionally, to identify their ethnicity participants were given the option of checking off a box labeled “Latinx” or given the option to define the way they identify this for themselves with a designated writing space within the Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix D). In the interview, some participants used the term “illegal” to define their immigration status. However, while it is clear to the research team that this label may have been used by some members of the undocumented immigrant community in this study, it is also clear to the research team that this label continues to be used in many political platforms, including academia, to dehumanize this community (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). In order to avoid reinforcing the politics of dehumanization within academia, the research team agreed on using the terms *undocumented/documentated* to describe the immigration status of the participants in this study. Table 4.1 reflects the participant’s Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix D), in addition to their immigration status.

Table 4.1  
*Summary of Demographic Information*

ID	Age	Gender Identity	Pronouns	Ethnicity	Country of Origin	Years in U.S.	Immigration Status	Formal Education
1	29	Non-Binary	They, them	Latinx	Mexico	15	Documented	PhD Student
2	28	Woman	She, her	Latinx	Mexico	6	Undocumented	Less than High School
3	48	Transsexual	She, her	Hispanic	Mexico	30	Undocumented	High School
4	23	Trans-male	He, him	Latinx	Mexico	10	Undocumented	High School
5	23	Trans-Female	She, her	Latinx	Mexico	14	DACA	High School

6	37	Transsexual	She, her	Latina	Mexico	6	Asylee (Granted Asylum)	Some College
7	29	Male	He, him	Latinx	Peru	13	Documented	PhD Student
8	33	Trans-male	He, him	Latinx	Mexico	25	Undocumented	High School
9	38	Woman	She, her	Mexican	Mexico	18	Undocumented	High School

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Participants ranged in age from 23 to 48 years ( $M=32$ ,  $SD=7.56$ ). When the participants were asked to describe their gender identity the individuals used a variety of labels and pronouns. For instance, two participants identified themselves as transsexual and indicated their pronouns were “she, her.” From these two participants, Participant six initially identified her gender identity as “Feminine,” but later in the interview she indicated, “...I am transsexual, not transgender...” clarifying her gender identity as transsexual. Two participants identified their gender identity as trans-male, noting “he, him,” as their pronouns. Participant one identified their gender identity as “non-binary” and indicated their pronouns are “They, them.” Participant two identified her gender identity as transgender and pronouns as, “she, her.” Later in the interview she clarified her gender identity by stating, “I am a woman...in my head I am a woman.” Participant five initially identified her gender identity as “male,” and pronouns as “he, his.” While she filled out the demographic questionnaire, she noted that she identifies as a “trans-female” but has not begun taking hormones. Moreover, during the interview she noted her disdain for how others currently use words such as “bro, sir, guy” to taunt her, and explained she could get in trouble for labeling herself in any other way. Participant seven identified his gender identity as male and pronouns as “he, him.” Finally, Participant nine initially indicated her gender identity was ‘X,’ and when asked to clarify she noted “transwoman,” and that her

pronouns were “she, her.” However, throughout the interview, Participant nine clarified her gender identity, “...I do not consider myself a transwoman, I consider myself a woman. All my life I have lived as a woman, since I have been able to use reason.”

Participants further described areas of the Demographic Information. For instance, a total of six participants identified “Latinx” as their ethnicity. One participant identified “Hispanic” as her ethnicity. Another used a gendered form of the ethnic label to identify her ethnicity indicating she is “Latina.” Finally, one participant identified her ethnicity as “Mexican.” With regard to country of origin, a total of eight participants noted they were born in Mexico, and one participant identified Peru as his country of origin. Participant’s length of time living in the U.S. ranged from 6 to 30 years ( $M=15.2$ ,  $SD=7.64$ ). Participants also described their immigration status throughout the interview. A total of five Participants disclosed being undocumented. The remaining four participants expressed various forms of immigration statuses. For instance, Participant one noted they had previously been undocumented “after over-staying their visa,” Participant five disclosed she is a DACA recipient, and Participant six indicated coming to the U.S. as an asylum seeker, with recently granted asylum. Only one participant indicated he arrived in the U.S. with “documents.” Participant’s level of education ranged from less than high school to current PhD students. Five participants indicated that they had completed a high school education. Two participants indicated they were currently enrolled in PhD programs. One participant indicated she had some college experience but did not complete it. One participant shared she had less than a high school level of education. Overall, the participants represent a wide range of experiences. In the following sections, the results of the data analysis will be discussed beginning with emerged domains, followed by the emerged categories, and finally with the subcategories.

## **Emerged Domains**

The research team identified domains by reading the transcripts and capturing the main ideas from each section of the manuscript using the research questions as guidance. The list of domains was revised throughout the data analysis process and resulted in a total of four domains including: (1) The Experiences of Trans Latinx Immigrants in Different Lands, (2) Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants, (3) Challenges Experiences by Trans Latinx Immigrants, and (4) How Trans Latinx Immigrants Manage their Challenges. Within each domain several categories and subcategories emerged. To ease flow of content in presenting the data analysis results, the remainder of the chapter is organized into domain topic areas. In each domain topic area, domain definitions, all emerged categories and their definitions, and finally, all of the emerged subcategories within that domain will be presented. Participants' quotes associated with each domain will be presented to further illustrate the results. A table with every domain, category, and subcategory are provided at the end of this chapter to further summarize and organize the data (see Table 4.2). Lastly, there were subcategories that had only one participant. These subcategories were categorized as "Rare," and these were not interpreted within the results of this study because rare categories are considered to be unrepresentative of the data (Hill et al., 2005). In the following paragraphs, the emerged domains, categories, and subcategories will be further described.

### **Domain 1: The Experiences of Trans Latinx Immigrants in Different Lands**

The Experiences of Trans Latinx Immigrants in Different Lands was defined by the research team as the perceived encounters that this community may have had, both positive or negative, before or after immigration to the U.S. The emergence of this domain emphasizes the unique perspective that immigration brings to shaping the narratives of this community

throughout their interviews. Within this domain both the Pre-Migration to the U.S. and Post-Migration to the U.S. emerged as the categories as this community reflected on their migration experiences. Each of these categories yielded several subcategories that will be identified and further described in the following paragraphs.

**Pre-Migration to the U.S. Category.** The participants spoke about their experiences prior to immigrating to the U.S. Within this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Trans Individuals are Criminalized, (2) Face Harassment, Violence, and No Safety, and (3) No Benefits Exist for Trans People. In the following paragraphs, the Pre-Migration subcategories will be identified and further described with exemplars from participants.

***Subcategory 1: Trans Individuals are Criminalized.*** A total of five participants described the ways in which they are made into outlaws and rejected from society for being Trans in their country of origin. For instance, three of the participants indicated that they felt that coming out in their country of origin was forbidden due to the cultural, religious, and gender norms that exist there. Additionally, one of the participants also spoke about the legal societal limitations placed on Trans people's ability to adopt children:

Marriage is an issue too. In this case same-sex marriage, which doesn't exist there or even a civil union, so there is no protection. So even if I was there and my gender marker was female, like with my partner, [we] wouldn't be protected in some ways. Adoption—not gonna happen, [or] bringing [kids] back (Participant 7).

Participant nine spoke about the constant rejection that “people like her” experience as a result of being Trans in her country of origin's society. Participant six spoke about lacking protection against discrimination from federal laws and reported being exposed, ridiculed, and accused of identity theft, which she equated to being undocumented in her own country of origin:

I was undocumented in my own country since I did not have an ID. Because of the fact that I am a Transwoman and I transitioned, the photograph of who I was and the photograph that I became obviously had nothing to do with one another. Therefore, it is

something very difficult because I could not go to cash checks at the bank, I could not make any transactions - because I would get there and everyone would said, 'Oh, who is this? Is this your brother, or who is he? I need your IDs, I need your identification,' and experiences like that. I had a university credential with my actual image. One day I went to seek employment and they said, 'What, and whose name is this? No, no, no!' And they began to expose me in front of all the people; they started to yell at me in front of everyone. "No. It is because you are making use of documents that are not yours! Who the hell is that [P's Old Name]!?" And so [I said], "Hey, calm down, lady. I only came to ask for a job, I did not come for you to ridicule me in front of anyone." The lady acted so badly that all I did was snatch my documents and left because everyone was looking at me like I was a strange animal (Participant 6).

Participant six' shared that her country of origin renders Trans individuals invisible, and makes them target to discrimination, even when federal laws against discrimination have been passed to protect them. This experience was described as "a lethal game of chance" given that even law enforcement abuse transwomen:

...In [my country of origin], these kinds of things are what make life difficult for us, because [we] cannot find work, [we] do not have an ID—[we] are undocumented in [our] own country—and people can mistreat [and] discriminate against [us], and the law...does not protect [us]. Even the police...want to extort [us]or want [us] to prostitute [ourselves] for them. There is no lack of asshole police officer that pick-up transwomen [that also] abuses [us]. So, life is difficult as a Trans person, and [we] do not know when the "lethal game of chance" will play [us] (Participant 6).

***Subcategory 2: Face Harassment, Violence, and No Safety.*** A total of five participants described either direct or an awareness of experiences related to constant humiliation, bullying, death threats, and murder targeting Trans individuals in Latin America. Several of the participants expressed "safety" is not part of the reality for Trans individuals. For instance, Participant nine disclosed that "people like [her]" are bullied and experience constant harassment everywhere they go. Similarly, Participant six shared her personal experience of being physically assaulted, which left her with a broken nose and jaw. This same participant fled her country of origin because she was receiving death threats after one of her friends was assassinated for engaging in activism to improve their lives as Trans individuals. Within her

narrative, Participant six also acknowledged that even with her “socialization as a man,” she was not guaranteed safety or integrity. For Participant three, becoming a target for human trafficking was a feared her mother held. While she did not “dress as a woman” her feminine appearance drew men’s attention, leading Participant three’s mother to send her to the U.S. for safety:

I lived in [country of origin city], which was very dangerous...At the age of 15, I began working in a cleaning company that cleaned towers. Sometimes I attracted attention for being the way [that] I am. Older, evil men thought it was easier to offer us drugs to [lure] us into human trafficking. I had many friends who were kidnapped, made addicts, and then were prostituted... So my mom told me, ‘[I] do not want you to work here anymore it's dangerous, go with your dad’...I got the courage...and I came here [to the U.S.]...At that time, I looked like a girl and was very feminine, so it was too much [and it attracted] the attention of men. My mom said, ‘I do not want [human trafficking] to happen to you’ (Participant 3).

Relatedly, while Participant seven did not express his gender identity until he lived in the U.S., he shared that he could not think of any benefits to being Trans in his country of origin before immigrating because physical safety is a challenge. Participant eight grew up in a small, religious town in his country of origin, where he was harassed and laughed at for being “different” and speaking as if he “were a boy:”

Growing up in a really small, religious town, [with] a lot of older people—they knew I was different; they would laugh at me a lot because I would speak as [if I was] a boy (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 3: No Benefits Exist for Trans People.*** Four of the participants shared that they did not believe being Trans in their country of origin carried any benefits. For instance, both participants four and eight shared that they saw no benefits to being Trans in their country of origin, Participant four specifically indicated that for him it was due to “not being out.” A reason that Participant seven does not see any benefits to being Trans in his country of origin is because being respected and treated well while he is accessing medical care has limited options:

Accessing medical care, where we can be respected or treated well—very few possibilities. That's why I don't know about benefits, I can't really think of any (Participant 7).

Participant six explained that for Trans individuals in her country of origin many obstacles exist without a principal one including: not having an ID, not being recognized by society, lack of protection by the law, discrimination, hate crimes committed against them, and lack of job opportunities. She explained that as a result of the economic and social marginalization Trans individuals endure in her country of origin, they are placed in situations where the only two job options available to them are either a hairstylist or a prostitute:

...Being trans in [country of origin], you have two [options]: either you become a stylist, or you become a prostitute, there is no other [choice], there are no [options]. Because society rejects you, companies reject you (Participant 6).

By discussing how Participant six's friend, also a transwoman, was denied her psychology degree after refusing to dress as a man for a photograph, she exemplified how the barriers faced in education by Trans individuals, lead to the economic marginalization she previously discussed. Unfortunately, her friend received a post-humous degree after she was brutally assassinated in her country of origin, but only after “a big movement” across the world occurred:

...She was already dead for some time—there was a very big movement because it was not only in country of origin, it was also here, it was in many places, because what happened to her was horrible—[and] the country of origin's university sent her the diploma. For what!! That was mockery... (Participant 6).

Participant six further shared that she sees more problems to being Trans in her country of origin than benefits because only Transwomen with access to wealth have benefits and protection:

...Benefits that one has in country of origin as trans—there are none—many problems, [but] very few benefits. Many people are either stylists or prostitutes—there are no other [options]. The few or many that are dedicated to other types of things like some YouTubers that I have seen, is because their parents have [money]. If you have [money] you can buy the respect of whoever you want... (Participant 6).



**Post-Migration to the U.S. Category.** As participants considered and reflected on their experiences after they arrived in the U.S., several subcategories within the Post-Migration to the U.S. category emerged. The emerged subcategories included: (1) Believe Opportunities Increase in the U.S., (2) Perceives Trans Support Increased, and (3) Racial Awareness Increased. In the following paragraphs the emerged subcategories within the Post-Migration to the U.S. category will be further described.

***Subcategory 1: Believe Opportunities Increase in the U.S.*** Five of the participants shared their views regarding the vast amount of opportunities they perceive in living in the U.S. For instance, Participant six shared that she believes that challenges are placed upon by the individuals themselves and within their mindset, because being in the U.S. is full of opportunity:

Well, I think here one creates our own obstacles, because in reality this country offers you everything. If you want to study, you study. If you want to work, save money, and create a business, you do it. This country gives you many opportunities but having opportunities does not really depend on the country alone. It really depends on you, on how you do it. How have I been able to obtain opportunities? Simply by studying and learning English. [By] working very hard... (Participant 6).

Similarly, Participant four indicated that he believes living in the U.S. is a big opportunity because challenges are part of one's mindset, and if individuals want to get ahead, challenges should not be an obstacle:

Challenges? I don't think so. I think the challenge will be in your head. Because like I said, it really depends on you. If you really want to get ahead—there shouldn't be any challenges. There is going to be hiccups here and there. I could say that for me personally, I don't think there is big challenges...I think...it's the opposite it's the total opposite—you have a big opportunity with just being here (Participant 4).

Participant two contextualized her experiences in the U.S., by indicating that despite everything that she has been through, her only reward of being an immigrant is being able to work hard to survive and have a home:

Well, my reward as an immigrant or being here [in the U.S.], is that despite everything, I have pushed forward and obtained many things like my house. I don't have live luxuriously, but I also don't live bad either, I live like a normal person (Participant 2).

Similarly, Participant nine shared that she believes living in the U.S. is better than living in her country of origin because poverty was a reality:

Well, I feel that here [in the U.S.] you can live a little bit better. Because I see that in [my country of origin]—I mean I saw, and I experienced it—there are many people who are affected by poverty (Participant 9).

Participant nine further shared that in her country of origin health care and economic opportunities are more difficult to obtain than in the U.S. where access to work and food exists.

Participant five also saw living in the U.S. as an opportunity for all of her social group memberships because accessing knowledge and help is easier in the U.S. than in her country of origin:

I'd say [there's] better opportunity for all three labels; it's easier to get knowledge. Even though you're an immigrant they can still help you. It's just easier here than over there. You have to drive miles or far away to find a doctor that can actually help you over there. Here you can easily just call and make an appointment and they'll get your information and you can start right away. Over there if you don't have the money then you can't (Participant 5).

***Subcategory 2: Perceives Trans Support Increased.*** A total of four participants shared their perspective regarding how much more access to resources they perceive they have in the U.S. as Trans individuals when compared to that of their country of origin. An example of this comes from Participant two who shared that there is no support for Trans people in her country of origin like the one she found in the U.S. with the help of a social worker:

Well, I can tell you that in my [country of origin] there is no support for transgenders, there is none like there is here [in the U.S.]. Here, with [Social Worker's Name] we have found many things that I have never seen before (Participant 2).

For Participant six, arriving in the U.S. has helped her feel at “ease.” Unlike in her country of origin, she perceives that more laws to protect Trans individuals exist and believes these are enforced in the U.S:

When I arrived here [to the U.S.], I felt a little calmer because I feel that it is not so easy to get hurt and get away with it, right? Because I feel that this is a country where the law is applied and followed, and obviously if people are abusive the law has to punish them. Not like in [my country of origin], where there is corruption, where people who have more get away with things (Participant 6).

One of the reasons Participant six has felt at “ease” in the U.S. stems from the support she received from the immigrant rights organization that helped her apply for asylum. This process helped her not only gain a sense of relief, but perceives it changed her life for the better:

Here [in the U.S.], it was different because thankfully, there were people who supported me from the Immigrant Rights Organization—they helped and supported me a lot. I did not know that I could apply here for asylum. They were the ones who helped me, they explained the situation to me and supported me in everything. They knew everything that happened to me, so they were the ones who helped to make my life different—and in reality [helped] change my life in all aspects (Participant 6).

Being able to apply for asylum was an aspect that helped Participant six feel more support as a Trans person in the U.S. In addition to this, her experiences with the health care system have “improved,” which is important to her. For instance, she shared that the health care system in her country of origin does not have regard for or understanding of Trans people’s health care needs, where Trans individuals are publicly humiliated. In comparison, in the U.S. she has only been sent to the “gynecologist by mistake” once, but noted that “at least here, they do not treat you poorly in the health care center,” instead, “they let you in, respect you like any other person.” As a Queer and Trans individual, Participant seven expressed that moving back to his country of origin would not be a good option, even though he thinks about going back all the time:

Now, my mom and my dad moved back to [country of origin]. My dad retired, so they decided to move back. I'm like with my Queerness, especially with me being Trans, that's not really a very good option for me. Also, I have a partner here—I have a life that I've made here. I guess I think about going back all the time, but I know there are things that are good, the timing here, that make me want to stay here (Participant 7).

In addition to having a life in the U.S., another reason Participant seven expressed he does not see himself going back to his country of origin stems from feeling like he has a space in the U.S. with the work he is able to do with Queer and Trans youth, whereas he does not see a space for him in his country of origin:

Whereas here—I work right now for a program that works with queer and trans youth—I feel like there's a space for me here. In [my country of origin], I've connected to some activists, so I know they're creating space, but it's just so hard—being trans here it's not easy either—but being trans over there, I don't know how they do it (Participant 7).

Similarly, for Participant eight expressed conflicting feelings with regard to migration to the U.S. He shared that coming to the U.S. was “freeing” but also noted he continued to struggle with his identity as a Trans individual:

Coming to United States was kind of [freeing] but at the same time, nothing will help me in my mind. I thought, “I tried to be my mom's daughter.” Growing up [in] [X Latin American Country X] culture shit, from small-town, cowboy macho thing. If there was a conversation about maybe two gay men, I always would hear hate and homophobic thoughts about it, “Oh, *esos jotos* [Oh those faggots],” or, “They can go to hell,” or “*Mujeres* [women],” but I didn't ever identify with any of those things. I was like, I'm a man (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 3: Racial Awareness Increased.*** Three of the participants shared their experiences of how their awareness of race increased with personal experiences and with more time living in the U.S. Participant one shared that since they arrived to the U.S. approximately 15 years ago, they have been witnessing racism while living in a Southwest state:

Yeah, so...before living here in [West Coast State], I lived in [Southwest State] .... For fifteen years—basically the whole time I've been in the U.S... there was a lot of racism (Participant 1).

For Participant eight, an awareness of racial divisions has increased the longer he has been living in the U.S:

...Here in [Southwest State] ...back in the years from '90s to like 2000s, it wasn't as [it is] right now. You can see division from different colored groups...as I'm seeing it right now (Participant 8).

Participant seven shared several instances that indicate his racial awareness has increased.

Relatedly to Participant eight, time has been a factor in Participant's seven realization around the role race has played in how poorly he has been treated since he arrived to the U.S:

...I was a Cis, White person—by that point I was identifying as a woman and those carried some challenges—but I grew up middle class, so the world was very different for me. Race wasn't something that I thought about, it was something that came up in conversations in school about injustice or conversations about that. It wasn't something that was present in my life. I feel like being here, slowly, [race] became more and more relevant. It's some of my experiences when I first came here—the way that people treated me—I was just like, 'Oh people are really cold here, people are not very nice,' but the more I've lived here the more I've realized, 'Oh, it's just towards people like me' (Participant 7).

Another example he provided of his increased racial awareness was expressed in a sense of invisibility due to not being seen or heard when compared to his White peers:

Being interrupted or not being seen or not being heard. It just happened to me a couple months ago—I'm in a meeting, I say something, it's not taken into consideration. I say it a couple of times because I'm like, "No this makes sense," but no one is listening. Then five minutes later the White person says it and they're like, "Oh that's a great idea," I'm like, "What the hell!? I just said that!" (Participant 7).

In a different part of the interview, Participant seven also alluded to how his world has been turned "upside down" since living in the U.S. Central to his message was race, and how his lack of previous awareness of racial issues, now has made itself a daily presence in his life making him feel like the "world is upside down":

Before, when I lived in country of origin, things made sense to me. When I was perceiving myself as a Cis, White, middle-class person, things made a lot of sense—they were unfair—but, it's not something I thought about on a daily basis. Now, I feel like the whole world is upside down and I'm living in it (Participant 7).

## **Domain 2: Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants**

Another domain that emerged from the analysis of the data is the Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants. The research team defined the Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants as the rewards that participants perceived and attributed to their multiple social group membership. This domain reflects the perceived contributions that membership in their social groups brings to the participants life. Under this domain four categories emerged including: (1) Rewards Related to Ethnicity, (2) Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant, (3) Rewards Related to Being Trans, (4) Rewards Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups. Each of these categories yielded several subcategories that will be identified and further described and the following paragraphs.

**Rewards Related to Ethnicity Category.** In the Rewards Related to Ethnicity category, the participants spoke about the perceived positive aspects of being a member of the Latinx community. Within this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Latinx Pride, and (2) Power in Connecting to Indigenous Roots. In the following paragraphs, the Rewards Related to Ethnicity subcategories will be further described with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Latinx Pride.*** A total of five participants expressed the pride they have in their cultural and historical background due to being Latinx, with some expressing this is how they have survived living in the U.S. For instance, Participant one explained that their cultural background is an important part of their identity as a Latinx individual:

...I think for me, it's a very important part of my identity. I'm very proud of my Latinx background. I'm really proud of my culture, I love [my country of origin's] culture—I love basically all aspects of it (Participant 1).

Participant eight, highlighted the love and the pride he has for cultural heritage. He disclosed that his mother took an important role in teaching him to be proud of his ethnic background even when others have told him he, “[Does not] belong [in the U.S]”:

We were brought up also to love yourself—in my mind, I was fighting a lot of things—my mom...she...never put us down...for being [country of origin citizen] or anything, so I did grow up...being proud of my heritage...We have always cherished who we are even though we are here and people say, "You don't belong here" (Participant 8).

Participant six indicated that she is proud of her cultural and historical background because regardless of Latin American country of origin, she believes Latinx are connected to one another:

For me, to be Latina is to feel proud of the culture I come from, because regardless of [my country of origin]—I feel that we, as Latinos, have a lot of history, [and] many things to be proud of... We are a group of people who are very empathetic—we are not indifferent to the pain of others—we are people...that when we experience misfortune, we all join, regardless of whether we are from Mexico, from Guatemala, from El Salvador, from wherever. We are all [tied to] that invisible cable that makes us want to help others in some way. It may be because of education, due to inheritance from our parents or from our own cultures—but that is something that...I feel we all have as Latinos, regardless of what Latin American country we come from. We are warm people... (Participant 6).

Participant six stated that even when she is mistaken for “Middle Eastern or American,” she always corrects people by responding, “I am a proud Latina, from [country of origin],” and expressed her love for her rich and diverse cultural heritage because she has a “little bit of everything and everyone ...” Both participant three and seven expressed their love for Latinx food.

***Subcategory 2: Power in Connecting to Indigenous Roots.*** Three of the participants spoke about their awareness, knowledge, and the benefit that comes from connection to their Indigenous roots. For instance, Participant six spoke about how recognizing her Indigenous roots gives her knowledge of who she is:

Benefits? Knowing my origin, where I come from, and who I am. Where do I come from? I come from a culture a thousand years [old]. I feel that I am 50% more

Indigenous than from any other place. Because my grandmother was just like the Indigenous people from before...And knowing all that she taught me—knowing how to handle the *metate*—are things that are inherited not simply learned. The principles of respect, love, and empathy are cultural and something that you inherit. That is what I mean when I say knowing where I come from—it is all that I received from my grandparents, my great-grandparents (Participant 6).

Participant seven shared that having a foundation of his country of origin's history is important for him, and while he acknowledges his colonizing ancestors [and their negative aspect], he is proud of the good aspects of his history because he identifies and is connected to the resiliency of his [Indigenous] ancestors:

...I think that those are some of the benefits.... having [a] foundation of your history. I feel very identified with my history from [country of origin]. Acknowledging that I have colonizing ancestors—acknowledging that I have things on both sides—But still being very proud of my history—the good parts of my history. And how people have been so resilient—including immigrants here right? So, having that connection to that resiliency (Participant 7).

Because of his rich cultural heritage, Participant eight expressed that “there’s so much” to who he is, noting that learning about his Indigenous grandmother helped him begin to identify with his Indigenous background:

I think the culture; we have a lot of culture. I have Anglo friends and White friends and I say, 'We have so much culture, it's amazing, I love it.' There's so much [to] who am I. My grandmother, my mom's mother, she's Tarahumara—she was native, so the culture is so rich. Now that I'm learning more about it, it's amazing because I can say...that I'm Indigenous (Participant 8).

Even though he does not know much about his grandmother because she died before Participant eight could meet her, he noted that knowledge of her existence and that he “has blood from her” connects him to other Indigenous people, which is important for him.

**Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant Category.** In the Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant category, the participants spoke about the perceived positive aspects of being an immigrant. In this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Being Bilingual, and



(2) Having a Broad Perspective on Life. Within the Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant category, Immigrant Pride also emerged as a subcategory, but will not be further described in this section since only one participant reported their experiences in this area. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant category will be further described and participant exemplars will be provided.

***Subcategory 1: Being Bilingual.*** A total of six participants indicated that they believed being able to speak two languages was beneficial in their personal lives. For instance, three participants shared that being bilingual opened paths for them because they can communicate with others and find better employment. Participant three highlighted the importance of being able to speak two languages in her own life:

If I have to speak English, I will speak it, but if not, I prefer Spanish. Speaking two languages...I can communicate with people from other countries. English helps me a lot—also knowing many people—to find a better job... Being Latina and not speaking the language, we are left with the hardest jobs, I would say, they think we are not going to progress. [So], it helped that my sisters taught me English (Participant 3).

Similarly, learning English has helped Participant six open doors for herself, “little-by-little.”

One participant shared that learning English was particularly important, since her family only spoke Spanish:

I was able to learn English within less than a year, which was a big thing for me because my parents didn't know any English, my brothers didn't know any English—I was the main one (Participant 5).

Participant five also attributed the acquisition of her supervisory role at her current place of employment to being bilingual. Like Participant five, Participant eight alluded to the important role he played in his family as their translator because he was bilingual:

Now that I understand translation, it's hard [but] we did it at such a young age [and] we knew how to translate for our parents—it's amazing. At that time, I didn't know...[but] a person that is bilingual for me—[is] worth so much now... (Participant 8).

The same participant also shared the subtle messages that he received from his mother about the importance of maintaining his Spanish language:

...We would speak English in school, but [at] home have to speak Spanish—and she would always say, "Well, you're going to speak [English] in the school, outside, and everywhere, why don't you just speak Spanish all the time here?" And that's something that I brought up myself with. Right now, it's important for me to speak the proper Spanish...because I have an accent when I speak English, but that's who I am—to never pretend to speak Spanglish, because I did speak a lot of Spanglish and my mom once told me, "Can you just speak either Spanish or English? I don't think there's such a Spanglish language..." We grew up with both languages, and she [would always say], "*En Español, dilo bien, correctamente* [Say it correctly in Spanish]" (Participant 8).

Participant eight expressed his love for the Spanish language and the connection gain from being able to speak it with others, "We love our language, we love how you can go to in a place and maybe just start talking Spanish..." Likewise, Participant seven discussed the important role that living in a place with a high concentration of Spanish speakers had on helping him navigate the school system and to maintain his language:

I was lucky that I ended up in a place—I lived in [County in West Coast State] where there was a lot of people that spoke Spanish—that made it so much easier to go through the school system. When I used to not understand something in class I was like, "Hey, what they'd say? What did you say?" and maintain my language (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant one simply stated that they were proud of being able to speak two languages, "I feel very proud of the fact that I can speak two languages."

***Subcategory 2: Having a Broad Perspective on Life.*** Three participants shared that in immigrating to the U.S., they experienced a broadening of how they view the world by meeting new people, meeting more of their own culture, and expanding their world view because they know two cultures. For Participant one, living in two places helped them develop resilience, strength, giving them a sense of pride. Moreover, they indicated that living in two places has also helped them find commonality with other immigrants and view things from different perspectives:

I feel proud of knowing two cultures. Having lived in two different places—I think that's a huge strength for me, and it helped me develop resilience and strength. I'm able to see things from a different perspective—it gives me sort of a like a broader range of vision and how I look at things...and building community [with]...other immigrants—being able to have that in common (Participant 1).

For Participant four, immigration to the U.S. helped him meet people from different cultural and racial backgrounds, helping him expand his understanding of the diversity that exists in the world:

...When you come here, you just see different people...like alien people. I never saw a White person before—that was very strange to me, it was just weird. If you think about it, [it's] as if I am nothing in this world, you are so tiny—there are so many other parts of the world and people look so different. Here I met Asian people—not just White people, so it's very cool (Participant 4).

In addition to meeting others from different cultures and racial backgrounds, Participant four shared that he has been able to meet more of his own culture:

Benefits? Maybe what I said earlier, that you get to meet more of your culture even if you are from [country of origin] You get to meet more of your culture [in the U.S.] (Participant 4).

Participant seven shared that witnessing poverty in his country of origin combined with his knowledge of current policy helps inform his opinions and be more compassionate in his world view:

...Being able to see things from a different perspective—have some context that helps me have a more informed opinion—I grew up seeing things that people didn't see here—I'm more compassionate. Not everyone, but I think sometimes middle-class American people have no idea what poverty looks like. When I moved here, we had [a] 54% poverty [rate] in my country—you went out on the street and saw poor people. Because of that, even in terms of my understandings of policy, I'm more compassionate than people who have no idea what poverty looks like in Latin America or even here in some areas. So, I consider it a benefit that I can have that value to inform my opinions (Participant 7).

Participant seven further shared that immigrating helped him increase his ability to connect to other immigrant groups, because of the shared feelings and experience that comes with immigration:

Other benefits? I think being able to connect to other immigrants. Even if they are from another country—connect on some basic feelings about migrating and the experiences... (Participant 7).

In the Rewards Related to Being Trans category, the participants shared their perceived positive aspects on being trans. Within this category, the Proud of Being a Trans Parent subcategory emerged, but will not be further described because only one of the participants discussed it, and as a result is considered to be unrepresentative of the data (Hill et al., 2005).

**Rewards Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups Category.** In the Rewards Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category, participants spoke about their experience being placed in a distinctive position that gives them access to various vantage points of view. Within this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Unique Perspective, and (2) Latinx Immigrants Bring Culture to U.S. In the following paragraphs, the two subcategories within the Rewards Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category will be described and expanded on with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Unique Perspective.*** A total of four participants shared the ways in which their position in society gives them access to a distinctive perspective that is informed by their membership in multiple social groups. Participant one shared that for them, centering “intersectionality” in their lived experiences is important, as it inspires them to build bridges within [their] communities of membership to bring in their own perspective:

The benefit for me is that...I can't not think about intersectionality—that has to be a center point for me because I live it, that's my experience. Some people can push it aside and focus on one thing, but for me that's impossible because it's so true to me and I know

it's true for other people. It inspires me to integrate that more and look for community in building bridges within those communities (Participant 1).

Participant six shared that for her being a Trans Latinx immigrant means that she can share her personal experiences with others so that those individuals do not make the same mistakes that she has personally made:

...Latina immigrant and trans? The good experiences that I have had are that I feel that I have contributed to many people in some way. I do not say "I have changed their lives" because I cannot really change anyone's life, I can simply share my experiences, I can talk about what I experienced, and try to help [a] person not commit the same mistakes I have made..(Participant 6).

For Participant eight, being an undocumented Trans Latinx has opened up doors of opportunities despite his barriers, because he has been able to share his perspective with others who are interested in the experiences of the community:

I have taken everything so patiently, it has opened opportunities, like talking to you right now. Like *te comenté anteriormente* [I told you earlier], I didn't know where my life would take me. I'm undocumented, what can I do? I didn't have the opportunity to play sports. But now, being who I am, my identities as: undocumented, transgender, Latino has opened up so many doors for me—by just having interviews *con gente como tú* [with people like you], interested in our community (Participant 8).

Participant seven views his membership in all of his three communities as a benefit because his membership in each provides him with a broad set of experiences that he uses to connect and relate to his broad social groups Latinx, Trans, and immigrants even if it is not 100%:

Having the opportunity to connect to: immigrants, trans people, [and] Latinx folks in some way—even if it's not like 100% all there—but having...a very broad set of experiences that can help me connect to all of these different groups: I work with Queer and trans youth. I've worked with Latino immigrants—Spanish speakers. Maybe there are some things they don't know about me and I won't bring up or things I cannot say about what I think, but I'm still able to relate and get some benefit [from] that connection (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 2: Latinx Immigrants Bring Culture to U.S.*** A total of three participants spoke about the cultural contributions that immigrants bring to the U.S., including the impact the

culture has in creating opportunities for employment, connection, and to finding a sense of belonging. For instance, one participant spoke about how her cultural traditions, including food, has opened the doors of opportunity for her in many places:

Sometimes we are rewarded in terms of: “Oh, you are Latina...” the music, our traditions —because it opens doors for us in many places...I love cooking. [When] I cook, all Americans like it. In restaurants, I have [created] menus from things my mother taught me...sometimes they also reward you with increasing your salary, because I’ve been lucky to have a well-made Hispanic menu...I think that being Latino helps a lot... (Participant 3).

Another participant spoke about how immigrants bring culture to the Latinx community that grew up in the U.S.:

...You have something to offer to the... Hispanic community that grew [up] here—coming as an immigrant. You’re bringing culture here—when I came here, I would tell my colleagues, “Oh you know I do this, I do that” ... “oh really?” I guess cultures meet here—different cultures. Even though you are from [country of origin], you could be from [city in country of origin], and they have a whole different culture, or you could be from [country of origin’s state] and they have a whole different *tamalaes*. I guess that’s the benefits [of] when you come here. When I came here, I saw a lot of cultures--you were [a country of origin citizen], but it was a totally different [country of origin citizen] (Participant 4).

Participant seven expressed that because Latinx share a common language, they are able to find connection. He noted that unlike other immigrant groups, Latinx immigrants can learn about and connect with a broad group of individuals within the ethnic community because of the shared language:

I think having a shared language—Spanish. I see folks that immigrated from other countries that don’t have that opportunity to connect with such a broad group of people because of language differences. I feel like I’ve learned a lot about different cultures by watching *novelas* [Soap Operas]. Not sure how accurate those are, but I picked up language, or things about culture, or places that people refer to. And so all of [those] common experiences. We talk about watching *Rebelde* [Rebellious] or *Betty La Fea* [Ugly Betty]. I feel like people from other continents don’t have that because they don’t share so much culture because of the language differences. I think this kind of goes along with the immigrant experience (Participant 7).

### **Domain 3: Challenges Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants.**

The research team defined the Challenges Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants as the difficulties that the participants perceived as members of multiple social groups. Under this domain four categories emerged from the data: (1) Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity, (2) Disadvantages Related to Being an Immigrant, (3) Disadvantages Related to Being Trans, and (4) Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups. Each of these categories yielded several subcategories that will be identified and further described in the following paragraphs.

**Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity Category.** In the Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity category, the participants spoke about the perceived disadvantages of being Latinx. Within this category the following subcategories emerged: (1) Experienced Stigma for Being Latinx and (2) Racial Unawareness. In the following paragraphs, the Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity subcategory will be further described by providing participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Experienced Stigma for Being Latinx.*** A total of two participants spoke about their experiences with stigma because of their ethnicity. For instance, Participant seven shared instances of individuals expressing surprise when they learn he attended college. While living in a [Southwest State], Participant one experienced stigma for membership in the Latinx community and for speaking Spanish, which made it difficult for them to “access their culture.” They attributed the shame and fear of retaliation instilled in the Latinx Community for speaking Spanish in White neighborhoods as a part of the cause for the segregation they observed, making it difficult for them to build community:

I think it’s the language...well, I mean the language was part of it...Anytime you spoke Spanish, people would make comments like, “Why are you speaking Spanish?” So people within the Latinx community had that fear instilled in them so they didn’t want to speak Spanish...Or they were ashamed to speak Spanish because they were like, “Well

someone is going to say something, somebody is gonna be racist towards me if I speak my language.” I think it was harder to build community because we felt like people were going to make comments about it. I mean definitely at home you felt comfortable, but if you’re out in public it’s kinda like you’re looking over your shoulder and seeing, “Who’s around me? Are these people gonna make comments?” So, it was very segregated. If you were in the Latinx neighborhood—in the Latinx stores—you felt more comfortable speaking Spanish—being a visible part of the community. Whereas if you’re somewhere predominantly White, then you definitely try to...look over your shoulder and see if it’s ‘Ok’ to speak Spanish or to say something about your community... (Participant 1).

***Subcategory 2: Racial Unawareness.*** A total of two participants expressed some form of unawareness related to personal encounters with overt racial discrimination. For instance, Participant six shared that she did not believe she has experienced overt forms of racism:

In terms of racism or things like that, I feel that in reality there has not been many people that has grabbed me and done things to me (Participant 6).

Similarly, Participant eight shared his experiences growing up, where he indicated that he never experienced overt discrimination or racial tension for being Latinx:

...When I was younger it was more tolerant, thankfully. We never experienced any discrimination, other than faces...when...all of us [would] go to the restaurant, and they would see us—a short little Mexican family [that] walked in—We never experienced any racial tension for being Latinos (Participant 8).

**Disadvantages Related to Being an Immigrant Category.** In the Disadvantages Related to Being an Immigrant category, the participants spoke about the perceived disadvantages of being an immigrant. Within this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Pain of Immigration, (2) Undocumented Status Creates Barriers, (3) Made into an Outcast, (4) Learning a New Language was Hard, (5) Separation from Loved Ones, and (6) Living in Constant Fear of Deportation. Within this category, the Immigrant Pride subcategory emerged but will not be discussed since only one participant spoke about this. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Disadvantages Related to Being an Immigrant category will be further described with participant exemplars.



*Subcategory 1: Immigration is Painful.* A total of eight participants expressed the difficult adjustment and sometimes traumatic experiences they endured as immigrants to the U.S. For instance, two participants spoke about the difficulties they experienced with the culture. Participant one broadly shared that it was difficult to adjust to the culture and to the education system for them. Similarly, Participant four noted that for him the cultural values, beliefs, lifestyle, and the way in which people treated him in the U.S. was different and hard to understand:

I think culture and the way of living is something that is also hard. Like it's a different lifestyle you know? It's different beliefs. The way that people treat you, the way you show respect to your elders—here it's completely different. Over there you get a book thrown to your face if you raise your voice to a teacher. Here, I saw a lot of like face-to-face confrontations with teachers. So, it was very complicated to understand what was going on...in school (Participant 4).

Participant four shared that for him moving back to his country of origin would be too difficult because in the beginning he did not want to move to the U.S. because he would miss his neighbors, but now he does not want to go back because it would be difficult to adjust since he has been living in the U.S. for 10 years. In the interview, Participant three shared she left her father's home due to her "way of being." As a recent immigrant, she shared it was difficult leaving her home being homeless and not speaking English:

...When I turned 18, I had to leave to live alone— [while living] in a new country for me. They knew English—my family—but I did not, and that was difficult. I then had to go live with a woman who picked me up from the street (Participant 3).

Participant five noted that she does not see any rewards of being an immigrant because she has had many discriminatory experiences. Likewise, Participant two indicated that coming to the U.S. did not cross her mind, but because a woman convinced her that life in the U.S. was different, she came. Though when she arrived in the U.S., she indicated she suffered significantly:

Honestly, it was not my intention to come to the [U.S.]. A lady from my town told me to come, and [told me] that life here was different, and that because I knew how to work and do many things, I could pick myself up here. But that lady did not want to come alone, that is why she convinced me, and I came with her. When arrived here, I suffered a lot (Participant 2).

Unlike Participant two, Participant eight shared that his mother was aware they would immigrate to the U.S., and for that reason, helped prepare him prior to immigrating. He shared that this preparation felt as if “they were going to war.” In this process he learned how he would be labeled “[undocumented],” even though he did not understand its meaning since he was young:

Right before my mom made the decisions to come here, it was like we were being prepared. I was nine years old and I knew the word “illegal,” and I was so young that I didn't understand—but I knew that word was describing me. And they said, “We're going to be 'illegals' and you can't talk to people [letting them know] from where we are, and we can't get out—if we get to a city, we're going to have to stay there. We can't say where we come from or how we crossed...” I was young...I was not scared—but [it] was almost like going on a war and they just prepare you. I was scared because they were [saying] that a coyote was coming. I thought that a coyote was the real animal 'cause [in] my pueblo [village] we have coyotes, and that was one of them, but you realize, “Oh, this guy is a coyote” (Participant 8).

Participant six shared that one of the most difficult things she has experienced is crossing the border. In order to survive the intense heat and hunger, she ate insects and drank her own urine:

...Crossing was very difficult. There were very difficult days because there was intense heat. They left us without food for almost a week-and-a-half—without water—in the dessert. I dedicated myself to eating all kinds of insects that I found on the road: flies, grasshoppers, worms—whatever I found, I ate because I was starving. With all due respect, and maybe you'll think it's dirty, but without water, I drank my own urine. I drank my urine on more than one occasion, just to survive. There was a moment when I was about to fall into the desert, but I think there was a merciful hand that got me out of there because I heard the coyotes behind me... (Participant 6).

In her immigration process, Participant six shared that she did everything to stay alive and not lose consciousness, otherwise she would have died or eaten by animals in the dessert. She shared that she had to ask a man who was walking with her to bite her arm to gain access to an

adrenaline rush. Unfortunately, in the process of crossing the border she had to leave one of her friends behind because he died:

...I slowly got to where a man was, and I was about to lose consciousness. The only thing I remember is that my face tingled and that I saw in [the color] black. And I asked him for a favor. I said, “do me a favor...I want you to bite me...so hard, in this part because it’s very sensitive...Please do it, I need adrenaline or something that wakes me up.” He grabbed me and bit me, I even bled a little. But the adrenaline shock made me open my eyes and run to where everyone else was. And that is how I was a bit safer and away from the animals. I think that was one of the [most difficult] things I experienced, because I was alone in the middle of the desert and with fear animals would eat me. A friend actually stayed on the way because he died—it was very difficult (Participant 6).

While Participant seven acknowledged that his immigration narrative may be different than that of other immigrants since he immigrated to the U.S. with his parents, he also shared that, “[he] migrated [to the U.S.] when [he] was sixteen, and that was very painful.” He explained that his pain stemmed from wondering how his life would be if he stayed in his country of origin:

It’s tough being an immigrant. At least for me, because I was sixteen, I didn’t really have, “Oh I’m going to work,” and I’m just going with my parents, [be]cause I didn’t make that decision, I wasn’t... that immigrant that really wants to go for their families and things like that. I was like, “Eh, ok I guess I’ll go, it sucks,” I mean there are a lot of painful things about the experience in different ways. I think not so much now but “a lot of what if...” “...What if I...stayed? What would things look like? (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 2: Undocumented Status Creates Barriers.*** A total of five participants expressed the ways in which not having an immigration status (i.e., undocumented) limited their access to education, employment, and important resources including healthcare. For instance, Participant two expressed her difficulties maintaining stable employment given that she lacks a valid social security number:

Obstacles? Well, the fact that I cannot be in a company for the simple fact that I do not have papers. Because I have obtained good jobs, honestly, and I have stayed for long periods of time, but when the company wants to [hire me]—because I lack a valid social security number—they tell me that I cannot stay there. That has always been my problem—an obstacle here (Participant 2).

For Participant four, not having the same rights as U.S. citizens is an obstacle, which keeps him from doing things he would like to do such as returning to his country of origin:

...Not having the same rights as other people, like not being able to do things that you wish you could do. People that are born here take things for granted. [They] could go to [country of origin] and are gonna be able to come back and keep living [their] life (Participant 4).

Because Participant five is an undocumented immigrant, she indicated that in school of jobs people have tried to “take [her] down” by saying, “...you can’t do it cause you’re an immigrant,” but believes immigrants are here “to make something of themselves.” Throughout the interview, Participant eight emphasized an awareness of the implications of being undocumented in his life. For example, he indicated that because he lacked access to community organizations and role models in higher education he did not know where to go or what his options were because, “... [He] knew [he] was undocumented. [And] didn't know what other roles [he could] take.” He shared that this affected his future and opportunities. While his counselor tried to give him hope for his future, his undocumented status posed challenges to helping him because she lacked knowledge on the resources available to him. Given the barriers created by an undocumented status, Participant eight decided to drop out of high school:

She helped me stay in school...she's like, “There's hope, let's try to see what's there for you—there's scholarships for you.” I didn't know what a scholarship meant. When it came to that time she [asked] me for documents, I honestly said, I don't have any documents.” It was sad because she didn't know what to do and didn't know how to help me. That time for me was like, “What else do I do?” I quit school for a month because I was like, “What I'm going to do? Why am I staying in school?” My mom was a single mother, and at that time was pushing me to have a job because I needed to help her out. I made the decision: I'm staying here for what? I wanted to play professional soccer and I thought that was my fate—but I don't have any documents, they can't help me. Unfortunately, my counselor didn't have resources to look for other things to help me out—so that was a breaking point for me too. Once again, being [undocumented] stopped me from pursuing things, so I quit school for a month (Participant 8).

Because Participant eight did not qualify for DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals], he expressed a sense of relief in having a job. Though he did share that while he was applying for DACA, he dreamt of going back to school:

...Thank God I have a good job, [because] I didn't qualify for DACA. I was going to qualify—so it's once again, those little things—I was like, "I can go back to school now, I know there's so many helps out there for undocumented students" (Participant 8).

Participant nine shared throughout various instances in the interview her own experiences with being undocumented. For instance, she indicated that because she cannot get a license, she drives with caution. In another instance, she indicated that she fears driving long distances without a license:

Well, I could be honest...we need a license. Sometimes I am scared to drive far [distances]—that is an obstacle (Participant 9).

***Subcategory 3: Made into an Outcast.*** A total of five participants spoke about the ways in which they have been made to feel as an outsider in the U.S. For instance, Participant six shared an experience where a woman called her a foreigner, threatening to call the police while Participant six helped a friend move:

...Once I had an occurrence with a lady—she made me laugh—because I stopped in front of her house since I was carrying something, I was helping a friend to move—then she goes out and starts to insult me, and asks me why I stopped in front of her house. So, I ignored her and said, “Okay, say what you want, I do not care because I'm not doing anything.” And she began to say, that she was going to talk to the police, and going to throw the police at me, because she was sure I am not even from this country, and I said, “You know what? Talk to whoever you want, you are free to do what you want, that's why this country is free.” That's it. I did not tell her anything else, and I finished doing my load and everything and I removed the car from there and went to do what I had to do. I think that's the only experience [I had where] I can say, 'it did make me angry' (Participant 6).

Another participant spoke about how long it took him to understand his location in U.S. society, where he became aware of his minority status:

Becoming aware of how I've become a minority—that's been a trip. That's taken, honestly, over a decade to come to that understanding of, "Wow, this is where I am in the world," in terms of the dynamics in society, "This is where I'm located." Which was something that I was not aware of when I first came here. And like I said it wasn't a thing for me—I was very privileged in that sense (Participant 7).

One participant indicated that he is aware that people think of him differently because he is not from here:

They see you as something—I am not trying to say that they see you less, but they do think differently because you are not from here. At the end of the day—you are not from here (Participant 4).

Another participant spoke about how others used derogatory words to remind her of her family's limitations due to lack of documentation status:

Once we moved to [Midwest City], people would use it to disrespect you—like wetback, immigrant, you don't have papers—stuff like that. And it was not just me, but my mom—cause she was the one that moved here—it was more towards her or me cause I would try to help her with her English, so it was just people being rude and would be like, "Oh no its cause you're an immigrant" or "you can't do this because you don't have papers." Which was very harsh, but it happens (Participant 5).

Participant eight shared various examples throughout the interview where, feeling like an outsider was highlighted for him due to his immigration status, and he shared how it made him feel. For instance, he noted that while growing up, he was ashamed of speaking Spanish, because "everybody [else] wanted to speak English. His differences were further highlighted because his mother babysat many "Anglo kids" that made him ashamed of being undocumented and wish he had the resources they had:

...When I was in seventh grade, my mom also babysit a lot of Anglo kids—so you can truly see the difference when we're all together. For me it was more [of] being ashamed. My friends would all just be like, "Oh, well we went to Disneyland and we traveled for vacations. What did you do?" And I would make up things: "Oh, we went to [country of origin]," and things like that. I think I was just ashamed to maybe be in [my] family at that time... we were undocumented, we couldn't do anything...I was just ashamed of being undocumented. My friends were Latinos, so it was more with my mom's kids that she babysit. And I mean, you grew up also knowing that, "Oh, they're the gringos, the gringitos," So because their skin color is...lighter than yours. I don't really remember that

I ever wished to have their skin color. I don't think I ever did. Maybe I wished that I was similar, like maybe have a better house like they did, or having their trips. Or maybe having both of their parents. Maybe those things is what I wished for (Participant 8).

Participant eight shared another way in which his documentation status impacted him. He spoke about how the use of the word “illegal” made an impact on him, perhaps highlighting his difference, “Growing up, [in] childhood, I knew I was illegal. That word, it hit me.”

***Subcategory 4: Learning a New Language was Hard.*** A total of five participants described their challenges with learning English as a new language. For instance, one participant spoke about some of the difficulties with having to force himself to learn the language because he wanted to know what others were saying in school:

I think it's hard to be a Latino, especially when you don't know a lot of English. I mean, you...have to force yourself to know English and of course have to practice. But I think it's hard, overall. Especially when you come from a background where you had nothing, and then [come] here [without] knowing any word. I could say that is part—[but] I don't think that's the biggest challenge because I feel like in school, they told me I was pretty good at learning...I really wanted to know what people were saying (Participant 4).

Participant four also shared that as an immigrant he was bullied because of his accent and because he did not understand what others said:

My experiences? I guess being bullied... because you didn't know what they were saying, or [didn't] understand. Or when you start speaking English—you have an accent, and then people think you talk funny. So that could be one (Participant 4).

During two different parts of the interview, Participant six disclosed that, for her, the biggest obstacle has been learning English a barrier that has been hard to break:

Well, the only obstacle that I think I have had until now is the language. I think it's the only barrier that has cost me [a lot] to break—the language barrier. Because I have always had difficulties with English. During these past years I've learned more, little by little... (Participant 6).

Similarly, to Participant six, Participant one shared that they also struggled with learning the language from the beginning, however, they were able to learn English fairly quickly while their

mother continues to struggle with the language. For Participant three, it was difficult to see her family being bothered with her for not speaking English, so in order to defend herself she learned the language. Unlike the other Participants who shared their struggles with learning English, Participant seven shared that he was lucky to have studied English in his country of origin, but even with his previous exposure to the language, speaking it every day was hard. Even though he has learned the language, he later shared that after living in the U.S. for thirteen years, he does not feel one hundred percent confident in Spanish or English:

After having lived here for thirteen years—because I went through two years of high school, then college, work, and now grad school—I feel I stopped developing in Spanish. I don't know if other people feel this, but I don't feel one hundred percent confident in Spanish, but the same thing in English. I'm in the space where I'm like, "Dammit I feel confident in Spanglish." I feel like in [County in West Coast State] was really cool—especially, with the jobs I [had] with the Latinx community, and just [being with] my friends, that was perfect. Now that I've moved to [Western State] it's different (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 5: Separation from Loved Ones.*** A total of four participants spoke about the pain that comes with leaving their families behind after they immigrate to the U.S. One participant shared that she would like to bring her mother to the U.S., and would like to see her family, but it is a challenge:

...Challenges? I don't know, I'd like to bring my family here—my mom— [I would like to] see my family (Participant 2).

Participant four shared that he did not want to leave his country of origin where he left his father and family behind because now that he is in the U.S., he only has his mother and young sister.

Participant seven also shared that his sister and friends had to stay behind in his country of origin, noting that this was challenging for him:

My sister stayed in [country of origin]. We thought that we could petition for her because she was older, and she didn't get a visa. We thought that we could just petition for her to come here in a couple of years—obviously, that took way longer than we thought. So, just missing my friends, it was a really challenging time (Participant 7).



Participant eight indicated that he also left family behind, but even though they live in a U.S. state that is not far from his country of origin, he knew they could not go back due to being undocumented.

***Subcategory 6: Living in Constant Fear of Deportation.*** A total of three participants expressed their concern regarding the constant fear of their family or themselves being deported. For instance, Participant one shared they feared their mother would be picked up by I.C.E. on her way to work or that I.C.E. would be contacted after their apartment office managers found out their apartment was under their uncle's name:

My mom and I immigrated when I was about 14-years-old from [country of origin] and came on a tourist visa—and overstayed our visa like most people do. In Southwest State it was very difficult because even for my mom to drive to her job was scary and worrying because she didn't know if she would get pulled over—if she would get taken to I.C.E or picked up by I.C.E. There was one instance where we were renting our apartment—under my uncle's name because we obviously didn't have a social security number. One of the office managers found out that it was not under my mom's name and there was this huge thing where they were looking, “What was going on?” They were investigating all these things. We were scared they were gonna report us or turn us over (Participant 1).

Before Participant six was granted asylum, she experienced a significant amount of uncertainty she would be deported to her country of origin and remain an outcast:

The uncertainty of being thrown back to [country of origin], that was what most worried me. That I would be sent back and go back to being nothing—and remain an outcast. Because in [country of origin's city] that's what [one is] ...a trans person does not have the opportunity for anything. I tried and I tried in many ways. I learned to be a dance instructor, and even then the discrimination is well engrained (Participant 6).

For Participant eight, being undocumented is akin to living in fear because he and his family lived in constant fear of being sent back to their country of origin when either crimes occurred near their home or they saw government vehicles:

One thing that happened—we lived in an apartment complex; I think I was about 15. And my older brother—we were in school—they picked us up early. He was scared and was like, “We gotta go to my mom's job,” my mom was taking care of elderly people. In

the apartment complex there was a crime, and immigration was there for the whole thing. So, my brother [said], “Ay, no, they're going to come and get everybody.” That whole day, we didn't go back because we were so afraid. Now that I look back to it—just being afraid of seeing these government vehicles—I grew up being afraid of them. Now I know my rights and everything. But you're afraid all the time because you know your fate and you don't want to go back to a place that you came from. We were escaping poverty. Now that I remember—that whole day we were just scared, we didn't know if we were going to go back; we didn't know if they were going to stay there—for how long. But those experiences, being an immigrant [is] just living in fear (Participant 8).

**Disadvantages Related to Being Trans Category.** In the Disadvantages Related to Being Trans category, the participants spoke about the perceived disadvantages of being Trans. Within this category, the following subcategories is a Concern, (4) Family Negated Trans Identity, (5) People Lack Trans Awareness, (6) Cis-Gender Norms are Harmful, (7) Discomfort with Physical Appearance, (8) Lack Role Models, (9) Personal Struggles Affect Mental Health, (10) Lack Resources for Gender Affirmation, and (11) Unaware of Personal Trans Identity. Within the Disadvantages Related to Being Trans category, the Faced Obstacles as a Trans Parent subcategory emerged, but will not be further described in this section since only one participant reported their experiences in this area. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Disadvantages Related to Being Trans category will be further described with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Cost of Gender Non-Conformity.*** A total of seven participants expressed their experiences related to their gender expression not being perceived or respected by others regardless of the internal gender identity. For instance, participants expressed a variety of concerns related to being singled out in bathrooms, a loss of job opportunities, or being misgendered due to being in an, “in-between space where people do not know what to make of you,” (Participant 7), as it relates to cis-gender binary norms. Moreover, Participant seven

shared his fear regarding what would happen to him during this “in between-space” or what he would encounter:

[I was] very fearful of what I was going to encounter [in] that kind of 'in-between space' where people don't know what to make of you (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant one spoke about the times when they are misgendered and feel they must educate others to ensure their pronouns are used correctly:

There are times when I have to educate people—they get the pronouns wrong; they make comments [and] I have to push back and educate them (Participant 1).

Participant four provided his perspective regarding the challenges he perceives transwomen face when they do not gain access to the privileges that transmen access as they transition:

Especially transfemales they are very out there, because you can tell when they are transitioning...Unfortunately, they don't have the privileges that we do. Like that our voice changes—for them their voice stays the same...it's really hard for a transwoman—and I'm speaking just in general (Participant 4).

Participant two provided examples of negative experiences being gender non-conforming. For instance, she shared that she is often criticized and avoided by men because even though she lives as a woman, she has worked with big machinery which is considered the work of men:

I live as a woman all the time [and] I always behave like a woman...I've had jobs in different companies...and I don't know if it's because of my intelligence or what, but I've placed to operate machinery. I've always liked to be involved, stay focused on work; try to be the best. But I have had experiences for being transgender. Because there were people that simply saw me as a woman working with machines—sometimes even better than [the men] did—they avoided me. [They said], “How is it possible that that person is there? Or that is a man's' job.” They would say things because I was different then the [men] there (Participant 2).

She also shared her struggles with being perceived as “strange” and being overlooked from job opportunities with the excuse that jobs want either men or women:

At jobs, sometimes you get there and then they say, “I asked for men,” or if they wanted women they say, “I asked for women.” Many jobs set us aside. It has happened to me—when I've arrived, they look at [me] strangely and say, “No to that person.” There are

times when they put [me] to do something and see that [I] know how to work, or that [I] work well, and stay... you could say that there is discrimination (Participant 2).

Participant two later shared the only obstacle she experiences is workplaces prefer ‘men,’ but she believes that if she cannot do a job, she will learn because she has not allowed herself to fall.

Similarly, Participant eight shared his fears of losing his job due to the physical changes he is experiencing as a result of hormone replacement therapy:

I'm scared about my changes because my voice is breaking; I'm having some facial hairs. At my job, I've been working with residential families—Jewish families, more White families—me he *ganado su respeto* [I've gained their respect] and I don't know what's going to happen; I'm going to be changing...when I go to their houses, they'll be like, “Oh, are you sick?” or “Your voice!” My voice is the one that's giving me a hard time, and I am worried about it because I don't want to be unemployed. I'm worried that it's going to be at that point that my changes are going to be so obvious... [I] cherish my work...I take care of my job so much, but I'm afraid they're going to say, “You know, you can't come here anymore.” I'm afraid if I open up to them as being transgender, they're going to get freaked out because I don't even know if they know what transgender is. So, I'm concerned about my job (Participant 8).

Participant five shared her struggles with finding employment, indicating that after potential employers meet her in person, she never gets a call back:

I think other job opportunities that I've tried. They see me physically and then they're like, “Okay, we'll just give you a call back,” and they never do. Or after a meeting they never call back (Participant 5).

Earlier in the interview Participant five shared she has been denied the right to use any type of restroom as she has been told by both [binary genders] she cannot use “their” restroom. Even when she tried to use a family restroom, a security officer told her she could not:

...I haven't had any issues with the bathroom, but I still use the men's bathroom. If I try to use the family restroom—I've had security once [tell] me, “Oh you can't use that restroom.” Which I didn't mind at that point but if I have both people from both restrooms telling me where to go, I should just go into the family restroom so there won't be any problems (Participant 5).

In other instances, she shared several experiences of not being allowed to enter the restroom of her choice, indicating that people sometimes can or cannot tell that she is trans, which leads to

suggestions over which restroom she should use, though she believes it is her choice and should not be told where to go:

...At the airport, several times at the mall—I think I was at a school for an event, and I was using the men's restroom and one of the teachers was like, “Oh, you're going to [the] wrong bathroom,” and I'm like, “I'm not,” she's like, “You need to use that restroom,” but I was like, “Do I have to explain?” Just by looking at me you could tell, but sometimes you can't. But it's my choice, don't tell me what to do. I've only had trouble at two places—one of them made a work meeting about me 'cause apparently, I was the only person using the women's restrooms. I was confused 'cause I've seen other transgender people in there, so I don't get what's the problem? I'm not the only one. There [are] other people (Participant 5).

Another participant also shared she has been stopped and questioned about which restroom she would use, often lecturing<sup>23</sup> those who question her on how they expect her to enter a restroom with her current physical appearance:

I had problems with the restrooms. Sometimes they are like, “What toilet do you use?” [I respond] “Excuse me? In my house there is one bathroom and it is unisex. It is the same thing, nothing happens. How will I enter a men's restroom like this?” I say, “No, right?” [they say] “Go on.” (Participant 3).

Participant eight shared he has experienced fear while in both the male and female bathrooms because he can pass but sometimes does not:

I've been experiencing bathroom issues, also. Sometimes I've passed as a male, but sometimes I don't. [In] a male bathroom sometimes I have sat there and like, “Ay, I have to go!” [because] I think I have to be like, “Okay, nobody came in, I'm going to check,” 'cause it's scary because you don't know if they see you [what] they're gonna ask you. Also going to the woman's restroom, sometimes I found myself with this older lady just looking at me like, “What the hell is he doing in here?” Then I have to make my girly voice, “Hi” ... going to the bathroom—something so simple that a lot of people don't get. We're just going there to do our business and nothing else (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 2: Endured Family Abuse and Rejection.*** A total of six participants described and shared their experiences with rejection, hatred, and physical abuse they endured from some of their family members. Some of the participants expressed the ways in which their family's treatment also influenced their personal life. For instance, two participants shared they

were rejected by their families who believed being Trans was contagious, particularly in a way conveying being Trans is not acceptable. An example was provided by Participant six when she shared her family would “not allow their children to get near” her because they feared being Trans would transmit to their children. Similarly, Participant three indicated that her aunts shared their concern over her son turning out to be like her, though she refuted that being Trans is not contagious and if her son was Trans, she would welcome him:

My aunts said that he was going to be like me, I said to them: “Well, if he is, I welcome it.” [But] that's not true, is not contagious. He... is not homophobic either because from a small age I took him...to our trainings, to gay parades—wherever he went, he was a happy child (Participant 3).

Other participants shared their experiences with suffering at the rejection and physical abuse they experienced from their family. For instance, Participant two shared on one instance during the interview that she suffered due to her, “*machista* father.” In a later section of the interview, she further explained the complex relationship she had with her father and how after he drank alcohol with his brothers, who made fun of him for having a “faggot,” he would take out his anger on her:

[An] obstacle was that my dad was a *machista* person [and] sometimes he would start hitting me without reason. My dad told me that he loved us very much and that he wanted us to make others respect us, but the men of the countryside are different, they are more *machistas*. Sometimes my dad's brothers...would say things about me like, “Oh, you have a fucking faggot,” or they talked badly about me. I'm not going to tell you that my dad was bad, [and] I can tell you that I understand him because [it's] as if they say something knowing that you have it—it puts you in a bad mood. Sometimes we were fine at home, [and] he would go out in the evenings [and] join his brother under a tree to talk—when he got home, sometimes out of nowhere he would hit me. My mom and I did not like my father's drinking. My dad was not one of the people who was always on the street, but when my dad drank—I paid the consequences. I do not like to speak ill of my dad, but my dad threw me out of the house when he drank, he beat me up badly and my mom always sent me to my grandma's when my dad went out—my mom suffered a lot (Participant 2).

Participant nine shared that because of who she is, she only received hatred from her father and grandfather which led her to drinking, drug use, and prostitution, and eventually hospitalized with only a few short months to live:

Well, I did not see the importance of life because I felt that I did not fit into this life because of what I am ... I never [received] any support, a gesture of affection, [or] of love from my father [or] my grandfather. What I [received] was pure hatred [and] anger... And all of that leads you to make some ugly decisions in your life—rebellion [and] age—that [also] leads you to do stupid things. I started drinking at a very young age [and] using drugs. I even got to the point [of] prostituting myself in order for my brothers to eat, because my father never took responsibility of us. But before you realize it...it's...[too] late—I started rebelling, [and] using cocaine. It got to a point where I do not know how [or] what happened, I just woke up in the hospital, [and] they told me, “Your liver is like this, your pancreas is in pieces, and I doubt very much that you’ll survive.” And I fell asleep for two months (Participant 9).

Participant eight shared his experiences of physical abuse, humiliation, and messages he received about how wearing a corn cob between his legs to emulate the “male genitalia,” made him a sinner:

I would get beatings by my mom because one time I was playing house—mom and dad—and I was the dad. I came to the house with a piece of corn cob in my pants because that was my part, right? That's what a man has between their legs and that's what I thought made me a man. My mom saw [and said], “What the hell do you have in there?” and everybody laughed at me first, but then I received a big beating. I couldn't understand when she would beat me—I would just be like, “Why? I'm not doing nothing wrong; this is who I am.” I knew that the neighbors [and] family, probably knew I was different, but it was taboo, it was [a] sin. You were a sinner, going to go to hell or maybe by thinking that beating it out, it would go out of my system or something. I did experience maybe like homophobia (Participant 8).

While Participant seven was not rejected by his immediate family, he shared that a challenge for him has been the loss of his extended family because he knew they would reject him for being Trans, so he made the decision to stop talking to them altogether:

I think the loss of my extended family for sure. It wasn't even so much that they rejected me, I just knew they would, and I stopped talking to them. So, they don't know—they know, sort of—but there's very few people that I still interact with; whereas I had like a hundred-fifty people in my family back in [my] country of origin (Participant 7).

*Subcategory 3: Personal Safeguarding is a Concern.* A total of five of the participants expressed their concerns and worry related to personal safety in intimate relationships in their daily life, with participants expressing a need for self-protection. For instance, Participant four indicated that when he began transitioning, he wondered what people would say about him and was ashamed to say anything. He also highlighted the underreporting of news exposing the daily killings of Trans individuals that make Trans individuals feel unsafe and at risk:

Then you have to think about what you really want to do—some people don't feel safe because they feel like their life is at risk. The news don't put out how many transgender people get killed a day all over the United States: at least one transgender person dies every day because they get jumped... (Participant 4).

Like Participant four, Participant eight also highlighted the violence that targets Trans women, but highlighted there is a lack of awareness on how Trans men can also be killed and abused:

This movement of transgender violence—it's really harsh...on a transgender woman—it's different on a transgender man, but I feel like we can also be killed; we can be abused (Participant 8).

Furthermore, when Participant eight was asked to speak about the challenges he experiences as a result of membership in the Trans Latinx immigrant community, he noted the sexual harassment that he experiences, "...Yes, I think especially with cisgender men, we're still being sexually harassed." Participant eight shared that he received a request from a local reporter, who was White, to interview him to document his transition, which he viewed as an opportunity. However, he shared that throughout the interview he felt used and as if the reporter only wanted his story for his own purposes:

Can I just share something with you? At the beginning of my transitioning, this... reporter—local from [Southwest State]—reached out to me and said that she wanted to follow my transitioning. I said "Yes," because like I said, I'm open to opportunities. But [in] the first three interviews I had with her, she didn't really connect with me, she didn't sympathize because she's White—she does have privileges—so I didn't feel that connection. I felt like she only wanted my story—I have felt that they want our story—to sell it or just want it for their own purposes...I was feeling so uncomfortable that I



stopped, and I said, “I’m sorry. I can’t do this,” because I felt like I was being used! (Participant 8).

On several instances during the interview, Participant six expressed her concerns and difficulties with being able to have a partner because her ability to view the world using both “a man’s and woman’s” perspective has heightened her awareness and ability to profile people. Moreover, she shared she has yet to feel vulnerable with anyone, because the individuals with whom she has been with have not gained her trust. As a Trans individual she believes she must be defensive, guarded, and pretend to be tough so people will not abuse her, but she described herself as someone who is sensitive:

An obstacle for me is the fact that [because] I am Trans—sometimes I have to take care of myself, [and] I have to pretend to be very rude. Actually, I am very sensitive, but I have to pretend I am very rough so that no one approaches me... and want to abuse me. Even with the way I am, there is no slob that has missed the opportunity of groping me without my consent...I believe I am a sociable person and I speak well to others... [So] an obstacle for me, is the fact that sometimes I still have to be very defensive (Participant 6).

Similarly to Participant six, two other participants also spoke about their need to protect or prove themselves as “not weak” to their family. An example was provided by Participant three, when she shared that by working in the “hard labor” of farms, where she cut vegetables, she revoked her brother’s ability to continue conveying she was weak. Similarly, Participant five shared that when her brothers try to fight with her, she shows them that she is not weak but dismissing them when they try with arguments:

[I] try to show my brothers that nothing... can take me down. What I always tell them is, "I gotta show you that I'm not no punk bitch." That's what I always tell them—they always took that in... Sometimes my mom is like, "I don't know how you could do it." I'm just like, "It's...normal, people...[just] wanna say their two cents." My brothers—even though they're bigger and taller than me—I can still show them that...I'm not weak...At some points they've tried... [with] little arguments that we would get into, but I'm like, "It's not going to work out...you think you're...tough and you see me..." I'm like, "If you wanna fight then we can fight." And...every time I tell them, "You can say whatever

you want it's not going to hurt me...' And they've been okay with it, they're supportive about it, they're cool with it (Participant 5).

***Subcategory 4: Family Negated Trans Identity.*** A total of five participants shared the ways in which their families invalidated and/or rejected who they are as Trans individuals. Throughout the interview Participant three shared multiple instances in which her family rejected and/or invalidated her for being Trans. For instance, she shared that when she first arrived to the U.S., her family questioned her for her “way of being” and for not speaking English. In fact, her father tried to make her a “man” by making her work in a farm, but did not succeed in changing her:

My dad made me work in a ranch to make me a man—and could not. He thought that he did me wrong, but I said, “Wow, he showed me how to work.” He placed me where there were beautiful and handsome men. At the same time my father said, “Oh, I will make her a man.” No, he could not change me (Participant 3).

Similarly, Participant three’s brothers who are “manly and heterosexual” enjoyed living with her because she treated them like their mother would, by cleaning and cooking, despite their belief she would be a prostitute like some of her friends. Her aunts, uncles, and grandmother disliked Participant three’s mother because they blamed her for Participant three’s “way of being,” to the extent of viewing Participant three as a “stranger” when she first arrived in the U.S. Participant three shared that her son, before he introduces his girlfriends to her, will often tell them that his “mother is different,” though she indicates when they meet her they like her a lot. From an early age Participant four knew who he was, but every time he tried to do something that was inherent to his “nature” he got in trouble with his family for not doing the correct “girl things” which made him question himself:

I remember one time I got in trouble because I tried peeing standing up...Certain things that I would do that my grandma would, *sacar la chancla* [take out her sandal]. Because I was like not doing normal things—I guess, what you would think...a girl would do. I already knew what I liked, I knew what I wanted but... every time I did something... out

of my nature, it would be wrong so... I would question myself, “Okay, you need to stop playing with soccer balls.” Instead...she would tell me to go play with my auntie and I would be like, “that’s just fucking boring...I don’t wanna do that...” And she would get mad at me, and would be like, “No you go play with the girls,” (Participant 4).

When Participant five was six years old, it was difficult to see the way his family stopped talking to and rejected her cousin after he transitioned into a Trans man, because part of her family is old school and believes “you are born with what you have.” She indicated that she saw him in the early stages of his transition, and when he came out and told the entire family, most of them said “that is not right,” and she witnessed her family’s aggression towards it, so he decided to leave. Participant seven shared that when he was young, his family and friends would tell him, “you should be more feminine,” which made him mad. While his family is more supportive now, he shared that his new family, his partner’s family, is having a difficult time accepting him:

...I guess the thing that is challenging sometimes with my new family—which is my partner’s family—[is] having some acceptance from some of them: sometimes they’re cool, sometimes they look at me weird, 'cause they knew me pre-transition—mostly *tios* [uncles] and *tias* [aunts]. Siblings are pretty good—pretty solid people. Her dad...knows that I’m trans, because it’s pretty obvious...But I’m not sure he has some understanding of... transness. And there’s...religious reasons...but he’s very welcoming and loves me as a person; he cares a lot about me. But sometimes he’ll use...female pronouns, which is weird to me... I have a beard now. We did struggle a lot with my partner’s extended family. At that point I was in the middle of transition, but they didn’t know—so they only perceived us as a Lesbian couple. We had some experiences of people being flat out like, “This is not okay.” Someone that was like, “You shouldn’t.” When I moved here, we were staying with her family [and] someone was like, “You need to kick them out,” to her dad, who defended us (Participant 7).

Participant eight shared that he suffered a lot growing up because his mother saw him as a girl, who should be wearing dresses:

...I suffered a lot. My mom is a really strong character—*mujer* [woman]—she’s really *chingona* [badass]. She knew she had a daughter, and she’s like, “Why is my daughter not wanting to wear dresses?” For me, wearing dresses was the most awful thing in the world, [when] she would let me use my neighbor’s clothes, I was so happy. When it was like a religious event or a party, I had to wear a dress. I would put a fist to it—I would fight for it—and I would get a lot of beatings for that. I couldn’t understand why my mom was hurting me (Participant 8).

Now that Participant eight is out, he shared that his family is being quiet about it, which is hard for him because if they call him by his birth name it brings him back to who he was.

***Subcategory 5: People Lack Trans Awareness.*** Four of the participants shared their experiences of being misunderstood, their identities being confused, and being misgendered. For instance, Participant two shared that for her, being Trans is something different. However, she believes there are many Trans individuals that exist and not everyone is the same. Participant three spoke about a challenge she has experienced with being perceived as someone who would harass others because of who she is. For instance, she shared that an obstacle for her is that others believe she would steal or harass men, but does not because she is respectful and wants others to respect her the way her mother and sisters are respected:

The obstacle was that I would not be able to do things, make fun of the person, or I would steal, or harass men. That is what I think was an obstacle. However, I have demonstrated that the way I am does not lead you to offend anyone. No, you can work with honesty without taking anyone's job. And I am not going after men. I respected myself, and I wanted [men] to respect me like my mom or my sisters; that's how you have to respect me, and I'll respect you... (Participant 3).

Participant six shared her own experiences and frustrations toward others who do not understand that gender identity and sexual orientation are different, but both are on a spectrum. Another participant shared that now that he is out, his family is “being quiet about it,” but he cannot move forward when people continue to call him by the name he was given at birth:

Now that [New Name] has been born, I talk about her as my past years [but] when they call me by that [Old Name] name—it's not hurtful, it's just not letting me keep going, especially with my family, my friends, and outside (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 6: Cis-Gender Conforming Norms Harm.*** A total of four participants described several instances where they experienced noticeable changes in treatment by people in their environment stemming from the physical changes in their body that gave them access to

cis-gender norms. However, several participants spoke about the constant anxiety they experience from fear of being found out as Trans. In addition to this, some participants spoke about the awareness they gained related to how their value as a person in society changed after they transitioned, and the stereotypes associated with their new physical appearance. For instance, Participant four shared he wonders whether the promotion he received at his job was due to the changes he experienced in his outward physical appearance because he notices people place more value on him, making him realize that society is “messed up.” He shared his awareness increased and knows he is a man with privilege now and that he, “would have never got this really good promotion if [he] was a girl”:

Man, our society is fucked up, it’s messed up. Just because I have a beard, it makes a difference, it makes me better? That’s my point of view. It’s crazy because I could tell you that I have men privilege, even though... I am the same person. Why is it that now that I have a beard and a deeper voice, I am more valuable than before? It’s crazy—you go through a lot of changes not just your body, but also with people and also...your environment changes too (Participant 4).

As Participant four furthered developed his thoughts around this, he began reflecting on how he is also now perceived as, “someone that’s tough and stronger in some kind of way...I am *macho* now,” noting that having this perception is difficult because [cisgender] guys do not understand him because they were never a girl. He also shared his complex and negative experiences related to the vacillation between access and no access to male privilege once people find out he is Trans:

When people find out [I’m] transgender, they treat me differently [and] start putting me down, [as] if I’m a girl again. They start giving me comments, especially [people from country of origin], you know how the guys like to play around? “Oh, don’t say that because he’s here so he’s gonna take offense,” because they know that I was a girl. When people start finding out or I tell them upfront their mood switches—the way they treat me goes back to not having guy privileges. It’s a weird change ‘cause it’s not like, “Oh okay, now I’m a guy and then everything is fine,” no it goes back and forth. People treat me differently all the time. I’m like, “I’m the same person” (Participant 4).

Similarly, Participant seven acknowledged having a “privilege” in being able to access to cis-passing privilege, “most of the time.” Yet, even with this access, he also shared he is anxious about others perceiving him as Trans. Later in the interview he provided an example of when he experiences anxiety over people realizing he is Trans. For instance, he noted that in medical settings or emergency situations he is unsure what would happen if he is unable to speak up for himself, but went further to say that he does not believe it would make a difference if he was able to speak up:

I think that’s the anxiety that I feel: people realizing I am trans. Medical settings, for instance, [in] any emergency situation I’m going to be transported to the ER, what’s going to happen there when I’m not able to speak up for myself? Or even if I’m able to speak up for myself, doesn’t mean that’s going to make much of a difference (Participant 7).

Participant six spoke about how her fear increases when she is questioned on her in-depth knowledge of cars because these are men’s interests and knows men prefer women who are fragile and feminine. Later in the interview, she shared she tries to stay safe by not placing doubt in men about whether she is a woman or a man because she fears they may be homophobic or transphobic and later beat her up; she simply cannot just let anyone know she is transgender unless they are trustworthy:

It is even [not] placing doubt of whether I am a woman or a man, because I want to try to be as safe as possible. I do not know if the man next to me is homophobic or transphobic, and later he waits for me in a street and hits me with shovels—just as it happened once in [country of origin], where three or four waited for me [and] beat me up—no, I do not want that for me. Part of the obstacle of being Trans, is that you have to be more discreet in everything—and I try to be. I try not to let anyone know that I am Trans for any reason if they are not trustworthy... When I first arrived, there was a guy who happened to push me, but thank God there was an African American woman, she knew that I did not know anything...she defended me, because when I first arrived, I was in a poor condition and you could tell. This guy passed and nudged me hard...[but] the woman stood in front of me and started to say [to him], “What did he want? What was wrong with him? Was he too wide? And that the street was too wide for him to pass and push me.” From there I learned that not all people should know something [about] my life because I do not know if the one [I tell] hates those things. I think part of the obstacle of being Trans is that you cannot let everyone know that you are Trans (Participant 6).

Participant nine shared the ways in which people's inability to tell who she is has created difficulties for her because men believe she is a "complete woman," so she often has to push them away because she simply wants to be alone.

***Subcategory 7: Discomfort with Physical Appearance.*** Four participants shared a lack of full comfort with their body because they did not yet have the sexual organs or body that aligns with their mind, with some participants expressing feeling "incomplete." Throughout the interview, Participant six expressed the only obstacle she faces to being happy with who she is, is not feeling "normal" with her body in front of a partner because she does not have a vulva:

The obstacle that I have right now to being happy with myself—in reality—I would like to find a way or look for someone who can help me to have my vulva, so I can finally be completely normalized with my body. [So] I can have a partner and be able to undress with him or her without caring about anything (Participant 6).

Later in the interview, Participant six continued to express her obstacle to feeling good about herself is feeling "incomplete." She further expressed that even though she lives, works, and is a woman in society, as a transsexual woman she experiences dissatisfaction with her sexual organs:

I am a transsexual woman, although I already live as a woman, work, and I am a woman in society—my sexual organs do bother me. I am bothered by having to shower and see certain things that displease me, having to go to the restroom and having to dry things that displease me (Participant 6).

Similarly, Participant two expressed her wish to transform herself "more like a woman," because she has not been able to do this yet and it is an obstacle for her. Participant four expressed that even though he has been able to be himself, he has a love-hate relationship with his appearance because although he loves the way he looks and how others respond to his body, his body "is still" the same:

For me, at the end of the day even though you are you—it's kind of like a love and hate relationship because you love the way you look but your body is still the same... so it's hard to think, "Oh, I like how people are looking at me, but I'm still not comfortable with myself,"... if that makes sense to you (Participant 4).

Participant eight shared his early childhood experiences of always knowing he was a boy but being unable to figure out why his body was not on the same page as his mind, leading him to suffer alone. He further expressed he often felt like he always had a "guy twin" that "could not be born," to explain the feelings he had about being a guy, which his doctor normalized as a common feeling that Trans individuals have:

...I always talk about that time as someone else. I always see myself as a twin, I grew up feeling like, "Oh, maybe I was going to be a twin and he was going to be a guy and that's why I feel these things." My [Trans] doctor said that it's really common for us transgenders to grow up like that, to feel like you have a twin... (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 8: Lack of Role Models.*** A total of four participants shared how their lives were impacted by the lack of Trans role models in their life. In this subcategory, participants shared how the lack of guidance led them to make mistakes in their personal life or even to not know how "to be" themselves. Some expressed the important role finding others like them had in understanding themselves. Throughout the interview, Participant eight shared that he did not understand why he felt like a boy and shared he did not know anyone who was like him, so he never shared. In his struggles with his Trans identity, he met a doctor who was a Trans man which made him very happy as this was the first Trans man he met:

I was going back to seeing a doctor...and when I got there, they introduced me to my doctor [Doctor's Name]. He introduced himself as a transgender man. I'm looking at this guy—fully masculine—you would have never thought that he was born a female. I was so happy that I wanted to touch him and be like, "Wow! Are you for reals? This is my first encounter with somebody," but I didn't say anything because I was so used to growing quiet, right? But I was just so happy (Participant 8).



Participant eight also expressed he does not believe there are any gender role for him because he grew up without a dad. He did not know who to look up to for those aspects of himself, so he looked up to his brother:

I didn't grow up with a dad figure, but I grew up with my brother, so I did look up to his macho side: like men can do this. [It's] not like there's any gender roles for me—but growing up, I didn't know who to look up to for those things. I don't really have a lot of experiences because I was just nine years old and my transitioning experience has been recently (Participant 8).

Participant nine expressed how the lack of guidance and support in her life about sexual health led her to acquire a sexually transmitted disease, HIV. She had to rely on and navigate these areas in her life on her own because “‘Nobody told [her] this can happen to you...” Participant five spoke about her experiences of not having anyone at an early age, and how her parents hid her cousins' transition until they arrived to the U.S., so at an early age she had many questions, but no answers:

I know he was transitioning, but my parents didn't tell me ‘till I got to the United States. They finally told me, “Oh, your cousin so-and-so is now a guy,” which I knew already, but they just didn’t want to talk about it at an early age...As a little kid I was like, “How is that possible? How can that happen? What do you have to do to do all that?” They didn’t have all the answers, but slowly I was able to learn about it (Participant 5).

Participant seven shared he did not begin thinking more consciously about being a Trans man until a couple of years ago, because his understanding of Trans was limited to only Trans women and he did not know Transmen existed:

I’ve been out to myself for probably...four years...my understanding of 'transgender' was only that there were transgender women, because back in [country of origin] transgender women cut my hair and that’s how I knew there were transgender women. I didn’t know there were transmen—like at all. I had no idea, until I was nineteen—in college... I got more involved in the Queer community, I started meeting more people, I started meeting transmen and I was like, “Woah, that’s what I am, that’s who I am.” I struggled a lot with that (Participant 7).

However, he spoke about the importance of being around other Queer and Trans people who were exploring masculinity because it made him realize he could be a Trans man:

I did drag at some point—before I came out as Trans—and I feel like that was such a cool moment for me 'cause those were all [country of origin citizens], being Trans in a Queer space in [country of origin]. I feel that's what made things click for me: [that] I can be a Trans [country of origin Citizen] dude and there are people like me. 'Cause when I had that meltdown, I ended up coming back to [country of origin] for a month and a half and I figured things out a little more. I think meeting Queer folks [and] people who were Trans as well—more nonbinary—but people that were exploring masculinity in some way, that was very important—when I came back a couple months later that's when I was like, “Nope, it's happening, I'm a dude and I want to change my pronouns” (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 9: Personal Struggles Affect Mental Health.*** A total of four participants in this subcategory shared their struggles with mental health and how their personal struggles as a Trans individual had an influence in these day-to-day struggles. During one instance of the interview, Participant eight shared he felt empty inside when he had tried to live his life for his family instead of living it for himself:

Sometimes I have felt so empty inside because I wasn't who I was. I was living for a mother that wanted to have a daughter that could get married and have kids. I was living for my sisters and my brothers to have a sister. I was living for them; I was not living my life (Participant 8).

Two participants shared the times when they both attempted suicide multiple times in their life. For instance, Participant six noted that when she was eleven years old, she realized she would not change to be like her mother, she became depressed and attempted suicide multiple times:

...[Ever] since I was little, I always thought that I would be like my mother, but when I realized that—[I]was eleven-years-old—nothing [happened] at all. They [also] told me all about sexuality ... I said Damn! I went into a deep depression—after I found out that I was not going to change like my mom, so I started my suicide attempts—doing nonsense (Participant 6).

Like Participant six, Participant nine shared she became suicidal after her father refused to allow his mother to visit her in the U.S. using a humanitarian visa when Participant nine was in the hospital and in a coma:

They fixed the papers for my parents with a humanitarian visa so that they would come to say goodbye, but since my father never cared about me, he did not want to come. He did not allow my mother [to come], because in [country of origin State], unfortunately, they are *machista* and do what the man says. And that hurt me and made me sink. I had psychiatry for a while, because all I wanted was to kill myself, because I said, “It’s not possible that the person who gave me life now does not care about my life.” But I was wrong: my mother loves me, I love her—I adore her. Unfortunately, when you do not have someone to count on, you cling to a man (Participant 9).

Participant seven shared how other’s perception of Trans experiences, who they are, and their genders is painful for him because he sees himself as a person who is simply trying his best. He further shared the negative and dehumanizing perceptions from others such as believing that Trans individuals are the “devil incarnate” makes him angry and impacts his mental health:

Hearing messages about trans people that are pretty painful to hear—people invalidating: who we are, our experiences, and our genders. Or just thinking that we are devil incarnate or something. The things that people think that we are...I’m like, “I’m just a person trying to do the best I can in my life.” People think that we’re monsters. Sometimes it just makes me so angry! I think that’s the thing that impact[s] me—if we’re talking about treatment and mental health (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 10: Lack Resources for Gender Affirmation.*** A total of four participants spoke about the challenges associated with finding access to the means that would help them to affirm their gender. For instance, Participant three wondered how she could begin her transition process, so she found ways to access hormones by having her mother send them to her from her country of origin, or by getting them from a woman she knew. Participant six spoke about her lack of monetary means to have bottom surgery in order to finish her transition, which she considers her only obstacle to happiness. When asked about how she manages her challenges as a Trans Latinx immigrant, she stated she has not been able to overcome her personal obstacles because she has not found the means to complete her transition, a question during which she began crying. She indicated that she would not like to die without having completed her transition:

The personal obstacles are things that I have not been able to overcome because I do not have the resources to complete my transition. It's something that frustrates me [and] hurts me ... [and] I cannot keep it from weighing me down. But I have to give it time to try to achieve it. So how do I cope? Fighting, trying to reach it every day—disciplining myself. Trying to find somewhere where I can do it and does not cost me so much. I do not know, I am looking for a way to achieve my dream, I have already achieved many things, but that is something I would love to finish and have not been able to—and I do not want to die without completing it...It's something that weighs on me and is difficult to get out, because it frustrates me. It's something that I think about and it makes me want to cry. It is simply the only thing (Participant 6).

Participant four shared he believes being born in the U.S. or working for certain companies can provide access to health insurance with benefits for gender affirming services, but he questions how an immigrant could access these resources. Participant eight shared he has been able to access information through social media, a platform that made him realize that White Trans individuals have more access to money for surgeries and doctors. He dreams about accessing these but has to remind himself that “[He doesn’t] have what they have.” He further shared that he sees the differences and privileges that White Trans individuals have access to:

...A lot of White transgenders—they have their privileges. They have everything that a lot of us struggle with what we need, with medications and stuff like that (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 11: Unaware of Personal Trans Identity.*** While some participants shared that they knew they were Trans from an early age, a total of three participants expressed a lack of knowledge or understanding of this in their personal life. For instance, earlier in the interview Participant seven shared that because he came from a privileged background while growing up in his country of origin, he was not aware of “transness or [his] own transness.” Participant eight shared he used the word “Queer” to identify his gender since the “LGBT” letters did not fit him. Despite using the word “Queer,” he was still unhappy even though his family already accepted him and despite presenting as masculine through outward presentation and in his clothes:

Being in the community—I didn't fit with any of those letter[s]; I always [said] LGBT, but I was never lesbian. Until I found the word Queer about three years ago that [I]

identified myself. 'Cause being Queer, I don't identify with any other gender; being queer is just like *Jotería* [a reclaimed pejorative in Spanish, similar to Queer], it's just happy and out there, right? At that time, I was already out of the closet with my family and they accept[ed] me. I always identified more as masculine: my clothes, the way I present, and stuff like that. But I thought that was it. I was like, "Why am I not happy? Because my family already accepts me. Why am I still not being me?" (Participant 8).

In a later part of the interview, Participant eight shared he knew identifying as "Queer" was not it for him, and with the help of his girlfriend, he was able to understand the man he had always been, which scared him because he realized all of the risks associated with the changes.

Participant five, shared that she did not know she was Trans, she simply "knew [she] was different she just "did not know yet what" that meant.

**Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups Category.** In the Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category, the participants spoke about the perceived disadvantages of being members of multiple social groups. Within this category, the following subcategories emerged: (1) Unable to Separate Identity, (2) Isolation, (3) Unwelcomed by the Latinx Community, (4) Powerlessness Over Social Position, (5) An Aspect of Identity Increased in Saliency, (6) Unable to Modify Birth Certificate, and (7) Cannot Explain Trans Identity in Spanish. Moreover, within the Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category, the emerged Finding a Trans Affirming & Culturally Competent Therapist is Hard subcategory will not be further described in this section since only one participant reported their experiences in each of these areas. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category will be further described with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Unable to Separate Identity.*** A total of seven participants expressed their challenges with being asked to discuss who they are as separate entities. Several of the participants also described experiences where they were used, devalued, and felt "fragmented" as

Participant seven described it, while living in the U.S. For instance, several of the participants shared some of their struggles with feeling like they have to choose between identities because they want to connect to others, or they believe all of their experiences are combined. During the interview, Participant eight shared he had struggles with his identity. When he was asked to elaborate on whether his struggles were associated with any particular identity, he stated he believed they are all combined because “It’s who [he] is.” Participant one shared their struggles with having to pick and choose between Latinx and Trans communities because for them these communities are segregated despite people like them existing in both of these communities:

I feel like it's very difficult, because you have to pick and choose. You can be with your Latinx friends or you can be with your non-binary friends. It doesn't feel like they're together, like they're meshing yet. I don't know if that's because the Trans Community needs to be doing more work on their intersectionality, but also the Latinx community needs to be working on that as well. It's like both groups are segregated right now and they're not realizing that there's folks that are both. So, there needs to be integration there—it's very difficult. I feel like I can pick one group, but if I'm with that group, I can't be with the other group. So, it's like I have different sets of friends, I have different sets of things and it's not integrated (Participant 1).

Participant two and three both similarly shared they have to demonstrate their worth to get recognition. For instance, Participant two shared that as a Trans Latina her challenge has been to demonstrate that she has worth, is not less than, is capable, can overcome and move ahead. Similarly, Participant three shared that Trans Latinx immigrants have many health problems, but an obstacle is they have no voice or a space of their own:

Right now, we have many problems in terms of health—We do not have a place for us as a sex—as they say—in the bathrooms where we [can] go. And we have no voice or vote in that regard. That is an obstacle that I see, as a transgender [person], they still do not create spaces for us places, in others they do, but right now in many places they do not. And that would be another challenge, letting others know about us—[and] that we do not traverse life with a contagious [disease], talking about others, or trying to be bad—at least I do not. The doctor told me that I have to take care of myself because other people can come with another disease and they give it to me, [and] I do not have other defenses to

protect myself...I hope that they accept us as we are, and give us our place as another gender, especially as Latinas. They see us [and say], “Ah, she is a prostitute or does shows.” We have people—not professional—but that can be valuable with a good job...we have the same value—they need to serve us as we are (Participant 3).

Participant four expressed that being Hispanic, Trans and an immigrant is difficult for him because there is “nothing positive” that is associated with all of these three labels imposed on him:

It's difficult—all around, the fact that you're just not Hispanic, you're also transgender, you [are] also an immigrant. So, there is nothing positive that comes to mind when you say those three things together. Those words—when you say those three things together is just negativity—off the bat. It's not because you want to, it's just that's how we are labeled because we're bad people, we're going against religion, we're going against the law—but we're not bad of people. We're just like anybody else, we also have feelings (Participant 4).

Participant five shared the ways in which she negotiates who she is based on the various situations she is in. For instance, even though she knows who she is, while filling out her DACA and ID application, she put ‘Male’ because she will not change it into ‘Female’:

I have DACA. When I was renewing my work permit—I did the biometric appointment, [and] you have to fill an application—they ask for the gender, I wrote male. When they were going to take the picture they were like, “Are you sure you want to do male?” and I'm like, “Yeah, I'm positive.” And they're like, “Are you sure? We can change it to female,” and I'm like, “No I'm okay with it.” At the DMV I was getting my ID, they also were trying to change it, but I was like, “No, it's fine.” They kept insisting, but I was like, “It's okay...” (Participant 5).

When Participant seven was asked about his experiences related to being a Trans Latinx immigrant, he shared his surprise because he believes everything is combined and connected:

Whoa... I don't even—it's everything that I just mentioned ‘cause everything is so connected (Participant 7).

However, Participant seven also compared and contrasted living in his Country or Origin versus living in the U.S. He provided an analogy of how the U.S. has worked to make him feel “fragmented” an experience he did not have when he lived in his country of origin:

...One of the challenges that I mentioned earlier...I feel like when I was living in [country of origin], society was this open field and [there were] places to explore and [I] was welcomed everywhere. Here I'm like, "There's buildings, let's see if I can get in or if I even want to get in." So, it seems more fragmented (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 2: Isolation.*** A total of seven participants expressed a general sense of feeling disconnected, not being able to find communities of support, and a feeling of needing to deal with problems alone. For instance, Participant three shared at her age the only obstacle she sees for herself is having a fear of staying alone and she worries about "...What will happen to [her] in the future." Participant five shared she always keeps her problems to herself, indicating that as the eldest of her siblings, she tries to show them "Nothing can take [her] down." Similarly, Participant two shared she knows other Trans Latinx immigrant women, but she does not feel she is supported by anyone except for a Community Social Worker that runs a Trans support group she attends. Participant six expressed her inability to connect with some Trans Latinx immigrant women because they view her as a competition for potential partners, are envious and lack unity. She also shared she dislikes this lack of unity among some Trans Latinx immigrant women because it makes things more difficult for others in similar situations without the lack of support:

It is not nice because...they tell you horrible things. And sometimes you ask them how I could do this, and they say, "No, you investigate, because nobody taught me." It's like, you're Trans just like me, you're Latina just like me, you're an immigrant just like me ... and instead of saying, "Okay, well I did it this way, maybe you can try it this way and it works" ... No, there are those who say, "No, you investigate, because when I arrived nobody taught me anything and I do not have to make it easy for you. Do it yourself..." (Participant 6).

As a transsexual woman, Participant six further explained that her difficulties finding a source of support are due to many transgender women not understanding transsexual women, which is a smaller group of individuals:



There are many things that many transgender women do not understand about a transsexual woman. And sometimes that implies a bit of difficulty in having friends who are transsexual not transgender. Because as transsexual women, we are a smaller group from transgender women; and transgender women are a bigger group than us. And as a transsexual woman, I can say that I do not know many transsexual women, I know only one—me. Maybe there are others, but they probably will not be noticed... (Participant 6).

As she furthered discussed her multiple oppressed statuses within the Trans community, she also indicated that she is a bisexual transsexual woman which complicates matters for her as this group is even more reduced:

...And then if you add that you are a bisexual transsexual woman, it is even more complicated. Because sometimes transsexual women for the most part are straight, and like men only. And bisexual transsexual women are a much smaller group—I believe. Maybe I'm the only oddity or maybe there are others out there, but I do not know her. So, it's complicated for me...It's different, totally different, sexual orientation and gender identity are totally different things. It's what I explain to everyone, but they do not understand. [So] it's hard (Participant 6).

Participant eight shared that when he was in high school, he experienced low motivation because he was struggling with his identities. Even though he was able to find some understanding around his Trans identity by following Trans individuals on social media and witnessing their mental and physical changes, he never reached out to anyone, and even though more Trans individuals are coming out Latinx are not:

About two years ago, I started [using] social media and I was following a lot of transgenders. I was so amazed [with] the transformation—not just physically, but mentally and everything people would talk about. I thought, “Oh it's always knowing that I was him or I was her,” by reading their stories. I never reached out to somebody I think the transgender community...it's growing so much, but, we, as Latinos, haven't come out a lot to one another (Participant 8).

Participant eight further reiterated that as a Trans Latinx immigrant, it has been hard to find a community of transmen who are Latinx immigrants as well:

As a Latino transgender immigrant, it's kind of like I'm a new generation, even though we talk about that there's been trans since [for]ever; for me, it's hard to find a community yet.

Maybe I'm the one where support [starts] in my own community, [because] I think, we're still afraid to come out; I mean Latino transgender man (Participant 8).

Participant seven shared that because he did not have a close relationship with his extended family who lived in the U.S., when he first moved to the West Coast State he felt "...lonely because he was not able to share things with [his] family" even though they were the only ones he had in the U.S. Furthermore, he also shared the lack of sense of belonging and detachment he has felt in the U.S. because he is a Latinx immigrant that has had to learn the culture with time, but now in the state where he currently lives, he has no community. However, even among other Latinx he expressed he has felt a sense of not belonging because other Latinx's culture feels borrowed:

I would say one of the biggest issues, as an immigrant, is that for me that sense of belonging, those cultural references that I feel like I've gained over time. Especially as a [Latin American] immigrant—right now I live in [Western State]—so not a lot of community in general. Even within Latinos, feeling that sense of not belonging. It's always kind of like a borrowed place or a borrowed culture, and detachment. Sometimes when I hear a song, even though [it] is [from X Latin American Country]—but in [country of origin] its popular—if I hear [Famous Singer]—and it's just because it was in a song or he was singing, it would just appear and I didn't play it—it just warms my heart. I think of things that culturally I can enjoy, but it's different, it doesn't feel mine (Participant 7).

Participant seven also shared he has taken a stance against those who are against undocumented immigrants, and indicates that as a result his social circles have gotten smaller:

"...You don't like my friends that are undocumented? Then, bye." You know? No chill about it—not even just White people...like "all lives matter" people or people that are against undocumented immigrants, or that are like, "Well, we have to be reasonable about it," it's like, "It's their land, shut the fuck up..." My circles for sure have become smaller (Participant 7).

Participant one shared their associated stress because part of their identity is not recognized.

They expressed that because their identities are not recognized, it feels like they are constantly putting out a fire:

It definitely adds on to the stress ... it's like putting out a fire when there's another fire. It's ...never done because one part of your identity gets recognized and the other it's not, so... it adds on to the stress...it doesn't ever feel like...you ever fix the issue...There's always something else because both of those identities are not getting recognized (Participant 1).

***Subcategory 3: Unwelcomed by the Latinx Community.*** A total of six participants spoke about their negative experiences with other members of the Latinx Community that included: bullying because of the way they spoke or behaved, harassment, fearing for physical safety, and being misgendered. For instance, Participant five shared that when she and her family moved to a Midwest city, she had to attend bilingual schools with more Latinx; however, she noted that the people in the school were not friendly or welcoming. Later in the interview, she expanded her experiences in this new environment and described being bullied for the way she spoke English and for the way she acted, which was hard coming from her “own people”:

...Once I got here, they're like, “Your English, it's not proper, you talk too fast, we don't understand the way you write,” I'm like, “That's what I learned.” I got used to it, but I was like, “I know English, so what's the problem?” I was basically bullied for a year and... everything was new. It was just basically the way I acted, the way I spoke—they were like, “That's not proper, that's not the right thing,” it came from my own people, so it was kind of hard (Participant 5).

Participant six shared that when she did not speak English she worried because she could not “even order a sandwich” and would encounter people who pretended not to speak Spanish.

Participant three shared that others often think undocumented immigrants come to displace others from their jobs, including her siblings, but she has proven them wrong. Participant two shared that when she worked with machines with other Latinx men, she was told that she was not a woman and the work she did was for men “not fags”:

...I came and the machines caught my attention, because it is neither a man's nor woman's work because the work is not heavy at all. Since I did not have a hard time programming a machine..., [and] changing plastics [was] the only thing that was heavy, I could do it. I had a lot of problems, I even had to leave that job at the end because I could not stand it—they would taunt me a lot. I felt very pressured and uncomfortable

there. They were men from [Latinx Caribbean Country]—they said that this work was of men, not for *potos* according to them—*potos*, means faggot. [They told me] to leave, that only men worked there, and that I was not a woman (Participant two).

Participant eight discussed his experiences with being misgendered, and shared he believes Latinx have engrained customs which is why they question his name. Participant seven shared the challenges he experienced with the Latinx community. For instance, he shared it is important to understand the unique aspect of Latinx immigrants in the differing experiences and rivalry dynamics that exist between Latinx cultures rooted in history. An example of this are Central Americans discussing their immigration journey through other Latin American Countries and the pain this might bring up when discussing it:

...something that's unique about immigrants that are Latinx, is that we have this understanding also of dynamics between cultures—between countries, especially. And so that gets a little interesting. For instance—I wouldn't include myself in this group-- but [X South American Country] and [Y South American Country], there's a rivalry there. And between [Y South American Country] and [Z South American Country]. And all this really dumb stuff that's got like historical background. ...Also, that understanding of how sometimes in conversations things might come up. I used to teach citizenship classes and folks that were from Central America and folks that were from [Northern Latin American Country] sometimes had some issues. I think that was part of that immigrant experience that some of them had gone through and some of the things that they lived through their immigrant experiences in [Northern Latin American Country] (Participant 7).

Participant seven further shared that even though he wants to connect to people from his country of origin, he is afraid for his physical safety if they find out he is Trans. Moreover, he shared even though he believes the Queer communities are open to immigrants, he does not find that the other way around:

With those three things at the same time? Well for instance, there is a [country of origin] community here—there's a city where there is one—and I'm like, "Okay, I would like to connect with those people," but I'm afraid that they're gonna find out I'm trans, I'm afraid that [it's] not even just, "Oh, they're gonna reject me," it's like, am [I] going to be physically safe if they find out I am trans? I would say the spaces where I go into the Queer community, they've been pretty immigrant friendly and accepting and very open to all immigrants, and so I don't find that as much the other way (Participant 7).

He further explained that for Latinx who have lived in the U.S. for generations in his current state of residence, it is not okay to be a Latinx immigrant who maintains their culture:

Even in Latino spaces here in [Western State], you have more of those generations that have been here for a very long time or that were always here. Whereas, in southern [West Coast State] it was more recent immigrants. So, even being an immigrant for some Latinos here is not cool. They're like, "We got here a while ago or some people have always been here." They're like, "...I don't know why you still speak Spanish?" So being Spanish speaking, [and] retaining that culture, they're like, "No, you're an American," you can be something-American, but at the end of the day, "You shouldn't speak Spanish," you should acculturate or assimilate more than acculturate (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 4: Powerlessness Over Social Position.*** A total of six participants shared their experiences with feeling impotent, vulnerable, and without a lack of control over their personal and their loved ones' life circumstances. For instance, Participant one shared the worries they hold over their family, especially their mother, in experiencing racism and nativism because of the current political climate:

Now with the current political climate...I worry about my family experiencing racism and nativism. Especially since my mom still lives in [Southwest State]. I worry about her because she's had...some of these racist encounters. I worry—if something were to happen to her... She's never had a physical experience, but there's comments made about her accent, about her immigration status, and things like that (Participant 1).

Similarly, Participant seven shared that while he is not impacted by the immigration system, Latinx people close to him are, and he knows the barriers they experience and is pained knowing about the things that are coming up in terms of immigration:

...Living in a community—and especially being a Latino that's very connected to the Latino community—just the pain of knowing things that are coming up in terms of immigration...Since I moved here, I started learning about barriers that folks used to share with me. The more I got involved, the more I lived with folks that were Latinos around me—my neighbors and stuff—the more I learned about how messed up the immigration system is. I'm fortunate enough to not be affected myself, but people that are close to me are impacted by that system. I think if we are close to the Latino community—most likely we're going to have some of that (Participant 7).

However, while he shared that he is not undocumented and not impacted by the immigration system, he understands the current political climate messages target Brown and immigrant people, which places him in the “same bag” as everyone else:

Even within this political environment—I’m not undocumented—but all these messages, I know that when people see me, they don’t see whether I’m documented or not, or whether I’m Mexican or not, they’re just like, “We’re all in the same bag.” So, I understand that these messages—to me it feels personal because they are towards all of us who are Brown and are immigrants, or maybe have accents or of immigrant families. So, in that sense that is a huge burden and challenge (Participant 7).

Participant seven later shared that he feels angry toward people who are angry at Trans and immigrant people like him, but he cannot fight anyone directly because the anger he sees appears on social media and via proposed policies. He shared his frustration and indicated he does not understand why he lives in a world where people like him are not considered to have family values. He further expressed a sense of loss of control over what could happen to him, and danger his life has as a Trans Person of Color because of racial profiling and being found out as Trans:

If for some reason I'm pulled over and frisked, or TSA. I mean, hopefully will never happen but just knowing that I could be in danger because of these situations. I mean just being POC is one thing, but even beyond that with being trans it's like, 'Fuck!' it's even more (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant eight shared he has realized he is a Man of Color, due to the current time and because he works cleaning rich houses in a primarily White environment, allowing him to recognize that, “There is a race difference, there [are] racists,” and because of this he knows that certain jobs exist for Latinos:

...Now in my older years...being a Latino—It's kind of hit me that I am colored. [That] I'm in that community of Colored People. Especially in this time right now, me and my work environment—It's really White; it's rich houses—I clean houses, so I know. It's kind of like, not to put it bad, but I know where I stand—or I know... what our Latino jobs are. And now I know that there is a race difference—there [are] racists...Now, it's hitting me [that I am]—a Colored Man (Participant 8).

Participant four shared he sees no rewards to being Latinx because they do not have a voice and going to school as an immigrant is expensive. He further shared he believes having a voice depends on the individual, and whether they want that voice. When Participant nine was asked to discuss how she manages her challenges as a Trans Latinx immigrant, she indicated that as an undocumented immigrant, she has no choice but to “behave well”:

Well, I repeat this to you, that I have no obstacles. For me, nothing is difficult...the only thing is that the law does not allow us to move [without] documents—that’s the only obstacle... Behaving well, working well, trying to follow the law. If you go against the law, you get screwed. I try to do what the law says, even if I am illegal...but I have no obstacles because I have learned to move forward (Participant 9).

Participant two shared she believes people born in the U.S. can live at the government’s expense, but as a Latinx immigrant she has no benefits, so work is a necessity to survive not a desire:

Well, the truth is that you realize that there are many people who are from here, who were born here, and live at the expense of the government. They do not work, and ask for unemployment [benefits], and they ask for [food] stamps... And sometimes as a Latina immigrant one has no benefit. Sometimes, I can tell you, it's not so much that you want to work, but there is the need that you have to pay your bills, eat, help your family. You have to ... put the effort to work (Participant 2).

***Subcategory 5: An Aspect of Identity Increased in Salience.*** A total of three participants shared their experiences with perceiving one of their identities was the primary source of their obstacles, over another. An example of this is through the narrative shared by Participant three, who noted she has encountered problems in jobs where men have felt more harassed because of her “sexual preference” or Trans identity than because she is a Latina:

It can be an obstacle, in terms of my preferences. An obstacle is...the preference I have. So, if you’re going to be given a job where there are a lot of men, they say you’re going to pressure or harass them. Or because I am like this, they think that this is the worst thing. So, I have had more problems in that sense than in being Latina (Participant 3).

In another instance during the interview, she shared that she has experienced more rejection due to her “preference” or Trans identity than for being a non-English speaking Latina:

...As a Latina I think the language a little bit, but more with the preference, it affects you more, people point you out more—lots of rejection in that sense, than [for] being Hispanic and without [knowing] English...(Participant 3).

For Participant seven, immigrating to the U.S. was a tradeoff, which meant he felt safer as a Trans person, but not as a Latinx person:

But I think the main benefit of immigrating was being safer here, as a transgender person. Maybe not as Latinx, but as a trans person (Participant 7).

Participant eight, shared that he grew up focused on his identity and being undocumented:

You know, not as much as what I'm seeing right now. Not as much affecting me directly but affecting my community. Growing up, it was more about... my identity and being undocumented. It was very scary (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 6: Unable to Modify Birth Certificate.*** A total of three participants expressed an inability to return to their country of origin to change the gender marker on their birth certificate. For instance, Participant four shared that in order for him to change the “female status” on his ID, he would need to change his birth certificate in his country of origin, which he cannot do:

I haven't find out for myself—I haven't [done] research... but as far as I know...if I wanted to change my female status in my ID, I would have to change my birth certificate, so I would have to go back to [my country of origin], which I can't [do]. ...When I present my ID people question me, they're like, “Oh, who is this?” So, now I'm not just explaining myself of why I'm trans or I'm just explaining why can't I change this.... It's just like... “Oh man this sucks!” (Participant 4).

For Participant seven, a reason he will not go back to his country of origin is because he would not be able to change his birth certificate over there, which has many negative ramifications:

Also, I can't go because I can't change my birth certificate over there, especially like my gender marker. If I can't change a gender marker on an ID, how can I get a job? Housing? Things like that (Participant 7).



Participant seven also added that for a period of time his job search was limited because his gender marker was not changed on his ID:

I would say for a period of time job searching, because my ID hadn't changed, my gender marker hadn't changed, so very limited in the options that I had (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant eight shared that he has not changed his legal name because he does not know if he would be able to change it at all:

I haven't changed my legal name yet, because I don't know if I can change it or what they're going to ask. I know that one of my other friends, she's transgender, she's doing the work ahead from us so I'm gonna see if I'm going to be able to change my name (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 7: Cannot Explain Trans Identity in Spanish.*** A total of two participants shared their experiences with being unable to communicate who they are as trans individuals due to the lack of available Spanish language that can translate terms and culture. For instance, Participant one shared they have not come out to their parents because the Spanish language with necessary pronouns to help their parents understand them does not exist:

I still haven't come out to my parents actually. It's really difficult because in Spanish the language doesn't exist for me to really explain this to them—at least I haven't found that language, the words and the pronouns and things that really would help them understand what I mean—[to] understand me (Participant 1).

Similarly, Participant seven shared the lack of available Spanish translation or cultural understanding of the language used by U.S. queer and trans communities feels like a challenge and is incomplete for him:

I would say in terms of how that interacts with queerness—like learning the language that is used for queer and trans community here and not having a way to connect it to Spanish as much. It feels incomplete—the knowledge about that feels incomplete. 'Cause for some things there's no translation or there's a different cultural understanding of it. So, I think those are the challenges of not necessarily being Latino but being Latino here in the states in a different context (Participant 7).

#### **Domain 4: How Trans Latinx Immigrants Manage Their Challenges.**

The final domain that emerged from the data was How Trans Latinx Immigrants Manage their Challenges. The research team defined this domain as the ways in which the trans Latinx immigrant community deals with their day-to-day personal, familial, and broad challenges while living in U.S., associated with their membership in multiples social groups. Under this domain, three categories focused on three aspects of their lives emerged from the data including:

(1) Societal (2) Familial, and (3) Personal. Each of these categories represents a system with which the individual interacts with and yielded several subcategories that represent the ways in which participants respond to their lived experiences within each category. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories that emerged from each category will be identified and further described.

**Societal Category.** In the Societal category, participants spoke about how they manage, broadly, their challenges as members of multiple social groups while living in the U.S. Within this category the subcategories emerged included: (1) Living a Life of Self-Determination, (2) Persevering Despite the Obstacles, (3) Connecting to Others, (4) Having a Strong Work Ethic, (5) Providing Mentorship, (6) Creating and Finding Affirming Spaces, (7) Educating About Trans Lives, (8) Maintaining Hope, and (9) Having a Documented Status. Moreover, within the Societal category, the Racial Pride subcategory will not be further described in this section since only one participant reported their experiences in this area. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Societal domain will be further described with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Living a Life of Self-Determination.*** A total of eight participants shared they try to live their lives in a way that prevents the influence of external forces to weigh on

the personal life choices they make for themselves as trans Latinx immigrants living in the U.S. For instance, Participant two shared she respects herself as a woman and tries to ignore others unless she is attacked first. Participant three shared at various instances throughout the interview that when she worked in the fields, she demonstrated to others she “could be who she wanted to be and that others have to accept her as she is.” Similarly, with her family, Participant three stated she did not allow her family to take advantage of her with poor treatment by showing them who she is:

...How did I survive it? Well, teaching them. I told them: "Look, I was not born this way, I did not [ask] to be this way, then why are you going to [treat] me like that? If I'm your blood." I explained to them: "If you want, I can change, but not [it is] who I am." [I learned] simply to not answer because...I had to defend myself. [Mom], she told me: "Never let anyone take advantage of you," ... (Participant 3).

Several of the participants expressed in a variety of different ways they would not be interested in allowing others' opinions to influence their personal lives. For instance, Participant four shared he believes he is the only one who can allow others' opinion to affect him because the challenges are in one's mindset:

I think it's your mindset. I say that because...you're the only one that's really gonna let things get to you. Because I could tell you that I met people that are very rude to me...but if you just are like, "Okay, that's what you think, that's your opinion, I respect your opinion' because everyone has the right to have an opinion" (Participant 4).

Similarly, Participant five shared she will not waste her time entertaining the opinion of others, because her parents taught her people would be paying attention to her, so she keeps to herself:

I just keep to myself, if I don't know you or you say anything, I just keep to myself. What my parents taught me was that, "They're paying attention to you." My dad will always say, "They're wasting their time, you're not." Ever since then, I've always thought of that [and] I always say it—people don't get it, but I'm like, "I'm not wasting my time, you are." I don't ignore them, just I'll listen but I'm like, "You're wasting my time, you're not going to get anything out of me." I always do that, and it makes them angry (Participant 5).

Participant six shared over several instances in the interview the way in which she has refused to allow her family and others influence the way she learned to live her life. For instance, she shared she learned not to blame, be irresponsible, and angry like her father, because people choose to live their lives by their own accord. With others in society, she does not see a need to accept others' venom into her own life and feels she would step in only if her family is harmed. In her personal life, she learned not to listen to the needs and wants of others regarding the choices she would make regarding the ways in which she chose to affirm her gender:

...Think of it this way, on a Thursday, I was going to leave money [for surgery], and on Sunday, I was in surgery. And I did it secretly because nobody wanted that I do anything. When surgery ended, I had to call a friend to pick me up because I could not walk. Because an orchiectomy is painful—but it was so worth it and I am happy. Having erections every morning like before was not for me, and something that I hated. And knowing that I wake up relaxed, without any worries—there nothing like that (Participant 6).

Participant seven shared he is glad he was connected to the Queer community before coming out as Trans, because he is not into the binary, cissexist, and heteronormative version of “transness” that exists. He believes he can be “super femme” and this does not take away from him still being a Transman. He also shared he does not allow others to treat him in a negative way because of his three identities:

...In terms of how I manage it—I just treat people the same way they treat me. I think through this experience, I'm less naive. And coming to all these identities, I've realized I'm not so nice anymore. [If] you don't like me, “Go away,” ... I don't have time...to justify myself, and I have so much to justify with all these lists—I'm like, “No... bye...” especially coming to a deeper understanding of race, ethnicity, and immigration, that's [a] pretty strong line... (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant eight shared he is no longer willing to allow others to discriminate against him anymore, because he will stand up for himself. Furthermore, he shared when he would be misgendered he realized no one else would [advocate] for him, so he chose to be himself regardless of where he is in his physical transition:

...at the beginning, I was shy about it and... if they ask me for my name, I would still say my birth name even though ...I didn't want to. But I learned that if I don't do it for myself, nobody else is going to do it for me. ...I make sure that my name is [P's Chosen Name], even if you hear a girly voice—I think by just being sure in who you are and being presentable, it's what's been helping me a lot (Participant 8).

Participant eight also spoke about the way he has broken barriers because he did not “fit-in:”

Sometimes you have to fit in those little squares and sometimes you don't fit--like I [didn't]. I never fit being a female, and sometimes I have to cross it off, just because our normal-- *el binario* [the binary system] to fit in. Now being an immigrant and Latino—you just break those barriers (Participant 8).

Participant nine stated that while others worry, she does not because regardless of what people say she never cared about what they think because her life and her body belong to her:

I see that many people like me care about what “will others say.” I do not care what others say. I am me, it is my life, it is my body, and I know what I do with my life and to whom I give my body” (Participant 9).

Participant nine also shared that being poor never impacted her as she always found ways of surviving and believes she can be happy anywhere. She believes people choose to be happy wherever they are, like she did with the small moments of happiness she had with her mother despite suffering at the hands of her father and grandfather.

***Subcategory 2: Persevering Despite the Obstacles.*** A total of eight participants discussed their approach to moving forward in spite of all of the challenges they face. For instance, Participant one shared how being an immigrant pushed them out of their comfort zone by moving to a new place, which taught them how to survive regardless of the environment:

Well I think moving to a place where you don't know anything and don't know anyone definitely pushes you outside of your comfort zone. It teaches you that you're able to survive no matter the environment that you're in. It makes you stronger—because you encounter all of these obstacles and it seems all these things are stacked against you, but you're able to overcome it. So, when other challenges come up, you sort of think to yourself, “Well, I've already been able to overcome such a huge thing, so this isn't as bad,” You sort of draw on those strengths that you developed (Participant 1).

Participant two talked about her experiences with not allowing herself to give up easily despite the limitations her documentation status places on her:

...I am not one of those people who allow themselves to fall easily. Obstacle that they say, I cannot achieve this—I try, I fall...I get up. Because I say, if one door closed on me, a better one will open for me—I look for another job, because I have always worked. And simply my only obstacle would be, “you have no papers, okay. You cannot stay in this company.” However, I do not close myself off in that I am not going to work (Participant 2).

Participant two further shared she has been in difficult situations but has always been able to pick herself up again. She noted that she has never given up, and demonstrated she can move forward:

I have never given up; I’ve always tried to get ahead and demonstrate that I can achieve everything I want (Participant 2).

Participant three noted that being a Latina, new to the country without the ability to speak English, and with her way of being, was the worst experience for her. However, by working and going to school she has demonstrated to her family that she is not sick or contagious and can live as herself without harming anyone. Furthermore, she later shared that she believes that because she never gave up, and has the experience of changing from a boy to a girl, she can continue to overcome:

I believe that with perseverance, like saying, if a door is closed for me, I will open another one. And if I could achieve who I am now—a change from a boy to a girl—than I can do that. Whatever obstacles come, no one will stop me. Right now, I have no obstacles because I never let anyone trample on me, I would say, “This [will not] stop me, no. I can do this. Thank God, I have been able to persevere, and whatever I want I do... (Participant 3).

Participant four say he wants to prove to people who underestimated him that he believes he can do much better than them, even though they had the same or even more opportunities than him. He also shared he is open-minded because he does not want any fears to keep him from reaching

his goals. However, he noted it would be easier to do things if everyone in the Trans community had a voice and worked together because a war cannot be fought with just one person:

...I'm very open... so when someone asks me, even though its uncomfortable, I still answer because I don't want any fears to stop me from my goals—I have my vision and where I wanna head to. Most of these transgender guys, they rather hide and not say anything and not speak up for our own community. It makes a big difference and a huge impact in the transgender community when you have a voice. If everyone were to have a voice and we all get together it would be easier to do things. Because you know you can't fight a war with just one person, but you gotta show people that it's okay (Participant 4).

Participant five shared that even though she has three things that can defeat her such as membership in the trans Latinx immigrant community, she notes that as an immigrant she is able to fight and not let anyone take her down. Participant six stated that, for her, managing her challenges is a daily struggle, where she continuously seeks ways to improve herself by “seeking another job, to earn more and continue her education for a better job.” She noted that while there are obstacles she, “Gets up every morning to fight with life in every way, and tries not to give up.” For Participant eight, being an immigrant “is just living in fear,” but even in the Southwestern State he said, “We survived, We're here.” Despite knowing he has survived, he shared he manages his challenges and limitations by “having a plan B, being more involved in [his] organization, and in the community just in case [he] can't work at [his] job anymore” because he wants to be able to sustain himself. He shared that creating plan B's allows him to not feel stuck to one job:

I've been doing plan Bs that I have never thought about doing. It's awesome because it's also going to make me not just be in a job just because this is the only job that I can get (Participant 8).

Participant nine shared everything she has wanted to do, she has done, but is unsure how. She shared various examples of this, and noted she does not see any obstacles, she does “everything [she] wants”:

Everything I want, I have done. How? I don't know, but I've done it. Everything that I say, "I want to work here," I do it, "I want to save 'X' amount for this date," I do it. For me, no obstacle exists—I do everything I want (Participant 9).

Participant nine was clear in stating she does not complicate her personal life with obstacles, because she believes if something is not going well or if opportunities do not present themselves, she sees no use in crying because living in the U.S. has many opportunities:

Many immigrants say for example, "Oh, we cannot study," and I say, "We can all study, we can all graduate." They don't give you work in one place, knock on another door. They closed one door? knock on ten, at least one will open. I don't think that is a problem. You are not doing well in one state? There are thousands in the U.S.; move to another. People complicate their own life—I don't. If you stay where you are and you see no opportunities, what are you going to do? Stay there? Cry? What's the use in crying? Nothing. The earth has enough water already, for you to water it with tears (Participant 9).

Participant nine further shared she believes those who stay in "their place" do not advance, simply because they gave up without a fight, but she believes regardless of what it is, one has to fight and not give up. Similarly, in another part of the interview, she also noted that she understands that people who are like her suffer a lot, but the only thing that people can do is to keep moving forward and fighting. When she was asked about her challenges as a Trans individual, she shared she saw no obstacles for herself, because everything she has wanted to do, she has been able to do since she arrived in the U.S.:

When I arrived here, I said I wanted to study, which was the first thing I wanted. So, I looked for a job to obtain what I want. I said, "I want to study," I enrolled to study. Many told me, approximately 18 years ago, "Oh, you will not be able to because you are illegal, you will not be able to because you have no social security number or you will not because you don't have this." Who said I can't? Look for it and find it—it can be done. Then I said, "I want to work in a bar, I want to be a bartender," because that's what I did in [my country of origin]. I did it. How did I pass the [bartender] exam without knowing English? I don't know, but I only failed two questions—they gave me the license. About six months later I said, "I want a car." I bought it. "I want to live alone," and I have been living alone for years. "I want a man by my side," I had one. "I do not want anyone by my side anymore" I don't want anyone, I lived with my boyfriend for ten years. Now, I am only interested in my work and my mother... (Participant 9).



***Subcategory 3: Connecting to Others.*** A total of seven participants shared their experiences with seeking support from others to manage the challenges they face in their life. For instance, Participant four, five and six shared they are grateful for the support they receive from others. Participant five indicated that a benefit for her is that people approach her, have positive reactions, and tell her to not let others take her down which makes her happy:

Benefits? The way people react to it—like their positive reactions, that's what makes me happy about it. Just random people approaching you, “Oh! I like what you're doing, keep doing it, don't let anyone let you down.” Every day, I get that (Participant 5).

Similarly, Participant six shared she is proud of people, regardless of race, who take the time to understand the type of people that Latinx are:

I am proud of all the people that understand Latinos, regardless of race. Because in reality there are many people of all races who understand what kind of people, we, as Latinos are. They do not speak on a surface level but gave themselves the opportunity to know us (Participant 6).

Participant four noted that for him a reward is seeing that others are interested and want to help the trans Latinx immigrant community:

I guess the rewards is that people, I guess they try to help you, they try to like genuinely be like “you know what? We gotta do something for them” ... I guess that’s kind of like a reward of going through all that... you know? I get to meet cool people (Participant 4).

Participant one expressed a sense of pride they feel when they can find community with other Latinx individuals. Other participants expressed the importance of finding support from others like them. For instance, Participant three shared she found information about transitioning and support from other Trans women when they worked together in a Trans show. “Among the women, we gave each other support, [by telling each other] ‘they sell this here...let’s put this on.’” She reported this was an important process for her development as a Trans woman. In various instances in the interview, Participant seven expressed the way he has found support in others. For example, he shared that after he moved to the U.S., he maintained

connection to people from his country of origin using an online web messenger. Moreover, he shared he also manages his challenges by speaking to “People that [he] trust[s].” However, he went a step further to clarify and specify, that he looks for relationships in people that are culturally similar to him, and he has found that in his partner’s family:

...I think I’m lucky because, my partner is Queer and Latina and has an immigrant family. So, I have my own social support group right now. Actually, I look for relationships that are with people that are similar... even my partner...I can't see myself with someone who doesn't identify as Queer, and as Latina or speak Spanish, or actually—culturally—I just can't... So that’s helpful (Participant 7).

Participant seven shared he feels a sense of belonging and closeness among other Latinx people due to the shared culture, which helps him have a sense of community:

I think culturally, I feel closer to people—I feel like there’s a sense of belonging even if most of the Latinos that I interact with, if not all of them, are not [from country of origin]—but there’s still a sense of sharing culture. I lived in [West Coast State] for a while, so I learned a lot about [X Latin American Country's] culture and my partner is [from X Latin American Country] as well and her family...I mean, I feel like I have been adopted by a lot of different Latinos—and if [they] share their culture with me, it feels like a broad sense of community, but also diverse in itself (Participant 7).

For Participant eight, finding an organization focused on discussing being both undocumented and LGBT was important aspect of his development because it helped him understand who he is:

I recently started my transitioning—about four months ago, so I'm on hormones. In a way, the word transgender, I didn't know exactly that I'm transgender. My identity as part of the [LGB] community didn't fit right. I found Trans Queer Organization—five years ago by one of my friends saying, “Hey you should come over, there's a lot of undocumented LGBT and we talk about being undocumented and also being LGBT, I think you should come over...” I have friends that are undocumented, but I don't have those two identities together and that's who I am. I went and I fit right in. Being there, I...understood all these different identities. We shared our stories. We have this thing called "double coming out," because you come out of the closet, but you also come out as undocumented. So, sharing my story helped me understand who I was and where I was coming from (Participant 8).

*Subcategory 4: Having a Strong Work Ethic.* A total of five participants expressed the strong work dedication they place into everything they do regardless of job positions to achieve their goals. For instance, Participant one shared they maintain a focus on their work because the research they do is connected to who they are:

...[I] also stay focused on my work because my work [is] also part of...my research interests. And my academic interests are very tied to both of those identities, so I try to... stay on that. I think I do take that on myself (Participant 1).

Participant two shared that as a Latina, she believes she is hardworking because she has been able to maintain employment by working well and being punctual. She also noted that her grandmother taught her to work for what she wants, which she used to support her family:

I was a stylist in [country of origin], I always liked working. My grandmother has taught me to work to get what you want. I remember that when I was in my town, I would make flan and pie. With that experience I was able to get money out...I achieved a lot of things because from there I helped my mother buy food, and sometimes lent [money] to my father too. And that is what I can tell you, I overcame. When I returned to my [country of origin city], I cut hair and saved money to open up my salon. I also enjoyed buying gold, silver and selling in the town—I've always liked doing business (Participant 2).

Participant three shared the benefits she sees from immigrants is that they leave a strong mark and she wants others to know that immigrants do the hardest work without stealing jobs from anyone:

...We do not let others trample on us...that we are capable—the hardest work we will do, but we will not take it from anyone. My brothers are here and did not show me they were capable, they always worked in big companies—I did not. I started from the bottom. But we can do it, whatever the work is—washing floors—whatever it is, we are going to do it, but we are not going to steal the work (Participant 3).

Participant six said she does not feel she is a bad person because she works, pays taxes, and only has two vices: food and exercise. Participant eight shared he grew up humble, and fighting for what he has because he knows things are never given, which he believes comes with being an immigrant:

You know what? I grew up fighting for what I have—[even] if it was a pair of shoes. I also grew up humble and that comes with being an immigrant: being a hard worker, and being a fighter all the time, and knowing that nothing is going to be given to you—you have to fight for it. That's what I really cherish about it (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 5: Providing Mentorship.*** A total of five participants expressed the value they place on being able to reach others in their communities in order to provide support or simply to increase the visibility of others like themselves, since many did not have those role models. For instance, Participant one shared they manage the challenges they experience in the U.S., by volunteering with organizations that serve both Trans and immigrant communities, because being present helps others see people like them:

The way I manage is I try to be with my communities even if they're segregated--I try to go to both. I try to volunteer for organizations that serve Trans folks. I try to volunteer for organizations that serve the immigrant community. Even if they're not meshing yet, I think me being there hopefully helps them see there's people like me. Relying on community is a big thing for me--being active [and] volunteering (Participant 1).

Participant three expressed her willingness to help other women like her, including her transsexual nephew, push forward because the difficulties will not end. Participant six shared that as a trans Latinx immigrant, she believes she can contribute by speaking about her experiences to other trans Latinx immigrant women. She can help them avoid making the mistakes she made. For this reason, Participant six indicated being Trans helped her transmit her life experiences to other Trans women who may need to talk to someone. She shares her story because many Trans women end up infected with AIDS or kill themselves because no guidance exists regarding the dangers of hormonal changes or using non-prescribed hormones. Similarly, Participant eight shared he believes his purpose is to share his story because he knows many like him are afraid to share their stories and many need resources:

I think one of mis *propósitos* [my purposes] is to tell my story. With my organization, that's what I've been doing and it has helped so much because this is the time that we need resources for our community, for our Latino communities, because there are a lot of

us, *pero* [but] we are still afraid to be out there, to tell our stories, so it's really important (Participant 8).

Participant eight described he has not been able to connect with trans Latinx individuals who are from his own country of origin because he believes it is hard for them to open up, so he wants to break those barriers using his own presence:

I need to connect with my own community as a Latino, as [member of country of origin], being transgender. I know there's spaces out there—I've seen them. But I think it's hard still for us to just open up with each other. I don't know if it's our *machismo* to not talk about our feelings. So, I want to help break those barriers, and maybe I want to be a face for that and just [say], “I'm here, if you need me.” Things like that (Participant 8).

Participant seven stated that being able to support other people that are also going through similar issues, like coming out to themselves, is important for him:

...I think just being able to connect to other queer and trans people and having a community. Being able to support other people that are also going through similar issues like coming out to themselves or even just tips, the kids are like, “What can I wear to make myself look flat?” things like that (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 6: Creating and Finding Affirming Spaces.*** A total of five participants shared the importance of finding or creating spaces that affirm who they are, particularly when those spaces do not exist. For instance, Participant one shared that they recently came out, but only because of the context in which they lived changed from a more conservative state:

So, I recently came out as non-binary—it's probably been about six months. It's something that I think I was only able to do because I moved to [West Coast State]. I think had I still lived in [Southern State] I don't think I ever could have came out because people are much more conservative, and I think the push back that I would have received would have been so much that I don't think that I could have done it (Participant 1).

They further expressed that they feel fortunate to be surrounded by people who accept and understand them. They believe that by being in a West Coast State, and in a higher education institution they have surrounded themselves with individuals who can provide this support for them:

I think being in [West Coast State], and especially being in a higher education institution, I have been really fortunate to be surrounded with some very understanding people and everybody has been really accepting (Participant 1).

Participant three shared that she believes that the people in the Midwest town in which she lives are not as “closed off” or do not hold similar negative stereotypes about Latinx individuals because the Latinx population has grown and there are festivals to celebrate their culture.

Participant five shared how welcomed she felt by her Black African American peers when she first arrived to her school in the U.S.:

I came here at a young age. I first came to [Southeastern State]. I went to [an] elementary school where the [population] was African American and no Latinos—there was probably 5. They were very welcom[ing]—Black people are... very welcome[ing] (Participant 5).

She later shared that in this school, she was never called “an immigrant,” and felt welcomed as the “new kid.” In other areas of her life, she indicates that she feels that her places of employment have been open to her. She shared that her workplace has told her she can use the women’s restroom, and has been asked for her pronouns and name:

At work with the hotel...there's not a public restroom so they're like, “Whenever you're ready, tell us what you want us to call you,” they’ll even ask me, “Do want us to call you by your name?” I’m like, “Yeah, it's okay.” At my second job I work with all females, so they understand. They’ve asked me when I first started, “What do you want to be called? [Are] there any offensive words that you don't like? You're welcome to use the women's restroom, we don't judge.” They were very open about it (Participant 5).

Unlike some of the participants who have mentioned they have encountered places of support and affirmation, others have shared they have not had these experiences and thus, have created their own communities. For instance, Participant seven shared that the way he manages his challenges in the U.S. is by finding a community or creating one when one does not exist because when he navigates the world and spaces, he negotiates aspects of who he is:

One of the things that I did when I got here—because there wasn't a strong Queer Latinx community—was create this space for Queer Latinx folks... Being able to find that

community was really cool, especially when people have the immigrant experience: being able to connect in all those three layers, it's like, "Oh you get it!" You get why there's nostalgia about home, but at the same time, there is this pain about home and there is this awesomeness about being here. I don't have to explain, right? I think that's why that space is coming to mind because when I find people like that, "I don't have to explain a lot of my existence to you." Whereas I feel like when I'm navigating the world, it's like "Okay, how Femme can I be first of all? How open about my transness can I be? How open can I be about my views about immigration?" Which are not political, they're just a part of my life and a part of people around me. "How much of my culture can I bring in to a space? Can I speak Spanish? Or can I play my music in Spanish? Will people even connect to it, you know?" I feel like that's the world—navigating all those things. When I meet people with all those three identities—I don't have to think about that, I don't have to negotiate anything. I can just be and not explain myself (Participant 7).

Similarly, Participant eight shared that he helped create a free healthcare clinic focused on providing services to his community:

...About a year ago we opened up this clinic called [Clinic], which is our doctors that are giving their time and their community service. [The] clinic [is] only open one Sunday out of the month because they give their free time. We just started by doing medical services, like *servicios médicos primarios* [primary medical services]. We don't have a specialist, we don't have therapists, we don't have anything. When I went to the clinic my first time, and we're talking about ten years of me [not] going to a doctor because when I was younger, we did have health insurance, but with all this political thing they stopped it (Participant 8).

He also shared that he is trying to build his community by bridging needed resources with spreading the purpose of the free clinic he helped establish in order to serve undocumented LGBT individuals because of their unique experiences:

We're trying to build our community—to bring resources and services to what we need. That's what we do, and this has been amazing. We talk about when we first started the clinic; it was about ten people. It's hard because we don't want to exclude anybody the way that we have been excluded—but we could only help LGBT undocumented [individuals] 'cause the doctors are giving their time...not that we needed special treatment if [we're] discriminated, but sometimes there's questions that make us uncomfortable, and those doctors are learning to respect our pronouns. Also growing up Latino, questions about condoms or sex or HIV—we're just trying to put the word out there—It's our purpose for the clinic... (Participant 8).

*Subcategory 7: Educating About Trans Lives.* A total of four participants shared the ways in which they educate themselves, loved ones, and society at large about who Trans individuals are. For instance, Participant one shared that they believe that by existing within their family and culture, they are broadening people's ideas of acceptance and open-mindedness:

I think that being in that position allows me to create some change within the culture and to broaden people's vision and ideas...I have seen it even just for my family. I've seen my mom be more accepting and be more open-minded just because of her knowing about me; [and] learning to accept me has made her more open-minded overall as a person. My family as well, my cousins, aunts, and uncles, now are more open-minded because of having that experience with me and I hope that I can continue doing that not just in my family but in a larger sense (Participant 1).

Participant three shared that she is willing and open to answering taboo questions others might have for her. Furthermore, she shared that she believes in the importance of educating others about being Trans because most unaccepting people are ignorant:

You have to educate people. From wanting to educate others [to say], "Yes, Wow! We were all wrong or we were ignorant," they will not acknowledge it, because no one wants to be ignorant. Sometimes they speak out of ignorance, and because they do not ask. I tell them, "I am free, ask me what you want. "Do you want to know?" I say, "I am like this... what is the problem?" Nothing happens. Just because I am like this, does not mean I will take away your husband, brother, uncle—no, I will not...I know how to respect (Participant 3).

Participant four shared that as a Trans person it has been hard for him, but his reward is that he is able to show others that his changes are not "so bad" and can show his humanity:

It's hard for me, but some of the rewards is that people wanna know about you. People genuinely are interested in you...and feel comfortable enough to tell you things—I guess I would take that as a reward for me. Because you go through all this uncomfortable pain, all these things that you go through to become transgender—I put myself out there. And to know that people think 'it's okay' or people start thinking, "Oh it's not that bad, I know him." I guess that's kind of the reward, where you start showing people that you're still the same person they met back in high school or they met in middle school and that you are just a human just like anybody else (Participant 4).



However, he shared that he decided to be more open about who he is because misleading and little information exists about Trans people, which makes people think that “everything is okay” when it is not:

...I realized that there's not a lot of information out there, there's very little information and the information that is out there is misleading. It makes you think it's all good—when it's not. There's dysphoria, some people don't get accepted by their parents. When you talk to someone or when you see information you just think, “Oh yeah, just go to the doctor, get a prescription and then you are transgender.” But not really, you still gotta think, “Okay are you ready for this? Are you mentally ready? Are you strong enough to go through this?” Nobody really talks about [it]—no one really knows... (Participant 4).

Participant eight shared that he has been studying so he can educate his family and community about how families cherished Trans people before colonization:

I don't think being transgender is new because transgender people have been from way back in the years. It was cherished—being transgender was like you were almost a God. You were given to your family and they would cherish you, but they had to be *colonizados* [colonized] and came all this. I've been studying, I've been trying to educate myself, so I can educate my family and educate our community too (Participant 8).

For Participant eight, it is rewarding to see individuals find their identities at a younger age and through representation, are breaking gender roles:

Rewards? I mean, I think we're representing. I have found more on social media, there are a lot of: [people from country of origin], Latinos, trans, young people. It's so awesome that they're finding their identities so young and this could help them so much. I also like that we have a culture as maybe breaking those gender roles, [by] us being who we are. I like that (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 8: Maintaining Hope.*** A total of three participants spoke about their aspirations for change in their personal lives and within their communities. For instance, Participant one shared that they manage their challenges as a Non-binary Latinx immigrant by trying to bridge their communities through organizing and volunteering because as they said, “If I don't try to bridge these communities who...else is going to do it?” Participant eight shared that despite taking over his sister's cleaning company, he sees himself doing other things in life:

Now that I'm an adult, I have always kept my job. My older sister made this small company—cleaning; this has been our family job and I have taken over. But I don't want to be a cleaner all my life. I do see myself doing other things (Participant 8).

In addition to seeing himself doing something else in his future, he also shared that when he began transitioning, he believed he was the only Trans Latinx; but now he knows there are many, and it is time for them to come out and share their stories:

...There's a lot of transgender Latinos. When I was barely starting my transitioning, I saw myself as the only Latino here in [U.S. Southwest City], but I am pretty sure we are a lot; we are a community. We're out there—I think this is the time for us to come out, to share our stories (Participant 8).

Participant nine shared that she loves everyone, because God gave her the opportunity to continue living again, and shared God does not always give these opportunities to everyone. However, her only goal is to live a little more to see and hug her aging mother again, and she believes that with God's help she will reach her goal:

I am interested in my life. The day [after] I arrive, hug, and kiss my mother, cardiac arrest can take me, but [at least] I have hugged and kissed her. Embracing, getting to see my mother—that is my only goal. And I am going to fulfill it with God's help. [But] I do not want her to get older and [for her] to keep finding ways to survive. I can eat a tortilla and I am full, or I can go tell a man I am hungry, and he will take me. But my mother cannot (Participant 9).

***Subcategory 9: Having a Documented Status.*** A total of two participants shared the way in which having a documentation status in the U.S. made their personal lives better and, in some ways, easier. For instance, Participant seven shared that he was fortunate enough to come to the U.S. with documents because he came with his parents. Participant six shared that she feels at ease knowing that she has a status in the U.S., because this means that she will eventually be able to gain citizenship and gain even more freedom than what she has now. Hence, she reported that her greatest reward is being “someone in society...existing for a society ...that can contribute to a society and be taken into account.” She reports all of this is due to the

help she received from an Immigrant Rights Organization and the government support in allowing her to stay in the country. She further shared that for her [having a status] has helped her lose fear of going out or seeking employment because she now has an ID that gives her a sense of “existence” as somebody in society:

I can tell you that I am not afraid to go out on the street now. Currently, I am not afraid to go ask for work. I currently have an ID. I exist for society, which I did not in [country of origin]. That’s something that in the United States, helped me a lot. Because it gave me the chance to be someone. It gave me the opportunity to be somebody, of contributing to society in some way. But more than being able to access employment opportunities, it [helped] to stop being afraid of being killed, stop being afraid to ask for work and that I will be ridiculed...I can tell you that I now consider myself part of a society, before I did not. I used to feel like a *paria* [outcast]. A *paria* is a person who has no place where they can be. They are rejected by everything and everyone (Participant 6).

**Familial Category.** In the Familial category, the participants spoke about how they manage their challenges within their family as members of multiple social groups. Within this category, several subcategories emerged including: (1) Family Familiarized to Trans Identity, (2) Unconditional Love for Trans Children, (3) Sense of Responsibility to One’s Family, and (4) Reassure Family they are Same Person. In the following paragraphs, the subcategories within the Familial domain will be further described with participant exemplars.

***Subcategory 1: Family Familiarized to Trans Identity.*** A total of six participants explained the process that their families underwent to become acquainted to their Trans identity. For instance, Participant two shared that she believes her family raised her as a woman from an early age. Moreover, she also shared that she viewed this treatment as the only benefit of being Trans in her country of origin, because her family treated her as a woman by making her stay at home to help her mother, instead of taking her to work in the farm fields. Participant three shared that her father blamed her mother for her “way of being,” and after she arrived in the U.S., he tried to change her, but could not so he accepted her:

...I came here, and my dad said, “Wow, I will not be able to [change you]—a challenge.” My dad gave up. I remember I turned 18, and he says, “Are you leaving? God bless you; I could not handle you.” Five years later my dad saw me again, he looked at me changed: breasts, long hair—to this day wherever he sees me, he hugs me, he loves me very much... he says to me, “You are my diamond in the rough,” he told me, “because polished you and now look, you changed a lot,” because [he] wanted to change me, but was not able to...[he] could not change me, it was something bigger than me (Participant 3).

During the interview, Participant three became emotional when discussing the pain, she experienced from being critiqued by her own family:

...It’s hard, more when people criticize you, but it hurts more when it’s your own family. But... those who criticize is because they do not know—they are afraid. Sometimes my dad talks to me and says: “It’s just that I was afraid.” I said, “Dad, you have other sons, and your lineage or your last name will continue...I did not fail you, on the contrary, you gained a daughter, yes or no?” He said, “Yes, I did.” So now my dad gives me whatever I ask for, and says I am is pride too... (Participant 3).

Participant three shared that the only thing she ever wanted was her father’s love, and never received a hug from him in 40 years. She noted that her mother had to die before she received her first hug and an apology from her father because she was left all alone. Participant five shared that her mother always knew she was Trans and her father is now “okay” with it, but she had to strengthen her relationship with her father before she could share she is trans since he stopped talking to her when she first came out as gay:

My mom knew about it. When I came out as gay my... dad didn't talk to me for a year. It took him a while...and after that I just had to...make our relationship stronger to tell him again that I was trans...that I want to transition, and he was okay with it. He was like, “At the end of the day you’re... my kid and that's all I have.” They always say that, “That’s all I have” (Participant 5).

However, Participant five also shared that she was very angry at her father and rejected anything from him until a couple of months ago because he stopped talking to her after she came out as gay. She shared that she has never seen her father cry, after they talked, but after that conversation their relationship is okay. Participant six shared that her mother did not let her live

with her when she first arrived in the U.S. since it took some time for her mother to get used to the participant's transition:

At first my mother did not assimilate to it, because my mother left a strong son. I could lift 661 pounds—I was a very strong person. At first it was difficult for her to assimilate it, respect, and understand me. In fact, when I arrived, my mother did not allow me to stay in her house. I had to live with my sister for almost 6 or 7 months while she familiarized herself with the new person that I was (Participant 6).

Participant six believes that the challenges her family has had with her, they have slowly resolved themselves with time, and instead of making a judgement they ask her questions:

The obstacles they had with me, have been overcome little by little, step by step, but I think it has gone well. I think the only thing my brother still does not assimilate is that we used to wrestle and now we continue to play, but not as often because he does hurt me... Now, they no longer try to make a judgement of who I am or what I am. They just watch, they keep it in their mind for a couple of days, and then they ask me...I am an open person...And if they do not understand it at that moment, they work it in their mind, and days go by and the doubt is removed. I think those are the obstacles that I have overcome in terms of family (Participant 6).

Participant seven shared that his nuclear family sometimes says some things that are problematic, but for the most part they are open in terms of gender, he explained that his parents who are in their 60s understand, “even non-binary, they get that” and they’ve only lived in the U.S. for thirteen years. Participant eight shared that friends and nephews began using his new name, and while his mother has seen his transition changes, she is being quiet, however, he knows that for his family and his community this is new:

All of my friends and my nephews have already started calling me [P's Name]. My mom, obviously—and I live with her—she's seen my changes. She's really being quiet. I mean, I understand, I don't expect that she will just wake up and be like, “Oh, here's my son.” But they're just being quiet about it. I also know that in our community, in our families, this is new (Participant 8).

In addition to knowing that this is something new, Participant eight shared that he knows that over the years his family has been in transition too and over the years his family has accepted him. He clarified that he understands that he knows his family is transitioning too. Even though

his mother is being “quiet” about his transition, in order to help them understand his process, he encourages his sisters to ask him about it to engage them in the process:

When I see my sisters, I just [tell] them, “If you have any questions, ask me 'cause there's not a movie that you can watch, this is my movie, [and] you can watch my movie.” Or we don't have relatives that are older [that] they can see... I show them my hormones and I say, “This is how I do it.” I know that my sisters are really open [to] me and they [think], “Well, we don't want to hurt you. We don't want to say things that are making you uncomfortable,” and I [say], “No, for me just being quiet is what makes me uncomfortable. Ask me what's going to happen next, ask me how I take care of myself” (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 2: Unconditional Love for Trans Children.*** A total of six participants spoke about the love and support they have received from their families. Throughout the interview, Participant two expressed the ways in which her family supported her. For instance, she shared that her mother always told her to be happy being “who she is” and told her not to worry about what others say. She also shared that she is who she is and has no drug vice because her mother always supported, stood up for, and allowed her to be who she wanted to be:

My mother always stood up for me and thanks to that, I am who I am. I am a person who respects herself, and thanks to my family that always supported me, I have never fallen for the vices of drugs: I do not smoke or drink... That also has to do with the treatment my family gave me, they allowed me to be who I wanted to be (Participant 2).

She shared that her mother has been her biggest supporter because she always defended Participant two. Furthermore, she shared that her sisters are also supportive, and she speaks well to her brothers, but her mother always gives her advice and she has never told participant “Why [are] you this [way],” she simply tells her to take care of herself. When Participant three returned home after leaving at the age of 18, she had changed physically, but others saw that this is what she wanted and respected her. Participant four shared that as a Trans person it has been hard for him to explain to his family what happens inside of his head, but he knows his mother

loves him unconditionally because they went through hard times together in their country of origin:

It's been really hard. It's not about other people for me, mainly it's with my family. Trying to explain to them, what is going on in my head without them thinking I am crazy. To be honest with you... I worry about my grandma. My mom and I are really close because of what we experienced back at home—we went through scarcity, we went through tough times, we didn't have nothing to eat. We lived tough times in [country of origin]. So, I felt that just put us together more. So, I knew my mom was gonna love me unconditionally because I love her unconditionally (Participant 4).

He shared that his family gave up on trying to change him because he had a sense of who he was, but he believes parents worry about their Trans children and their well-being because they know how tough society can be. He shared that even though he worried about his family's reaction in his country of origin, he did not have any challenges with his family accepting him because who he is was not a surprise to them. Participant five shared that her mother taught her to not discriminate or hate against his Trans cousin just because he is different because "they're still your family." Interestingly, Participant five shared that her mother always knew that she was never a boy. She shared that her mother has been supportive and waited until she was old enough to talk about it:

My mom...was very supportive about it and she kinda knew as a little kid... she just saw it. She's like, "...I know it says you're a boy, but you were never a boy. You always wanted to be dressed, to look pretty—you never played with ...boy toys." It's...those little things [that] they actually do pay attention to, and she just got them in the back of her head until I was old enough to talk about it (Participant 5).

Participant eight shared that he believes it is helpful that generations, like his nephews are being raised to understand many identities because his own nephews do not question who he is.

Participant seven shared that he believes that the belief that the Latinx culture is less accepting of Queer and Trans people than White cultures is a myth. He furthered shared that he believes

Latinx family's high value of family is a protective factor for overcoming a need to reject their children:

I recently was in a space...teaching about Queer and trans issues in a Latina conference... for Latina immigrants learning about social justice. It was such a cool conversation, 'cause they were so open to learning and so accepting of their own children or their relatives. So that idea of our cultures [being] less accepting than White cultures—to me it's not true, to me it's a myth...I feel like sometimes Latinx families can overcome those barriers because they place such a high value on family. They're like, "There's no way I'm gonna disown my kid, like my kid has to stay until they are 30 here." It happens, of course, but I feel like that value can be protective as well (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 3: Sense of Responsibility to One's Family.*** A total of five participants expressed the various ways in which they feel they have a duty to their family, regardless of their experiences with them. For instance, Participant two shared that despite her suffering in the U.S., she views being able to achieve her goal of helping her mother build her home and being able to do this makes her happy. She further explained that she helps her family a lot particularly her mother, even more than her brothers who also came to the U.S. and did not do much with their life:

We help out family a lot, well at least I do, I help my mother a lot—for my mother, whatever she asks. For my dad, I love my dad, but you know that one opts more for our mother. We are six in the family; two women and I have three brothers. Two of my brothers have already been here, but they did not do much, honestly—they were here for years and did not do much. I say, I am transgender, and I have achieved so much. You see that men either have many women, they are unfaithful, or they do not help their family much. They prefer to drink, hang out with friends, and I never did that. I studied and I have always helped my mother (Participant 2).

Participant two further shared that irrespective of her father's love for her or the abuse she endured, she reported that her mother has always been supportive of her and is not resentful toward her family, and now continues to help financially. She reports she has always helped her family financially. Participant three, shared that her father told her that he was impressed with her ability to work in the heat and cold weather in the farm fields, but for her the most rewarding



aspect of her work was sending money to her mother, which took her pain away. Furthermore, Participant three shared that she could work and make money honorably to send back to give to and build a home for her mother:

...My mother enjoyed the fruits of my work...what I did was think about my mother and think that she needed money. I would say to myself, “Well, my father is not sending her [money], I am going to work for my mother.” The years that I was here, I built my mother’s home in the country of origin—I alone. I demonstrated to them that I could work honestly... (Participant 3).

For Participant seven, he felt connected to the sense of ‘Family’ brought by recent immigrants that are Latinx:

Just the sense of family—I really feel connected with the concept of family that a lot of Latinos share here. Particularly if they come from immigrant families—closer to that first-generation. I think their concept of family—which is [being] very close with each other, [seeing each other] a couple times a week...So, I think that those are some of the benefits (Participant 7).

Participant nine expressed that she loves her mother and her father, despite her father’s lack of love toward her and attempts to kill her. Participant eight shared the ways in which he has learned to recognize that the translating work he did as a child was hard, but in some ways part of his job to help his family:

I know I was bad and I would put faces to my mom like, “Why don't you get someone to speak Spanish for you?” but then at the same time, I feel like we understand that was our job—and our job was just to be there translating (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 4: Reassure Family They are Same Person.*** A total of four participants shared the way in which they remind their loved ones that they remain the same individual after they transition or that because they transition, they are not a bad person. For instance, Participant three shared that she decided to show her family that she was capable. She behaved well, she never prostituted herself, she does not smoke, or drink simply to demonstrate to her family that even though she is from her country of origin, she did not come to steal her father’s

love. Instead, she shared that she had to earn her family's love alone, as a Latinx without the knowledge of the English language, and simply with her work. Her family now says "hello," hugs her, which makes her happy because she stood up for her mother's honor. Participant four reiterated that he has not changed, and remains the same person since his transition:

...I wanna...say it again, I'm still the same person...it's not like my attitude changed or anything...it's not like I'm... a meaner or a nicer person. I'm still the same... (Participant 4).

Similarly, Participant six shared that her mother realized she is the same person before transitioning, in essence, but now is who she was meant to be:

...she realized that in reality I am still the same person, in essence, but physically I am now who I should have always been. The obstacles that I have overcome with my family are those kinds of things. The fact that they began to know me with this new image and realized that I am still the same person in essence. I'm still the protective sister, the preoccupied sister, and the one that pressures everyone [with love]—because [I] like to hug and kiss my brothers and mother. I am still the same playful sister, the joker—I am still who I always was (Participant 6).

Participant eight shared that despite the struggles he endured, he hopes his mother can see that he is still the same person but simply happier with who he truly is:

I just hope that she could see that I am happy, and I think if I were a mom or a dad, I would want to see my kid happy. I hope that at the end, the little pieces of the puzzle will just fall in and they will know that this is who I am. I'm still the same person, I'm being who I truly am. I know they have seen me struggle and now they see me happy (Participant 8).

**Personal Category.** In the Personal category, the participants spoke about how they manage their challenges as members of multiple social groups. Within this category, several subcategories emerged including: (1) Authenticity, (2) Minimizing Challenges, (3) Defining Own Gender Identity, (4) Accessing Gender-Conforming Norms, (5) Concealing Trans Identity, (6) Persisting Despite Mental Health Issues, (7) Self-Acceptance, (8) Taking Personal Care of Self, and (11) Resignation. Moreover, within the Personal category, the Self-Love subcategory

will not be further described in this section since only one participant reported their experiences in this area.

***Subcategory 1: Authenticity.*** A total of seven participants discussed the rewards of being true to themselves. Some of the participants expressed the ‘happiness’ they feel when they receive external feedback about being ‘seen’ for who they are due to their physical changes. Others expressed relief about receiving less questions about their gender identity, an openness to the attraction of others, and things becoming easier for them; however, none of them spoke about their authenticity being contingent on accessing gender affirming services, but one shared that being herself was contingent on the “feeling” of safety. For instance, Participant six shared that she was able to be herself when she dated a bi-gender individual because she was able to lower her guard and show how fragile and feminine she can be simply because she felt safe and like she “did not have to protect herself from anyone.” She expressed that she was able to take her life into her own hands as she is now:

“The fact that [I] learned to cook, and I feel good [about it], the fact that I dress how I’ve always wanted, the fact that I can be sensitive without being judged, the fact that I can express the love that I always have for people...” (Participant 6).

Participant three shared that after she transitioned, she was able to go back to her workplace in a farm field, where she told her coworkers that despite her father’s attempt to change who she is, she transitioned because, “[People] have to know their purpose in life,” and indicated that who she is, is bigger than her. Participant one shared that they feel more like themselves and other people are starting to recognize them for who they are. They shared that when other people used “she, her” pronouns, they felt they were not seen or understood, but now they are able to be themselves:

I feel like the biggest thing has been [that] I finally feel more like myself. I finally feel like people are recognizing me for who I am and they’re starting to see me for myself.

When people use[d] “she, her” pronouns I would always feel like, “You're not really seeing me” Like you don't really understand who I am. But now I'm able to be more myself (Participant 1).

Similarly, Participant five shared that for her, she has learned more about the community and simply being “true to oneself” is a reward for her. Participant four shared that while he considers himself a “straight” man and is not attracted to men, he indicates he does not want to be a hypocrite and keeps an open mind since gay men are attracted to him:

Today I consider myself straight. I feel like at the end of the day you are attracted to the personality...I don't want to say that because I don't like guys [or] I'm not attracted to them—I don't wanna be a hypocrite because I am very open minded. Gay guys hit on me more than straight girls. I think they are really nice, but that's pretty much it, [I] just [say] “Yeah, no thank you...” But I don't wanna say I would never because, you might meet someone that just really touches your heart (Participant 4).

Participant seven shared that there are a lot of moments when he was told to be more feminine and when he can identify he is Trans. However, now that others are “viewing” him as a man, he feels like this has opened up an opportunity for him to be more feminine because people are not likely to question his gender identity:

There were a lot of moments when I can see that I was trans. So many people were like, “You should be more feminine...” which is weird because now I'm feminine. You know what's interesting? The more people identify me as a man, the more I feel I can be feminine—it just opens that door for me. Before I feel like I acted more butch 'cause that was the only way that people would perceive me as masculine or as male. I feel like once people were like, “Oh you're a dude, he, him, his.” I'm like “I can be as Femme as I want to and people won't question my gender identity.” So that's kind of nice (Participant 7).

Participant eight shared his chosen name since he began his transition and indicated that is “Who he is” and shared he is “so happy.” He expressed the gratitude and excitement of what beginning hormone replacement therapy did for him:

These past months have been the happiest months of my life. I've been living happy. It's like I'm being born again; I'm sharing everything, I'm experiencing everything as [P's name]. It's kind of like I'm living my teenager years in my thirties, so it's awesome. It's awkward sometimes, too. My mom did mention she didn't know I was taking hormones the first month because I was scared to tell her. Before she knew, sometimes she would

pronounce me as him. She said, “*Ay, estás bien contento hoy* [Oh! You are so happy today]” ...I have never seen you so happy before!’ In my mind I was like, “Because I was taking hormones already! Because this is who I am” (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 2: Minimizing Challenges.*** A total of seven participants expressed the ways in which they downplay the experiences that they have as members of multiple oppressed social groups, and many of them decontextualized their own personal experiences attributing lack of personal efforts and achievements to individual factors rather than contextual. For instance, Participant two shared that while she likes to go out and enjoys making friends, she shared that people are often unaware of her experiences and how she feels. She shared she often tries to leave or forget her problems at home and changes the “bad into good in [her] head” because she knows our “heads can deceive us.” Participant three shared that language and her form of transsexualism, being transgender, was a challenge for her before, but because [being trans] is no longer taboo in jobs it is no longer a challenge. Participant three further shared that because she “looked like a girl” when she was young, she was given access to jobs because people saw her as a girl despite dressing like a boy, but did not have obstacles:

In [country of origin] my benefit was that they let me enter into the homes more easily because [they said]: “Ah, it’s a girl” because I appeared like a girl, honestly. In [country of origin] I never put wore makeup or eyeliner. My thinking was of a young girl, but I never moved it forward, I always dressed as a boy. I looked like a girl, but I never said, “I’m going to be transsexual...” No, I was always like a natural girl. I did not think that by putting on make-up, “I would become a woman,” No, I felt like a woman—make up or clothing will not make me the girl I wanted to be because I already felt like a girl inside. So that gave me the courage to face my uncles, my people—everyone. I asked for work as a girl: I wash, iron, take care of children—they gave me jobs because they saw I was a girl...and I had no obstacles (Participant 3).

Participant nine decontextualized her experience indicating that she believes the obstacles are created by individuals, and individuals are the only ones who place limits on themselves:

Obstacles that I have had—I don’t think so. Because in reality, the obstacles are placed by you. You are the one who says, “I am putting a stop here, or I want more” (Participant 9).

Similarly, Participant four and six, both, also decontextualized their experience by indicating that the mindset of the individual creates the obstacles. For instance, Participant six shared that she has not had any obstacles because she believes that the obstacles are created by the individual and they are the ones who can dictate the course of action. Participant six also noted that she knows individuals who do not like Latinx but expressed that she does not care because these are individuals who are not the majority and only speak for the sake of it. Participant four indicated that he does not believe it is about “being an immigrant,” but about people’s personality and where they put their minds:

It all depends on the person. I strongly believe that where you're putting your mind, you are going to do it. So, it's not about 'the being an immigrant part.' [It's] your personality kind of thing (Participant 4).

Similarly, he later shared that he has no expectations that White people will change, because change is hard, so when he has a challenge, he tries to understand and analyze the situation before he lets it get to him:

...I can't expect a White person that—60 years ago all this was White here—didn't see no gay or anything like that, I can't change their mind...that's the thing that people have to understand...I hear people like, “But they are changed because it's different times...” Yeah but it's hard, change is always hard for someone. Just like change was hard for me, it's also hard for them. I can't be like, “No, 'eff these White people” because I understand where they come from. So, when it comes to handling my challenges—If I have a challenge, I'm like, "Okay, I gotta understand the situation, I gotta think about a lot of things"... I think about the situation [and] the person; I look [at] their body language. When it comes to a challenge that someone talks to me wrong or says something to me wrong, I analyze things before I really let them get to me (Participant 4).

Participant five shared that she does not believe she has had any challenges as a result of being Latinx. For Participant eight, learning English was not a barrier despite having an accent now:

Growing up here—because I was nine years old when we moved from country of origin to Southwest City in Southwest State—at the beginning, the language was not a

barrier because I was small, I had ESL classes, and I was excited to learn English, even though I have an accent and everything (Participant 8).

In various instances, Participant nine decontextualized and minimized her own personal struggles. For instance, she noted that since living in the U.S., she believes she has not had problems or face discrimination for being Latina, she noted that she feels free as if she were in her own country of origin:

What do I tell you? Well, I do not know what to answer you. Because I honestly—fortunately, I’ve never had a problem, I’ve never had anything for being Latina—never. I feel as if I lived in my [country of origin]—I feel free, I feel like myself. All of these years that I have been here, I have never had any problems with anyone, not even with justice [system], so I do not stress out. I live how I want to live—I live well... (Participant 9).

In another instance, Participant nine reminded researcher that for her being a Latina or undocumented does not affect her in any way, even though she has HIV which is a separate thing, she lives well. Participant nine shared that she does not have any obstacles and her sexuality [gender identity] does not affect her, she simply wants to go back to country of origin and do what she needs to do, and return to the U.S. One way in which Participant nine has decontextualized her experiences was by identifying discriminatory practices as overt and observable behaviors. She discussed that she has never heard anyone call her a “faggot or transgender,” so she believes that Trans people without self-respect are hated and rejected because she believes that self-love and self-respect leads to happiness and no obstacles regardless of who you are:

For me, life is like any life: my life is normal. I am not affected by what I am. The world [and] everyone sees me as a woman, thank God! Everyone respects me, they call me ma’am, miss...I’ve never heard someone call me faggot, transgender, whatever. I think it does not matter, although you may be the ugliest transvestite on the planet, but if you do not respect others, you will receive everything: hatred, rejection, anger. If you love yourself, and you respect others, you will be happy—you will not have any obstacle, you get what you want. If you are kind, you can be a monster, [but] if you approach [someone] and [say]: “Oh, I need this, could you help me?” people will say yes. But if

you're impolite, and ask for things like you are used to, it is logical that people will say no. So, what is my experience? I don't know, because I live a normal life—for me, my life is normal (Participant 9).

Participant nine further shared that she has not received any rejection except from her grandfather and father.

***Subcategory 3: Defining Own Gender Identity.*** A total of seven participants shared how they perceive their own gender identity. For instance, Participant two explained that there are Trans individuals who have more “exaggerated mannerisms,” however for her, she feels she is more conservative. However, she indicated that she feels “like a woman” and in her head she, “is a woman,” clarifying that she is not “a man that is transforming into a woman,” but rather a “woman trapped in the body of a man.” Participant three shared her own thoughts about what she believes of Trans identity:

...we are a derivative of many things like heterosexual, homosexual—all of that. So, I am this way: I like men, and I like for men to feel like a man and to be able to pamper him like a man—not to be his maid, but to care of him like he deserves. [Similarly] to what my mother did for my father, or my sisters did for their husband, or my aunts to their husbands. I think that in this way—as a woman, that privilege, ‘Wow!’ people can depend on me all the time, like my son did, who depended on me all the time. And I think I did a very good job...I showed him the correct path (Participant 3).

Participant six clarified that she identifies as a transsexual woman and not as a transgender woman. While further explaining her gender identity, she noted that she identifies as a transsexual woman because she is “not okay with her sex organs,” and noted that transgender individuals can transition their gender without a need to transition their sex because they are “okay” and happy with their sex organs but she is not:

There are trans women who ask me, “Why do you want an operation...?” [and I respond] ... “Simply because you are transgender does not mean that you are transsexual—it is something that you do not understand.” I am transsexual, not transgender. Being transgender is when you transition from one gender to the other, but you do not have the need to change your sex—so you just change your gender, [and] you're happy as you are—if you have a penis, [you] live with it, you do not feel bad for having it, and you can



have partners and have sex without any problem—it's okay, you are a transgender woman—that is what you are...But I have a thing called dysphoria. Dysphoria [happens] when you are transsexual, and...when in reality you want a vagina [and] you really want to have the life of any normal and ordinary woman. That's not the same as being a transgender woman. A transgender woman is one thing and a transsexual woman is another... (Participant 6).

She further explained some of the differences between women who are “transvestite, transgender, and transsexual”:

...So, the same as transvestite girls, a lot of people generalize us, because they say, “Ah, the trans girls.” And they say that Trans girls are transvestites, transgenders, and transsexuals. My friend a transguy [asks], “Why LGBTTTT?” I say, “man its transvestite, transgender, and transsexual,” “Aren't they the same?” “Of course, we are not the same...” a transvestite girl will not want to change gender, she can still be a boy and just be a butterfly at night and continue a normal life. The fact of being a transvestite does not imply that you are homosexual. They are heterosexual people who only transform to work for the show—because they like it. But they do not change gender. Changing gender is already living 24 hours as a woman, without renouncing their sexual organs because they are comfortable as they are (Participant 6).

Participant eight shared that he always knew he was a boy as a child because he identified as masculine, but he believes he has always been in transition with life and in coming to the U.S.:

Ever since I [can] remember, I was a boy. I was really happy, I was really active, I would play outside a lot. I wanted to be a cowboy because that's all I could see. I wanted to have my own cows. I would always identify myself as being masculine. Sometimes we say that in transitioning—maybe physically, medically, it's been only four months—but I have always been in transitioning, in transitioning with my life, in transitioning with coming here (Participant 8).

When Participant nine was asked to discuss her experiences as a Trans individual, she answered by indicating she does not consider herself a transwoman but simply a woman, because she has lived as a woman since she was young:

...I do not consider myself a transwoman, I consider myself a woman. All my life I have lived as a woman, since I have been able to reason. I started to dress as a woman since I was 12 years old, and from there...I just live as a woman...I am and I consider myself a woman, as simple as that... (Participant 9).

Participant nine further shared that she does not feel “gay,” and simply “is, feels, and sees [herself] as a woman. Participant one shared that as a Non-Binary person they get the impression others believe that they are trying to be difficult, who they are is a fad, or that Non-Binary people are not real and the only way to be Trans is to have surgery to fit into a box:

Sometimes I get this impression that people think I’m trying to be difficult or it’s just a fad, something that’s gonna go away, or [that] Non-Binary people are just making this up. This idea that it’s not real [or] who you are—in reality, I feel more myself than ever, [it’s as if] the only way to be Trans is to have surgery or fit into a box (Participant 1).

In a previous part of the interview, Participant five disclosed she not begun hormone replacement therapy, but she shared that people have tried to offer to change her gender marker. However, she says that even though she knows who she is, until she is ready, she will not be changing her gender marker because she could get in trouble for it:

...It’s just, I don’t like people telling me what to do and telling me right away, ‘You should be this,’ I know what I am. Until I’m ready to tell you, then you could do your job don’t tell me...I can get in trouble for it. So, it’s like, “No” (Participant 5).

***Subcategory 4: Accessing Gender-Conforming Norms.*** A total of five participants expressed the ways in which their life was made easier by being able to access the benefits afforded to those whose physical gender expression is not questioned by society. For instance, when Participant three was asked to describe the benefits of being Trans, she shared that everything became easier for her when she was able to wear a dress because it facilitated and eased her ability to work in some areas and have her family stop viewing her as “bad” and into someone who was viewed as a capable of raising her own child. Participant four shared how his “new gained” access to being perceived as “male” afforded him the opportunity to either show others he is still the same person, but looks different or how it afforded him the opportunity to start somewhere new where no one would know he was “a girl” before:

...I could [have] chose[n] two things: either I put myself out there and show people that It's okay—I'm still the same person that you met, [I] just I look different, which is not a bad thing. Or I could have been like, "You know what? I'm gonna move to another state and start a new life: no one is gonna know me, no one's gonna know about me...if you look at me right now you couldn't probably tell I was a girl. So, I could have went somewhere else and just start a new life (Participant 4).

Participant four was able to compare and contrast his new gained privileges, noting that he has noticed his opinions count now, whereas he notices that transwomen are viewed as "vulnerable," and may be why their experiences are different than his. However, with his new gained "privileges" he notes that he does not see challenges, instead he sees them as benefits, "Now I'm a guy, so now I have all these privileges." Similarly, Participant eight views his transition as an opportunity that has "opened more doors for [him]." Participant nine shared that in her [country of origin's] society she was not rejected since no one realized who she is because she learned how to behave, talk, and dress:

...No, never, only from my father and grandfather, from society never, because society never realizes what I am. Thank God I had a course—I began studying beauty. So, I knew how to dress, get ready, walk [and] talk. I had an education that I learned—and that helps you a lot—how you behave...you will always see me like this...like a woman...in no place where I go do they realize [who I am] until I tell them...those who know already, I don't care (Participant 9).

Participant seven expressed how the longer he is on hormones, the longer being perceived as trans is not an issue anymore, which is an advantage:

I even have that advantage of, 'Maybe people not perceiving me as trans,' so it's a nice dilemma to have sometimes. The more I'm on hormones, the more that's not an issue as much (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 5: Concealing Trans Identity.*** A total of five participants noted they hid their Trans identity either currently or in the past as a strategy to survive, to maintain relationships, or to keep jobs. For instance, Participant one shared that when they lived in a more conservative state, their friends, environment, and family were all "very conservative," so

coming out for them was difficult. When Participant five was asked to discuss her experiences as a trans individual, she noted that she simply tries to keep to herself, and she does not, “tell people [who she is, she] just go on by [her] day.” However, she shared that the reason she does is because when she goes out others taunt her while she goes out during the day by repeatedly calling her “bro, sir, or guy,” which are words that she dislikes:

I’ve had issues when I go out during the day...people just try and make jokes...try and call you sir. There are certain words at this point that I don't like being called like: bro, sir, guy. So, when they say those words towards me, and keep repeatedly saying them I know they’re saying it as a joke (Participant 5).

Participant four noted that he sees living in the U.S. as an opportunity to do so much more, because in his country of origin he was aware that “over there just alone being a lesbian, [he] would have [gotten] judged,” which is why he never came out to his mother when he was younger, despite knowing what he felt and what he liked. He noted that “[he] never really told [his] mom anything until [they] came here.” Participant four further shared his experiences with knowing he was attracted to women but being unable to share this with someone else because people think children do not know what they like. Participant seven shared that even though he knew his family would not reject him, it was difficult for him to transition in front of the Latinx community he worked with because it would be too much for him:

I knew my parents would not disown me or kick me out, but I think my fear was disappointing them. I went to therapy—had a whole meltdown [and] had to quit my job because of that. There [were] other things unaddressed. ...One of the main reasons why I couldn’t imagine transitioning in a job where I was around this big community...’cause I work with the Latino community organizing citizenship fairs and teaching citizenship classes. I knew so many people, I’m like, “I can’t transition in front of these people, I just can’t!” Now, I work with youth that do things like that, and I’m like, “I can’t imagine how brave that decision is to make,” I chickened out and I was just like, “Nah. Can’t do this. Too much” (Participant 7).

Participant eight shared that the way he has been managing his challenges as a Trans Latinx immigrant is by being “quiet about who he is” in order to protect his job:

I've been managing, especially [at] my work...I'm still being quiet about it because I don't want to lose my job (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 6: Self-Acceptance.*** A total of five participants shared the ways in which they have embraced who they are in the many ways Trans individuals exist in this world. For instance, Participant two shared that she has never regretted who she is because Trans people are intelligent, hardworking people who want to get ahead:

...There are many transgender people, but I can tell you that I have never regretted who I am, how I am, [or] why I am like this. Because I can tell you that we are very intelligent, we are people that like to work, people that like to get ahead (Participant 2).

Participant three shared that she suffered a lot as a teenager, but as an adult she moved to a new city and began transitioning to feel good about herself and her body. She further shared that with the advice of her mother, she now feels pride in who she is and no longer hides or feels shame for who she is:

...Now if people [ask me], "if I am this way?" I am proud and I say, "I am..." and nothing happens. Before I hid or I was embarrassed to talk about it—now I am not. People are more open, which helps... (Participant 3).

Participant three further shared she had many satisfactions as a Trans person, such as having son's love and not being beat [down], but will move forward regardless of being trampled on because she is not less for being Latina, she is proud of who she is and "likes who she is."

Participant three also shared that she is perceived as someone who can fight both like a man or a woman:

In [country of origin city] they look at you like, "Oh, go be with her, because she'll protect you," because I could fight like a boy or a girl and defend my friends. The mothers always said, "You take care of them for me," because they knew that I was going to take care of their daughters or sons, and I could manage both challenges. I acted like a girl, but I thought like a man: I saw danger, I thought about it and I would protect my sisters... (Participant 3).

Participant six shared that while being cisgender could have lessened her challenges, she does not feel bad for being born a transwoman because she values what she learned living as a boy as it gives her an origin:

...all that inheritance is something that gives me an origin. Even to the person that I was. Having been a boy back then—thanks to that I learned many things that are now useful to me: being able to drive, being able to be in the police force, having learned to pick crops, knowing something of mechanics—[the fact of] knowing so many things that I am learning in life and [learned] in my previous life. These are things that are now useful to me, [because] it is not so easy to learn it in another place...so, I do not feel bad about having been born a Transwoman—that I was not Cis—I would have liked it because I think it would have saved me a lot of difficulties. But there would have been things that I would not have learned. There would have been things that ... would have left me without being what I am now. It's complicated, but I do not feel bad to have been what I was (Participant 6).

She furthered shared that sometimes she believes she needs to be a little more feminine in her thoughts and attitudes, but unlike other transwomen who try to be overly feminine, so others do not think anything of them, she does not feel bad:

...maybe there are transwomen who are much more feminine than I am ...because in reality I know that I need to be a little more feminine in terms of my thoughts and attitude ... but even though they criticize me, I also don't feel bad. Because although I am not overly feminine—[like] people who try to be super feminine so that nobody thinks anything—I think [and] I feel that I am like that—a crude woman. There are many women that are crude too—they are very direct, specific, objective. I feel that if I were a Cis woman, I would belong to that group...And I know women who are like me... (Participant 6).

Participant six further spoke about her experiences related to having two perspectives. She noted that when she has had partners, she has told them they have the best of both worlds because she can fix cars and cook. She believes that she has the best of both worlds because she learned how to be a man and learned to do many things, and as a transwoman she learned by observing her mother in secret. Being able to have that combination of perspectives helps her contribute something to women who need help and to men who are negatively socialized. Participant seven

feels a strong sense of connection to the Queer community as someone who is also Bisexual, because his process of coming out has led him to a place where he is comfortable:

I feel really connected to the queer community especially because I'm Bi as well. I'm this queer trans boy that is sometimes kind of Femme even though my partner identifies as a lesbian and it's interesting. Just super connected to queer spaces, and because of that also feeling connected, similarly, to being Latinx, to that history of resiliency. So, my queer experience has been first I came out as Bi, then I came out as a lesbian, then I came out as a transman, then I was like "Huh! I am attracted to men as well," so that's where I'm at. I'm kind of full circle in an interesting way, but in a comfortable place (Participant 7).

He further shared that he is comfortable with his femininity even when people assume, he is gay, he enjoys the spaces in which Queer Latinx identities and communities combine:

Being really comfortable to the point people assume I'm gay sometimes—in some spaces. When I talk about my girlfriend, they're like, 'What?' I can see that. But we're pretty comfortable with that. My partner—because she's very Queer as well—she loves my femininity. Especially Queer Latinx—that combination [of] identities and communities—I really enjoy those spaces. So that's definitely a benefit of being trans (Participant 7).

Participant eight shared that he was undecided about transitioning until he found out a doctor who is Trans at the free Clinic would not send him to see a therapist to make sure he was “right” when he wanted to start transition, which made him happy:

About six months passed...I was undecided to make the deci[sion] or to ask questions, until one of my friends from the organization said, 'Hey, you know what? Have you ever considered transitioning?' And I said, 'It's been on my mind a couple of months,' and he said, 'Well, you're in luck,' he's like, 'Now we're gonna have [Doctor's Name], he's going to be helping with transitioning. We're gonna have these resources at the clinic.' And that has been one of my happiest days ever. I made an appointment the next Sunday because we have to wait every month to have our clinic. I had a one-on-one talk with him and I thought that he was going to send me to a therapist or [that] he needed to make sure that I was right--and no. Just by him being him and in my shoes, and a lot of our shoes, he just signed it off and said, 'You needed this since a long time ago, but I understand.' He understands my [position]...four months ago I started my [transition] (Participant 8).

Participant eight also shared that he manages his challenges by being presentable, such as being sure of who he is and having a good attitude when he enters a room:

... I've been managing by being presentable, being really sure [of] who I am. If I enter a room, I enter with a good attitude...that even if I get those looks, they know who I am or what I am. I've been experimenting and having good feedback... by just stepping in a place and being sure [of] myself...that's been really helpful for me (Participant 8).

***Subcategory 7: Persisting Despite Mental Health Issues.*** A total of five participants shared how they currently or in the past managed their mental health struggles on a day-to-day basis. For instance, Participant six shared that she hated life when she was younger and attempted suicide several times before deciding she had nothing to lose in trying to live:

In the beginning, when I was a little girl, I hated my life, and I even tried to kill myself many times. But when you realize and you hit rock bottom and see that there is nothing to lose other than what you are and [realize] you have is so much to keep moving forward, it is better to take the second decision. The easy door is always open—but if you have nothing to lose, you might as well try (Participant 6).

Similarly, Participant eight shared that he struggled while he grew up. He shared that in his mind he felt like a man but grew up silent about it and cried alone as a teenager, where he also had suicidal ideation but never spoke to anyone about them:

In my mind, I am a man—but I was really quiet about it. I never talked to anybody, I would cry myself, I don't know why I cried a lot. I grew up really silent about it. Thank God I grew up religious, and I never hated God for anything that happened to me, There was suicidal thoughts when I was in my teens because I was just fighting here and I was always quiet about it, because [I] grew up with this culture that...if you're a single mom, you don't reach out, you just deal with things. I grew up like that, just dealing with this and maybe trying to forget, but it never went away (Participant 8).

Participant eight shared that he quit school because of his struggles with his identities, but after he quit, he tried to get a job but could not. Due to his lack of documentation, he worked, as he put it, “under the table,” but went back to school with no motivation to finish:

I tried to work, but I also couldn't get a job, right? I had to work down the table somewhere. It got to the point where my mom was saying, 'Well, you're not going to school.' At this time school was blasting my mom's phone, 'Why is he not coming to school?' and my mom said, 'They're not going to take me to jail because you're not going to school, so you gotta go back,' you know that's how they set it. So, I just went back and honestly, I was like a zombie. I just finished school because I needed to finish. There was no motivation for me, I just wanted to finish so I could start working (Participant 8).



He continued to share that in his mind he felt like a man but grew up silent about it and cried alone as a teenager. He noted that he had suicidal thoughts but never spoke about them because he did not reach out, he simply dealt with things:

In my mind, I am a man--but I was really quiet about it. I never talked to anybody, I would cry myself, I don't know why I cried a lot. I grew up really silent about it. Thank God I grew up religious, and I never hated God for anything that happened to me, There was suicidal thoughts when I was in my teens because I was just fighting here and I was always quiet about it, because [I] grew up with this culture that...if you're a single mom, you don't reach out, you just deal with things. I grew up like that, just dealing with this and maybe trying to forget, but it never went away (Participant 8).

Participant one shared that the way they manage mental health challenges in the U.S. by utilizing their own mental health services. Similarly, Participant seven shared that he manages his challenges through therapy and medication:

Therapy—I have other issues, in terms of mental health that don't come from those things. But definitely these are layers of those issues. [And] medication, as part of one of the things I do for myself to take care of myself (Participant 7).

Participant three shared struggling with depression, but because she was diagnosed with HIV. She shared that she wants to get over everything that has happened to her, but she is the only one who knows what she experienced, but she often wonders how she endured everything. After receiving an HIV diagnosis, she became depressed, was rejected by siblings, and worried about dying and leaving her son behind. However, she overcame with therapy and by bringing family to the clinic to learn about HIV, but today people die from chronic illnesses but not HIV, and P's body is responding well to [HIV] treatment:

Sometimes I want to get over it, but it's deep inside. But I do not always remember it—only I know what happened. I get emotional, more than anything I feel “How did I endure everything?” I do not know if you're going to ask me or if can tell you. Three years ago, I got sick...[and] I went to the doctor, I had the test and it was HIV positive. That made me depressed and I thought, “Wow I'm going to die and my son is going to stay.” Thank God, [Community Social Worker], the doctor, they [both] sent me to a therapist and I have overcome it (Participant 3).

***Subcategory 8: Taking Personal Care of Self.*** A total of four participants shared the ways in which they take care of themselves to manage the personal challenges they experience in their lives. For instance, Participant two shared that it took her 6 months to recover from a facial paralysis, with the help of her mother, which she experienced after being exploited by a woman who paid for participant to arrive in the U.S.:

...Sometimes I do not know how I endured, because when I got here with this lady everything changed. This lady sold food and wanted me to stay and do everything in the house. And I had to pay her what she [lent to] me to come. I do not know what happened, but she was very different with me, [she] always [said], "Do this, do the other thing." Well, I went to an agency to work—I got up in the morning to help her do everything—and I went to work. I would go back [home] to make food again ...The truth is that the lady mistreated me [and] there was one time that I got so upset that I got a facial paralysis—in 2012. My head started to hurt a lot and I could not stand it. I came here to the clinic, and they told me that [I was] on the verge of a stroke—they admitted me, they injected me, and my mouth went sideways. It took a while—like 6 months—but thank God I talked to my mother, she told me what to put on it. I injected myself, I went to get massaged on my face (Participant 2).

Participant four shared that he manages challenges by not taking things too personally and analyzing situations to understand others because he knows everyone's culture is different when coming into the U.S.:

It all depends [on] not taking things too personal. You're coming to the United States or a new country and everyone has a different culture, different beliefs. I think I'm very open [to] that...So, [you] can't really take everything to... heart. You have to understand "Okay, they are acting this way because of this, or they are saying this to me because of this..." (Participant 4).

Participant five shared that she manages day-by-day because she will not fight the bathroom issue she experienced, but this may change later toward transition as it does not affect her as much. Participant seven shared several ways in which he manages his personal problems. For instance, he noted that he disconnects by watching shows in Spanish that make him feel connected:

Netflix—disconnecting...Netflix sometimes has some really cool...media in Spanish now...to get [to] feel still connected. There's [a]... couple of shows like...*Rebelde* [Rebellious]...they have some *Novelas* [soap operas]. Hulu has mas [more] *Novelas* [soap operas] too. It's interesting, they have...original Netflix shows now in Spanish. There is [a] Mexican one that's so good, *El Club de Cuervos* [Crows Club] (Participant 7).

He also shared that he has a dog, and he just does “self-care” and reaches out to community to manage the challenges he personally faces. Participant seven shared that he has not managed the familial challenges well, and even though he tried to fix a relationship with a relative he tries not to think about it:

Not well...I kind of disconnected from my extended family. So [I] kind of just try and not think about it. I did try to patch up a relationship with one of my relatives, and that's taken a lot...more self-examination and courage than...any other situation that I've experienced.... (Participant 7).

***Subcategory 9: Resignation.*** Two of the participants shared the way in which they have endured their challenges and, in a way, accepted the “inevitable.” For instance, Participant two shared that with the poor treatment that she endured and because she has no family in the U.S., all she could do is cry alone. However, even though she endured a lot, she believes that it is part of God's plan, and sometimes believes that her experiences are just “part of life.” Participant nine shared on several instances during the interview the ways in which she places her trust in a higher being. For instance, she shared that she tried to be happy regardless of where she is because she places trust in God and believes God places people where they need to be. Due to a drug addiction, Participant nine became ill and was given no hope and poor life expectancy, but she fought and asked God to allow her to see her mother again:

In 2004, it changed my life totally. I was a drug addict, I used a lot of cocaine, I was an alcoholic, I drank too much, or I got sick. They no longer gave me life chances. But look at me. I'm here. I fought and fought and I said, Lord, if you do not let me see my mom, do not take me. Leave me the time that is necessary, with that I arrive and I give a hug or a kiss to my mother, pick me up, but right now help me get up. And here I am - without any life expectancy that I was given - and look - 13 years (Participant 9).

Participant nine further shared that she only uses the term 'father' for the man that made her, because the real 'father' is God. Participant nine resigned herself to the idea that her mother could not visit her, because her father did not allow it. She saw no choice but to fight for her health on her own and asked for God's help. She also shared that she loves everyone because God gave her another opportunity to live.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed account of the various domains, categories, and subcategories that emerged from the data extrapolated from 9 interviews with trans Latinx immigrants. After conducting a data analysis of the data 4 domains emerged including: 1) The Experiences of Trans Latinx Immigrants in Different Lands, 2) Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants, 3) Challenges Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants, and 4) How Trans Latinx Immigrants Manage their Challenges. Within the domains a total of thirteen categories emerged from the data, and within each of the categories, several subcategories emerged. Exemplar quotes were taken directly from each transcribed interview to provide readers with a wide range of examples from each participant, which were all included within each domain. Table 4.2 provides a visual representation and a summary of all domains, categories, and subcategories that emerged from the data, along with the associated frequency and classification codes.

Table 4.2

*Summary of Domains, Categories, Subcategories, and Frequency*

Domain	Category	Subcategory	Frequency
1.The Experiences of Trans Latinx Immigrants in Different Lands	Pre-Migration to the U.S.	-Trans Individuals are Criminalized	Typical (5)
		-Face Harassment, Violence, & No Safety	Typical (5)
		-No Benefits Exist for Trans People	Variant (4)
	Post-Migration to the U.S.	-Believe Opportunities Increase in the U.S.	Typical (5)
		-Perceives Trans Support Increased	Variant (4)
		-Racial Awareness Increased	Variant (3)
2.Benefits Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants	Rewards Related to Ethnicity	-Latinx Pride	Typical (5)
		-Power in Connecting to Indigenous Roots	Variant (3)
	Rewards Related to Being an Immigrant	-Being Bilingual	Typical (6)
		-Having a Broad Perspective on Life	Variant (3)
		-Immigrant Pride	Rare (1)
	Rewards Related to Being Trans	-Proud of Being a Trans Parent	Rare (1)
Rewards Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups	-Unique Perspective	Variant (4)	
	-Latinx Immigrants Bring Culture to U.S.	Variant (3)	
3.Challenges Experienced by Trans Latinx Immigrants	Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity	-Experienced Stigma for Being Latinx	Variant (2)
		-Racial Unawareness	Variant (2)
	Disadvantages Related to	-Immigration is Painful	General (8)
		-Undocumented Status Creates Barriers	Typical (5)
	-Made into an Outcast	Typical (5)	

Being an Immigrant	-Learning a New Language was Hard	Typical (5)	
	-Separation from Loved Ones	Variant (4)	
	-Living in Constant Fear of Deportation	Variant (3)	
Disadvantages Related to Being Trans	-Cost of Gender Non-Conformity	Typical (7)	
	-Endured Family Abuse and Rejection	Typical (6)	
	-Personal Safeguarding is a Concern	Typical (5)	
	-Family Negated Trans Identity	Typical (5)	
	-People Lack Trans Awareness	Variant (4)	
	-Cis-Gender Conforming Norms Harm	Variant (4)	
	-Discomfort with Physical Appearance	Variant (4)	
	-Lack Role Models	Variant (4)	
	-Personal Struggles Affect Mental Health	Variant (4)	
	-Lack Resources for Gender Affirmation	Variant (4)	
	-Unaware of Personal Trans Identity	Variant (3)	
-Faced Obstacles as a Trans Parent	Rare (1)		
Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups	-Unable to Separate Identity	Typical (7)	
	-Isolation	Typical (7)	
	-Unwelcomed by the Latinx Community	Typical (6)	
	-Powerlessness Over Social Position	Typical (6)	
	-An Aspect of Identity Increased in Salience	Variant (3)	
	-Unable to Modify Birth Certificate	Variant (3)	
	-Cannot Explain Trans Identity in Spanish	Variant (2)	
-Finding a Trans Affirming & Culturally Competent Therapist is Hard	Rare (1)		
4.How Trans Latinx Immigrants Manage their Challenges	Societal	-Living a Life of Self-Determination	General (8)
		-Persevering Despite the Obstacles	General (8)
		-Connecting to Others	Typical (7)
		-Having a Strong Work Ethic	Typical (5)
		-Providing Mentorship	Typical (5)
		-Creating and Finding Affirming Spaces	Typical (5)
		-Educating About Trans Lives	Variant (4)
		-Maintaining Hope	Variant (3)
		-Having Documented Status	Variant (2)
		-Racial Pride	Rare (1)
Familial	-Family Familiarized to Trans Identity	Typical (6)	
	-Unconditional Love for Trans Children	Typical (6)	
	-Sense of Responsibility to One's Family	Typical (5)	
	-Reassure Family they are Same Person	Variant (4)	
Personal	-Authenticity	Typical (7)	
	-Minimizing Challenges	Typical (7)	
	-Defining Own Gender Identity	Typical (7)	

-Accessing Gender-Conforming Norms	Typical (5)
-Concealing Trans Identity	Typical (5)
-Self-Acceptance	Typical (5)
-Persisting Despite Mental Health Issues	Typical (5)
-Taking Personal Care of Self	Variant (4)
-Resignation	Variant (2)
-Self-Love	Rare (1)

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*Note.* General = 9 to 8, Typical = 5 to 7, Variant = 2 to 4, Rare = 1

*General:* Applies to all but 1 of the participants

*Typical:* Applies to more than half of total participants

*Variant:* Applies to 2 participants up to cutoff for Typical

*Rare:* Considered unrepresentative of the data in this study and were not interpreted in the results

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, understand, and describe how membership in multiple oppressed social groups might influence stress and coping among a sample of U.S. Trans Latinx immigrants. This chapter provides a discussion of the results described in Chapter 4 and how these results compare with previous empirical research literature, while considering how they advance our understanding of the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants. Hence, this chapter is organized in three areas that describe the complex narrative that emerged within this study including: surviving as Trans in Latin America, intersecting oppression in a new land, intersectional invisibility, and the strength of this community. The strengths and limitations of this study are considered, as well as the implications for practice and future research.

#### **Surviving as Trans in Latin America**

...In [my country of origin], these kinds of things are what make life difficult for us, because [we] cannot find work, [we] do not have an ID—[we] are undocumented in [our] own country—and people can mistreat [and] discriminate against [us], and the law...does not protect [us]. Even the police...want to extort [us] or want [us] to prostitute [ourselves] for them. There is no lack of asshole police officer that pick-up transwomen [that also] abuses [us]. So, life is difficult as a Trans person, and [we] do not know when the ‘lethal game of chance’ will play [us] (Participant 6).

The results of this study revealed several pre-migration experiences described by trans Latinx immigrants. The pre-migration results center on the experiences of the participants as trans individuals in Latin America and demonstrate the perceived human rights violations that occur against this community in Mexico and Peru, the two Latin American countries represented in this study. To demonstrate, accounts of criminalization, harassment, violence, and lack of safety were subcategories that emerged based on the narratives of five out of nine of the



participants. Additionally, four of the nine participants indicated they do not believe in the existence of benefits for Trans individuals in Latin America. Previous empirical literature on Trans migration to the U.S. may help to illustrate how these results compare to the literature.

Empirical literature on Trans Latinx immigrants describes gender identity as the propeller for U.S. immigration where this community seeks protection through asylum (Galvan & Keatly, 2012). The driving forces for seeking relief and safety in the U.S. among Latin American Trans individuals stem from stigma, discrimination, fear of persecution, violence, murder, limited resources, lack of employment opportunities, and a need for freedom to express their gender identity (Cerezo et al., 2014; Galvan & Keatly, 2012; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Prieur, 1998; Sente, 2008; Sotela, 2008). Consistent with these results, participants in this study discussed the criminalization, harassment, violence, and lack of safety or benefits for Trans individuals in Latin America. While the results of this study mirror previous empirical literature, it is important to note that only one participant in this study fled her Latin American country seeking U.S. asylum. Three others who were out as Trans in Latin America, indicated they immigrated for other reasons including fear of being targeted for human trafficking and for economic reasons. The remaining five participants all indicated that they immigrated with their parents as children or teenagers and came out as Trans while living in the U.S. The results of this study differ from previous empirical literature in that several of the participants spoke from an awareness of the human rights violations that occur in Latin America against Trans individuals, rather than first-hand experience. Nonetheless, it is important to contextualize the Latin American context to understand the pre-migration results.

The pre-migration results in this study reinforce the existence of cissexism in Latin American countries, with its societal symptom, trans-negativity, continuing to materialize itself

through human rights violations, torture, and murder of Trans individuals. Trans-activists have attempted to dismantle this societal symptom, without much improvement. The direct quote that introduced this section comes from this study's Participant six, who is a self-identified activist for Trans rights in Mexico. Participant six's personal accounts with trans-negativity in Mexico, highlight the criminalization, lack of safety, and barriers that made her life impossible to live. The following quote also sets up the contextual living environment and reality that push many Mexican Trans individuals to leave their country. In 2012, Participant six risked her life by making the treacherous and dangerous walk across the desert via the Mexico/U.S. border to seek U.S. asylum. She made this difficult choice after receiving several near-death encounters stemming from physical assault, and following several death threats soon after some of her trans-activist friends were brutally tortured and assassinated:

...They killed one of our friends, and then they killed another...and that was under threats...Because we worked...we tried to make our life different. I do not know if it was something from the government...if it was pure policy issues or some discrimination from discriminatory groups that killed people. Friends who were also gay, they were killed with a lot of violence and cruelty—they burned them, they did horrible things to them—and the police, the only thing that was said was... 'it is a passion homicide,' and did not investigate further—that was all. So, with all those things, it makes you think 'When will my turn be?' (Participant 6).

Much of the recent violence observed against Trans individuals in Mexico has been recognized as a backlash against this community after the country recognized same-sex marriage in 2010, with several prominent advocates in the trans community being brutally murdered. Currently, Mexico holds the second-highest index of crimes motivated by trans-negativity in Latin America and is rising (Transgender Law Center, 2016). Between 2007 and 2012, many of the murders motivated by trans-negativity took place in Mexico City, the only city in Mexico that has enacted both same-sex marriage laws and laws allowing Trans individuals to change their gender markers on their birth certificates (Transgender Law Center, 2016). Trans human

rights violations have been linked to organized crime from the police, the military, drug cartels, and gang violence. In 2012, drug cartels and gangs were responsible for most killings and abductions in Mexico, with police often working with the cartels and gangs (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Vulnerable communities, including trans women, are often victims of drug cartel and gang violence, falling victim to cartel kidnappings, extortions, and human trafficking (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Transgender Law Center, 2016). In this study, Participant three reported that because of “who she is,” she lacked safety, which led her mother to send her to the U.S. to live with her father:

I lived in [country of origin city], which was very dangerous...At the age of 15, I began working in a cleaning company that cleaned towers. Sometimes I attracted attention for being the way [that] I am. Older, evil men thought it was easier to offer us drugs to [lure] us into human trafficking. I had many friends who were kidnapped, made addicts, and then were prostituted... So my mom told me, ‘[I] do not want you to work here anymore it's dangerous, go with your dad’...I got the courage...and I came here [to the U.S.]...At that time, I looked like a girl and was very feminine, so it was too much [and it attracted] the attention of men. My mom said, ‘I do not want [human trafficking] to happen to you.’ (Participant 3).

From the above examples, it is shown that two of the narratives provided by Trans immigrants from Mexico can be linked to a context that perpetuates violence against Trans individuals. A similar anti-trans context was described by the participant who immigrated from Peru.

Peru continues to fight for the human rights of gender and sexually diverse individuals. For instance, human rights organizations advocate for legislation that protects these communities from violence and discrimination under the national Penal code (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Despite the rise in hate crimes and murders targeting these communities, Peru’s conservative majority congress, has made it difficult to pass legislation that protects these communities, leading to increased challenges for Trans Peruvian nationals (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Participant seven endorsed several of the reasons why living in his country of origin would not

be an option for him, and also disclosed how living in his country of origin impacted his ability to express both his gender identity and sexual orientation:

The reason why I was such a late bloomer in terms of my sexuality and my gender identity was because it was so forbidden, people didn't speak about it. I knew it wasn't okay. The only time that I mentioned, maybe being bisexual—I remember being with a group of friends. We were just walking, and for some reason I was like, 'I think I might be bisexual,' and some of them just shut me down completely. They were like, 'What? No!' 'Cause we went to a Catholic school, and [it] had been ingrained that, 'We respect people, we love them, but it's not okay, and people can overcome this,' whatever. But still that like 'Eeeh, no.' Even myself—I can remember looking at a gay couple and feeling scared or kind of weird about it because that's what we were taught. So, I feel like all those things prevented me from coming out to myself earlier (Participant 7).

The contexts of the two countries representing the sample of Trans Latinx immigrants in this study were briefly described and several of the pre-immigration results were embedded within these contexts. The accounts of criminalization, harassment, violence, lack of safety, and lack of belief in the existence of benefits for trans individuals in Latin America discussed by the participants in this study can be contextualized within these two countries' socio-political frameworks. Consideration of how these socio-political forces influence individuals and their sense of self and well-being as they immigrate into the U.S. is important.

### **Intersecting Oppression in a New Land**

In the U.S., systems of oppression work to 'other' individuals because of perceived differences and as a result reject, oppress, and dehumanize them (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Perez-Chavez, & Salas, 2019). The results of this study reflect the ways in which Trans Latinx immigrants were 'othered' by cissexism, nativism, and ethnocentrism in the U.S. stemming from perceived differences in their ethnic background, gender identity, and immigration status. When considering the results, a stark difference between the perceived rewards (i.e. 4 subcategories) versus perceived disadvantages (i.e., 20 subcategories) can be observed in Table 4.2. These results suggest this community perceives far more challenges than benefits associated with each

of their broader Trans, immigrant, and Latinx communities. More specifically, they perceive more Disadvantages Related to Being Trans (i.e. 12 subcategories) and Disadvantages Related to Being an Immigrant (i.e., 6 subcategories). Only two subcategories emerged focusing on the Disadvantages Related to Ethnicity category, reflecting a muted experience.

While the results of this study reflect the ways in which each of Trans Latinx immigrants' social groups are 'othered' in the U.S., a narrative challenging how this community understands their social position within these multiple social groups also emerged via the Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups subcategory. The heightened systemic violence targeting this community is also reflected in the results of this study. A strong (focus on interlocking systems of oppression) and weak (focus on multiple identities) intersectionality framework will be used to help consider the ways in which overlapping systems of oppression impact the well-being, health, and access to resources for this community (Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, Sharma, La Roche, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Kohlman, 2011). Hence, in the following paragraphs, a brief discussion of how each of Trans Latinx immigrant social groups are targeted will be provided, followed with a discussion on their intersectional invisibility.

**Shared Trans Experience.** In 2014, Time Magazine published an article claiming we were living in the era of the *Transgender Tipping Point*, a time where factors impacting the Trans community were finally being discussed in mainstream culture (Steinmetz, 2014). Yet, the current experiences of this community emphasize a different reality. Soon after the Supreme Court struck down all state bans on same-sex marriage, a backlash on the most vulnerable groups within the gender and sexually diverse community, Trans People of Color, was observed (American Association for Justice, 2016). With 146 trans murders between 2008-June 2016, the U.S. held the third-highest index of crimes motivated by trans-negativity in the Western

Hemisphere behind Mexico with 257, and Brazil with 868 (Transgender Europe [TGEU], 2016). A similar trend against Trans individuals was observed in Mexico after the legalization of same-sex marriage. Together, these trends reveal that cissexism remains alive in both countries, and may help explain why even after immigration, the Disadvantages Related to Being Trans emerged with the most data.

In this study, the participants expressed the ways in which cissexism has materialized itself and made its presence visible through the myriad of challenges that they share with their broad Trans community. Consistent with previous literature (Israel & Tarver, 1997; Lev, 2004; Xavier, 2000) on the challenges associated with trans-negativity, in this study the participants expressed major challenges in three areas including discrimination (i.e., cost of gender non-conformity), family rejection (i.e., family abuse and rejection, family negated trans identity), and safety (i.e., personal safeguarding is a concern). Among the challenges communicated by the participants included being singled out in bathrooms, losing jobs, being misgendered, with a couple participants who began taking HRT noticing a “fear and risk of violence” increase for them during the “in-between-space, where people do not know what to make of you.” While the participants expressed challenges in the areas related to an internal sense of self (e.g., Discomfort with Physical Appearance subcategory), as noted above the challenges they emphasized were external in nature. For instance, many of the challenges communicated by the participants were associated with others’ not perceiving their internal sense of gender (i.e., gender identity) to be congruent with their gender expression, which may place them at increased risk of violence.

In this study, participants also expressed challenges with family abuse, rejection, and sometimes invalidation of their gender identity, which is consistent with previous literature (e.g., Grant et al., 2011; Liu & Mustanski, 2012). Among Trans populations, the empirical research

conducted strongly suggests that stigma affect the mental health of Trans individuals (Bockting, Robinson, & Rosser, 1998; Nemoto, Iwamoto, & Operario, 2003; Nemoto, Sausa, Operario, & Keatley, 2005), which is consistent with what was found in this study where four of the participants expressed how their personal challenges as a Trans individual have impacted their mental health. The results in this section revealed a myriad of challenges that mirrors what was communicated by the sample of participants in this study.

**Shared Immigrant Experience.** Scholars posit that immigration has become a focal point for national debates, and others note we are currently living in one of the most anti-immigrant periods in modern U.S. history (Adames et al., 2019; Yakushko, 2009). Since the election of the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. president, these systems have been observed to strengthen and embolden themselves (Chavez- Dueñas, & Adames, 2016) with at least 315 confirmed hate crimes targeting perceived immigrants (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Anti-immigrant sentiments have disproportionately targeted undocumented immigrants. During the first month of the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. presidency, Trump signed an executive order giving federal immigration agents freedom to arrest and detain any undocumented immigrant with whom they come into contact with (Kopan, 2017). An increase in arrests is evident in the 22,000 immigrants arrested between January through mid-March 2017 (Hesson & Min Kim, 2017). An atmosphere of hostility can shape both the cultural discourse on immigrants, and have detrimental psychological effects on those who are the targets of prejudice (Yakushko, 2009), immigrants may experience loss of family, social support networks, exposure to trauma (e.g., before, during, and after immigration), compounded by an already complex acculturation (i.e., adaptation process to the new country's culture) and adjustment process that is associated with psychological stress (Berry, 1980; Masuda, Lin, & Tazuma, 1980).

In this study, the participants expressed the ways in which nativism impacted their lives. The participants also shared conflicting narratives on immigrating to the U.S. While five of the participants expressed a belief that with immigration to the U.S. their opportunities increased, eight participants indicated that they viewed immigration to the U.S. as painful. Participants focused on their perceived belief that Trans support increased in the U.S., while other areas of pain expressed due to immigration were more congruent with previous literature on immigrants. The painful experiences described are consistent with the literature on the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 1980; Masuda, Lin, & Tazuma, 1980). Participants highlighted challenges adjusting to the culture, values, beliefs, and lifestyle of the U.S. Additionally, five of the participants expressed challenges with learning the language. This stressful experience was coupled with the ways in which anti-immigrant rhetoric ‘others’ them. Several participants spoke about the way in which they were made into an outcast or were reminded of their perceived ‘difference.’ Participant four provides an example:

... I am not trying to say that they see you less, but they do think differently because you are not from here. At the end of the day—you are not from here (Participant 4).

For some it was coming to an understanding of how they became a minority with time living in the U.S., “...Wow, this is where I am in the world, in terms of dynamics in society...this is where I am located.” For others, becoming aware of their difference started in childhood, “...[since]...my childhood...I knew I was illegal, that word, it hit me. I’d have to pretend I was from somewhere else.” Others exemplified experiences with before, during, and after exposure of traumatic experiences (APA, PTFI, 2012; Cervantes, Mejia, & Mena, 2010). The challenges posed for individuals in this study as immigrants was also compounded with immigration status, with a total of five participants expressing the barriers this status imposed on them. Central to the challenges expressed by this sample of individuals was limited employment opportunities



coupled with lack of access to health care, education, and transportation consistent with previous literature (Chavez, Lopez, Englebrecht, & Viramontez, Anguiano, 2012; Debry, 2012). Three participants expressed fear and worry over family members or themselves being deported, with some expressing traumatic responses at the sight of government vehicles:

...that whole day, we didn't go back because we were so afraid. Now that I look back to it—just being afraid of seeing these government vehicles—I grew up being afraid of them. Now I know my rights and everything. But you're just afraid—you're afraid all the time because you know your fate and you don't want to go back... (Participant 8).

**Shared Latinx Experience.** Among the results of this study, Shared Latinx Experience yielded the least amount of data with only two participants within each of the emerged Experienced Stigma for Being Latinx and Racial Unawareness subcategories. The dearth of data within these subcategories was not viewed by the research team because there were not many shared challenges as an ethnic group by this community. Scholars posit that ethnicity accounts for how Latinx are socially positioned in relation to U.S. social hierarchy of success, power and mobility, while others add that it accounts for most social inequities including education, health, and socioeconomic status (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Organista, 2007; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008). Other explanations for the lack of data representing challenges as an ethnic group may be explained by both ethnic and racial identity development models. Ethnic identity is understood as an aspect of the self that includes a sense of acceptance and congruence regarding membership in a social constructed ethnic group (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017), and in this study five participants expressed a positive sense of ethnic identity (see “Latinx Pride” subcategory in Table 4.2). On the other hand, racial identity is “the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to the membership within [the] racial group within their self-concept” (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998, p.23). Meaning that individuals may not have yet developed self-awareness of be of their racial identity. This might explain why

this community may not be responding to their challenges. An example of this is through the message that they conveyed regarding their inability to see racialized experiences by not speaking about it. This may also explain why only a few of the participants witnessed stigma for being Latinx. Acevedo-Polakovich and colleagues (2014) posit that centering ethnicity among Latinx in the study of Latinx social identities may enable researchers and practitioners to develop a more accurate, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of the Latinx experience. In some ways Trans Latinx immigrants experience oppression and discrimination that is identical to the Latinx community, Trans Community, and undocumented immigrant community.

Overall, the above experiences provide evidence on the ways in which Trans Latinx immigrants experience oppression in ways nearly identical to their broad social group memberships. Many of the results that were briefly discussed have been previously validated. However, the unique ways in which Trans Latinx immigrants experience their oppression remained unexamined. The next section highlights these results.

### **Intersectional Invisibility: A Unique Trans Latinx Immigrant Narrative**

The term *intersectional invisibility* was coined in the research literature to denote the experience of groups with multiple oppressed social group memberships (Thomas, Dovidio, & West, 2014; Sesko & Biernat; Purdie-Vaughns & Eichbach, 2008). The term “*invisibility*” does not ‘literally’ mean that individuals do not see, for example, Trans Latinx immigrants. As discussed previously, it suggests that the broad constituent groups and broader U.S. society fail to fully acknowledge the experiences of individuals who are members of multiple oppressed social groups (Purdie-Vaughns & Eichbach, 2008). The term also suggests that individuals who are members of multiple oppressed social groups experience a qualitatively different form of discrimination (Siesko & Biernat, 2010). Within the overall results of this study, the

Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category emerged, which is a narrative that emphasizes, and perhaps even challenges, how this community understands and experience their social position as members of multiple oppressed communities.

The emerged Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups category provides data that explains the ways in which Trans Latinx immigrants experience oppression differently than members of their broader Trans, immigrant, and Latinx communities. To demonstrate, when the primary student investigator asked participants to discuss their social group experiences as a whole via the prompt, “*Tell me about your experiences as a Trans Latinx immigrant...*” (see Appendix E), the majority of the participants (7 out of 9) expressed an inability to separate who they are into distinct entities (see “Unable to Separate Identity” subcategory in Table 4.2). A quote from Participant seven in this study captures what appears to be both confusion and surprise from the initial prompt, “Whoa...I don’t even—it’s everything I just mentioned, ‘cause everything is so connected.” Other participants had similar reactions to the prompt, including Participant eight who noted, “I think it’s all combined. It’s who I am and now I cherish it.” Other participants expressed several difficulties with being tasked with “having to pick and choose” between their communities of membership or expressed a lack of control or ability to choose in how they are perceived by society due to membership in all three communities:

It's difficult—all around, the fact that you're just not Hispanic, you're also transgender, [and]...an immigrant. So, there is nothing positive that comes to mind when you say those three things together. Those words—when you say those three things together is just negativity—off the bat. It’s not because [we] want to, it’s just, that’s how we are labeled, ‘we’re bad people, we’re going against religion, we’re going against the law.’ But we’re not...bad of people. We’re just like anybody else, we also have feelings (Participant 4).

As seen in the examples above, the inability to separate their identities was expressed as a challenge by the sample of participants in this study. However, this study's research team did not view this community's challenge of separating different aspects of their identity as a flaw. We argue that most human beings perceive themselves as whole beings, but it is the revolving and changing social and political contexts that create salience of certain aspects of identity. An example of this can be found in the literature, where some scholars have suggested that social contexts heighten the awareness or salience of ethnic identity (French, Seidman, Allen, & Amber, 2006), while others theorize that it determines which aspects (e.g., race, gender) of identity become more salient (Adames & Chavez-Duenas, 2017). In her study focused on the resiliency factors among Trans People of Color, White (2013) noted that the participants had a difficult time discerning between experiences of racism or trans-negativity.

Changes in context via immigration may elucidate why three of the participants indicated that an aspect of their identity increased in salience (see "An Aspect of Identity Increased in Salience" subcategory in Table 4.2). For instance, Participant eight explained that his undocumented status was placed at the forefront of his awareness above everything else, "...growing up...it was more about my identity and being undocumented. It was very scary." For Participant three, all of the challenges she has faced with language as a Latinx person were acknowledged, but for her, her "preference" as she refers to her gender identity, has led to "more rejection" and being targeted at her work places, which is consistent with Cerezo and colleagues (2014) findings on employment challenges for immigrant transwomen. However, for Participant seven immigration to the U.S. has meant "being safer here, as a transgender person. Maybe not as Latinx, but as a trans person," placing into question why certain aspects of identity are targeted over others with immigration to the U.S. Participant seven's discussion on

his inability to separate his identity, also revealed what appears to be attempts by the new U.S. context to fragment who he is as a result of his immigration from Peru, a more conservative country with regards to laws that protect the rights of gender and sexually diverse individuals:

...One of the challenges that I mentioned earlier...I feel like when I was living in [country of origin], society was this open field and [there were] places to explore and [I] was welcomed everywhere. Here I'm like, "There's buildings, let's see if I can get in or if I even want to get in." So, it seems more fragmented (Participant 7).

The 'fragmentation' discussed by Participant seven may be akin to the 'othering' that occurs due to perceived differences created by U.S. systemic oppression that previously discussed (Chavez-Dueñas, et al., 2019).

Members of ethnic minority groups develop a keen eye for discerning where their social group is situated within the U.S. social hierarchy (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017), sometimes as a form of survival (Sue, 2010). A total of six participants expressed a sense of powerlessness over their social position, with expressed feelings of impotence, vulnerability, and a lack of control over their loved ones' and their own personal life circumstances. Among some participants, documentation status became a source of additional barriers that led to a sense of impotence over behavior or learned helplessness:

...the law does not allow us to move [without] documents—that's the only obstacle... [so trying by] Behaving well, working well, trying to follow the law. If you go against the law, you get screwed. I try to do what the law says, even if I am illegal... (Participant 9).

While for Participant two, being undocumented has meant that she does not have access to public entitlements, and work is a means of survival regardless of type of work because, "...sometimes ...it's not so much that you want to work, but there is a need...to pay your bills, eat, help your family." For Participant one, there is fear over their loved ones having negative experiences due to, "...the current political climate...especially since my mom...has had racist encounters... there's comments made about her accent, and immigration status..." However, for others there

was an expressed awareness of how systemic oppression materializes itself by creating social inequities or *structural intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991; Grzanka, 2014), via the creation of a lower position in society for oppressed communities, as expressed by Participant eight who is also an undocumented immigrant:

It's kind of hit me that I am colored. [That] I'm in that community of Colored People. Especially in this time right now, me and my work environment—It's really White; it's rich houses—I clean houses, so I know. It's kind of like, not to put it bad, but I know where I stand—or I know... what our Latino jobs are (Participant 8).

Participant seven expressed feeling both pained and burdened because the anti-immigrant rhetoric used to dehumanize undocumented immigrants also targets the visible “Brown” Latinx community, including him, even though he is documented:

...Being a Latino that's very connected to the Latino community—just the pain of knowing things that are coming up in terms of immigration...Even within this political environment—I'm not undocumented—but all these messages, I know that when people see me they don't see whether I'm documented or not, or whether I'm Mexican or not, they're just like 'We're all in the same bag,' right? So...these messages—to me it feels personal because they are towards all of us who are Brown and are immigrants or maybe have accents or of immigrant families. That is a huge burden and challenge (Participant 7).

Participant seven further expressed anger at his inability to fight back the negative rhetoric he experiences because of the social group memberships he and others in his life are targeted for:

It's...anger that I feel because of the anger that people feel towards people like me. There's not even something [or] someone to come back to, someone to fight, if no one says these things directly to me. But I just see it in the media, I see it in Facebook, I just see it everywhere. You see it in policies being proposed by these politicians. And there's no way to fight back with words. Sometimes I'm like, 'Oh I'm gonna smack someone!' That pent-up anger because of being trans and because of being an immigrant and having friends that are immigrants and trans—the same thing—knowing people that are being affected by this as well. I think it's so messed up that we supposedly are not the ones with the family values—whatever the hell that means. I'm like, 'I feel way more moral than some of these people' and I'm like, 'How do we live in a world like that?' Things don't make sense (Participant 7).

Given that scholars have theorized that Latinxs are currently living through one of the most anti-immigrant periods in modern U.S. history, with the increase in laws and policies that target this community (Adames et al., 2019), the exemplars above contextualize how the exposure to anti-immigrant rhetoric, the barriers they face due to their undocumented status, their placement in society at large, and how this creates a sense of impotence to fight the systems that create their social position and reality in a direct way. Being able to discern, however, where they are placed within the U.S. social hierarchy may be helpful in developing strategies of protection and survival.

Another message embedded within their unique position was that of a general sense of feeling disconnected, not being able to find communities of support, and a feeling of needing to deal with problems alone was expressed by eight of the participants. For some participants it is difficult to find support among Trans, Latinx, immigrants because they are afraid to come out:

As a Latino, transgender immigrant, it's kind of like I'm a new generation, even though we talk about that there's been trans since [for]ever; for me, it's hard to find a community yet. Maybe I'm the one where support [starts] in my own community, you know? [Because] I think, we're still afraid to come out (Participant 8).

Or because they are misunderstood by the communities, they are already a member of because they themselves belong to a narrower subgroup:

There are many things that many transgender women do not understand about a transsexual woman. And sometimes that implies a bit of difficulty in having friends who are transsexual not transgender. Because as transsexual women, we are a smaller group from transgender women; and transgender women are a bigger group than us. And as a transsexual woman, I can say that I do not know many transsexual women, I know only one—me. Maybe there are others, but they probably will not be noticed... (Participant 6).

Participant six in this quote also alluded to the “visibility” of Trans individuals and the challenges that discrimination, bias, fear of safety previously discussed, creates for this community in being able to find sources of support with other Trans individuals, particularly

because individuals would have to out themselves and fear repercussions. However, overall, there was a general sense of disconnection discussed and lack of perceived support expressed. One participant indicated a decreased social network due to other's internalization of negative stereotypes created by the nativism, ethnocentrism, and cissexism that exists in society today. Isolation has been described to increase among recently arrived immigrants due to language barriers, acculturative stress keeping them from accessing social capital (APA, PTFI, 2012). To date, no other study focused on the experiences of this community (Cerezo et al., 2014; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2015) or expressed these results on Trans Latinx immigrants.

Another layer that adds to the Disadvantages Related to Belonging in Multiple Social Groups is the lack of well-known Spanish vocabulary for the Trans community. Two participants talk a little about their challenge expressing themselves in Spanish. Participant seven talks about how the lack of Spanish translation and the language used by U.S. queer and trans communities feels incomplete:

I would say in terms of how that interacts with queerness--like learning the language that is used for queer and trans community here and not having a way to connect it to Spanish as much. It feels incomplete--the knowledge about that feels incomplete. 'Cause for some things there's no translation or there's a different cultural understanding of it. So, I think those are the challenges of not necessarily being Latino, but being Latino here in the states in a different context (Participant 7).

Something that is often not considered is the lack of vocabulary that Trans Latinx immigrants may have to share with their families and have them understand who they are.

Participant one shares a bit about this experience:

I still haven't come out to my parents actually. It's really difficult because in Spanish the language doesn't exist for me to really explain this to them--at least I haven't found that language, the words and the pronouns and things that really would help them understand what I mean understand me (Participant 1).



For this community, not being able to communicate who they are with others, especially family, may lead to further isolation. To compound this sense of isolation is the discussion by seven of the participants on how aspects of themselves do not get recognized. The level of social marginalization that this community experiences is astounding, as not only did they discuss a sense of isolation within their various social group memberships, but they also discussed a form of within-group discrimination by one of the communities from which they could gain support, the Latinx community. Unfortunately, several of the participants also expressed several instances of poor treatment by this community for not speaking the language, for being recent immigrants and having a perceived “unwillingness” to acculturate, and because of their gender identity. To date, no study has focused on the ways in which this community experiences isolation and within group discrimination. Nonetheless, this form of discrimination was expressed with great pain. In the following paragraphs, the ways in which this community manages their challenges will be discussed.

### **Interconnected Strength: Existing and Persisting in the Face of Hatred**

It is impossible to understand the ways in which the humanity of Trans Latinx immigrants is perpetually violated, without also understanding the sources of strength that sustains their spirit. The emerged results of this study provide empirical evidence of the ways in which this community has responded to and negotiates their relationships to many of the previously mentioned Societal, Familial, and Personal challenges and stressors they endure while living in the U.S. From the studies (i.e., Cerezo et al., 2014; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2015) that have specifically focused on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants, only two (i.e., Cerezo et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2015) provided reference to the strength of the community, and only one (i.e., Cerezo et. al., 2014), specifically referred to their strength as

ways immigrant transwomen cope or manage the hardships this community encounters. Hence, the messages communicated by Trans Latinx immigrants in this study are an important contribution to the literature, given the dearth of empirical literature that exists.

In this section, socio-historical and cultural context are considered and used to contextualize the lived experiences and strategies this community described that they employ to survive in order to provide a strength-based narrative of the results—emphasizing the way they manage their stressors. From a strength-based perspective, the resources and assets of a community are understood from their point of view. Consequently, the primary student investigator considered how the survival strategies described by Trans Latinx immigrants compare to current empirical literature as well from the Seven Psychological Strengths of Latinx (e.g., determination, *esperanza* [hope], adaptability, strong work ethic, connectedness to others, collective emotional expression, and resistance; Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) recently identified in the literature. The Seven Psychological strengths were survival strategies developed by African and Indigenous communities in Latin America during the period of colonization that many Latinx continue to employ today to survive systemic oppression in the U.S. Grounding the strengths of this community within its diverse and historical roots, honors the Latinx culture and informs how they behave and think about themselves, including their internal sense of gender, which can help uncover the diversity that exists within Trans Communities of Color. While considering the impact of multiple and interlocking systems of oppression, the results of this section represent the multi-layered ways of managing the stressors this community employs in their interactions and negotiations with their Societal, Familial, and Personal stressors. In the following paragraphs, the intersectional and collective attempts to survive will be briefly discussed.

**Societal.** In this section, the primary student investigator focused on explicitly gathering information on how this community manages their challenges as Trans Latinx immigrants in the U.S. (see “Semi-Structured Interview Protocol” Appendix E). Interestingly, the research team observed that several of the emerged results from this study, specifically within the Societal category, converged with the typology identified for the Psychological Strengths of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). For instance, the Living a Life of Self-Determination subcategory represents messages by eight of the participants who barred external forces from influencing their lives across various aspects of their identity, with messages from an “unwillingness to allow others to discriminate” against them or to no longer having a willingness to “justify themselves to others.” These messages are similar to the identified Psychological Strengths of Latinx, *Resistance*, or “the will power and courage to stand firmly for one’s beliefs, ideals, and practices...demonstrated in the determination of...[defying] the odds and limits placed on [Latinx] by oppressive systems” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p.27). Hence, the message conveyed by the Living a Life of Self-Determination subcategory within the results of this study is important, given that the participants also conveyed a sense of Powerlessness Over their Social Position. Through actively defying systemic oppression, some participants expressed a sense of freedom from “not caring what people think,” while others, like Participant eight, recognize that breaking barriers is simply what needs to be done:

I never fit being a female, and sometimes I had to cross it off, just because our normal—*el binario* [the binary system] to fit in. Now being an immigrant and Latino—you just break those barriers (Participant 8).

Also, with the relief and freedom that comes from being able to liberate themselves from being defined by oppressive systems:

I'm so glad I was connected already to the Queer community before coming out as Trans, because now I am not into this like super binary, super cis-sexist, heteronormative

version of Transness. To me, I can be super femme and still be transguy—it doesn't take away from that (Participant 7).

Eight of the nine participants discussed how they approach moving forward, despite all the challenges and limitations placed upon them due to their immigration status, language and cultural barriers, being underestimated, invisibility of the trans community, or simply for being a member of three oppressed groups. All eight participants discussed how limitations and barriers have not kept them from being able to move forward. A common theme within this subcategory is “not waiting for things to happen, but rather making them happen.” An example of this is conveyed by Participant six who shares that managing her challenges is a “daily struggle,” because she “wakes up every morning to fight with life...and tries not to give up.” Likewise, participant eight shares that he has been creating “Plan Bs” in case his job fires him due to the physical changes associated with his transition. For other participants, knowing that if “they don't give you work in one place, [you] knock on ten, [because] at least one will open,” and for others is not letting their “fears” keep them from reaching their goals. The strength that surfaces despite the challenges this community faces is exemplified by this quote:

...Moving to a place where you don't know anything and don't know anyone definitely pushes you outside of your comfort zone. It teaches you that you're able to survive no matter the environment that you're in. It makes you stronger—because you encounter all of these obstacles and it seems all these things are stacked against you, but you're able to overcome it. So, when other challenges come up, you sort of think to yourself, “Well, I've already been able to overcome such a huge thing, so this isn't as bad,” You sort of draw on those strengths that you developed (Participant 1).

Through the examples above, the participants demonstrate an incredible amount of courage in the face of chronic hostility and draw from their experiences to persist. A parallel from the excerpts discussed, can be found in their endless *Determination* or “endless drive and courage to do what is necessary to meet goals despite the barriers encountered” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas,

2017, p.27), another identified Psychological Strength of Latinx. Preserving Despite the Obstacles is an important strategy that may have allowed this community to survive.

Moreover, among this community a need for close relationships was expressed. Receiving support from others outside of the Trans Latinx immigrant community was expressed as a positive experience by some participants, especially with those who “took the time to get to know” Latinxs. In addition, there was a sense of pride expressed by participants who could find connection with others like them, with one participant expressing he “looks for relationships with people that are similar.” Finding a sense of community has been an important aspect of survival, particularly for oppressed communities (French et al., 2019). Similar to the findings that emerged in a study with other immigrant transwomen (Cerezo et al., 2014), Participant three, being around and working with other Trans women in a Trans show, found “support” and knowledge of methods to transition among her peers. For Participant eight, who experiences more challenges due to his undocumented status, being able to connect to others like him not only validated but helped him understand himself as Trans and undocumented person:

I recently started my transitioning—about four months ago, so I'm on hormones. In a way, the word transgender, I didn't know exactly that I'm transgender. My identity as part of the [LGB] community didn't fit right. I found Trans Queer Organization—five years ago by one of my friends saying, “Hey you should come over, there's a lot of undocumented LGBT and we talk about being undocumented and also being LGBT, I think you should come over...” I have friends that are undocumented, but I don't have those two identities together and that's who I am. I went and I fit right in. Being there, I...understood all these different identities. We shared our stories. We have this thing called "double coming out," because you come out of the closet, but you also come out as undocumented. So, sharing my story helped me understand who I was and where I was coming from (Participant 8).

Connectedness to Others is “valuing the need and enjoyment of being emotionally, physically, and spiritually connected with others throughout the life span in order to witness and share in life’s challenging and joyous times” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p.27), and it is

another of the Seven Psychological Strengths for Latinx. This community exemplifies this Psychological Strength and finds ways to validate their humanity through connecting with others like them.

Another way in which this community described they manage their challenges is through Having a Strong Work Ethic. Across five of the participants, a sense of pride in persevering through work was mentioned, even among those who face the most barriers finding employment, undocumented immigrants. As an undocumented immigrant, Participant eight expressed a sense of pride in being a fighter and a hard worker:

You know what? I grew up fighting for what I have—[even] if it was a pair of shoes—I also grew up humble...That comes with being an immigrant: being a hard worker, and...a fighter all the time, and knowing that nothing is going to be given to you—you have to fight for it. That's what I really cherish about it (Participant 8).

For others in this subcategory, an overt reminder to challenge the stereotype “immigrants are here to steal jobs” that stems from nativist ideologies was challenged by one participant:

...We do not let others trample on us...that we are capable—the hardest work we will do, but we will not take it from anyone. My brothers are here and did not show me they were capable, they always worked in big companies—I did not. I started from the bottom. But we can do it, whatever the work is—washing floors—whatever it is, we are going to do it, but we are not going to steal the work (Participant 3).

Similarly, to other identified Psychological Strengths of Latinx, *Strong Work Ethic*, or “valuing the importance of working hard, producing quality, and taking pride in one’s work endeavors regardless of social status or occupation” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p.27), can be observed in the narrative of the participants both as a survival strategy, but also as a way to challenge the myths that exist about the work values of this community.

Several of the participants discussed a lack role models available to them and faced challenges in finding community supports. Social mirroring (e.g., media, peers) is an important aspect of developing a positive sense of self-worth (Winnicott, 2005). The expressed need of

five participants to provide to their community the visual representation they themselves lacked, speaks to the wisdom this community holds on the importance of visibility and representation.

Some of the participants discussed a willingness to help other Trans individuals, including family. For Participant six, being able to transmit her experiences to other Trans women who are inexperienced or lack knowledge about risks is important to her:

...Many Trans Latinas sometimes are new to the matter, and they want to take hormones without prescription or get together with other girls who are drug addicts. So, what I can provide is to let them know that [they] are free to choose who [they] want to be...a trans girl with as normal life as possible or go on the bad side and dedicate to vices. But in reality, many end up being infected by AIDS, or many end up killing themselves with the combination of hormones and drugs they cannot control everything. A hormonal change is something very difficult, and that is what many Trans women do not know. [If] with my experiences I can contribute, I do. It's what I try to do the most. I think it's something that helps me a lot—having been Trans and being able to transmit my experiences (Participant 6).

For others, however, it is important to create visibility and awareness about individuals like themselves. For Participant eight, there is an invisibility that exists among Trans Latinx, and has taken it upon himself to tell his story because many in the Latinx community are still afraid to come out. For him, being a visible role model in the Latinx community as Trans is important:

I yet need to connect with my own community as a Latino, as [country of origin], being transgender. I know there's spaces out there—I've seen them. But I think it's hard still for us to just open up with each other. I don't know if it's our machismo to not talk about our feelings. I want to help break those barriers...maybe I want to be a face for that and just [say], "I'm here, if you need me" (Participant 8).

Similarly, for Participant one, being the bridge to their segregated communities has been a source of management for them:

I try to volunteer for organizations that serve Trans folks. I try to volunteer for organizations that serve the immigrant community. Even if they're not meshing yet, I think me being there hopefully helps them see there's people like me (Participant 1).

Five of the participants exemplified the Creating and Finding Affirming Places strength by taking matters into their own hands to create what is not made readily available to them. For

historically disenfranchised communities, spaces of affirmation have not been made readily available. Five of the participants, shared the importance of either finding individuals who are both accepting and “understanding” of their gender identity or welcoming of them because they were the “new kid” after they immigrated to the U.S. While finding spaces that were welcoming of the participants’ multiple aspects of their identity was important, others spoke about the importance of finding places with people “like them.” Participant seven expressed feeling a sense of relief when he is able to find a community that shares all three aspects of his identity because he is often negotiating how much of his gender expression, his gender identity, his culture, his language, and his views on immigration he can “share with the world.” However, finding these spaces of affirmation is difficult and when he cannot find them, he creates them:

One of the things that I did when I got here [to new state]—because there wasn't a strong Queer Latinx community—was create this space for Queer Latinx folks... Being able to find that community was really cool, especially when people have the immigrant experience. Being able to connect in all those three layers, it's like, “Oh you get it!” You get why there's nostalgia about home, but at the same time, there is this pain about home and there is this awesomeness about being here. That challenge of that narrative being so shitty about immigrants. All these things that I don't have to explain, right? I think that's why that space is coming to mind because when I find people like that—I don't have to explain a lot of my existence to you... When I meet people with all those three identities, I don't have to think about that, I don't have to negotiate anything. I can just be and not explain myself (Participant 7).

Safety is often a word that is relative to the context for disenfranchised communities.

However, research on finding comfort and support around an oppressed identity has been identified as a source of strength (Meyer, 2005), particularly when there may be expectations that you will experience backlash because of “who they are” as Participant seven alluded to in their response. Several empirical research reports (Grant et al., 2011) have discussed the fear that Trans individuals experience as a result of needing medical care, and when considering Trans individuals who are also undocumented, the likelihood of attaining or accessing medical care is



difficult, if not, nearly impossible. Participant eight, spoke about what he did to create a space for this community given the sensitivity and need for a space where his community feels comfortable:

We're trying to build our community—to bring resources and services we need. That's what we do, and[it] has been amazing. We talk about when we first started the clinic; it was about ten people. It's hard because we don't want to exclude anybody the way that we have been excluded, but we could only help LGBT undocumented [individuals] 'cause the doctors are giving their time...Not that we needed special treatment if [we're] discriminated, but somethings there's questions that make us uncomfortable, and those doctors are learning to respect our pronouns. Also growing up Latino, questions about condoms or sex or HIV—we're just trying to put the word out there—It's our purpose for the clinic... (Participant 8).

Empirical research indicates that a positive sense of ethnic identity, or connection to culture of origin, can be a protective factor against discrimination among U.S. Latinx (Acevedo-Polakovich, Chavez-Korell, Umaña-Taylor, 2014). In this study, five of the participants expressed a sense of pride in being Latinx, with some expressing it is an “important part” of their identity, expressed a deep pride of cultural heritage including an expression of the culture, food. For others, it brought up both a sense of pride, but also a deep sense of how the collective history and cultural values connect and unite Latinx:

For me, to be Latina is to feel proud of the culture I come from, because regardless of my [country of origin]—I feel that we, as Latinos, have a lot of history, [and] many things to be proud of...We are a group of people who are very empathetic—we are not indifferent to the pain of others—we are people...that when we experience misfortune, we all join, regardless of whether we are from Mexico, from Guatemala, from El Salvador, from wherever. We are all [tied to] that invisible cable that makes us want to help others in some way. It may be because of education, due to inheritance from our parents or from our own cultures—but that is something that...I feel we all have as Latinos, regardless of what Latin American country we come from. We are warm people... (Participant 6).

Nativist and ethnocentric ideologies have a deep impact on the psychology and well-being of immigrants, particularly in this time where the anti-immigrant rhetoric has increased (Adames et al., 2019). For Participant eight, his mother's inculcation of pride of his culture has been an

especially important protective factor, particularly as an undocumented immigrant, against the anti-immigrant rhetoric he experiences:

We were brought up also to love yourself—in my mind, I was fighting a lot of things—my mom...she...never put us down...for being [country of origin citizen] or anything, so I did grow up...being proud of my heritage...We have always cherished who we are even though we are here and people say, "You don't belong here" (Participant 8).

Other important ways in which this community responds to their expressed societal challenges is by Educating About Trans Lives, by Maintaining Hope, and Having Documented Status. The participants in this study shared that people lack awareness about the Trans community, to remedy this, four of the participants shared that they educate others about Trans lives. Some participants expressed a dissatisfaction with small amount of information that is often “misleading or inaccurate,” which has led some of them to openly share their experiences to combat this despite how uncomfortable it may be for them. For others, it has opened the opportunity to “create change within the culture and... broaden people’s vision and ideas” including within their family. Participant eight has taken it upon himself to re-educate himself so that he can help others de-construct how they understand Trans individuals:

...I don’t think being transgender is new because transgender people have been from way back in the years. It was cherished, being transgender was...almost a [like a] God. You were given to your family and they would cherish you, but they had to be *colonizados* [colonized] and came all this. I've been studying, I've been trying to educate myself, so I can educate my family and educate our community too (Participant 8).

Being able to change the narrative that has erased Trans individuals from history is a powerful tool of managing their invisibility in society, as can be observed by Participant eight’s efforts.

Several of the barriers created by lacking an undocumented status. It is important to note that while the legal ramifications of having a documentation status in the U.S. is outside the control of the participants in this study, and significant barriers exist for five of the nine

participants in this study who discussed the barriers of being undocumented, two of the participants did express the relief and privilege that comes with having a documented status in the U.S. Specifically, for Participant six, receiving asylum in the U.S. has meant that she feels a sense of relief because she will be able to become a U.S. citizen and “gain more liberty than she had before.” Unfortunately, the lack of documents has prevented some of the participants in this study from being able to go back to their country of origin. Participant nine, who was one of three participants who discussed her ways of Maintaining Hope, shared that one of the things that keeps her alive is her only goal of “...arriving [to Mexico and] hugging her mother.” Sadly, she indicated that she would not be able to go back to Mexico until she can save money to be able to care for her mother. Other limitations created by being undocumented, were shared by Participant eight, who also maintains hope of working in other things outside of cleaning. While only a small number of participants spoke about the importance of Maintaining Hope or *esperanza* [Hope] this has also been identified as a Psychological Strength of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Given the dire challenges and barriers that this community faces, may explain why other ways of managing their challenges, such as taking more active actions, was reported among this sample of participants.

**Familial.** In this section, the primary student investigator focused on gathering information on how Trans Latinx immigrants manage their challenges with their family/loved ones (see “Semi-Structured Interview Protocol” Appendix E). Within the Familial category, the ways in which both the family and the participants responded to any challenges they faced emerged. Central to the results of this section of the study was an important traditional Latinx cultural value, *familismo* [familism], which is closely associated with placing a strong emphasis on familial ideals including obligation, affiliation, and cooperation among family (Falicov,

1998). Among Latinx, *familismo* is one of the key values used to orient their behavior and understanding of themselves (Lawton, Gerdes, Haack, & Scheider, 2014). In the following paragraphs a discussion on how this value was observed within the emerged results will be considered.

Among the participants in this study, six of them expressed the responses their family had toward their Trans identity. The responses included and reflected the pain and hurt they felt at their family's negation and rejection of their Trans identity. However, the messages by some in this group of participants conveyed was that these painful experiences were embedded within a process that led the family to attempt to assimilate the social and physical changes made by some of the participants, which took some time, and for some it continues. One of those participants is Participant eight who shared that everyone in his family has begun to accept his social changes, like using his chosen name, while his mother remains "quiet" around the changes. In some ways, empathy and understanding was provided by the participants toward their loved ones with the contextualization of their age, for example, and consideration that "transitioning" and may be "new" to them:

I understand, I don't expect that she will just wake up and be like, "Oh, here's my son." But they're just being quiet about it. I also know that...in our community, in our families, this is new (Participant 8).

While for other parents, like Participant six's mother, did not assimilate to the idea of having a daughter so Participant six gave her mother and family time and space to "familiarize"

themselves with the "new person" that Participant six became:

The obstacles they had with me, have been overcome little by little, step by step, but I think it has gone well. I think the only thing [that] my brother still does not assimilate is that we used to wrestle, we continue to play, but not as often because he does hurt me... Now, they no longer try to make a judgement of who I am or what I am. They just watch, they keep it in their mind for a couple of days, and then they ask me...I am an open person...And if they do not understand it at that moment, they work it in their mind, and

days go by and the doubt is removed. I think those are the obstacles that I have overcome in terms of family (Participant 6).

For others, like Participant five, her father stopped talking to her, but eventually came to be “okay” with her because she is his daughter:

My mom knew about it...when I came out as gay, my... dad didn't talk to me for a year. It took him in a while...and after that I just had to...make our relationship stronger to tell him again that I was trans... that I want to transition, and he was okay with it. He was like, ‘At the end of the day you’re... my kid and that's all I have.’ They always say that, ‘That’s all I have’ (Participant 5).

Participant two was the only participant who indicated she was treated like a woman beginning at the age of six, and “feels [her] family raised [her] as a woman.” Despite the abuse her father placed her through, he allowed her to stay home to engage in gendered role behavior such as cleaning the house and cooking. The exemplars provided by the participants exemplify the role that *familismo* played within the lives of these families. A wide range of reactions from rejection, remaining quiet, to acceptance of the participants was observed, with a process of familiarizing themselves with the physical and social changes that come with the transition process. In previous studies (Cerezo et al., 2014), the importance of social support by “family of choice” was highlighted as an important protective factor for immigrant transwomen. However, Rhodes and colleagues (2015) discussed similar findings in their study with their sample of participants who spoke about rejection that they experienced, but also a gradual acceptance process that took time.

While a gradual acceptance process was discussed, another of the unconditional love that they received from their families emerged. Some participants expressed concern over what their family would say but were pleasantly surprised when they were accepted. With others parents disclosing that since the participant was little, they knew it said they “were a boy” but recognize the participant was “never a boy,” participant five expressed surprise at the fact that her mother

did pay attention to her and waited until participant was old enough to talk about it. Two of the participants spoke about “family” being an important protective factor for them personally and for Latinx. For instance, Participant two expressed how the love and support from her family became a protective factor for her because it has kept her away from vices or drugs:

My mother always stood up for me and thanks to that, I am who I am. I am a person who respects herself. Thanks to my family who always supported me, I have never fallen for the drug vices: I do not smoke or drink... That also has to do with the treatment my family gave me, they allowed me to be who I wanted to be (Participant 2).

In accordance to a report through the National Council of La Raza’s Social Science Research Solutions (2012), Participant seven expressed that he believes that the intensity of trans-negativity and homo-negativity is no stronger among Latinx than other groups in the U.S.

I recently was in a space...teaching about Queer and trans issues in a Latina conference... for Latina immigrants learning about social justice. It was such a cool conversation, ‘cause they were so open to learning and so accepting of their own children or their relatives. So that idea of our cultures [being] less accepting than White cultures—to me it’s not true, to me it’s a myth...I feel like sometimes Latinx families can overcome those barriers because they place such a high value on family. They’re like, “There’s no way I’m gonna disown my kid, like my kid has to stay until they are 30 here.” It happens, of course, but I feel like that value can be protective as well (Participant 7).

It appears that within this sample of individuals, there is a strong sense of support coming from their families. Research has found that *familismo* can be a source of support among Latinx individuals, particularly insulating them from the acculturative stress of immigration (see Barry & Annis, 1974).

A strong sense of responsibility to their family was expressed among five of the participants in this study. Participants expressed the importance of having a sense of connection to their family. Others indicated that it was important to support their family, particularly as cultural brokers or translators for their family who did not speak English. Others discussed that even though they had significant struggles in the U.S., being able to send money to their family

in their country of origin was a personal reward for them. This included Participant nine, who has a strong faith and was rejected by her father, “I love my mother... I love my father even though he does not love me, [and] that he wanted to kill me... I love him like you have no idea,” and regardless of the rejection, she continues to send money back to them in country of origin. A strong sense of *familismo* was addressed by the participants in this study.

Another way in which an obligation to the family was displayed by the participants was through the sense of worry that their family would not perceive them as the same person after transitioning. Four of the participants expressed that they have had to reassure their family that they are a good person by working, and not prostituting herself, or smoking just because of the way they are. Others expressed that nothing has changed about them in terms of their attitude, but instead the family has realized that they are the “same person in essence” just physically changed into the person they were always “meant to be.” For Participant eight, it is their hope that his family sees he is still the same person he has always been.

The results of this section challenge, and complicate, our understanding of Latinx families’ acceptance and support for gender diverse individuals. As was noted above, several of the participants and families expressed a behavioral orientation that alludes to a sense of responsibility toward the family. The results may help to counter some of the narratives that have been established regarding the rejection that this community experiences, often from their families. For this sample of participants, however, it appears that family has been a protective factor against the current research focused on simply the risk factors that impact Trans communities of Latinx descent. Family is an important protective factor, particularly as members of multiple oppressed communities where a sense of isolation was expressed as a challenge by this community. The intensity of trans-negativity is no stronger among Latinx than

other groups in the U.S. In fact, a recent study by Social Science Research Solutions found that Latinx are more likely to support marriage equality and are more tolerant of LGBT individuals than the general population (Social Science Research Solutions, 2012).

**Personal.** In this section, the primary student investigator focused on gathering information on how Trans Latinx immigrants manage their personal challenges (see “Semi-Structured Interview Protocol” Appendix E). Within the Personal category several of the participants expressed the ways in which they challenge the oppression they endure via aspects of themselves they have direct control over. Considering this notion, among the Trans community “living authentically” is an important concept, primarily because attaining this human right has been difficult if not impossible for members of this community. Among the sample of participants in this study, ‘Authenticity’ (see Table 4.2) emerged among seven of them. The content of their messages around this focused on “happiness,” “visibility,” and “relief” that they had the opportunity to be their true selves. It is important to note that none of the participants expressed their sense of authenticity was contingent upon accessing gender affirming services, though some participants did express starting HRT. Instead, an internal focus on having the opportunity to explore and experience gender differently than their non-trans peers was expressed. For instance, being able to engage in the expression of gender via dress or behavior was discussed. For others, it was simply having the opportunity to be “true to oneself” regardless of the external perception of others, such as was the experience for Participant five who continues to use “he, him, his” pronouns in society because she “could get in trouble” otherwise. For her, being an undocumented immigrant and having to negotiate the legal status and her gender marker has been a challenge. Additionally, when external



perceptions of gender identity matched the internal sense of gender for Participant seven, it created the opportunity to express his gender differently than what is expected of a man:

...So many people were like, “You should be more feminine...” which is weird because now I’m feminine...Before I feel like I acted more butch ‘cause that was the only way that people would perceive me as masculine or as male. I feel like once people were like, “Oh you’re a dude, he, him, his.” I’m like “I can be as Femme as I want and people won’t question my gender identity.” That’s kind of nice (Participant 7).

Among this sample of participants being able to express themselves, regardless of outside perception of their internal experience of gender, was an important factor that appeared to contribute to a positive sense of self.

Furthermore, labels and language in society have power from which reality is often created and defined (Rodriguez, Cruz, Perez-Chavez, 2016). Some in the Trans community have had access to the language used by academics to express and define their gender (e.g., Transgender), with those who have not, continue to “identify as Gay, either as a way to defy concepts and terms that have been imposed” on this community from outsiders (Rodriguez, Cruz, Perez-Chavez, 2016, p. 17). As an outsider to the Trans community, and perhaps as a response to the initial prompt, “*Tell me about your experiences as a Transgender individual...*” (See Appendix E), a total of seven participants described their gender identity, with some even providing a definition of it. Like Participant six, who indicated that she identifies as transsexual and not transgender:

There are trans women who ask me, “Why do you want an operation...?” [and I respond] ... “Simply because you are transgender does not mean that you are transsexual—it is something that you do not understand.” I am transsexual, not transgender. Being transgender is when you transition from one gender to the other, but you do not have the need to change your sex—so you just change your gender, [and] you’re happy as you are—if you have a penis, [you] live with it, you do not feel bad for having it, and you can have partners and have sex without any problem—it’s okay, you are a transgender woman—that is what you are...But I have a thing called dysphoria. Dysphoria [happens] when you are transsexual, and...when in reality you want a vagina [and] you really want to have the life of any normal and ordinary woman. That’s not the same as being a

transgender woman. A transgender woman is one thing and a transsexual woman is another... (Participant 6).

Chavez-Korell and Lorah (2007) provided a similar definition of transsexual individuals as Participant six. In contrast to this definition, Participant one indicated there is a misperception that “the only way to be Trans is to have surgery or fit into a box,” with another indicating she is “simply a woman.” Participant three indicated she believes Trans individuals are a derivative of “heterosexual, homosexual.” Among Trans Latinx women, in addition to Gay, a variety of terms exists that include *hombres muy afeminados* [very feminine men], *mujeres completas* [complete women], as well as *vestidas* [the ones who dress up] (Diaz, 1998; Infante, Sosa-Rubi, & Magali Cuadra, 2009; Prieur, 1998). However, regardless of how this community chooses to define their internal sense of gender, Participant five provided a reminder that this experience belongs to her and no one else:

...It's just, I don't like people telling me what to do and telling me right away, ‘You should be this,’ I know what I am. Until I'm ready to tell you, then you could do your job don't tell me...I can get in trouble for it. So, it's like, “No” (Participant 5).

The exemplars above provide insight into the variance that exists within the Trans community and the way in which they define their internal sense of gender. Among Trans Latinx, the use of heteronormative linguistic practices can be oppressive and continues to be a challenge for the Latinx community whose gender identity and expression does not fit traditional binary representations (Santos, 2017). This may be another explanation to the responses, in a way as a form of challenging their oppression, provided by this community, which is why this was considered a strength for this community. As could be observed by the responses given by the sample of participants, some individuals had access to academic language. A reason for this is that unlike previous studies conducted with Trans Latinx immigrants, the sample of participants in this study was observed to have more years of formal education (see Table

4.1). Most participants (5 out of 9) completed their formal education in the U.S. since they arrived at an earlier age, giving them more access to the cultural norms, customs, and language used to describe gender diverse individuals in U.S. mainstream society. Overall, the results of this study exemplify the strength of this community. Despite the myriad of challenges and unique social position, they have found a way to persevere.

### **Study Implications**

The results of this study provide an important contribution to our understanding of the within-group (e.g., gender diversity, race) psychological literature on Latinx. Currently, the literature focused on gender diverse individuals who are immigrants from Latin America is underdeveloped. The majority of research on Trans Latinx immigrants has focused on identifying the associated risk factors of this community including HIV, poverty, suicide, weighing heavily on the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrant women. Albeit important information, the current empirical research that informs mental health professional's knowledge of this multiply oppressed community is heavily focused on a deficit-based model (i.e., risk factors), and the narratives of other gender diverse individuals (e.g., Transmen) is absent. To add to this, research has primarily used a 'single-axis' or 'uni-lateral' approach to study the inequity that frames multiple dimensions of difference (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity), making these appear as discrete nonoverlapping variables (Dhamoon, 2011), rather than intersecting or co-constructive phenomena (Grzanka, 2014). This study focused on understanding the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants as members of multiple oppressed social groups and the ways in which they manage their associated stressors using both a strong (focus on interlocking systems of oppression) and weak (focus on multiple identities) intersectionality framework to

conceptualize the results. The minority stress framework served to understand how a minority status influences psychological distress.

The results of this study begin to emphasize the way in which the oppression of Trans Latinx immigrants is similar to their broad social groups (e.g. Trans, Latinx, immigrant), and the unique way in which this community experiences oppression. A strength-based approach was used to understand how this community manages their associated stressors. The research team grounded their understanding of Trans Latinx immigrants' societal, familial, and personal survival strategies using the Seven Psychological Strengths of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Duenas, 2017). The results of this study can be considered by both mental health professionals and researchers working with this community. In the following sections, the implications for practice and research from the results of this study will be discussed, while considering how each can be used as tools to transform social structures and cultivating social justice (Grzanka, 2014) for this community. Finally, the study's strengths and limitations will be discussed.

**Clinical Practice.** Mental health professionals working with Trans Latinx immigrants can consider the results of this study in order to provide Trans-Affirming and Culturally Responsive psychological care for this community. Given the myriad of challenges emerged in the results of this study impacting Trans Latinx immigrants, using a strength-based approach is important to ensure further marginalization is not re-created in the psychotherapy room. Adames and colleagues (2018) proposed a model of psychotherapy that integrates both a weak and strong intersectionality framework to ensure that 1) all aspects of a client's identity are 'seen,' and 2) all forces of oppression impacting the presenting concern are considered. The use of this framework can help Trans-Affirming and Culturally Responsive mental health professionals to "appreciate that a significant part of the distress that [oppressed individuals] experience is caused

by systems of oppression that operate in society,” (Adames et al., 2018, p.74), while also honoring their unique experiences. This framework can be coupled with other theoretical approaches to conceptualize and inform care. The following sections provide recommendations at an individual, family, and societal level for working with Trans Latinx immigrants.

***Individual.*** The results of this study can help mental health professionals consider the ways in which they can intervene at an individual level. In order to effectively work with this community, providers can begin by establishing a trusting therapeutic alliance. Building an alliance with a community that experiences multiple forms of oppression will take time, require the integration of Latinx cultural values while considering their level of acculturation, and will require taking a cultural humility stance or being curious, non-assuming, open, and responsive to client’s cultural identities (Owen, 2013). Additionally, understand and expect, that suspicion of professionals is healthy and expected (White, 1984) given the myriad of negative experiences related to anti-trans, anti-immigrant, and anti-Latinx sentiments in society. Mental health professionals can begin to explore their own views about gender diverse individuals and immigration and its impact on undocumented Latinx immigrants, as these will inform how mental health professionals establish a trusting and supportive therapeutic relationship that validates their intersecting experiences. Because this community defined their own gender identity in this study, it is important to inquire about the pronouns they use, the way they define their internal sense of gender, and avoid making assumptions about someone’s gender identity based on their external expression of gender (i.e., behavior, dress). In order to build alliance with undocumented immigrants, openly discuss with clients that reservations to trust are expected due to the socio-political environment. Additionally, informed consent should highlight that information will not be shared with government agencies (e.g., police, ICE).

Once a therapeutic alliance is established, considering various aspects that may inform the presenting concern is imperative. Participants in this study expressed a wide range of experiences related to their pre, during, and post immigration journeys. Mental health professionals can pay special attention to symptoms of depression, fear, anxiety, PTSD, substance use and abuse or general psychological distress that may directly stem from traumatic experiences associated with any or all of the pre, during, post, immigration journeys. Additionally, assessing for the impact of community violence in the lives of Trans Latinx immigrants is imperative given the rise of hate crimes against these groups. Using a trauma-informed lens can help mental health professionals consider the complex experiences of this community. Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) developed the HEART (Healing Ethno-Racial Trauma) Framework to address the impact of ethnocentrism, nativism, racism and other systems of oppression on the Latinx immigrant community. The framework also considers a multi-faceted approach for treatment of Latinx immigrants at the individual, family, and community level (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019) while also considering the Seven Psychological Strengths of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Special consideration can be given to the additional needs based on increased social group membership. For instance, undocumented Trans Latinx may need additional services such as access to gender affirming services and legal immigration support. Clients can be connected to their country of origin's consulate to gain guidance on how to approach the process of changing their names and gender marker in their legal documents. Finally, because several of the participants discussed the ways in which they minimize their challenges, it is important to help clients become aware of how living in a hostile and oppressive sociopolitical context has impacted their experiences and access to resources due

to membership in multiple oppressed social groups. The goal with this is to help clients learn to externalize the blame to oppressive environments and outside of themselves.

***Family.*** In this study, the participants discussed several survival strategies and ways of managing their associated stressors. A strong sense of responsibility to their family was conveyed by the participants in this study. In order to honor this Latinx cultural value, both mental health providers and clients can discuss how family can become involved in the psychological care of clients. However, it is important that mental health providers also validate clients' painful experiences of rejection from their family, whom have also been conditioned to internalize society's hatred toward Trans individuals. Providing resources where both the family and client can find more information around gender diverse identities may be helpful to establish communication around the client's gender identity. Additionally, mental health providers may consider how the client's family members may also be impacted by oppression (i.e., undocumented) and reflect on how this impacts the family relationships, cohesion, and stress.

***Community.*** Trans Latinx immigrants expressed several ways in which they manage the stress they experience due to membership in multiple oppressed social groups. Mental health providers can honor their strength and their incredible resilience in the face of multiple forms of hatred. This community reported various ways in which they resist oppression, including living their life based on self-determination, perseverance, connecting to others, creating and finding affirming spaces among others. Mental health professionals can support this community by providing additional resources where they will find validation, affirmation, and connection they have used to continue preserving despite all of the obstacles they face. Mental health professionals can also demonstrate their commitment to supporting this community's well-being outside of the therapy setting by engaging in social action. Protesting to support the human

rights of this community, speaking to politicians about immigration reform and Trans rights (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) are ways that may show support to this community. It is important to consider that not all Trans Latinx immigrant will have the same experience or utilize all of the management strategies described in Table 4.2. Mental health providers can learn about the Seven Psychological Strengths of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) or survival strategies that many Latinx continue to employ today to survive the hatred from U.S. systemic oppression. Considering the strengths of the present study is imperative. In the next section both the strengths and limitations will be considered.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

In the following section, the strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed along with future areas of research. With a vast wealth of knowledge presented by all participants, it is important to recognize the factors that supported the findings along with areas to improve on for future research studies.

**Strengths.** One of the biggest strengths this study has is the variety of diversity found among the participants. In this study, the participants represented a diverse gender identity spectrum. Unlike previous research conducted with Trans Latinx immigrants (i.e., Cerezo et al., 2014; Palazzolo et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2015) where the sample included were all Trans women, this study had five out of the nine participants identified as Transwomen, with the remaining three identifying as Transmen, and 1 as Non-binary. Hence, this study begins to shed light on the within group differences related to gender variance existing within the Trans Latinx immigrant community. Moreover, participants were also diverse in their educational status (2 participants are PhD students, one participant has some college, five participants completed high school, one participant had not finished high school), age (participants ranged in age from 23 to



48 years), and citizenship status (five participants are undocumented, two are documented, one has DACA, and one has refugee status). The study, therefore, has a wider range of participants bringing forth a variety of experiences. The study's recruitment strategy could have led to the diversity in the sample. Some participants were recruited via a convenience sample (i.e. a community center) and the rest via a snowball sample (i.e. word of mouth).

Additionally, in order to get the rich experiences of each of the participants, the study itself had to be flexible. Due to the nature of the questions and the guides to formulate questions under a CQR paradigm, the participants had the ability to explore the experiences they wanted to share with the student investigator. This also led to most of the community speaking about its own resilience. The study also reflected the strong focus on intersectionality, or interlocking systems of oppression, rather than just on multiple identities. Considering strong intersectionality, allowed the primary student investigator to consider how contextual factors might influence the experiences of this community. The detailed descriptors of pre- and post-migration contexts is central to understanding the experiences of this immigrant community and is also considered a strength of this study. With the results that were highlighted previously, this can be used as a template for other research on how to take into consideration multiple oppressed groups.

**Limitations.** The results of this study came from a sample of nine participants living in major cities within the Midwest, West, and Southwest U.S. regions, with a majority of the participants representing the Midwest, which may create limitations to the transferability of these results to a broader Trans community. Although a large majority of Latinx individuals reside in large urban cities, there has been an increase in the Latinx population in rural areas, thus, exploring the differences of experiences among this community in a wider range of regions may

be beneficial to understand the unique challenges of this community. A recommendation for future research is to continue to explore how membership in multiple oppressed social groups might influence stress and coping among Trans Latinx immigrant communities across other U.S. regions to gain a sense of common factors that influence the stress this community experiences.

Additionally, a majority of the participants in this study are Mexican nationals which can make it difficult to transfer the results to a broader heterogenous Latinx population. Although the largest Latinx group in the U.S. are Mexicans, they are followed by Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Salvadorans, and Dominicans, none of which were represented in the study (Lopez & Patten, 2015). If the recommendation above is taken into consideration for future research, a larger Latinx representation may be captured as none of the East Coast was captured here, where a majority of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans reside (Motel & Patten, 2012). Furthermore, in terms of gathering different perspectives, there was only one Non-binary identified participant whose internal sense of gender may differ from those who identified as Transwoman or Transman. For future research, it would be recommended to recruit more Non-binary individuals in order to explore their experiences further.

Another limitation for this study was that neither researcher identifies as Trans, which limits how the data was read and the lenses through which it was viewed. Although all the data that used to elevate the results of the study come directly from the participants, how the data was read may be limited by the research team's non-Trans identity. The researchers used the consensus process to improve this blind spot, and also consulted with the auditor and literature to further contextualize and ameliorate this concern. Another aspect that could limit the transferability of the results is having some of the interviews conducted in Spanish. While several of the quotes were back translated for quality assurance, the research team may have also

missed contextual nuances due to differences in region in country of origin and level of acculturation in the U.S.

There were also limitations that can be attributed to the questions asked, or lack thereof. For one, there was not a focus on documentation status which could add to the complexity of experiences the participants have. The only question to screen eligibility that was slightly related was ensuring that participants needed to be an immigrant in the U.S. Although there was a variety in documentation statuses, there were no questions that dug into the differences in documentation status which leaves room for future studies to explore this area more. Finally, another question not asked explicitly was how long after immigrating to the U.S., the participants felt their lives had been shaped by their immigration to the U.S. Future studies can include this.

**Future Areas of Research.** Furthering our understanding of the within-group differences of Latinx is important, particularly as it relates to gender diverse communities. In addition to revealing the experiences in membership in multiple oppressed social groups (e.g., ethnic, gender diverse, and immigration status) among Trans Latinx immigrants, some participants expressed how racial awareness increased as a result of immigration to the U.S. Future studies can consider the role of being a member of an oppressed racial group, and how this influences the lived experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants. Moreover, this research can consider the role ethno-racial trauma has on the psychological well-being of this community.

Several survival strategies were identified among this sample of participants, challenging the current available empirical literature focused on discussing the risk factors of Trans Latinx immigrants. Further research can consider identifying additional survival strategies on this community. This research could further help validate the Psychological Strengths of Latinx (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Another area of potential research can focus on appreciating

the Latinx family system of support and what factors might lead to acceptance or rejection of Trans Latinx individuals. This is an important area to consider for future research, as the sense of family responsibility was endorsed by a majority of the participants in this study. Considering the role of psychological well-being among Trans Latinx immigrants is important as support from family can serve as a protective factor against oppression among Latinx (Falicov, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants as members of multiple oppressed social groups. A message conveyed within the emerged results of this study is that this community perceives more challenges than rewards associated with each of their broad social group memberships (e.g. Trans, Latinx, immigrant). The results of this study also demonstrated the *intersectional invisibility* or unique experiences of this community. Hence, this study showed this community experiences oppression in similar ways to their broad social groups, but in other ways their oppression is unique to their social position within these groups and often unacknowledged or explored. In response to their intersecting and unique challenges, this community discussed the ways in which they resist their oppression in the U.S. This study showed the complexity that exists among this understudied group within the Latinx community.

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APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT FLYER

# Intersecting Realities

## Research Study

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee IRB number: #17.357

Do you identify as **Latinx?** Do you identify as **Transgender?** Are you an **Immigrant?**



**If You are 18 Years of Age or Older & Belong to All 3 Groups**  
Please consider participating in a 1-hour confidential interview to share your story. Participants will receive \$20 cash or gift card.

[For More Information Contact:](#)

Silvia P. Salas-Pizaña, M.A. | [spsalas@uwm.edu](mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu) | (260) 215-2405

Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>	Silvia P. Salas (260) 215-2405 <a href="mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu">spsalas@uwm.edu</a>
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APPENDIX B  
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [Name of Subject],

My name is Silvia P. Salas, and I am a fourth-year Counseling Psychology Doctoral Candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). I am recruiting Participants of Latin American descent for my dissertation research study who identify as Trans, immigrant, and who reside in the United States. Overall, the aim of the study is to better understand how the Trans Latinx immigrant community copes with the stress associated with holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups.

If you are 18 years of age or older and belong to all three groups (i.e., Latinx, Trans, and immigrant), or know someone who does, please feel free to contact me so that I can provide you with more information about the research study. A 45-60-minute confidential face-to-face interview will be conducted. Participants will receive a \$20-dollar visa gift card or cash for completing the study.

If you are not able to participate but know someone who meets the criteria for the study, please feel free to share this email and the attached flyer with them! If you have any questions about this research study, please do not hesitate to contact me. This study has been approved by the IRB at UWM (IRB Protocol Number: 17.357).

My email address is [spsalas@uwm.edu](mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu)  
My phone number is 260-215-2405

Respectfully,  
Silvia P. Salas, M.A.  
Doctoral Candidate, Counseling Psychology  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
[spsalas@uwm.edu](mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu)

Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D., N.C.C.  
Dissertation Chair  
Associate Professor, Counseling Psychology  
Department of Educational Psychology  
School of Education  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

APPENDIX C  
CONSENT FORM

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Consent to Participate in Research**

**Study Title:** Intersecting Realities: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experience of Stress and Coping Among Transgender Latinx Immigrants

**Person Responsible for Research:** Silvia P. Salas, M.A. and Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D.

**Study Description:** The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and understand how membership in multiple oppressed social groups may influence stress and coping among Trans immigrants of Latinx descent who reside in the U.S. Approximately 8-15 participants, who are 18 years of age or older will be recruited. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to partake in a face-to-face interview where you will be asked a series of questions by Silvia P. Salas-Pizaña, a Counseling Psychology Doctoral Candidate at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the student principal investigator of this study. For online participants, the interview will be both audio and video recorded, but only audio-recorded for non-online participants. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time.

**Risks/Benefits:** Risks that you may experience from participating in this study are considered minimal. You may experience discomfort discussing stressful situations. There are no costs for participating in this study. The benefits of participating include a payment of \$20 as a visa gift card or cash immediately upon completion of the entire interview. For online face-to-face interviews, the primary student investigator will mail the \$20 visa gift card immediately during the next business day. To receive the payment, you must complete the entire interview. There are no direct benefits to you. However, your participation will help mental health professionals learn valuable information about the experiences of Trans Latinx immigrants.

**Confidentiality:** The personal information collected from you for this study is completely confidential and participants will never be identified. All audio and video recordings will be de-identified upon transcription. The primary student investigator will be the only one transcribing the recorded interviews to protect the individual's identity. All of the audio files and transcribed data will be retained according to the American Psychological Association's (APA) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's security confidentiality mandates. For online participants, the consent and interview will be audio and video recorded and will be saved and stored as two separate files to protect their identity. Online recordings will be immediately deleted from the recording servers upon saving of the file into an encrypted computer file. All data from this study will be saved on a secure encryption protected computer and in a locked file cabinet for a total of three years. After three years, all the information collected for this study will be destroyed. Only the lead investigators, Silvia P. Salas-Pizaña, M.A. and Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D. will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee or the appropriate federal agencies such as the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.



**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to not participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you can change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time. You are free to not answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives to participating in this research study other than to participate in a face-to-face interview.

**Questions About the Study:** For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Silvia P. Salas, M.A. at [spsalas@uwm.edu](mailto:spsalas@uwm.edu).

**Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research Participant?** You may contact the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 414-229-3173 or [irbinfo@uwm.edu](mailto:irbinfo@uwm.edu).

**Research Participant’s Consent to Participate in Research:** To voluntarily agree to participate in this study you must sign below or provide your verbal consent. If you choose to participate in this study, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below or verbal consent indicates that you are 18 years of age or older; you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits; and have had all of your questions answered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Non-online Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Non-online Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative      Date

Non-Online Research Participant’s Consent to Audio Record Interview:  
It is okay to audio record my interview, and for my audio recording data to be used in research.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

Audio Recorded Verbal Consent for Online Participant:  
“I [name of Participant] agree to participate in the Intersecting Realities study and agree to be audio and video recorded. I agree for my audio and video recording data to be used in research.”

Please initial:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal Investigator**

I have given this research Participant information about the study that is accurate and sufficient for the Participant to fully understand the nature, risks, and benefits of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent      Study Role

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent      Date

APPENDIX D  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

IRB#: \_\_\_\_\_

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This is a demographic form that will help us get to know a little bit about your background. Please try to answer all the questions as honestly as possible. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender Identity: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. What are the pronouns (e.g., he/her/they) that you use? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity? (Check all that apply, and write-in any descriptions you would like to add):
  - a. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b.  Latinx: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c.  Multi-ethnic (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what country were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How much schooling have you completed?
  - Less than High School  Some High School
  - Completed High School  GED
  - Technical/Trade School  Some College
  - Completed College  Some Graduate School
  - Completed Grad School

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Interview Questions**  
*Semi-Structured Interview Protocol*

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore, understand, and describe how membership in multiple oppressed social groups might influence stress and coping among Trans immigrants of Latinx descent who reside in the United States.

**Research Questions:**

1. What are the experiences that Trans Latinx immigrants have as a result of holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups?
2. How do Trans Latinx immigrants cope with the experiences associated with holding membership in multiple oppressed social groups?

**Research Question 1:**

1. Tell me about your experiences as a Latinx...
  - a. Describe some of the rewards/benefits as a result of being Latinx...
  - b. Describe some of the challenges/obstacles you experience as a result of being Latinx...
2. Tell me about your experiences as an immigrant to the U.S....
  - a. Describe some of the rewards/benefits as a result of being an immigrant to the U.S.
  - b. Describe some of the challenges/obstacles you experience as a result of being an immigrant to the U.S...
3. Tell me about your experiences as a Transgender individual...
  - a. Describe some of the rewards/benefits as a result of being Trans...
  - b. Describe some of the challenges/obstacles you experience as a result of being Trans...
4. Tell me about your experiences as a Transgender Latinx immigrant...
  - a. Describe some of the rewards/benefits as a result of being a Trans Latinx immigrant...
  - b. Describe some of the challenges/obstacles you experience as a result of being a Trans Latinx immigrant...
5. Tell me about your experiences as a [insert country of origin] Transgender individual prior to immigrating to the U.S....
  - a. Describe some of the rewards/benefits as a result of being a [insert native country] Trans individual...
  - b. Describe some of the challenges/obstacles you experienced as a result of being a [insert native country] Transgender individual prior to immigrating to the U.S...

**Research Question 2:**

1. Can you tell me how you manage the challenges that you experience as a Trans Latinx immigrant living in the United States?
2. Can you tell me how you manage the challenges that you experience with family/loved ones as a Trans Latinx immigrant?

3. Can you tell me how you manage the challenges that you experience as a Trans Latinx immigrant?

# CURRICULUM VITAE

**SILVIA P. SALAS**

## ACADEMIC HISTORY

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- 2013-2019**      **Doctoral Candidate at APA Accredited Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program in Educational Psychology**  
**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**  
**Milwaukee, WI**  
Concentration: Counseling Psychology  
Expected Graduation: August 2019
- 2012**            **Master of Arts (M.A.) in Clinical Psychology, Counseling Specialization**  
**The Chicago School of Professional Psychology**  
**Chicago, IL**  
Concentration: Latinx Mental Health
- 2010**            **Bachelor of General Studies (B.G.S.)**  
**Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis**  
**Indianapolis, IN**  
Concentration: Social & Behavioral Sciences  
Minor: Psychology

## CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

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- 2018-2019**      **APA Accredited Doctoral Internship in Health Service Psychology**  
**The University of Akron Counseling and Testing Center**  
**Akron, OH**  
**Director of Training: Donna McDonald, PhD**  
**Clinical Supervisor (s):**  
**Premala T. Jones, PhD, Sara Rieder Bennett, PhD**

The Counseling & Testing Center (CTC) at The University of Akron is a full-service counseling center that provides individual and group counseling, psychological assessment, crisis intervention, outreach and consultation services to the University of Akron community. The clients seen at the CTC are representative of the University of Akron's student body, which is a diverse and non-traditional student population, with clients also representing many underserved communities. Clients at the CTC present with a variety of concerns, ranging from developmental issues to more severe psychopathology. In order to meet the needs of this diverse client population, the training is embedded within a social justice

and multi-cultural framework to increase appreciation of both diversity and contextual factors that may impact student mental health and success. The CTC training emphasizes the promotion of student learning, success and retention through the provision of comprehensive culturally competent psychological services as well as prevention work across The University of Akron Community. The CTC does not have session limits and works with clients both on short-term and longer-term issues.

At the CTC, internship training activities vary. For instance, each week approximately 6-8 hours are dedicated to supervision and training and 18-22 hours are dedicated to direct service provision. A description of activities is below:

- *Individual counseling:*
  - Conduct comprehensive client clinical interviews to gather background information during first three sessions.
  - Work collaboratively with clients to develop treatment a plan during the fourth session.
  - Administer the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) every 4 sessions to assess client's mental status and progress in counseling.
  - Conceptualize clients utilizing a contextual, relational, and strengths-based approach.
  - Provide both career and educational counseling as needed.
  - Provide emergency crisis counseling as needed.
  - Maintain client records with timely documentation in the el Titanium electronic medical records (EMR) software.
- *Intake work*
  - Cover weekly four-hour block assignment to manage student walk-in intake meetings.
  - Gather relevant client information at time of initiation of services.
  - Form a clinical disposition for services and make the appropriate referrals.
- *Group counseling:*
  - Co-lead an ACT based psychoeducational group for clients who are challenged with depression and anxiety.
  - Co-lead an LGBTQ+ focused process group focused on improving, gaining insight with relationship issues.
- *Psychological assessment:*
  - Conduct Learning Disorder (WAIS-IV and WJ-IV) and ADHD assessments; career assessments (e.g., SII, 16PF,

MBTI); and personality assessment (e.g., MMPI-2, PAI) assessments as needed.

- *Outreach:*
  - Provide psychoeducational workshops as a preventive service to students and the campus community.
    - Topics presented on: study skills, cultural diversity, LGBTQ+ ally training, transgender awareness, stress management, exercise and wellness.
- *Supervision:*
  - Provide individual supervision for two Counseling Psychology doctoral practicum students during the spring semester.

**2016-2017**

**Doctoral Program Practicum  
Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers-Waukesha  
Waukesha, WI  
Supervisor: Debbie Contreras-Tadych, Ph.D.**

Sixteenth Street Community Health Center-Waukesha is a Federally Qualified Health Center that provides patient-centered, family-based health care, health education, and social services to underserved families in the greater Waukesha area.

**Activities Included:**

- Provided ongoing bi-lingual (Spanish/English) individual counseling services to adults with a range of psychiatric co-morbid disorders.
- Consulted with patients and supervisor to create individual treatment plans.
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary team for treatment of patient.
- Conducted psycho-diagnostic evaluations for referred patients.
- Administered short screening tools (e.g., BDI, BAI)
- Administered standardized psychometric tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV) to answer referral questions.
- Co-facilitated a weekly 1-hour AODA treatment group for court-mandated individuals with substance use.
- Maintained updated client records with timely documentation.

**2015-2016**

**Doctoral Program Practicum  
Women's Resource Center (WRC) and Women's Health Clinic  
(WHC) at Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center**

## **Milwaukee, WI**

**Supervisor: Venice Anderson, Psy.D., Colleen Heinkel, Ph.D.**

The WRC is a dedicated stand-alone facility in the VA that serves the mental health needs of women Veterans. The WHC is an integrated primary care-mental health care setting in the medical center that conducts brief behavioral health assessments and interventions to patients who are referred by their primary care physician.

### Activities Included:

- In the WRC:
  - Provided individual and group therapy using Evidence-Based Treatments (EBT) including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and PTSD.
  - Co-facilitated a group for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I).
  - Conducted assessments (e.g., Clinician- Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) along with clinical interview to determine PTSD diagnosis.
  - Conducted psycho-diagnostic assessments (e.g., Million Clinical Multi-axial Inventory (MCMI-III); the Mood Disorder Questionnaire (MQD); the Brief Addiction Monitor-Revised (BAM-R)), to write an integrated report to determine appropriateness of mental health diagnoses.
  - Consulted with patients and supervisor to create individual treatment plans.
  - Researched and identified resources for a workgroup planning committee focused on developing specialized mental health services for women faced with perinatal loss.
  - Maintained case notes in CPRS.
  
- In the WHC:
  - Met individually with patients in a faster-paced primary care setting.
  - Observed supervisor implement patient 30-minute behavioral health consultations and interventions.
  - Collaborated with physicians to provide integrated physical and mental health care to women Veterans who experience comorbid conditions including diabetes, high cholesterol, chronic pain, sexual health concerns, and physical disabilities.
  - Maintained case notes in CPRS.



**2014- 2015**

**Doctoral Program Practicum  
Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic  
Milwaukee, WI  
Supervisor: Leslie A. Davis, Ph.D.**

Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic is one of Milwaukee's oldest health and free clinics for the uninsured in the inner city of Milwaukee. This clinic provides medical as well as behavioral health services and aims to work from an integrative health care model.

**Activities Included:**

- Provided ongoing bi-lingual (Spanish/English) individual therapy, crisis intervention, assessment, and case management to uninsured adult immigrant men and women with a range of psychiatric disorders stemming from:
  - Domestic violence
  - Rape and sexual violence
  - Immigration issues
  - Trauma
  - Community violence
  - Extreme poverty
- Formulated and implemented appropriate and effective treatment strategies for individual patients.
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary team for patient treatment.
- Maintained updated client records with timely documentation.

**2013-2014**

**Doctoral Program Practicum  
Sixteenth Street Community Health Center  
Milwaukee, WI  
Supervisor: Maria E. Perez, Ph.D.**

Sixteenth Street Community Health Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center that provides patient-centered, family-based health care, health education, and social services to the underserved families in the south side of Milwaukee and surrounding communities.

**Activities Included:**

- Provided ongoing bi-lingual (Spanish/English) individual counseling services to monolingual and bilingual Latino/a adults with a range of psychiatric disorders stemming from:
  - Domestic violence
  - Rape and sexual violence
  - Immigration issues
  - Trauma

- Community violence
- Extreme poverty
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary team for treatment of patient.
- Conducted 30-minute behavioral health assessments to determine treatment and referral needs.
- Consulted with patients and supervisor to create individual treatment plans.
- Maintained updated client records with timely documentation.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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**2017- 2019**

**Intersecting Realities: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experience of Stress and Coping Among Latinx Transgender Immigrants**  
**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee IRB#:17.357**  
**Principle Investigator(s): Silvia P. Salas, M.A.**

The purpose of this qualitative dissertation study is to explore, understand, and describe how membership in multiple minoritized groups might influence stress and coping among transgender immigrants of Latin@ descent who reside in the United States.

Activities Include:

- Recruit participants from various sites that meet the study's participation criteria.
- Engage the participants in a face-to-face 60-minute semi-structured interview.
- Provide training to a research team on qualitative research methodology and analysis using Consensual Qualitative Research methodology (CQR).
- Learn about research ethics, confidentiality, and complete CITI certification.
- Train research team on CQR methodology and the use of NVivo software
- Hold and lead regular meeting times and discussions with the research teams.

**2010-Present**

**Immigration, Critical Race And Cultural Equity (IC-RACE) Lab**  
**The Chicago School of Professional Psychology**  
**Principal Investigator(s)/Lab Directors: Nayeli Y. Chavez- Dueñas, PhD & Hector Y. Adames, PsyD**

The IC-RACE lab investigates topics related to culture and race in psychology to build models, programs, and interventions that can be implemented among various Latina/o communities.

Activities Include:

- Attend lab meetings.
- Conduct literature reviews that lead to poster, paper, and workshops presented at various national conferences.
- Develop ideas for presentations at various National Conferences.
- Analyze qualitative data for various projects focused on Trans Latinx and Afro-Latinx Womyn.
- Mentor and collaborate with younger lab members on several projects within the lab.

**2013-2016**

**(Re)Search for Change Lab  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Principal Investigator(s): Shannon Chavez-Korell, PhD & Markeda Newell**

The (Re)Search for Change lab investigates topics related to impact of systemic issues on the lives of underserved communities.

Activities Include:

- Attend lab meetings.
- Collect, input, and analyze data for various quantitative research projects.
- Serve as manager of study focused on resilience in poverty when PIs are unable to attend on site interviews.
- Collaborate on various team projects to present at National Conferences.

**Spring 2015**

**Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee IRB#:14.218  
Principle Investigator(s): Michelle Parisot, MA**

This dissertation study is a qualitative investigation within a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework 2 using semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of undocumented Latinos during a critical transition period who are actively considering entering college. The purpose of this study was to explore the educational trajectories of undocumented Latino/as who are considering attending an institution of higher education (e.g. community college, private or public university, technical school). This study examined transitional outcomes using follow-up interviews after a 3-month period of conducting the initial interview.

Activities Included:

- Attended weekly meetings.
- Learned about research ethics, confidentiality, and completed CITI certification.
- Gained knowledge of qualitative research approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR).
- Received training in PAR qualitative research methodology and analysis.
- Developed an understanding of undocumented populations and immigration policies.  
Received training using innovative qualitative data analysis software (Max QDA).
- Participated in the development of a coding scheme from the formative stages of data analysis.
- Conducted exploratory preliminary analysis, coding, and theme development.

## PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

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Adames, H.Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., Perez-Chavez, J.G., **Salas, S.P.** (2019). Ethno-racial trauma in Latinx immigrant communities: Cultivating hope, resistance, and healing. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 49-62.

Farook, M.W. & **Salas, S.P.** (2015). Latina/o immigrants desafiando adversidades: Challenges faced by mixed-status families. *Latina/o Psychology Today*, 2(2), 26-32.

Adames, H.Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., Fuentes, M.A., **Salas, S.P.**, & Perez-Chavez, J.G. (2014). Integration of Latino/a cultural values into palliative healthcare: A culture centered model. *Journal of Palliative & Supportive Care*, 12(2) 149-157.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

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Adames, H.Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., & **Salas, S.P.** (in press). Affirming sexual orientation and gender identities of Latinos with dementia: Latinx intersections defined. In Y.N. Tazeau, H.Y. Adames, & D. Gallagher-Thompson (Eds.), *Caring for Latinos with dementia in a globalized world: Behavioral and psychosocial treatments*. New York, NY: Springer.

**Salas, S.P.** & Perez-Chavez, J.G., & Mendez, R.L. (2017). Standing strong: Latinas/os sustained by roots of connectedness, knowledge, and wisdom. In H.Y. Adames & N.Y. Chavez-Dueñas, *Cultural foundations and interventions in Latino/a mental health: History, theory, and within group differences*. New York, NY: Psychology Press/Routledge.

## PEER REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

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**Salas, S.P.**, Adames H.Y., Smith, K., Cruz, X., Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., Goerts, M.T. (2018, August). *Radical existence: A qualitative study of trans Latinx immigrants*. Poster presented at the 2018 American Psychological Annual Convention. San Francisco, CA.

- Adames H.Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., Perez-Chavez, J.G., **Salas, S.P.**, (2018, August). *Making psychology a sanctuary discipline: A call to protect & humanize immigrants*. Symposium presented at the 2018 American Psychological Association Annual Convention. San Francisco, CA.
- Casas, A.S., **Salas, S.P.**, Adames, H.Y., & Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y. (2017, February). *Between authenticity and hate: Latinx Transmen surviving community violence*. Poster presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Teacher's College Columbia University, Winter Roundtable Conference. New York, NY.
- Smith, S.N., **Salas, S.P.**, Chavez-Dueñas, N.Y., & Adames, H.Y. (2016, February). *#DearBlackGirl: Exploring the transformative power of collective self-love*. Poster presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Teacher's College Columbia University, Winter Roundtable Conference. New York, NY.
- Farook, M.W., **Salas, S.P.**, Adames, H.Y. & Chavez Dueñas, N.Y. (2014, October). *Sin Fronteras: Implications of U.S. immigration policies for Latino/a immigrants*. Poster presentation for the 2014 Biennial Conference at the National Latino/a Psychological Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- Perez-Chavez, J.G., Escutia, J., **Salas, S.P.** & Chavez Dueñas, N.Y. (2012, October). *When the American dream is out of reach: Clinical implications of undocumented status in Latino/a youth*. Poster presented at the 2012 Biennial Conference of the National Latino/a Psychological Association. New Brunswick, NJ.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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**Fall 2017**                      **Adjunct Instructor**  
**The Chicago School of Professional Psychology**  
**Chicago, IL**  
**Supervisor: Nayeli Y. Chavez Dueñas, PhD, Maureen Keeshin, PsyD**

Master's Level Course:

- Interviewing Skills I

Activities Included:

- Created course lectures and activities in order to help students develop culturally sensitive interviewing skills.
  - Instructed one sections of class.
- Met individually with students to provide feedback on class performance when necessary.
- Grade individual projects to assess student skill development.

**Spring 2015**                      **Co-Instructor**

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Supervisor: Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D.**

On-Ground Master's Level Course:

- Counseling 715: Multicultural Counseling

Activities Included:

- Supported instructor with course set up (e.g., preparation of course content).
- Graded papers and providing feedback and guidance on assignments.
- Graded course exams.

**Fall 2014**

**Lead Teaching Assistant  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Supervisor: Nadya A. Fouad, Ph.D.**

Undergraduate Level Course:

- Educational Psychology 110: Planning Your Major and/or Career

Activities Included:

- Took administrative role to coordinate and implement training for new incoming instructors.
- Facilitated communication between instructors and supervisor.
- Created schedule of teaching assignments.
- Updated and ordered new course materials.
- Updated course syllabus.
- Collaborated with campus services and set up visits to enhance student's learning opportunities.

**2013- 2014**

**Teaching Assistant  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Supervisor: Lauren Lessac, M.A., Nadya A. Fouad, Ph.D.**

Undergraduate Level Course:

- Educational Psychology 110: Planning Your Major and/or Career

Activities Include:

- Instructed 3 different sections of class.
- Aided in development of the curriculum.

- Graded and evaluated assignments.
- Met individually with students to provide feedback when necessary.
- Planned and developed individual course sessions.
- Collaborated with campus student services (e.g. Career Development Center) to enrich student learning.
- Collaborated with other instructors to implement new teaching ideas to the classroom.

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

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**2015-Present**            **Student Peer Reviewer, the *Latina/o Psychology Today* Bulletin  
National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA)**

## **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

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**2013-2018**            **Counseling Psychology Student Association  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Membership Position(s): Student Member**

**2013-2014**            **Counseling Psychology Student Association  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Membership Position(s): American Psychological Association of  
Graduate Students (APAGS) Representative**

**2013-2014**            **Bilingual Student Group  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
Membership Position(s): Student Member**

**2011-2012**            **Latino/a Students & Friends Association  
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology  
Chicago, IL  
Membership Position(s): Vice President**

**2011**                    **Latino/a Heritage Month Organizing Committee  
Center for Latino/a Mental Health at the Chicago School  
Chicago, IL  
Membership Position(s): Member**

## **HONORS AND AWARDS**

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**2017-2018**            **Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship Recipient  
Graduate School**

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- 2016**                    **National Latina/o Psychological Association Student Travel Scholarship**  
National Latina/o Psychological Association
- 2016**                    **Hispanics of Greater Milwaukee Scholarship**  
Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee
- 2015-2017**            **Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship Recipient**  
Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- 2014**                    **The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Teachers College Winter Roundtable on Cultural Psychology and Education Student Scholarship Poster Session Certificate**  
Teachers College  
Columbia University
- 2013**                    **Student Success Award**  
Student Success Center  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- 2012**                    **Distinguished Student Award**  
Counseling Department  
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology
- 2012**                    **Distinguished Student Scholarship Award**  
Counseling Department  
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology