

**Social Aspects of Religiosity & Discrimination in the Latinx Community:
A Qualitative Study in the Deep South**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how Latinx individuals use social aspects of religiosity and how they may or may not be used to buffer negative effects of discrimination. Research supports that discrimination has detrimental effects on individuals who experience it. Thus, it is important to understand how an individual can effectively cope when experiencing discrimination. Religious coping and social support seem to be positive coping strategies for individuals who experience discrimination, particularly Latinx individuals. Because of this, I examined how social aspects of religiosity can help these individuals. This study was qualitative in nature and carried out in the form of individual interviews, to better understand the unique experiences in this community. Participants ($N=7$) were asked questions about their religious and spiritual practices within and outside their faith community. Also, participants were asked about their experiences living in a non-urban part of the country and how they relate to their community. A qualitative framework was used to carry out this study. A phenomenological methodology approach was used to guide data collection and analysis. The results are a culmination of seven distinct Latinx voices from a Catholic church community, sharing deep perspectives of their lives. Final findings support the idea that although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity.

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Chapter 1

Overview

The Latinx community is the nation's largest ethnic minority, comprised of around 63 million people, making up about 19% of the total population (Pew Research Center, 2023). Those who identify as Latinx have cultural and ethnic roots in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Although many of these individuals are born in the United States, many also are immigrants with various levels of citizenship status (Passel & Cohn, 2015). These individuals come to the U.S. for various reasons, whether it is seeking asylum from civil wars and persecution to wanting a new start in a new country (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2009). Although immigration is not new, it has not stopped anti-immigrant sentiment, which has led to discrimination against these individuals (Hartman, Newman, & Bell, 2014). Anti-immigrant sentiment has also negatively impacted how non-immigrant Latinx individuals are perceived (Perez, 2010; Hartman et al., 2014) and how they view themselves (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Hwang & Goto, 2008). Because of this, it is important for clinicians to understand the unique cultural and ethnic aspects that make up this community so that we may properly serve them.

Although there are multiple factors that affect the mental health of the Latinx community, experiencing racial and ethnic discrimination are consistently mentioned in research (Ellison, DeAngelis, & Guven, 2017; Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000; NPR, 2017). Latinx individuals experience discrimination in various forms, ranging from the creation of controversial laws such as the Arizona Senate Bill 1070 (2010) and Alabama HB 56 (2011), to overt hostility such as hate crimes, to more subtle microaggressions like complimenting an individual, born and raised in the United States, for speaking "good English" (Yakushko, 2009). Although discriminatory

behavior is not new in the United States, it seems that the current political climate has amplified such negative feelings toward the Latinx community (Campbell, Mendoza, & Diestel, 2018). The literature in this area indicates that discrimination takes a heavy toll on the physical and emotional well-being of individuals. In particular, experiencing discrimination is linked with depression, low self-esteem, distress, and other negative mental health outcomes (Ellison et al., 2017; Finch et al., 2000).

Discrimination is consistently found to have a negative impact on the mental health of individuals who identify as a minority, such as Muslim Americans (Rippy & Newman, 2006), Asian Americans (Gee et al., 2009; Hwang & Goto, 2008), individuals who identify as African American (Ellison et al., 2017; Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Kim et al., 2017), and Latinx individuals (Araujo, 2004; Ayón et al., 2010; Cobb et al., 2017; Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015). For example, experiences of discrimination have been found to increase psychological distress, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression for individuals in the Latinx community (Hwang & Goto, 2008). Another negative consequence of continuous discrimination is the negative impact it has on how individuals view themselves, the immediate community (i.e., sharing a cultural and/ or ethnic identity) they identify with, and how they view themselves in the greater community (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015). From a clinical perspective, experiences and perceptions of discrimination are important to address in clinical work with these populations because they seem to be a present-day reality.

Due to such findings, researchers have shown interest in social and psychological factors that could help mitigate the harmful effects of discrimination, with religion being an area of particular of interest (Hayward & Krause, 2014; Krause, Shaw, & Liang, 2011; Lim & Putnam, 2010; Pargament, 1997). Religion has been shown to be an effective form of coping for

individuals experiencing psychological distress (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Ellison et al., 2017; Gerber et al., 2011; Koenig et al., 1998; Pargament et al., 2000). This is particularly true for individuals in the Latinx community (Guarnaccia, Martinez, & Acosta, 2005; Heckert, 2012). Religiosity in the Latinx community and how religiosity is used to promote health is well researched. Involvement in churches and faith communities are major resources for Latinx and play an important role in the dissemination of health information (Livingston et al., 2008). Being a part of faith-based communities seems to have many beneficial psychological and physical health outcomes, and should thus be considered as a potentially important aspect of treatment for mental health concerns (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Pargament, 1997; Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2007; NIMH, 1998).

Although there is considerable evidence that religious involvement relates to positive mental health outcomes for Latinx individuals (Guarnaccia, Martinez, & Acosta, 2005; Heckert, 2012), relatively few studies have examined the role of religion in buffering the effects of discriminatory experiences, specifically social and communal aspects of religiosity. Literature supports the idea that collectivist cultures, such as those that Latinx individuals ascribe to, are more community and family oriented (Triandis & Suh, 2002). Because of this, it seems appropriate to consider social aspects of religiosity as potential helpful coping mechanisms related to discrimination. Social aspects of religiosity are, as Ellison and his colleagues (2017) described, indicators of religious involvement and engagement—e.g., church attendance, prayer, and religious social support, which can be either tangible or emotional, such as religious leaders, educational programs sponsored by religious institutions, and mentorship programs (Hope et al., 2017). Social aspects of religiosity have been found to be helpful for other populations such as African Americans (Ellison et al., 2017; Hope et al., 2017), but have not been actively examined

in the Latinx community. Because of this, further research is needed to determine whether this is also true for Latinx community, and if so, what do social aspects of religiosity look like for the Latinx community and how are they uniquely used to buffer the negative effects of discrimination.

This study looked at the relationship between social aspects of religiosity and discrimination with the intent to help clinicians understand the different ways that Latinx individuals cope with the negative effects related to discrimination. Specifically, this study focused on Latinx individuals of the Catholic faith in a non-urban community in the Southeast of the United States. This was done intentionally because much of the research, focusing on Latinx individuals living in the United States, is done in big cities (Saenz & Torres, 2003). Because this study was exploratory in nature, it was carried out in a qualitative manner with phenomenological methodology. Participants were asked questions about their religious and spiritual practices within and outside their faith community. Participants shared their authentic experiences living in a non-urban part of the country and how they related to the greater community. The aim of this study was to review how the relationship between Latinx individuals and their religious community (or lack of) have shaped their lives, and the range of their experiences.

Final findings suggest that although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity. The results also support the need for culturally competent and non-traditional ways of thinking about mental health in order to effectively serve this population. The chapter that follows is a review of the literature on the history and current experiences of discrimination in the Latinx community, outcomes and

consequences of discrimination experienced by Latinx individuals, overall religious coping, and communal aspects of religious coping.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination can be defined as “a behavioral manifestation of a negative attitude, judgment, or unfair treatment toward members of a group” (Pascoe & Richman, 2009, p. 534). Research has long documented the deleterious effects of discrimination on mental health (Gee, 2002; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002). According to Ríos-Salas and Larson (2015), discrimination usually occurs in one of two ways—behavior that targets an individual or behavior that targets the group of which an individual is a part. Throughout history, ethnic and racial minorities have been the victims of institutional and interpersonal discrimination (Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997). Although the United States has become a more racially conscious society, it is naïve to believe that discrimination no longer exists (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Research supports that experiences of discrimination can become chronic life-long stressors for those who are the targets (NPR, 2017).

Discrimination relates to negative differential treatment or denial of opportunities- such as education, employment, and housing based on group membership (Allport, 1979; Essed, 1990; Jones, 1997). Discriminatory practices are usually carried out by members of groups in power. Understanding discrimination and how it is manifested requires an understanding of related terms. Terms such as racism, prejudice, and oppression are used interchangeably to explain discrimination, but have distinct meanings (Allport, 1979; Essed, 1996; Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Jones, 1997). Racism is defined as antagonism directed against an individual of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior, while oppression refers to the belief that one group is superior to another and the denial of economic and social opportunities to the “inferior”

group (Allport, 1979; Essed, 1990; Jones, 1997). The key factor distinguishing racism and oppression from discrimination is the existence of a power differential. Essed (1990) suggests that discrimination can occur without there being a status or power differential between the parties, but a power differential is inherent to oppression and racism. Prejudice is a negative attitude toward an individual or group as a result of social comparison with one's own group, while believing one's own group to be superior. (Jones, 1997).

Although discrimination, prejudice, racism, and oppression are used interchangeably in literature, there are clear distinctions of between those terms. Most definitions of discrimination describe discrimination in a broad manner, an action or behavior of one group against another (Allport, 1975; Jones, 1997). Essentially, prejudice is an attitude, while discrimination and racism are behaviors based on prejudicial attitudes. Prejudice individuals may not necessarily discriminate or engage in racist manners, but without prejudicial attitudes, individuals cannot discriminate or act in a racist manner. Due to the experiential aspect of discrimination, it seems appropriate to inquire about them in qualitative research (Araujo, 2004; Soto, 2011).

As one of the largest ethnic minority in the United States (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2009), the Latinx community is one of the many groups of individuals who experience discrimination. However, to date, White-Black relations in the United States have dominated studies about prejudice and discrimination (Hartman et al., 2014). Without diminishing or denying the experiences of Black individuals and other minority groups, it is also important to acknowledge that White American attitudes towards the Latinx community have not been positive (Blakemore, 2017; Hartman et al., 2014). There is a need in the literature to help clinicians and others in helping professions understand and acknowledge the existence of these experiences. The history of discrimination in the Latinx community is long and extensive and

shares some similarities with other ethnic and cultural groups (Carrigan & Webb, 2017).

However, just like those other groups, the Latinx community has experienced discrimination in its own way (Blakemore, 2017).

History of Discrimination in the Latinx Community

1800s

Since the 1840s, anti-Latinx prejudice has led to illegal deportations, school segregation, and even lynching—which are events that are often forgotten in the telling of U.S. history even though these events echo the civil-rights violations of African-Americans in the Jim Crow-era South (Blakemore, 2017). In his article, Blakemore (2017) reviews the history of discrimination experienced by the Latinx community, starting from the 1800s to present day, and highlights how it has evolved from over time. During this time, emigration of Latinx individuals was welcomed news to American employers who desperately needed fast and inexpensive labor. Blackmore (2017) described companies consistently ignoring existing immigration laws that banned importing contracted labor and sent recruiters into Mexico to convince Mexicans to emigrate. Thus, anti-Latinx sentiment grew along with immigration (Fernández-Armesto, 2014). Latinx individuals were not allowed into White American establishments and were segregated into poor urban neighborhoods (Blakemore, 2017; Fernández-Armesto, 2014). Though Latinx were critical to the development of the U.S. economy and, often were American citizens, factors from their language to the color of their skin to their countries of origin were used against them. The stereotypes that Latinx individuals were lazy and unintelligent for speaking Spanish began to dominate non-Latinx White American mentality (Blakemore, 2017). At worst, that prejudice turned fatal. According to historians, mob violence against Spanish-speaking people was common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Carrigan & Webb, 2017).

Early 1900s

Though mob brutality eventually quelled, unwelcoming mentality of Spanish-speaking Americans did not. In the late 1920s, anti-Mexican sentiment spiked as the Great Depression began (Blakemore, 2017; Fernández-Armesto, 2014). As the stock market dropped and unemployment grew, White Americans accused Latinx individuals and other immigrants of taking away jobs (Carrigan & Webb, 2017). Fears about jobs led the United States to forcibly remove around 2 million people of Mexican descent from the country—up to 60 percent of whom were American citizens. This was known as repatriations; these removals were not voluntary and were illegal (Blackmore, 2017). These repatriations resulted in families being split up and people being sent to countries that, for the most part, were foreign to them (Blakemore, 2017).

For those individuals who did decide to stay, they faced discrimination in almost every aspect of their life. Unlike the South, segregation was not explicitly a part of the laws in the Southwest of the United States (Carrigan & Webb, 2017). However, Latinx individuals were excluded from restaurants, movie theaters, and schools (Fernández-Armesto, 2014). Latinx children were expected to attend schools that were “for them” because it was the general belief that these children were inferior in every way, and thus did not belong in schools with White American children (Blakemore, 2017).

Late 1900s

In the 1950s, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) enforced a mass deportation campaign known as Operation Wetback (Blakemore, 2017; Fernández-Armesto, 2014). The term “wetback,” a slur alluding to Mexican migrants crossing the Rio Grande to enter into the United States, was used widely in newspapers at the time. The initiative focused on two

primary objectives: to decrease the flow of undocumented Mexican workers into the United States and to discourage employers from hiring them. Instead of punishing the employers, President Eisenhower and other government officials decided to persecute the laborers. INS would arrive, unannounced, at places of work and other places in communities that were known to be frequented by Mexican Americans (Funderburk, 2017).

If people could not provide immediate documentation indicating their citizenship, they were taken into custody (Fernández-Armesto, 2014; Funderburk, 2017). Rather than sending people directly across the border, the U.S. government negotiated with the Mexican government to transport individuals to southern Mexico, hundreds of miles away (Smith, 2018). Since many of the deportees were from various regions of Mexico or other countries, this essentially stranded them. As during the massive deportation during the Great Depression, hundreds of American citizens who could not quickly produce proof of citizenship were also among the deported individuals (Smith, 2018). Although this operation only lasted a few months, it caused devastation in the Latinx communities across the nation.

Implicit Bias and Current Experiences of Discrimination

As stated earlier, although overt experiences of discrimination have decreased and are no longer as socially acceptable, much of the bias that perpetuates such experiences is very much alive (Yakushko, 2009). Bias can influence our judgement and is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward something or someone (Banaji et al., 2001). Some of the most common examples of unfair bias are based on stereotypes about another person's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and identifying group. Using the implicit association test (IAT), Perez (2010) found many Americans associate negativity with Hispanic immigrants relative to non-Latinx White immigrants, and that this implicit bias predicts anti-immigration policy preferences.

Hartman and his colleagues (2014) found similar sentiments in a sample of 275 white, non-Hispanic adult participants. They conducted phone interviews in which they provided different scenarios related to immigration, such as overstaying a visa, getting paid “under the table,” and flying a “foreign flag” outside their home. Hartman and his colleagues (2014) found that White Americans take significantly greater offense to transgressions such as being in the country illegally, “working under the table,” and rejecting symbols of American identity, when the immigrant is Hispanic rather than White (or unspecified).

The creation of laws, policies, and political rhetoric that negatively affect the Latinx community are believed by many to be rooted in discriminatory ideologies. The current political climate has amplified the negative stereotypes of Latinx individuals, which in turn, has led to continued discrimination. When the previous president announced his candidacy in 2015, he stated, “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best... They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people... They’re sending us not the right people. It’s coming from more than Mexico. It’s coming from all over South and Latin America, and it’s coming probably— probably— from the Middle East” (Time Staff, 2015). The previous president advocated for and signed off on policies that were anti-immigrant such as the Executive Order in January 2017 (travel ban that affected individuals from mostly Muslim- majority countries), the cessation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy (USCIS, 2017), and the “zero-tolerance” policy, separating families (Department of Justice, 2018). Although research on the effects of the current political climate on the Latinx community is new and limited, this kind of ideology can lead to discriminatory behavior against Latinx individuals (Bondy, 2017).

The othering of marginalized groups has had long-standing impact for people of color, particularly for the Latinx community (NPR, 2017; Ortiz & Telles, 2012). Latinx individuals not only experience discrimination based on their culture and ethnic background, but also due to their color of their skin (Ortiz & Telles, 2012). Ortiz and Telles (2012) examined how race plays a role in the lives of Mexican Americans regarding education, racial characteristics, and social interactions. They found Mexican Americans with darker skin complexions report more experiences of discrimination than their lighter skinned counterparts. In addition, they found that more educated Mexican Americans report more stereotyping and discrimination than their less-educated counterparts. Ortiz and Telles (2012) believe this is partly due to the greater contact educated Mexican Americans have with White Americans.

Five years later, National Public Radio (2017), found similar findings regarding the experiences of discrimination in the Latinx community. Specifically, they found that immigrant Latinx individuals experience discrimination based on race and ethnicity more than twice as often as nonimmigrant Latinx individuals (NPR, 2017). Curiously, as in Ortiz and Telles' (2012) study, nonimmigrant Latinx individuals and college educated Latinx people were more likely to report various forms of personal discrimination than immigrants (NPR, 2017), which is something to consider when thinking about non-educated, recent immigrants. Another important finding from the NPR study (2017), 78% of Latinx individuals believe that there is discrimination against the Latinx community in America today. Moreover, they found that about a third of Latinx individuals in America personally experienced discrimination when it comes to applying for jobs, being paid equally or considered for promotions, and when trying to rent a room or apartment or buy a house (NPR, 2017). In 2017, 37% percent of the Latinx individuals report experiencing racial or ethnic slurs associated with their race or ethnicity (Neel, 2017).

Based on the literature, it can be concluded that there are Latinx individuals experiencing some form of discrimination in today's society.

Consequences of Discrimination

Experiencing discrimination, whether it is overt or covert, has detrimental effects (NPR, 2017). Discrimination affects individuals at the time of an offense as well as much later. Evidence suggests discriminatory experiences impact individuals differently. Whether discriminatory offenses occur acutely or chronically, experiences of discrimination are linked with depression, low self-esteem, higher stress, generalized anxiety, distress, and other negative mental and physical health outcomes (Clark et al., 1999; Ellison et al., 2017; Finch et al., 2000; Kessler et al., 1999; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

Depression

Ellison et al. (2017) found that major discrimination experienced by their sample of African American individuals was positively associated with past-month depression and negatively associated with life satisfaction when controlling for external factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and religious involvement, demonstrating that discriminatory experiences have a significant lasting negative impact. Using a Latinx sample, Finch et al. (2000) were interested in how adults of Mexican origin experienced discrimination and how that affected depressive symptoms. They found discrimination and legal status factors were highly related to depression, and for those individuals who experienced discrimination and were able to recognize it, they scored high on the Center for Epidemiological Studies- Depression (CES-D) scale such that each one unit increase in perceived discrimination was associated with a 1.84 unit increase in CES-D score.

Not only does discrimination affect people at an individual level, but also from a group perspective as well. Rios-Salas and Larson (2015) were interested in looking at both experiences of societal discrimination and interpersonal discrimination in recent-arrival immigrant Latinx teenagers. Interpersonal discrimination was defined as discriminatory experiences that specifically target the individual. Societal discrimination was defined as discriminatory experiences against the group that one belongs— in this case, being a part of the Latinx community. They found that societal discrimination is positively associated with depressive symptoms in Latinx teenagers, specifically adolescents who experienced more societal discrimination (scoring above the median) were more likely to report depressive symptoms in the top 50th, 25th, and 10th percentiles of the sample when compared to adolescents who faced less societal discrimination (Rios-Salas & Larson, 2015). As for interpersonal discrimination, they found adolescents who reported interpersonal discrimination, representing 57% of the sample, were also more likely to fall into the top of the distribution of identifying depressive symptoms when compared to adolescents who did not report interpersonal discrimination (Rios-Salas & Larson, 2015).

Stress

Discrimination and stress also are related. It seems this correlation is true for individuals who identify with an ethnic and/ or cultural minority group. Currently, much of the literature focuses on this relationship in Black Americans. However, there is some literature looking at how this relationship uniquely affects the Latinx community. For example, Araujo (2004) wanted to learn more about the experiences and perception of discrimination of Dominican immigrant women. Araujo found a strong, positive relationship between discrimination and stress. English language dominance moderated the relationship between discrimination and

stress, indicating that Dominican women who did not speak English frequently and experienced discrimination, had lower stress levels compared to those who did speak English and understood it. Araujo (2004) concluded that the Dominican women who do not have mastery of the English language might not recognize discrimination as much because of the language barrier.

Clark et al. (1999) also looked at the relationship between discrimination and increased stress among ethnic minorities. They proposed a biopsychosocial model to describe the effects of racism among African Americans. In their model, the perception of racism increases psychological and physiological stress responses that are influenced by sociodemographic factors, psychological and behavioral factors, and coping responses. Over time, these stress responses result in increased anger, paranoia, helplessness, resentment, and fear. This leads to associating these particular psychological distress symptoms with physiological stress responses such as immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular functioning (Clark et al., 1999). Although this was a study on African Americans, the similarities in experiences with discrimination between African Americans and Latinx individuals (Blackmore, 2017) suggests a similar pattern may be found for the Latinx community.

Psychopathology and Substance Misuse

Research supports the idea that psychopathology is linked to discrimination. Kim and their colleagues (2017) examined the relationship between racial discrimination and psychiatric disorders in Black older adults. They found that greater experiences of discrimination were significantly associated with higher odds of being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder. Rippy and Newman (2006) investigated the effects of discrimination and its association with mental health in Muslim Americans. Specifically, they studied how perceptions of discrimination influence sub-clinical paranoid ideation and general anxiety in the Muslim American population.

They found a statistically significant relationship between religious discrimination and subclinical paranoia, although they found no relationship between discrimination and anxiety.

Substance misuse is also well documented in the literature as being linked to discrimination. For example, Verissimo and her colleagues (2014) investigated the relationship between discrimination and substance abuse among Latinx individuals, focusing on gender differences and type of discriminatory experiences. Latinos reported more discrimination and indicated higher prevalence of alcohol misuse and drug misuse than Latinas. Interestingly, discrimination was significantly associated with increased risk of alcohol misuse for Latinas and increased risk of drug abuse for Latinos.

Physical Health

Taken together, research demonstrates that discrimination has detrimental effects on the well-being of individuals. As stated earlier, discrimination also negatively affects physical health (Clark et al., 1999), nocturnal blood pressure being one of them. Experiences of discrimination are relatively common among US Hispanics and are associated with ambulatory blood pressure (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Nondipping of ambulatory blood pressure, or ABP, a potential cardiovascular risk factor, was found to be more common in Black Hispanic individuals than White Hispanic individuals, suggesting a varied experience of discrimination within the Latinx community (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Related to overall health, health care seeking behaviors are also impacted by discrimination. In 2017, National Public Radio, along with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, conducted a comprehensive survey regarding discrimination in America. They released various reports with their findings, one specifically about the experiences and views of Latinos. In this report, they stated that twenty-five percent of Latina women report having been discriminated against in

trying to seek medical care, and when they need it, they avoid getting it. When thinking about mental health services and how clinicians render these services, it is important to keep in mind how our clients may experience discriminatory behaviors in therapy.

Different Experiences of Discrimination within the Latinx Community

Acculturation plays a significant part in how a Latinx individual experiences their world and how the world interacts with them. Acculturation refers to “the process of adjusting to a cultural milieu distinct from one’s place or culture of origin, including changes in culture practices, values, and identifications” (Salas-Wright & Schwartz, 2019, p. 352). Considering levels of acculturation, Finch et al. (2000) concluded that highly acculturated Mexican immigrant participants were more likely to recognize discrimination than their less acculturated counterparts, but more highly acculturated U.S. born respondents were less likely to experience discrimination, overall, compared to both immigrant respondents and U.S. born respondents. Higher socioeconomic status can help alleviate the detrimental effect of discrimination on depressive symptoms, particularly in contexts of interpersonal discrimination (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015), which could suggest that those individuals who are not financially secure, may be more at a risk of the negative socioeconomic consequences of discrimination (i.e., lack of education, proper housing, and adequate health care; NPR, 2017).

Research suggests that acculturation, mastery of English language, education level, socioeconomic status, and legal status may all play a role in how Latinx individuals experience and comprehend discrimination (Araujo, 2004; Ortiz & Telles, 2012; Ayón et al, 2010; NPR, 2017). Ayon et al. (2010) examined the role of discrimination and *familismo* on internalizing mental health symptoms among Latino youth and their parents. They concluded that discrimination is experienced by both immigrant parents and U.S. born children, but more so by

the children. One way that the authors interpreted this finding was that U.S. born children spend more time (i.e. school, places of work) with their non-Latinx counterparts, meaning that they are more likely to experience discrimination based on having more of a chance to be exposed to it. This was also an explanation offered by Ortiz and Telles (2012). As for language, the literature suggests that Latinx individuals who have a good understanding and mastery of the English language tend to notice discrimination more so than individuals who cannot read, write, or speak English (Araujo, 2004). Although differently than Latinx immigrants, U.S.-born Latinx individuals also experience discrimination. Considering a U.S.-born college population, Hwang and Goto (2008) looked at how Asian American and Latino students experienced and reacted to discrimination. Although, their results indicated that both groups experienced similar exposure and reactions, Latino students were more likely than Asian American students to have been accused of doing something wrong, like cheating or breaking the law.

Religiosity and Spirituality

Experiences of discrimination are very much a part of the Latinx community's world experience. There is a plethora of research that suggests discrimination negatively affects well-being and mental health. Thus, it seems clinically relevant to identify coping skills and other effective interventions to diminish the effects of discrimination. Some coping mechanisms to consider are religion and spirituality. Hill et al. (2000) believe that religion is an important part of the human experience, and thus, the field of psychology should be more open to incorporating it in research and in clinical practice. In their paper, they defend the need for psychologists to consider religion as an important and legitimate factor of study.

Religiosity and spirituality develop across the lifespan (Hill et al., 2000). Hill and their colleagues (2000) define the word *religion* coming "from the Latin root *religio* which signifies

bond between humanity and some greater-than-human power” (p. 56). The literature identifies at least three historical designations: 1) a supernatural power to which individuals identify with or are motivated by 2) a feeling that a person experiences and 3) ritual behaviors carried out in respect of that supernatural power (Hill et al., 2000). Religiosity is a perception of how strongly one adheres to their religious beliefs (Hill et al., 2000; Pargament, 1997). According to Koenig (2004), religion emphasizes involvement in a faith community and responsibility to one another in that community.

Religiosity and spirituality are sometimes used in the literature interchangeably, yet they are distinct factors. Spirituality can be “any kind of belief (including no belief) and may or may not involve adherence to any particular doctrine, moral, or ethical principle, or hold one accountable to others” (Koenig, 2004, p. 77). Thus, spirituality is more personal in nature. The literature suggests that these two experiences are linked: religiosity strengthens and contributes to the spiritual experience, which is in turn shared in spaces for social practice (Rivera & Montero, 2007). The literature defines religiosity and spirituality within the fields of mental health, anthropology, medicine, and theology in various ways (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006). Yet, due to the fact that the vast majority of Latinx individuals identify as Catholic or Protestant (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2007), the literature suggests that there is commonality in how religiosity and spirituality practices look like within this community (Soto, 2011).

Metaanalyses have estimated an average effect of magnitude between religiousness and depression ($r = -0.09$) and between religiousness and general psychological well-being ($r = 0.11$) (Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Smith et., 2003). In 2014, Hayward and Krause also completed a comprehensive review regarding the effectiveness of religiosity in increasing mental health. They concluded, after assessing both the positive and negative aspects of this relationship many

times over, there is strong evidence that religiosity has a modest but robust relationship with lower incidence and severity of mental illness and with greater psychological well-being overall. This has been a common finding in various populations such as African American women who have experienced domestic violence (Watlington & Murphy, 2006), Latinx recent immigrants (Guarnaccia et al., 2005), and Chinese, Filipino, and Vietnamese Americans (Appel et al., 2014). This finding has also been consistent in populations outside of the United States (Paez et al., 2018). Interestingly, religiosity has been found to be used more frequently as a way to cope for individuals who report low income and lower socioeconomic status (Ojeda & Piña- Watson, 2013; Paez et al., 2018).

Religious Coping

About ninety percent of the world's population practices some sort of religious or spiritual practice (De la Torre, 2009; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Hodges, 2002; Koenig, 2009; Koenig et al., 2001). Specifically, when discussing Latinx individuals, the Pew Report (2007) reported that Catholicism has the strongest following among Latinx individuals in the U.S. among foreign-born individuals, with 74% of these individuals being Roman Catholics, compared with 58% of U.S.-born Latinx individuals. One thing to note is that only 64% of Hispanic Catholics report attending services regularly (De la Torre, 2009). Due to these facts, it seems appropriate to suggest that Latinx individuals engage in some sort of religious coping. (Guarnaccia et al., 2005; Heckert, 2012; Soto, 2011). When faced with stressful and traumatic events, how one copes can have a significant impact on the ability to minimize psychological distress and maintain a sense of well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Religious beliefs and practices often entail views of the world that help believers to reframe negative life events, thus providing a framework to cope with them more effectively (Hayward & Krause, 2014).

According to Koenig, Pargament, and Nielsen (1998), religious coping is “the use of religious beliefs or behaviors to facilitate problem-solving to prevent or alleviate the negative emotional consequences of stressful life circumstances” (p. 513). Religious coping has been found to be beneficial for individuals experiencing life stressors, such as posttraumatic stress (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Gerber et al., 2011), discrimination (Ellison et al., 2017; Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2013; Taylor et al., 1987), physical illness (Koenig et al., 1998) and overall distress (Holt et al., 2014; Loewenthal et al., 2001; Pargament et al., 2000). Researchers have proposed that there are five basic functions of religion: meaning, control, comfort, intimacy, and life transformation (Pargament et al., 2000). Pargament and his colleagues (2000) suggest that religion is an important part of the reorienting process of coping and meaning-making and that it provides a framework for social support and coping mechanisms. This seems to be particularly true for individuals in the Latinx community (Guarnaccia et al., 2005; Heckert, 2012; Soto, 2011).

Religious coping has also been found to positively promote posttraumatic growth, or positive outcomes to traumatic events. Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) completed a meta-analysis, looking at the relationship between religious coping and posttraumatic growth. They found religious coping methods produce positive psychological outcomes such as acceptance, hope, life satisfaction, optimism, spiritual growth, and stress-related growth (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). When thinking about possible resiliency and coping factors for experiences of discrimination, religious coping can facilitate posttraumatic growth, which in turn, goes back to two of the five functions of religion— meaning making and life transformation (Pargament, 1997). Gerber et al. (2011) conducted a study to explore religious coping styles (positive versus negative) as mediators of the relationship between gender and posttraumatic growth. Positive religious coping

strategies are typically related to more positive outcomes, whereas negative religious coping strategies are generally related to more negative outcomes (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Similar to the findings by Ano and Vasconcelles (2005), they found that positive religious coping was strongly related to posttraumatic growth. Also, negative religious coping was strongly related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. These relationships remained significant after controlling for traditional coping methods, gender, and race.

Religious coping has also been found to be beneficial in many distressing situations; however, there are instances when religious coping can have detrimental effects (Koenig et al., 1998). Koenig et al. (1998) examined religious coping behaviors and health status in medically ill hospitalized older patients. They were able to identify negative and positive types of religious coping, with negative religious coping behaviors being related to poorer physical health, worse quality of life, and greater depressive symptoms. Koenig et al. (1998) attributed negative religious coping to people's beliefs of reappraisal from deity as punishment, reappraisal from demonic forces, and pleading for direct intercession. Individuals who used positive religious coping, such as collaborative religious coping, seeking spiritual support, and seeking support from clergy or church members, reported fewer depressive symptoms and better quality of life. This was especially true for individuals who sought out support from clergy or church members and collaborative religious coping (Koenig et al., 1998). Thus, although not all situations or individuals benefit from religious coping, there are many forms of religious coping that have been found to be helpful, particularly in the Latinx community.

Religious Coping in the Latinx Community

It has been well documented that the Latinx community heavily relies on religion and spirituality (Guarnaccia et al., 2005; Heckert, 2012). Guarnaccia et al. (2005) describe religious

congregations, particularly Catholic and Protestant churches in community as the extended family system. These religious groups are particularly used when Latinx individuals experience some sort of hardship (Barden et al., 2016; Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2013; Soto, 2011).

Involvement in churches and faith communities, which are important in the dissemination of health information, are major resources for Latinx individuals (Livingston et al., 2008). Being a part of faith-based communities seems to have many beneficial psychological and physical health outcomes, meaning that it should be considered when thinking about treatment for mental health concerns (Clements & Ermakova, 2012; Pargament, 1997; Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2007; NIMH, 1998). Yet, as described by Guarnaccia et al. (2005), when it comes to Latinx individuals, there is little research on the specific roles of religious institutions, their clergy, and lay organizations in support of people in psychological distress.

When professional mental health services are not available, Latinx individuals commonly use religious coping to help reduce distress. Heckert (2012) conducted a qualitative study in which she addressed the availability and use of mental health resources by Latina immigrant in a rural part of western Pennsylvania. She found that few formal and informal culturally sensitive resources were available to the women that were interviewed. Even when formal mental health resources were available, interviewees expressed a preference for seeking informal help in the form of religious coping. One of the examples given was that the interviewees would travel great distances to meet with a Catholic priest who could speak Spanish. When asked specifically what was beneficial from meeting with the Catholic priest (besides the fact that the Catholic priest spoke Spanish), women stated that it was helpful to speak to someone “who was thinking of you” and provided guidance (Heckert, 2012).

It is important to recognize that less educated Latinos with no experience working with therapists may seek help from a priest, a physician, a family member, or a spiritual healer such as a *curandero*, *espiritista*, or *santero* (Soto, 2011). Acknowledging the importance of religion and spirituality for Latina women, Soto (2011) conducted a qualitative study on the importance of incorporating religion and spirituality into psychotherapy and how this incorporation affected depressive symptoms. Participants in this study indicated that religion and spirituality played a significant role in their daily lives and that including attention to religious or spiritual factors in therapy were extremely important. For all the women who participated in the study, they believed that God gave them the strength, fortitude, and willpower to overcome crises and sadness in their lives. Looking at physical health concerns, Barden et al. (2016) carried out a qualitative study to understand the lived experiences of Latina breast cancer survivors. The authors reported that every participant shared how their faith helped them through their cancer journey. Participants shared that having strong belief systems and actively practicing their spirituality and religion were extremely important to their recovery. Participants also expressed their willingness to give up control to a higher power, “It’s that acceptance of He knows better than I do . . . it has helped me over the years with many different situations to just accept whatever is happening at that moment. I think this was one of them” (Barden et al., 2016, p.153). Also, participants stated that the active practicing and ritual of engaging in prayer was helpful to their recovery.

Religious Coping in the Face of Discrimination

Given that religious coping seems to be beneficial to help reduce mental and physical distress, it may be worthwhile in considering its effectiveness on reducing negative effects of discrimination. For example, Ghaffari and Çiftçi (2010) investigated the moderating effect of

discrimination in a sample of Muslim immigrants. Results concluded a significant relationship between discrimination and both religious attitudes and religious behaviors. Regarding religious attitudes, Muslims reported that religious beliefs and behaviors (e.g., praying five times daily, reading the Qur'an, observing daily prayers in a mosque) were helpful in dealing with discrimination. In terms of religious behaviors, results suggest that perceiving discrimination may encourage Muslims to use their faith in coping with distress from the discriminatory experience (Ghaffari & Çiftçi, 2010).

Religious coping has also been found to be effective in the Latinx community. Ojeda and Piña-Watson (2013) carried out a quantitative study on the mental health of day laborers, most of whom were undocumented Latino males. Findings demonstrated the importance of *familismo*, spirituality, work satisfaction, health, and discrimination on life satisfaction. Given the deleterious impact discrimination can have on mental health, Ojeda and Piña-Watson (2013) examined whether the impact of discrimination on life satisfaction could be buffered by *familismo*, spirituality, work satisfaction, and views on personal health. Among the variables, spirituality and views on personal health were identified as protective factors against the role of discrimination on life satisfaction, suggesting that religious coping can be used to protect an individual from the consequences due to discrimination.

Social Support and Social Aspects of Religiosity

Social support is well supported in the literature to be positively associated with religious coping. One approach to researching social support in the context of religious groups is thus to treat it as functionally the same as secular forms of social support, like neighborhoods and families (Hayward & Krause, 2014). Religious congregations can be used to help grow networks of enduring social relationships from which they could receive great benefits (Ghaffari & Çiftçi,

2010; Guarnaccia et al., 2005; Heckert, 2012). Large studies with representative samples of the general U.S. population have demonstrated that more frequent religious group participation is related to general forms of social support. Ellison and George (1994) examined a regional sample of adults of all ages in a Southern community, finding frequency of religious participation was related to having both a larger number of non-family social ties, and to greater frequency of contact with them. Another study, using longitudinal data from a sample of adults from a California county found that people who attended religious services at least weekly in 1965 were much more likely to see their social network grow by 1994, and less likely to see it get smaller, compared with less frequent attenders (Strawbridge et al., 2001). In addition to the frequency of attending religious services, a congregation's character can impact the degree of social support that its members exchange (Ellison et al., 2009). Ellison and their colleagues (2009) found that people experience less support in groups that were very large, and that offered few opportunities for social interaction.

Research on religious involvement and social support demonstrates that religious services and groups facilitate social networks and provide a sense of belonging and cohesiveness (Holt et al., 2014). Holt and their colleagues (2014) were interested in looking at the religion-health relationship, in a sample of African American individuals, and to see how social support mediated that relationship. They found that engagement in religious behaviors was associated with better physical functioning and fewer depressive symptoms. Interestingly, they also found that the organizational aspects of religious participation serve a more important function in the provision of social support than the private aspects, meaning that the social interactions that an individual encounters in a faith community carry more weight than the individual mechanisms

(e.g., praying on your own), at least in this sample of individuals with a more collectivistic cultural background.

Research over the years has established that social support has positive effects on well-being and can buffer the negative effects of distressing experiences (Krause, 2008). Religious congregations can effectively serve as conduits for social support (Appel et al., 2014; Krause, 2008; Ellison et al., 2017). As it is supported in the literature, congregations offer several types of formal support, other than religious and spiritual guidance, via ministries targeting specific needs, ranging from financial assistance, food security, and health outreach (Bopp et al., 2011; Caplan & Cordero, 2015; Galiatsatos & Hale, 2016). In addition, clergy members engage in pastoral counseling, often addressing mental health concerns or family matters (Taylor et al. 2000).

Literature in this area supports the idea of individuals who have established, prospering personal relationships with their fellow church members tend to enjoy better health than people who are not as close to their fellow parishioners (Krause, 2008). It is possible that church-based social support can occur through informal exchanges among members themselves, and between members and clergy. Typically, religious congregations are powered via networking: individuals and families are often recruited into churches by pre-existing social ties, and once they join, this allows individuals to form and sustain lasting social relationships (Kurien, 2001; Taylor et al., 1987). Religious cultures typically encourage a sense of close community, fostering kindness and charity towards fellow members (and others), as well as norms of reciprocity (Ellison & George, 1994). Over time, members can cultivate support systems that can be used during challenging times (Ellison & George, 1994). Church members have the ability to provide multiple types of support, ranging from tangible aid (e.g., goods and services) to socioemotional assistance like

“companionship, morale support, care” (Krause, 2008). Although such social support may be obtained via relatives, friends, neighbors, or other meaningful relationships, there is evidence that suggests religious sources may offer greater mental and physical health benefits (Krause, 2006). In their paper, Krause & Bastida (2011) described when a person feels they belong to a congregation, “the member sees himself as taking part in his group; he identifies himself with it, he participates in it, he receives his motivation from it; in a word, he is in a state or disposition of interaction with the group, which understands, inspires and welcomes him” (p. 399). In essence, a person becomes one with the community.

Being a part of a religious community has many benefits, including overall well-being and health. Krause and Bastida (2011) were interested in looking at church-based social relationships, belongingness, and health among older Mexican Americans. The participants who attended church more often reported receiving emotional support from fellow church members more often (Krause & Bastida, 2011). The findings further revealed that older Mexican Americans who receive more emotional support from the people they worship with are more likely to feel a sense of belongingness, which leads to having better control/awareness and better health overall.

The literature around church-based social support currently focuses primarily on the experiences of African American congregations (e.g., Taylor et al., 1987; Ellison et al., 2017). However, the literature that does exist for other ethnic, cultural, and religious groups suggest similar importance and value on social aspects of religious coping. For example, Kurien (2001) found that Hindu and Muslim Indian immigrants increase their religious participation once they arrive to the U.S. because it is a way for them to maintain their immigrant ethnicity and cultural practices. In a study that examined religious factors and coping with depression, Loewenthal et

al. (2001) found that relative to other religious groups, Muslims believed more in the ability of Islam and social support to help them cope than to seek professional mental health services. Religion also seems to be a cultural belief fundamental to the understanding of mental health in Asian Americans. Chinese churches have become a major source of support, bridging cross-cultural gaps and providing a sense of community for Chinese Americans in New York (Appel et al., 2014), similar to how churches serve the same function for African Americans (Billingsley, 1999). It seems there is a familiarity and identity component that helps individuals seek social aspects of religiosity to help them cope.

However, while there is clear evidence that participating in a religious group is related to better social integration overall, it is not as clear if indicators of religious involvement—e.g., church attendance, prayer, and religious social support, also known as social aspects of religiosity (Ellison et al., 2017), alone mediate a relationship with mental health. Several studies have looked at the role of general social support, both inside and outside the church with mixed results. For example, studies of medical patients diagnosed with depression have found that higher levels of social support do not account for a significant amount of the relationship between frequent religious participation and the initial severity (Hayward et al., 2012a). Other studies have found that while frequent religious participation does have an indirect relationship with fewer depression symptoms via the path of general social support, it also has an equal or greater direct relationship among Korean immigrant older adults (Park et al., 2012), and longitudinally among cardiac patients (Ai et al., 2007) and psychiatric patients (Hayward et al., 2012b).

Furthermore, researchers have also focused on support processes within a congregation, or social aspects of religiosity, and how this religious support may differ from what is received in

non-religious settings. Hayward and Krause (2014) completed a review of the literature highlighting empirical support that “the high salience and self-centrality of the religious groups serves to enhance the impact of congregational support on well-being, and that there are certain qualitative differences between congregational and secular support that confer additional well-being benefits” (p. 266). A similar conclusion was reached by Lim and Putnam in 2010. They found that while the size of one’s congregational friendship network was associated with greater life satisfaction; the effect became stronger when a person denoted a level of importance of the congregation to their identity. How much a person is involved in their religious community has also been included in this area of research, with Krause and their colleagues (1998) suggesting that religious involvement or religious engagement influences congregational support, most benefiting individuals who are highly involved members. Thus, it is likely that social aspects of religiosity have a more pronounced impact on well-being than support received in settings that are more secular, especially if a person is invested in the religious community and involved in various ways.

Social Aspects of Religious Coping in the Face of Discrimination

Social aspects of religion can help individuals cope with emotional and physical distress. It would seem appropriate, then, to suggest that the same mechanisms could be used to cope with discrimination. When talking about social aspects of religious coping, the literature seems to consider this as actively engaging in social aspects of the religious community, such as participating in a church choir or engaging in some sort of church-based ministry (Ellison et al., 2017). The literature suggests stress buffering effects of religion may result from a minimum threshold of engagement, rather than from incremental changes in religious involvement (Schieman et al., 2013). In other words, religious involvement can be the most beneficial and

best buffer the effects of distress for those individuals who are consistently active in their worship services, pray, and seek religious social support. Schieman et al. (2013) noted that the “minimum threshold of engagement” depended on what a person perceived that threshold to be. Although the threshold may look differently for everyone, the active partaking and engagement of communal religious activities are consistently found to be the most beneficial (Ai et al., 2016; Ai et al., 2013).

Thus, it is possible that the negative effects of discrimination, an unfortunate reality for communities of color, can be buffered by social aspects of religiosity. Ellison and their colleagues (2017) focused on the effects of major discrimination using a sample of individuals who identify as African American, particularly looking at experiences around unequal treatment encountered in public settings and institutional contexts (e.g., education, labor markets, and housing)—on two mental health outcomes: depressive symptoms and life satisfaction. They explored the role of multiple facets of religion, including religious attendance, prayer, and congregational support. Their findings supported the idea that religious social support offsets and buffers the negative effects of major discrimination on both mental health outcomes, particularly for respondents who reported seeking support the most often.

Interestingly, benefits of social aspects of religiosity are not only found to be helpful for adults but also for teenagers. Hope et al. (2017) were interested in learning about discriminatory experiences that Black adolescents deal with. Using a religious framework, the authors looked at religious social support as a potential coping factor. Since the literature suggests religious social support helps the mental health of Black adults, they were interested in seeing if this held true for Black adolescents as well. In line with the literature, Black adolescents who experienced discrimination were more likely to meet criteria for a DSM diagnosis. However, like the adult

findings, Black teens who reported experiencing religious social support were less likely to meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder. Their findings suggest both young and old can benefit from religious social support.

Social aspects of religion seem to be important in being able to effectively cope with psychological distress. Not only have social aspects of religiosity been effective in supporting positive mental health, but some literature suggests social aspects of religiosity help decrease the negative effects of discrimination (Ellison et al., 2017). Currently, the literature in this area is dominated by the experiences in the African American and Black community. It would be beneficial to see if similar results are supported in studies that focus on the Latinx community.

Current Study

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Latinx participants in regard to their use of social aspects of religiosity and how they may or may not be used to buffer negative mental health effects of discrimination. Current literature suggests that social aspects of religiosity can be beneficial in buffering discriminatory experiences. Specifically, this study looked at the unique experiences of a small, non-urban Latinx sample in the Deep South who attend a Catholic church. This was done intentionally due to much of the existing literature on Latinx mental health concerns focuses more on urban communities, with the majority of the research being conducted in cities and other communities with a relatively high number of Latinx individuals (Heckert, 2012). One potential reason for this may be because in order to get an adequate sample size for a quantitative study, researchers must conduct studies in areas populated with a high number of Latinx individuals. This has led to an oversight and the untold experiences of Latinx individuals who live in communities with a relatively low Latinx population. Because of this, this study was conducted in a qualitative manner, specifically using

semi-structured interviews. This research methodology helps address gaps in the research related to the Latinx community and helps direct future research. Furthermore, the results of this study can hopefully provide insight on how clinicians can better support Latinx individuals who experience discrimination, in this local community and in other rural communities across the country. Finally, this study has the potential to contribute more broadly to the training of culturally competent clinicians.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of discrimination of this particular Latinx sample?

Research Question 2: How do Latinx people at this parish cope with discrimination?

Research Question 3: In what ways, if any, are social aspects of religiosity used in coping with discrimination?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

This chapter outlines the research methodology for this study and provides the rationale for the chosen design, participant selection, setting, procedures, research questions, and data analysis. The aim of this study was to gather information regarding the role of social aspects of religious and spiritual practices of a sample of Latinx individuals and how these may influence the experience of discrimination and mental health. Current literature is limited in the understanding of this interactivity. Furthermore, the experiences of Latinx individuals, especially those who identify as immigrants, are not well documented in research or understood. A qualitative approach was chosen to guide my effort to investigate this phenomenon, so to better understand the unique experiences of these individuals who tend to be overlooked in their greater community.

Qualitative Approach

This study was an exploratory study about the lived religious experiences of Latinx individuals in a non-urban community. The project aimed to better understand the social aspects of religion and spirituality and what role they play in people's experiences with discrimination and mental health. Because of this goal, this study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the unique experiences of Latinx individuals in the local community. Qualitative methodology is used in research to investigate social phenomena from the subjective perspective of the participants (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The main objective of qualitative research is to understand experiences with the hope of "interpreting the messiness of real life" (ATLAS.ti, 2022). It differs from quantitative research in that qualitative research aims to describe and interpret experiences, provide new insights, describe and explain with few hypotheses, and

generate theory (Kazdin, 2017). Starks and Trinidad (2007) described qualitative research methods as a process “to delve into questions of meaning, examine institutional and social practices and processes, identify barriers and facilitators to change, and discover the reasons for the success of failure of interventions,” meaning that qualitative research methods allow for a more critical and reflective interpretation of phenomena and processes. Ponterotto and Casas (1991) note that qualitative research can be useful in obtaining knowledge about racially and ethnically diverse and under-studied populations. Thus, a qualitative design is appropriate in understanding the everyday experiences of Latinx individuals, for example those who live in small and rural communities and immigrants (Ojeda et al., 2011).

One common form of data collection in qualitative research is interviews. Interviews can be used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of individuals (Gill et al., 2008). As stated previously, qualitative methodology is believed to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than could be interpreted from quantitative methods. Thus, interviews are appropriate when little is known about the studied phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants (Gill et al., 2008). In addition, interviews seem to be appropriate for exploring sensitive topics, like discrimination, where participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group environment (Kruger et al., 2019). During our time together, participants were afforded an opportunity to openly and safely share their experiences and construct meaning throughout the interview process. Interviews were focused on capturing the essence of the authentic experiences of the participants.

Phenomenology

As stated earlier, the goal of the study was to illuminate rich and personal lived experiences of this particular community. For this study, I chose to root its theoretical framework

and design in phenomenological methodology. Phenomenological research involves trying to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Peoples, 2017; Peoples, 2021). It is important to note that phenomenology is, first and foremost, a philosophy. Edmund Husserl is credited with being the Father of Phenomenology (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021). Husserl believed that nothing should be assumed or taken for granted when trying to understand a phenomenon (Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence, 2020). Husserl's version of phenomenology is called Transcendental Phenomenology (Peoples, 2017; Peoples, 2021). Transcendental Phenomenology emphasizes intentionality, seeking to understand human experience (Moustakas, 1994). According to Husserl, to capture the pure essence of a phenomenon, a person needs to suspend all previous understandings and biases to experience the true experience. Transcendental phenomenology is grounded in the concept of reduction, setting aside all preconceived ideas, via bracketing or Epoché, to see phenomenon through "unclouded glasses," thereby allowing the true meaning of phenomenon to emerge naturally (Moustakas, 1994).

When considering my three research questions, I aimed to use phenomenological methodology because it allowed me to illuminate the rich descriptions and personal meaning of the lived experiences related to social aspects of religiosity and discrimination. Phenomenology is the most appropriate methodology because I am interested in the experiences that the participants may or may not share. When deciding which methodology to use, I considered other popular qualitative methodologies like ethnography and case study (Creswell, 1998; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). While the method of ethnography is used to identify shared patterns of a cultural group, it does not fit my study because I was interested in the individual experiences of my participants rather than the collective whole. A case study approach, which allows for the

development of detailed depictions and case analysis of a single case or numerous cases, was considered but did not fully meet the requirement of focusing only on experiences as lived. My research questions are limited to the experiences of people and do not ask about opinions, perceptions, perspectives, or any other thoughts about the topics of social aspects of religiosity and discrimination.

Researcher Role

My role as primary investigator for this study was one of an observer. In the spirit of Transcendental Phenomenology, my goal was to be “a stranger in a strange land”— a phrase used by Peoples in 2017 to illustrate the idea of bracketing— so that I could extract the pure essence of the phenomenon or experiences of my participants. In more technical terms, I engaged in the practice of Epoché. This means that I brought awareness to my own biases and previous understandings in order to intentionally suspend them for the interview process. It is not possible to completely eliminate one’s biases, but we can make conscious efforts to suspend them or set them aside (Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence, 2020). For more visual and experiential learners, this is similar to the process of meditation. When a person meditates, they do not cease all thinking processes but rather acknowledge their thoughts in the moment and set them aside to help foster meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Considering that I was once part of this church community during my time in local community, I had developed my own thoughts and opinions about the people who attended a local Catholic church and their involvement in the greater community. Because of this, it was imperative that I engaged continuously in the practice of bracketing as I developed and carried out this study. When I was considering who would participate in the study, I was aware of the possibility that some of the participants could be people that I met while I served in various

capacities at the church. This ended up occurring, with one of the participants being someone I worked with during my time at the church. What bracketing looked like in this case was intentionally suspending all previous ideas and interactions with this person in order to get the essence of her experiences. There were moments that I wanted to ask further follow-up questions consistent with what I previously knew about her, but I did not. This was due to two reasons: one, because I did not want to risk tainting the true essence of her experiences and, two, because I did not want to veer from the current experience. Husserl believed that to minimize the problem of having subjective thought overwhelm the objective existence of something as we aim to know it, he proposed that people need to position themselves differently in the world and think about their thinking. (Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence, 2020). Throughout all my interviews, especially the one with the person who I interacted before the start of the study, I made sure to approach them from a place of genuine curiosity, as a stranger with no frame of reference for their experiences.

Although I had been a part of this parish community for many years, at the time of conducting screenings and interviews, I was a few years removed from being an active member of the community. Since I was entering a community that had changed in many ways, including the appointment of a new parish leader, a worldwide pandemic, and an ever-growing Spanish speaking population, it was important for me to re-establish trust and association with the people of this community. Before I began my recruitment efforts, I contacted church leadership and met with them in person. Community gatekeepers are important towards building trust and gaining access and vouch for researchers and facilitate contact (Das, 2010; Ojeda et al., 2011). I considered this step to be the most important because it helped support and endorse my research study with the church community. Ojeda et al. (2011) noted that gatekeepers can validate to

potential Latino immigrant participants that a researcher is safe and their “well-being and security will be protected.”

Along with the metaphorical “stamp of approval” from the church leadership, I also needed to prepare myself on how my presence and my interactions with the community would impact the study. Ojeda and their colleagues recommend researchers explore how “self-disclosure and building a trusting relationship early on may facilitate recruitment and trustworthiness in communities historically exploited by mainstream psychological research” (Ojeda et al., 2011). Essentially, it was important for me not just to rely on flyers and advertisements but that I went physically into their space, their community, so potential participants could get to know me and, hopefully, develop trust in me. I made sure to schedule a time to make an in-person announcement after one of the Spanish Masses and stayed after the conclusion of the Mass to chat with interested individuals. During that experience, I was asked questions about my emphasis in school, where I was from, where I lived now, what I hope to do in the future once I completed my degree, and, of course, questions about the actual study. By answering their questions, I displayed my interest in wanting to form an authentic relationship with them.

Participants

Participants needed to meet three criteria: be at least 19 years of age, identify as Latinx, and attend the Catholic church in town, made up of a predominately Spanish speaking congregation. The age requirement is based on the state of Alabama’s age of consent. Due to the academic nature of the term *Latinx* and the limited use of the identifier outside the academic world, participants were asked if they identify as Latino, Latina, and/ or Hispanic. Anyone who identified with one or more of those ethnic identities was considered to participate in the study. Finally, each participant indicated they attended the Catholic parish selected for this study

predominately composed of Spanish-speaking, Latinx individuals. Real names were retracted from transcripts and all study-related graphics, with the intent to protect the identities of the participants. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

	Age Range	Gender	Country of Origin	Total Time in the USA	Total Years in Local Community	Occupation
Participant #1: "Isadora"	Late 20's	Female	Mexico	Less than 5 years	2 years	Stay-at-home Parent
Participant #2: "Dolores"	Mid 50's	Female	Mexico	Over 30 years	15 years	House Cleaner
Participant #3: "Marisol"	Late 20's	Female	Colombia	Less than 5 years	< 1 year	Graduate Student
Participant #4: "Andres"	Early 40's	Male	Mexico	Less than 5 years	1 year	Construction Worker
Participant #5: "Soledad"	Late 50's	Female	Ecuador	Over 30 years	<6 months	Home Maker
Participant #6: "Magda"	Mid 50's	Female	Mexico	Over 30 years	10 years	Community Engagement
Participant #7: "Carmela"	Early 50's	Female	Mexico	Over 10 years	12 years	House Cleaner

Sampling

The participant sample consisted of seven adults (Table 1) who identified as Latino, Latina, and/ or Hispanic, who lived in a town in Alabama, and who attended religious services at a specific Catholic church in the community. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used to ensure a diverse group of participants. Creswell (1998) describes purposive sampling as a technique used in qualitative research to select specific individuals or units for analysis. This means that I chose my participants on purpose, not randomly, based on certain characteristics. In addition, snowball sampling was used in combination with purposive sampling. Peoples (2021) recommended that snowball sampling be used in conjunction with purposive sampling when studying sensitive topics or when members of a population are

difficult to reach. Snowball sampling allows for currently enrolled participants to help recruit future participants (People, 2020). It is important to note the enrolled participants were not required to help recruit. In fact, every single one of them brought up the topic on their own and volunteered to do this on behalf of the researcher and the study.

The sample consisted of 6 women and 1 man, ranging in age from 27 years to 59 years, although not gender diverse, proved to be diverse in lived experiences. Five of the participants identified their country of origin to be Mexico, while the other two were from South American countries, Colombia and Ecuador. In addition, citizenship statuses varied from undocumented to citizens of the United States. It is important to note that the participants were not asked to proactively share about their citizenship status, yet all seven openly shared their status throughout their interview. The participants varied in the number of years in this country (1 year to 38 years) as well as in the local community (less than 6 months to 15 years).

Six were parents, while one was not. The one participant was pursuing a graduate degree while the others varied in occupation: house cleaner, construction worker, community engagement, stay at home parent, and home maker. Finally, the sample was well represented by individuals of diverse involvement in their church community, as well as the greater local community.

Sample Size Rationale and Saturation

Six to 10 interviews were anticipated in order to reach a level of saturation. This range of participants was based on literature suggesting an appropriate range to be 2 to 10 participants (Groenewald, 2004), while Creswell (1998) recommended conducting “long interviews with up to 10 people” for a phenomenological study. In 2010, Mason conducted a meta-analysis of various qualitative studies, trying to determine ideal sample sizes in order to reach saturation.

Regarding phenomenological studies, Mason (2010) found that these types of studies had a minimum of six participants, with over two thirds of the total number of phenomenological studies suggesting a range of 5 to 25 participants. It is important to note that the literature related to the exact number of participants for saturation ranges widely, with some qualitative researchers believing that there should not be a limit while others wanting to identify a concrete number of participants and focus on the “depth of data” instead (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Fusch and Ness (2015) argued data saturation is not about the number of participants but rather the “depth of data.” They suggested that a researcher should choose a sample size that has “the best opportunity for the researcher to reach data saturation,” noting that a large sample size does not guarantee one will reach saturation. Furthermore, Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that a qualitative study reaches saturation “when there is enough information to replicate a study, when the ability to no new information can be obtained, and when further coding is no longer feasible” (p. 1408). Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that in phenomenological study designs, saturation is reached using probing questions and “creating a state of Epoché” (p. 1409). In addition, they suggested interviewing people that one would not normally consider in order to avoid the “shaman effect,” which is defined as an effect created by participants, with specialized information on a topic, who can take over the data— essentially making the data useless. Considering the literature and recommendations by Mason (2010) and Fusch and Ness (2015), I opted for a minimum of 6 participants (with a final sample of 7 participants); asked probing questions throughout the interview; generalized the recruitment criteria (rather than just asking people who were really involved in the church); and had a second coder for transcripts to ensure data saturation was reached.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through flyers and advertisements put in the weekly church bulletin and the church's social media account on Facebook (Appendix A & Appendix B). In addition, I attended one of the Sunday Masses to make a verbal announcement. Recruitment materials were provided in both English and Spanish to help interested individuals understand the process. On the recruitment materials, there was a brief description of the study, information about inclusion criteria, information about compensation, and my contact information.

Interested individuals were invited to call me to learn more about the study and to ask questions or express concerns. When people reached out to find out more details, they were read the screening protocol script (Appendix C or Appendix D), which also included information about significant aspects of the study that may impact their willingness to participate, such as length of time of the interview process. Englander (2010) notes that interviews should last between 1 to 2 hours in order to gather enough information. Keeping this in mind, all participants were told that their interview appointments would be no more than 2 hours long. This timeframe included the informed consent process, the completion of the demographic questionnaire, and the semi-structured interview. This information, along with other details shared about the study, served as the initial portion of the informed consent process. The screening protocol provided individuals a brief description of the study, details about privacy, confidentiality, and their rights as participants, as well as information about compensation. Then, individuals were asked yes/no questions related to the criteria: "Are you a Latino/ Latina/ Hispanic?", "Are you at least 19 years old?", and "Do you attend [local Catholic church]?" If individuals met criteria to participate in the study, they were provided different dates and times to schedule their interview. In addition, potential participants were asked if they preferred their interview to be conducted in

English or in Spanish. This allowed for individuals who had difficulty communicating in or understanding English the opportunity to partake in the study.

Instrumentation

Demographic questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix G & Appendix H) was designed to be read out-loud to participants. It was first created in English and was then translated into Spanish. The translation was verified by two native speakers, one of them being myself and the other, being an approved project assistant who has experience in providing mental health services in Spanish and serving predominately Latinx populations. The questionnaire was read in the preferred language of the participant. The information gathered was age, gender, mental health history, country of origin, years living in the United States, marital status, family size, general residential location, and current work status. Other details like name, years living in the local community, and years attending the local Catholic church were gathered during the beginning of the interview as an introductory question. Participants were also asked about current and past experiences with mental health struggles and whether or not they have received mental health treatment for their concerns.

Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide consists of key questions to help define areas of exploration, but also allows a researcher to go “off-script” in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill et al., 2008). This interview format is used most frequently in healthcare and social science research, as it provides participants with some guidance on what to discuss. In addition, the flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interview guides, allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may

not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the researcher (Gill et al., 2008). This approach to the interview is in line with the “methodological spontaneity of phenomenological research” (Peoples, 2021). The goal of the semi-structured interview guide used in this study was to capture key attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to discrimination and social aspects of religiosity.

The semi-structured interview guide used to guide the interview session can be found in English in Appendix I and in Spanish in Appendix J. Like the demographic questionnaire, the interview guide was first created in English and then later translated into Spanish. This translation was also verified by the same two people (myself and one of my project assistants) who verified the translation of the demographic questionnaire. The guide starts with a welcome and overview of the topic being researched. I began the interview by asking participants to state their name, country or origin, how long they have been living in the United States and in the local community. This was followed with pre-selected questions that aimed to shed light on the experiences of the participants related to social aspects of religiosity and discrimination. All the questions were created in consultation with my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Cornish, during the early stages of my study’s conceptualization. We came up with a total of 10 open-ended general questions, with each leaving room for probes, as needed. This format allowed for participants to have some structure while still having the ability to operate spontaneously. In order to limit misunderstandings and account for excluded or gaps of information, the last general question of the interview was not overtly related to the research questions, “Finally, is there anything I have not asked that you would like to tell me about?/ Por último, hay algo que no pregunte que le gustaría decirme sobre lo que hablamos hoy?” It also had a probe, “Were you able to say everything you wanted to say?/ Tuvo la oportunidad de decir lo que quería decir?” After all the

questions were asked, I summarized every response to each question and asked the participant to verify whether or not I had captured what they were trying to communicate accurately.

Procedures

Before starting the recruitment process, I submitted all the necessary materials to the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB), seeking approval to carry out the study. While I waited for IRB approval, I familiarized myself with qualitative methodology, phenomenology, my data analysis software (ATLAS.ti), and semi-structured interviews. I also practiced how to conduct my interviews in Spanish with my Spanish speaking project assistant as well with other Spanish speaking acquaintances. This was important for me to do because, although I am a native Spanish speaker, the lexicon and formality of a research study required a skill set that I had not used before. Ojeda and their colleagues noted that it was essential that interviewers were both “bilingual and bicultural,” noting that these qualities fostered culturally competent qualitative research with Latino immigrants because it allowed for interviewers “to accurately ask the interview questions, understand participants responses, understand the meaning of shared responses, and establish connection with participants” (Ojeda et al., 2011, p. 14). It was not enough for me and my Spanish-speaking project assistant to know the language but to be confident and knowledgeable about how to ask the right questions and how to infer meaning.

Interviews were scheduled based on participants’ availability, which was shared during the initial screening phone call. Once a time was established, participants were given the option to do the interview over the university approved video call platform, Zoom. Although all the interviews were completed over video call, the recording mechanism was set to “Record audio-

only files” in my university Zoom account. This allowed for me to collect my data, so that it may be analyzed later, and still protect the privacy and identities of my participants.

The video call method of conducting interviews, over in-person, was selected in order to limit risk of exposure to COVID- 19. Rosenfeld et al. (2022) discussed the importance of protecting the health of research participants, noting that “until herd immunity is strong, participants will incur risks by coming to high-density university campuses and exposing themselves to study staff.” Because of the current global circumstances, the primary researcher felt it was ethically responsible to carefully consider participants’ well-being. Finally, the video call was chosen over a phone call because I believed it allowed me to more easily develop trust with the participants. Ojeda et al. (2011) discussed the importance of establishing trust and personal contact with the Latino community, especially with Latino immigrants, when conducting research with this population. The culture value of *personalismo*, a nuanced Latino cultural construct that refers to a value for interaction with individuals whom one has a trusting and caring relationship, was highlighted by Ojeda et al. (2011) and deemed essential when conducting qualitative research with Latino immigrants. I felt the video call format would minimize any concerns and help develop a safe environment for the participants to share their experiences.

At the start of each interview, I asked participants to ensure they were in a private room, free from distractions and quiet (if possible). Then, the primary researcher read out loud the information letter (Appendix E & Appendix F) in the preferred language of the participants and reviewed the initial screening information. Along with reading the letter out-loud, I “shared” my screen view with the participants so they could follow along with what I was communicating. The information letter details participants’ rights and what I planned to do with the information

they shared during the interview. In addition, the participants were reminded that along with their \$25 gasoline gift card, they would receive a copy of the information letter and the debriefing form in the mail.

Anticipating concerns of legal status and disclosure of status, participants were informed that they did not need to share about their current citizenship status but were welcomed to do so if they felt comfortable. Questions about how long they have been in the United States, how long they have lived in the community, and country of origin were asked, but this information was only captured for descriptive data purposes. Participants were reminded that they could choose to end the interview at any time, and that the interview could invoke emotional responses depending on the questions and their experiences. Participants were told that I would ask for them to provide the address of where they would want their gift card (along with the information letter and the debriefing form) sent, towards the end of the interview. I informed them that this information was only written down on the envelopes that would be sent to the address they provided but would not be written down anywhere else nor transcribed. Participants were informed that I would be taking notes throughout the interview for me to gather my thoughts about the interview and to make sure that I captured the essence of what they were sharing. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions prior to providing their informed consent.

After consent was given, I informed them that I would begin the audio recording in order to capture their responses. Then, I read out loud the demographic questionnaire (Appendix G & Appendix H) and wrote down the answers in my notebook. After the demographic questionnaire was completed, the primary researcher began the interview protocol. I reminded the participants that there are no right or wrong answers and that all experiences are important and useful to

know. After the orienting statement, the participants were asked the general questions and probing questions, as needed, per the interview guide. This format was continued until all general questions were asked (as well as all needed probe questions) and all of the desired information was obtained. Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked where they would want their gift card (along with copies of the information letter and the debriefing form) to be sent. Finally, the participants were thanked and debriefed. The debriefing process involved me “sharing” my screen again, but this time I reviewed the debriefing form (Appendix K & Appendix L) with the participants.

Data Analysis

Research Personnel

The primary researcher of this study was me, a Latina woman who is enrolled in APA-accredited counseling psychology program. In addition, I had two project assistants. One of my project assistants was a bilingual Latina who is a licensed mental health counselor in the state of California, specializing in providing therapy to Latinx individuals. Her primary responsibilities in this project were to verify my translations of all documents used in this study, as well as my translations of the 5 transcripts for the 5 interviews that were completed in Spanish. It was important for me to have an IRB-approved project assistant to help with the translations who not only understood the language but also understood the culture nuances. Ojeda et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of these two distinct qualities in a research team when conducting qualitative research with Latino immigrants in order to avoid misrepresentation, objectification, and pathologizing.

My other project assistant was a Non-Hispanic, White woman, who is a current doctoral student in an engineering program. This individual’s primary responsibility was to help with data

analysis. Although this individual did not have a counseling or psychology background, she has substantial research experience with human subjects. She also completed the required trainings by the Auburn University IRB for all individuals wishing to engage in human subjects' research (CITI Training). Regarding the specifics of my study, I made sure that this project assistant was exposed to and learned about qualitative research, phenomenology, and data analysis. We spent several hours reviewing each topic, with me teaching this project assistant about what I had learned as well as requiring her to review various resources such as articles and informational videos. Once this project assistant was comfortable with the concepts, I provided her resources put out by the qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) that we used to help facilitate analysis. She reviewed all the tutorial videos put out by ATLAS.ti (the QDAS that was used in this study) on their YouTube channel. Moreover, it is believed that having an interdisciplinary research team can broaden the pool of potential collaborators, adding "richness and perspective" and a wide approach to understanding a specific phenomenon (Ojeda et al., 2011).

Explication of Data

According to Peoples (2021), the term "data analysis" is not in the spirit of phenomenological inquiry because "analysis" means to "break into parts." Phenomenology aims to view something in its complete and whole essence. Peoples (2021) recommends that the term "explication" be used instead. In her book, Peoples provides a definition for explication, "investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole" (Peoples, 2021, p. 57). Although the process of capturing the true essence of my participants' experience is the goal of this study, I will refer to this process as data analysis to keep uniformity and clarity with phenomenological literature, just as Peoples recommends in her book.

The primary data analysis methodology used in this study is Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach to analyze and interpret the wholeness of participants' experience. This process was chosen over other qualitative data analytic methods because their approach focuses on highlighting the everyday lived experiences of individuals. In addition, this method allows more of a free-flow and open interpretation of what is actually being experienced rather than asserting a theory (Moustakas, 1994). This is appropriate for this study because the goal of the study was to shed light on the experiences of the participants related to social aspects of religiosity and discrimination. In addition, various factors like being a non-urban sample of Latinx immigrants and living in the Deep South are unique to this proposed study. Thus, their daily-lived experiences are very different from much of the mental health research about the Latinx community, which typically highlights more urban samples and American citizens (Heckert, 2012).

Moustakas (1994) described a systematic procedure for transcendental phenomenological data analysis. First, a researcher engages with bracketing (Epoché) in order to suspend their previous understandings of a phenomenon. Then, a researcher focuses the transcripts, identifying significant statements shared by participants and use the participants' own words to generate preliminary meaning units (codes). Next, the meaning units or codes are synthesized into final meaning units or themes to describe the experiences of the individuals. Finally, using the themes to construct a composite description of the themes and the essence of the experience.

Moustakas' (1994) approach requires Epoché or bracketing to occur first, in order to “bring into awareness any biases or assumptions the researcher may have” (Hays & Singh, 2012). This is an essential premise of transcendental phenomenology. During the conceptualization of my study, I discussed with my advisor my standing relationship with the

church and my own personal experiences being a part of the community. In addition, I reflected on my own about my own experiences of discrimination in the local community and my feelings about such experiences. I worried how this would impact my ability to truly be a “stranger in a strange land,” as Peoples (2021) described this mindset to be important to really capture the true essence of a phenomenon. Understanding that one cannot truly ever suspend all biases in each moment, it was important for me to be aware and continuously reflect about my biases throughout this entire process. Regarding my project assistant who helped with the data analysis portion of this study, this was something that was also required for we continuously discussed during the data analysis process.

For the second phase of the data analysis, coding, I and my project assistant who helped with this process, used the 7 transcripts that were created from the audio recordings of the interviews. Five of the transcripts were translated into English before any coding began to have uniformity of the data; the other two interviews were conducted in English. It is important to note that I and my project assistant who helped verify the translations did our best in translating the essence of what was shared by the Spanish speaking participants. However, it is possible that the true essence of what was shared could have been misinterpreted or even lost due to some concepts not being directly translatable into English (Abfalter et., 2021; van Nes et al., 2010). Implications of this in future will be further discussed in the Discussion chapter. Once the Spanish transcriptions were translated into English, the coding began.

Transcripts were coded using ATLAS.ti, a type of qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), which provides useful tools in academic research, particularly for social science disciplines. With ATLAS.ti, a qualitative researcher can work with text documents in many capacities such as generating fully automated searches across one or multiple documents, auto-

code, or use semantic operations to extract meaning (ATLAS.ti, 2018). To keep with the essence of transcendental phenomenology, ATLAS.ti was only used as a data management platform, in which codes were created by myself and the project assistant based on the transcriptions. A benefit of using this software was that we could see, in real-time, how often codes were used, thus altering code names throughout the analysis process, if necessary.

After we were knowledgeable and competent of how to use ATLAS.ti, they began the coding process. First, coding occurred individually, meaning that we did not discuss our coding process with one another until the round of coding was complete. The approach to coding was inductive, meaning that codes were identified as a result of examining the transcripts. No predetermined codes were developed before we began this process. This approach was intentionally chosen because it was in line with phenomenological theory. The last step of coding was consensus coding, which involved me and my project assistant comparing codes and refining them. According to Saldaña (2015), this collaborative effort, known as intercoder agreement or interpretive convergence— the percentage at which different coders agree and remain consistent with their assignment of particular codes to particular data – is an important part of coding. Essentially, this process helps verify findings and limit researcher effects (ATLAS.ti, 2020).

Next, the codes were synthesized into final meaning units, or themes, to describe the experiences of the participants. Peoples (2021) described that themes are created by a researchers’ “deepened understanding of each participant’s description.” With this in mind, my project assistant and I collaborated on creating themes for each participant. We looked for codes that could be grouped together to generate a theme. Ryan and Bernard (2003) noted that in theme discovery, more is better. They suggested looking for repetitions, similarities and differences,

transitions, and linguistic connectors that occur frequently in text in order to produce themes—this is exactly what we did. Doing this together allowed for us to identify themes from different angles and positions, helping to limit researcher effects and develop confidence in findings.

Finally, we used the themes of each participant to construct a total picture and the essence of the experience. It is in this stage that we generated a cohesive understanding to each question that was asked and created general narratives, in order to unify the participants' accounts. All the participants' responses were organized thematically in order to describe the authentic experience. The meanings of each participant's experience were highlighted through direct quotes from the interviews.

Chapter 4

Results

Chapter Four presents findings that resulted from data collected through interviewing a total sample of 7 Latinx individuals selected from the same church community, comprised of a predominately Spanish speaking population. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for a rich depiction of these individuals' experiences. A methodical analysis of the interview transcriptions allowed me to identify word and thought patterns to generate preliminary meaning units for later framing of themes, and ultimately form a composite description of the true experience (Moustakas, 1994). After transcribing and translating the interviews, I followed a phenomenological process by delineating units of meaning, also known as coding. This process was accomplished by noting patterns in the way the participants described their lived experiences in the local community. Then, the codes were grouped to support the formation of themes. Ultimately, 9 themes developed from this effort and later led to the emergence of the true essence of the phenomenon: Although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity.

Participant Narratives

Conducting this study in a qualitative manner gave me the opportunity to engage with participants as I investigated the phenomenon of how social aspects of religiosity help (or not) cope with experiences of discrimination in the local community. I discovered that people were willing and open in sharing their experience, as well as grateful to have the opportunity to be heard. The following descriptions are designed to help the reader feel the essence of their stories. The names of the actual participants were changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

Participant #1

Isadora is a Latina woman in her late 20s who was born and raised in Mexico. Her highest level of education achieved is high school graduation. She is a mother and predominately stays home to care for them while her partner works most of the day. She arrived a few years ago to the local community, coming directly from her hometown. She informed me that she was interested in participating in this study because she resonated with the topic, noting that she felt she could speak about how her faith has helped her in various points in her life.

Isadora shared that she has been a member of the church community since she arrived, routinely goes to church, attending Mass once a week. When asked about other involvement in the church community, she shared that she has attended two other functions but wishes she could go to more. She shared that her days are full of parenting duties and running her household which keeps her from being more active in her church community. When asked why it was important for her to be a part of the church community, Isadora stated that this was her main source of social activity and community bonding.

Isadora stated that she has had difficulty building a support network in this country, and predominately relies on her partner to fulfill her emotional support needs. When asked about her experiences in the greater community, Isadora struggled to articulate positives about living in the community. She believed that this was due to not really partaking in the larger community and noted that this was due to a language barrier. However, she did say that she was hopeful that she could learn a new language and meet new people in the future. Interestingly, when asked about negatives about living in the area, Isadora shared that she has experienced maltreatment from “Hispanics”:

Isadora: When I first arrived... people know that you are in need of a job or that you don't have many opportunities to work. They want to take advantage of you...

Me: Did that happen to you?

Isadora: Yes. They want to pay you what they want. They want you to do things as if you've been doing things for 20 years. That's not cool. It's strange. If you know I'm just getting here and I'm just learning how to do this and you're the one that's teaching me how to do it, then why are you being so mean to me too?

When asked about how she coped with this experience, Isadora shared that she relied on her partner to emotionally support her as well as find tangible solutions for her like finding a new job.

Finally, Isadora shared her thoughts about her faith and how it has helped her through difficult times in her life. Isadora disclosed multiple stressors and hardships in her life, including symptoms of postpartum depression, the deaths of multiple family members and her ex-partner, and the loneliness of being in a new country without her family of origin. Isadora recognized how challenging her life has been but noted that it would be more challenging without her faith and her church community:

Isadora: Because I tell you, sometimes it's like I say, I don't know, I feel tired or I feel stressed or I feel a certain way. And sometimes I tell myself that I need to calm down... to make that connection with Him, a spiritual connection so to calm my mind, you get me?

Me: Yes

Isadora: It's a moment that I get things off my chest, talking to God or asking God or whatever (chuckles)... It's like I'm carrying, I don't know, a very heavy backpack and

suddenly I go and leave it there, or just simply talking to Him, talking with God is like I leave the backpack with Him and say, "I can't take it anymore. Now you help me carry it."

Participant #2

Dolores is a Latina woman in her mid-50's who was born and raised in Mexico. Her highest level of education achieved is the 9th grade. She is a mother and lives with her partner. Dolores is a full-time house cleaner. She arrived over a decade ago to the local area, first living in a major metropolitan city on the west coast and then another in the southeast before moving to her current home. Dolores shared that she came to this country nearly four decades ago and has no plans to return to Mexico. She informed me that she was interested in participating in this study because she strongly believes in accessible mental health services for the Latinx community.

Dolores shared that she has been a member of the church community since she arrived, routinely goes to church, attending Mass once a week. When asked about other involvement in the church community, she shared that she attends most events and activities put on by the church, especially if they are in celebration of the Lady of Guadalupe. However, she noted that she does not take on more active roles in the church because she works a lot and does not have the energy to be as active as she would like. She stated that she would eventually be a part of the church choir because she finds the people in the choir to be kind and welcoming. When asked why it was important for her to be a part of the church community, Dolores stated that she preferred going to a church that had Spanish Masses because the experience was "different" from the "other (Catholic) church in town."

Dolores openly shared about her life-long struggles with anxiety. She seemed to believe that her mental health concerns started very early on in her life, sharing almost an epigenetic hypothesis about her mental health concerns:

Dolores: I think it's because my anxiety is related to the problems that... well, how my parents were with me. I think that when I was in the womb, my mother was afraid of everything, especially all the things she endured living with my father. So, I believe that I got it (anxiety) from there.

She disclosed having received mental health treatment while living in a major metropolitan city on the west coast many years ago. However, Dolores shared she has not received mental health treatment since. When asked about barriers to mental health treatment, Dolores stated that she could not afford therapy because of her lack of health insurance. She became tearful as she explained her struggles with finding affordable health care because of her undocumented status. Dolores stated that she would attend therapy if there were providers in the community who could work with her situation and could understand the Latinx culture.

Dolores stated that she has a small but strong support network. However, Dolores stated that none of her confidants live in the area and she relies on her eldest daughter for emotional support when she needs it. When asked about her experiences in the greater community, Dolores shared that she really enjoyed living in the area. She noted that it was calm, peaceful, and safe, reminding her of where she grew up. In addition, Dolores shared she preferred living in the area over a big city. Regarding a negative experience in the local community, Dolores shared an emotionally charged account related to losing a client, who also claimed to be her friend, after she shared her undocumented status. Moreover, Dolores stated that this former client disclosed her status with a friend, and that the friend also distanced herself from Dolores.

Finally, Dolores shared her thoughts about her faith and how her church community has helped her navigate life. Dolores stated her faith gives a lot of meaning and structure in her life. She noted that her understanding of parenthood and family was rooted in her religion. She shared that she struggles to understand how someone could live life without God and has found this to be a point of contention with her sons. However, Dolores acknowledged that she does not love her children any less for not believing in God in the same way but hoped they came around. Although she has never needed tangible support and resources from the church, Dolores recognized that the church community can provide her with religious and physical support:

Dolores: I have never asked anything from the church. However, I do know that if I needed something, I could get it from the church. For me, the only thing that it (the church) has helped me with is my religious faith. I do know that many people have asked for financial support. I know that if you need something, like food, money for rent, they will help you if you ask.

Participant #3

Marisol is a Latina woman in her late 20's who was born and raised in Colombia. She is currently enrolled in a master's program at the local university. She arrived less than a year ago to the local community, coming specifically to complete her degree program. Marisol informed me that she was interested in participating in this study because she resonated with the topic as well as her appreciation for qualitative research.

Marisol shared that she became a member of the church community after visiting multiple churches of various denominations in town. She shared that when she found this church, she felt a sense of being in community and "an excuse to be close to the Latin community." Furthermore, Marisol stated that going to this particular church was like "returning to the

concept of mothers, aunties, and family get-togethers.” When asked about her involvement in the church community, she shared that she attends Mass every week and attends multiple events and functions like the Lenten Fish Fry’s. Marisol shared that she has met multiple friends, including a woman who she walks regularly with to church. Marisol acknowledged that she can be herself and feels accepted by this community.

Marisol provided unique insight of a graduate student and her experience at the local university. She shared both positive and negative experiences, in and out of the university. Regarding positive experiences, Marisol seems to believe that the university does a good job in providing space for international students to be in community and share with one another:

Marisol: I think something that the university has given me and has made me feel good about is that I have had the opportunity to put on and attend various events like the *Social Hour, Culture and Coffee*, and *Culture and Cuisine*, in which the highlighted country has been Colombia and I got the opportunity to represent my country. This has been a lovely experience, to be a part of the university and to be an ambassador for my country... These kinds of events are an opportunity for me and my comrades, the Nepalese, the Iranians... they feel the same way... When we have a platform at the university, it is a great way to showcase who we are and our culture.

Marisol expressed great pride in who she is and where she comes from and felt that she was well-rooted in her identity as a Colombian. However, Marisol expressed feelings of disappointment when she shared about her negative experiences:

Marisol: I have found it to be a bit sad and frustrating when someone learns that I work for the university and am pursuing my master’s degree, they assume that because I am Colombian, I probably work as an undocumented person or that I worked in a restaurant.

In addition, Marisol pointed out that she sometimes feels invisible and is not acknowledged as belonging to the student body unless she clearly is wearing clothing with the university logo on it:

Marisol: A White American can see me in the street, and they may not acknowledge me or smile at me. But if I am wearing something that has the (university) logo on it, and they see me on the street, they will smile at me or they will say, [university greeting].

Nevertheless, Marisol made it explicitly clear that she was a big fan of the university and roots for the university at every athletic event she attends.

Finally, Marisol shared her thoughts about her faith and how it has helped her through difficult times in her life. Marisol provided various examples when her religion and spirituality have served as buffers for challenging moments in her life, including coping with her family's economic hardship and recovery from a serious accident. Marisol shared her experience of faith being more transcendental in nature, noting that her "main focus is to find an idea of God or of a Higher Being, a support that provides me with an understanding of the lived experience."

Participant #4

Andres is a Latino man in his early 40's who was born and raised in Mexico. His highest level of education achieved is completing elementary school. He is married and is a father. Andres is a full-time construction worker. He arrived a little over a year ago to the local area, coming directly from his hometown. Andres shared that he came to this country in order to work hard and provide for his family. He informed me that he was interested in participating in this study because he enjoyed talking about his faith with others.

Andres shared that he became a member of the church community shortly after he saved enough money to buy a car. He shared that he routinely goes to church, attending Mass once a

week and spends a lot of his free time doing individual Bible study. When asked about other involvement in the church community, he shared that he participates in various raffles and events held at the church. Andres noted that he views Mass as a way to connect with others and be social. Andres also noted that he enjoys going to this church because it is something familiar in a time in his life where there is a lot of “new and change.”

Andres acknowledged that although this church community was not the one, he spent most of his adult life in, he felt connected to it. Andres emphasized the importance of religion and faith in his life, sharing that he chose to be part of the Catholic faith once he was an adult. He shared that his faith has given his life meaning and purpose, stating that in his hometown, he was able to be a part of creating and opening a new church. Andres shared that he has always seen his faith as a way to connect with others and viewed it as an integral part of serving the community. Andres noted that both his old and new church communities focus on helping, not only its parishioners, but the community at large:

Andres: They have two collections at Mass, one goes to the church and the other goes to someone who needs the money.

Finally, Andres shared his thoughts about the greater community, sharing both positive and negative experiences. Andres found that his experience of the local community is intertwined with the church, noting that he does not see a difference between the two. He stated that this reminded him of “back home,” encountering the people he sees at church out in the community. He also noted how calm and peaceful the local community and having very little to be worried about. However, Andres acknowledged that his greatest hardship was adjusting to a new culture and being away from his family.

Participant #5

Soledad is a Latina woman in her late 50's who was born and raised in Ecuador. Her highest level of education achieved is completing an associate degree. She is a mother and a full-time home maker. She arrived a few months ago to this community, moving from another state in the southeastern part of the United States. Soledad shared that she came to this country over three decades ago. She informed me that she was interested in participating in this study because she wanted to be more involved with the church community.

Soledad shared that she learned about the church community from her son. She shared that when she was first introduced to the church, she was shocked to see the large size of the congregation and how young the members were. Furthermore, Soledad shared that, although she was very new to the community, she felt that people were welcoming and friendly. Soledad noted that this was refreshing to experience and rejuvenated her commitment to her faith. Soledad expressed a desire to get more involved with the community.

When discussing her faith and how it has helped her cope with hard times in her life, Soledad spoke about how it provides a foundation for her life. Soledad shared the importance of her personal religious practices such as prayer and attending Mass, providing her comfort during challenging times in her life. In addition, Soledad noted the importance of social aspects of her faith, such as being a part of prayer and service groups, and the building of community. Soledad offered an idea about how religious support could benefit the greater community:

Soledad: If we could have religious support in the public system along with the other services we have...we could open the doors to a priest, to a counselor, to somebody of any religion, then I think it could help with the social problems that we have. It's a shame, I think that our officials, politicians, people that are in charge don't think of this.

We continue to tolerate and accept all these (shooting) tragedies that happen, that we hear on the news, but we don't consider, "Why? Why and how can we prevent this?" Not to do it after the fact, you know?

Participant #6

Magda is a Latina woman in her mid-50's who was born and raised in Mexico. Her highest level of education achieved is a bachelor's degree. She is married and is a mother. She works in community engagement at the local university. She arrived 10 years ago to this region, moving from the west coast of the United States. Magda came to the United States over three decades ago. Magda informed me that she was interested in participating in this study because she resonated with the topic and appreciated the opportunity to share about the experiences of being a Latina in the local community.

Magda shared that she has been an active member of the church community since for the majority of her time living in the local area. She shared that she first became a member of the predominately English-speaking Catholic church but became gradually more involved with the predominately Spanish-speaking Catholic church due to the need that she saw in the community. Magda shared a long list of the ways she is involved, including marriage preparation workshops, parenting classes, the Quinceañera classes, teen retreats, and Eucharistic ministry. When asked why she takes on so many different projects and efforts, Magda shared that she lives out her faith through action and service. She shared that these works bring her much fulfillment and pride. Most importantly, Magda stated that she saw her works as a "bridge" for parishioners to the local community.

Magda shared feeling very connected to the local community, beyond the church community. She noted feeling supported by various forms of social support, including religious

and non-religious friends. When sharing about her positives about living in the local community, Magda shared her satisfaction in creating a supportive “chosen family” and a network of friends. When sharing about her negative experiences, Magda shared about struggles within and outside the church. Related to the church, Magda disclosed an incident with a visiting priest who failed to understand the culture of the community and parishioners:

Magda: I had one experience with a visiting priest... I went to let him know about the struggles of one family. And he told me, “Well, people come only like this is a store. They want to buy something, and I am not going to be doing anything for them.” And I was like, “Oh...” (intonation of voice goes up). So, I wrote a long email to the Bishop to let him know... “Your priest, he was not being very kind.” What would Jesus do with this? I don't keep my mouth shut.

Related to her experience in the community, Magda shared about a co-worker who made fun of her accent during a work presentation:

Magda: I remember doing a presentation, and I said something like, “We invite families to attend the parent workshops.” I guess I didn't pronounce it correctly because she (co-worker) was like, “Wait a minute, Magda, we're not worshipping anybody.” She started to laugh but nobody laughed except her. I thought, “What did I say...” I had to think through everything I said. When you are an adult and you learn another language, first you think in your own language and then you make that translation, and then you try to figure it out. It takes time. Everything needs to happen in a millisecond. I went back and thought through, “What did I say?” I said, “I apologize if I mispronounce words. What I was trying to say is that we invite parents to come and attend educational programs.” I changed the word to “workshops...”

Despite these experiences, Magda believes she belongs in the community and finds meaning and purpose in how she lives her life.

Participant #7

Carmela is a Latina woman in her early 50's who was born and raised in Mexico. Her highest level of education achieved is high school graduation. She is a mother and currently is single. She arrived over a decade ago to the local area, coming directly from her hometown. Carmela is a full-time house cleaner. When asked about why she wanted to participate in this study, Carmela shared that she found the topic to be interesting and wondered what it would be like to be interviewed.

Carmela shared that she became a member of the church community shortly after she arrived. She disclosed that she started going to the church after being mostly inactive for almost 20 years. Carmela stated that she stepped back from the church during her marriage because her ex-husband was not religious. She came to the United States to make a new life for herself and her children. She sought out the church to “return to her roots” and have something familiar in her life. Since becoming a part of this church community, Carmela has served in various roles, including in liturgical ministry, religious education, and church leadership. When asked what prompted her to get so involved, Carmela shared that she saw a great need for people to get involved so she did.

When asked about her experiences in the greater community, Carmela shared, although having lived in the area for over a decade, she does not feel connected to the community. Carmela disclosed that most of the relationships she has are through the church, and predominately with Latinx individuals. She believes the main reason for not feeling as connected to the larger community is due to the language barrier and limited opportunities for single older

people to meet and gather. However, Carmela noted she felt the most excluded by the Hispanic/Latinx community:

Carmela: I think the most negative experience that I have had here is probably my interactions with Hispanics. The fact that you are a divorced woman, like in my case, or separated, people do not include you to interact with families. I know many people who would get together as couples and I would be excluded because I was divorced. Do you understand? Or because women would think, that because one is single, that I could take their husbands...I have felt very left out that they don't invite me to many things.

Carmela acknowledged that most of her interactions are with the Hispanic/ Latinx community and cannot say if she would be treated differently by non- Hispanic/ Latinx individuals. Finally, Carmela saw her personal growth as the most valuable thing she has gotten from living in this community:

Carmela: (A positive experience of living in this community) I think more than anything is that I have learned to value myself. I have been able to accomplish a lot as a woman. For example, I have been able to financially support my children's college careers and survive on my own. I became stronger and more confident.

Data Coding and Emerging Themes

Through the analysis process, my project assistant and I identified 406 statements as significant to the study. We reviewed the initial groupings of meaning through the context of the participant's complete response to each of the 10 interview questions as well as the responses to the demographic questionnaire. This helped us cross reference overall meaning with the developing clusters. The groupings were then organized into 9 themes: Religious Coping, Religious Meaning Making, Church Positives, Community Positives, Community Barriers,

Mental Health Experiences, Mental Health Barriers, Discriminatory Experiences and Urban versus Rural Experiences. These 9 themes evolved as we reviewed transcripts, with much discussion on why these seemed the most appropriate. This process took several hours, over multiple days, to complete. We determined these 9 themes captured the main ideas of what was shared by participants, as well as provided a clear path to understanding the essence of the phenomenon being studied. This next section further elaborates on each theme and provides examples supporting each theme.

Religious Coping

This theme relates to how the participants used their religion to cope with hardship and challenges. In line with existing literature, religious coping was a shared experience amongst the participants, with them using it to overcome life stressors such as mental health physical health concerns. Participants expressed the importance of having this ability to get through significant obstacles in their lives:

Isadora: Everything is going to be okay, whatever situation we're in, to think, to know that God or whatever we believe in, is taking care of us and is doing things in our best interest, whatever the circumstances

Andres: If I do mess up or need support, I offer it up to Him.

Marisol: I thought that there was a God who could do anything, and my doctor would say, "We will probably have to amputate your leg." And I would say, "Are there options?" And he said, "Very few." Then, I said to him, "Do what you need to do, and I will do what I need to do." And what I needed to do was, the only thing I needed to do, the only thing that I thought I needed to do, was go home and pray and ask God, "Lord, please make me strong. Show me how to heal my body. I want to save my leg."

Magda: When we have had tragedy in a family, that is our backbone support. When we have had to deal with illnesses, I could call my priest, the Sister, and say, “This is what we're going through. I need prayers. I need support.”

Religious Meaning Making

This theme relates to how one makes sense of their lived experiences. For the participants, this was how they understood their experiences, from a religious lens. Interestingly, some participants seemed to view their experiences from a positive religious meaning making framework, while others from a more negative one.

Marisol: God tries to communicate us in a variety of ways, but mainly through our intuition. I do believe that. And I think I have experienced it many times in supernatural ways that makes me believe, “I know God meant this thing for me. I know God wanted me to experience this thing. I know God asked this of me. I know God took this away.” I believe this truly marvelous.

Carmela: Maybe God will forgive this since He forgives everything... I sometimes think I am the problem. I feel like maybe, “I am the one that does not feel good about it...” It’s a promise that I made, that we both made, since it was mutual. We are two people (who made this decision). I vowed for in “sickness and health” and in the “good times and the bad” and I didn’t keep that promise. (I feel) like I failed.

Church Positives

This theme captured what the participants deemed to be positive experiences within the church community.

Soledad: When you go to the churches in Ecuador, you see all the involvement from the children because they belong to Catholic schools. When you are at mass, the kids, after

mass, are actually helping outside in the parking lots. And that's what I saw in (local town), too. It was super neat. The young people are outside, greeting you, and saying goodbye to you. I thought it was super nice.

Magda: We celebrate the feast of Virgen de Guadalupe. It's like this big thing. One year, when (former church leader) was here at (local Catholic church), he decided... "This is too big... Why, don't we do it at (another Catholic church)?" And we did it at (another Catholic church in the community) and I went and invited all my friends. And I said, "Guys, you guys, do you want to eat really good Mexican food?" "Yes!" "(Local Catholic church) is going to have this event. Come and learn about our culture." They were like, "Heck yes, food and culture? Let's go!" They came. The whole family. The kids were like, "Oh, tell me the story..." So, you just never know, how you act and what... You put a little seed down there.

Carmela: Once I got to make my friends, it was cool because I was able to go to church with them. [Interviewer: It sounds like it helped you get connected with the community.] Yes, with the community. Exactly. And also, I returned to what my life was like, religiously, before I got married. The part of me that I neglected during my marriage.

Community Positives

This theme highlights how participants fully engage in the larger community. Participants shared how they actively partake in the community and how they contribute to the local area.

Marisol: A few weeks ago, I was walking home after mass with the wife of an owner of a local restaurant. Someone that I met at church was driving by and stopped saying, "I didn't know you walked to church. I will give you a ride." I told the person, "Oh no, it's ok. Today, I have company. Maybe next time..."

Andres: This place is beautiful. It's calm and peaceful. I would say that things have gone well for me here. I would say everything is calm. There is no fear, there is no concern. That's how I feel.

Dolores: A positive for me is my work and the calm (I feel living here). Both of those are the main positives. Oh, and that I have everything nearby. I don't have to drive one or two hours to go to work, or doctor visits... Everything is close by.

Magda: Many times, when I'm working, and I'm talking with a family. There is somebody who asks about health resources, right? Health fairs, there's health fairs. And so, I'm there representing (the university) and the entity that I work for. The community comes and they now recognize me, "Oh, yeah, we see you in church. Oh, yeah, you and your husband are doing this. Oh yeah, you are the religious ed teacher..." But now they also want to know about the services offered through my job.

Carmela: I have never felt alone. It's the support that we all give each other here. I have had friends who have gone to the hospital, for example, to have their babies or friends who need... I have a neighbor a few doors down who had to go to hospital to get surgery to remove a piece of her intestine. My neighbor has no family members here (in this country) except her two young daughters. She felt comfortable enough to ask me to watch her daughters while she was in the hospital. She also asked me to come wash her hair in the hospital, "Can you please come by to wash my hair because I haven't washed it in two weeks?" With trust, we can and should support one another ... We give each other a helping hand.

Community Barriers

This theme related to the barriers and challenges that the participants reported that get in the way of being able to fully engage in the larger community.

Isadora: I feel that English separates me a little bit because sometimes many people try to talk to me and I don't know how to respond but I see that people try to talk or make comments about the children or about something else, but the language barrier makes it difficult for me. But from there, no, they haven't made me feel uncomfortable or anything like that. They have been nice to me.

Dolores: I have other clients who know that I am undocumented. It doesn't bother them. In fact, I had a previous client who tried to help me out. She said, "If it's possible, I will pay for the cost of fixing your papers." But I couldn't. She gave me a number to an attorney. We asked. She wanted to pay for everything, but I couldn't fix my papers.

Andres: For the first two or three months, you spend most of your time at home, not going anywhere besides work... I needed to save money to buy a car. Without it, I could not go anywhere. I did not want to bother people for rides... If you are not going anywhere, then you are not meeting friends

Andres: The negative is the struggle of being in a new place. You do not know the city very well. You do not know the rules like the traffic rules. You do not know where the highways will take you. So, you spend a lot of time alone.

Discriminatory Experiences

This theme captured what the participants deemed to be discriminatory experiences while living in the local community. Question 7 in the interview guide was instrumental in capturing these experiences authentically:

Dolores: (Regarding sharing her citizenship status with a former client) Yes, I never mentioned it to her before. I also mentioned that my husband did not have papers and after that, she no longer wanted to be my friend. It hurt me because no one should be that way to anyone.

Marisol: The worst thing is that this person was with their son. When I mentioned that I was from Medellin, his son touched his nose like he was snorting cocaine. His mom did not understand the gesture, so he did it again. And his mom asked him, “Why are you doing that?” I answered for him, “It’s because he is letting you know it’s the capital of cocaine.” He immediately became embarrassed, but he did not say anything, no apology, nothing. It was super uncomfortable for me.

Magda: When I went to the store, the lady behind me tapped me, and she said, “You are not from here, sweetie, are you?” “What gave me away?” So, she was like, “Oh, the way you speak.” And I was like, “Yeah, no. We just moved here...”

Mental Health Experience

This theme captured the mental health experiences of the participants. Folks shared both positive and negative experiences of mental health and their history with mental health treatment. In addition, some participants shared their conceptualization of mental health and the importance of receiving appropriate treatment.

Isadora: Mental health is very important because just as you can think of thoughts of blessings, of prosperity, of love, of happiness. There are also other thoughts that are not so good, that can be the opposite of all that. Those bad thoughts can lead you to do things against you, against others, against whoever. I think that faith reminds one they are loved and that everything is going to be okay.

Dolores: About five years ago, I moved to [a major city in the southeast] and only lasted 6 months there. My niece kept telling me to go, and that [this city] was better. I listened to her. Well, I was there for 6 months without work and I think I was depressed. I had headaches. I was sick. When I was returning to (local town), my well-being got better as soon as I entered the city limits. I felt better.

Marisol: My therapist said I need a support network here, and I asked (my friends), “Can I count on you to be there for me?” And they showed up for me. So now, here in the United States, I can count on three people who I know will be there for me.

Mental Health Barriers

This theme was identified as we grouped codes together for mental health. We noticed a number of the original mental health codes were focused specifically on the challenges of accessing mental health services. Thus, we decided to create a new theme to capture this experience.

Dolores: I have never (received therapy here) because you know, I don’t know if it would be free or if I would have to pay because I don’t have (health) insurance that could cover my needs. So, everything I have to pay out of pocket, whatever service I have to pay. And sometimes one doesn’t go seeking help because it is too expensive.

Marisol: (Regarding the university counseling center) the second reason why I stopped going was because the session was in English. I don’t think I have enough mastery of English to be able to express myself in the way that I would like. I don’t think I have strong enough of a vocabulary to be able to say what I want.

Carmela: There’s truly a real big need here. Truly. I think many people, including myself, when we hear that there’s a psychologist who can speak Spanish, we are like, “Oh, I

would love to meet with them...” It would be great to have therapy or something like that.

Urban versus Rural

Although not as denoted as the first eight themes, we felt this was an important theme to include due to participants making clear comparisons between both of them in various ways. This included both pros and cons of each and participant’s opinions of which lifestyle they preferred.

Dolores: This is a very quiet city. There is not much to do. Yet, you feel calm. I experience a lot of calm in small cities like these. For me, what I like the most is that there are very few drugs, there are not many gangs here. There are some here but not in the same amount as bigger cities.

Marisol: In Chicago, in New York, in Washington DC, but here there is no public transportation. It is ridiculous. Even in the summer, if you decide to stay here in (local town), there is no (university transit system).

Connection to the Research Questions

Investigating the phenomenon that exists relating to how these individuals experience social aspects of religiosity and how they buffer experiences of discrimination is the goal of this study. I set out to make meaning of this void in the scholarly literature. To accomplish this task, I posed three questions designed to not only serve as a guide for the study, but moreover to structurally search for meaning through the lived experiences of the participants. The following relates my findings to the research questions, describing the essence of the phenomenon by weaving in the emergent themes from my study.

What are the Experiences of Discrimination of This Particular Latinx Sample?

As discussed above, a number of participants reported experiences of discrimination in the local community from which the sample was drawn. They shared about experiences occurring in everyday settings including in the workplace, at school, at the convenience store, and at a bar in town. The participants who reported such experiences also happened to be the ones who were the most involved in the greater community, beyond just the church community. The participants described in various ways how “normal” interactions quickly become hostile and discriminatory. They all shared the same sentiment that this quick shift always took them by surprise and was disappointing:

Dolores: Her friend would say that she was a part of a Christian church community and when that lady found out I was undocumented, she too no longer wanted to do anything with me. And according to her, she supposedly helped the Hispanic community. I tell you; I don't see how she actually helped the Hispanic community because as soon as she learned that I was undocumented, she no longer had communication with me.

Marisol: In (local town), normally, what I have encountered with White Americans is that they are nice and everything but, well... I did have someone say, “Wait, you are in a master's program?” “Yeah...” “You speak English? You are teaching Spanish? For being Colombian, you are very smart.” I try not to take it seriously, but yeah, there are many moments like that.

Carmela: I went to a Dollar General to pick up some things. I was looking for something, but I could not find it. When I got to the register, the cashier I asked me, “Did you find what you were looking for?” And so, I responded, “No.” Then, she turned around and

looked at another worker, and they start to laugh. And so, I asked, “Why are you laughing? I didn’t find what I was looking for...” And they just kept laughing. I got home and I told my daughter what happened, “I think they were laughing at me because they probably assumed that I didn’t understand the question.” But I did understand the question. She asked me if I found what I was looking for and I answered honestly. I did not find what I was looking for.

Interestingly, discrimination was also experienced within the Latinx community. The participants who spent a lot of time within this community and who relied heavily on it as a main source of support reported this experience. This also seemed to experience the same sentiment as those individuals who spend a lot of time interacting with the greater community, one of surprise and disappointment:

Isadora: The only negative things about here is that the Hispanics, the same people that you try to get to know, they are not very kind... people know that you are in need of a job or that you don’t have many opportunities to work. They want to take advantage of you.

Carmela: That has been really hard for me here even so now, to present day. However, I have gotten used to it. It does not bother me as much anymore. In the beginning though, I would say to myself, “Why do they do that? Why do they all get-together and they don’t invite me?” “Why are they getting together for a picnic and not inviting me?” I think that has been the worst experience about living here. To experience that exclusion... I will say that this has been my experience predominately with the Hispanic community, which is where I spend most of my time. With the Americans, I tell my clients that I am single. They don’t seem to have an issue with that. I think they are more openminded when it comes to that.

How does the Latinx Population at This Parish Cope with Discrimination?

Participants shared the various ways in which they cope with discrimination. They described coping strategies to include positive view of self and identity, positive meaning making, and social support. All the participants who offered up their experiences noted these were essential in overcoming the negative effects of discriminatory behavior:

Isadora: He (partner) helped me look for another job where they didn't treat me like that. Yeah, he tried to make me find something that I was more comfortable with doing.

Marisol: This is the good thing about these kinds of interviews. People have a variety of experiences. Obviously, everyone feels differently about these kinds of experiences. I am a person who is super proud of her country and where she comes from. I am very proud of who I am. So, these types of comments or experiences do not succeed in making me feel sad.

Magda: There was an incident with a co-worker when I was giving a presentation. My husband tried to make me feel better by saying she was jealous of me. And I'm like, "What for? She's pretty, she's funny..." But my husband's like, "Uh yeah, but she doesn't have that Hispanic thing that people like, because you are new. You are unique."

Carmela: The majority of the people who come from our countries are poor people. Because the people who are wealthy or who have a lot, they stay. They do not have a need to leave their home. To say that all of Mexico is poor is incorrect. You can go to Mexico and be surprised of what you may find. There are people who are college graduates, who studied, who are professional, who earn a lot of money, who have good jobs, who take vacations, who live in luxury. The people who come to this country, are

predominately poor. Or that we had circumstances, like in my case, like a failed marriage or a bankruptcy and end up with nothing. We come here to work hard to be able to live.

In What Ways, if any, are Social Aspects of Religiosity Used in Coping with Discrimination?

Based on what was shared by the participants, a cluster of themes provided the answer to this question. Participants emphasized the importance of community and belonging that they experience specifically in their church community which they do not experience anywhere else in the local area. They shared how this impacted their view of self, their place in the larger community, and overall well-being. It seems that social aspects of religiosity were a protective factor for the participants:

Isadora: They invite you to get involved with the church. I have noticed that the (women) in the choir try to talk to you or chat with you or try to get to know you. I have noticed that when they put on the food sales, they are there. They greet you and they try to converse with you. They make you feel good, they don't make you feel like a freak.

Marisol: At church, it is different because I feel that I am a part of the Latin community. When the people there see me, they see me as one of them. Maybe it's because of my brown skin, maybe it's because of my facial features, maybe it's because of our shared language, maybe it's because of our shared beliefs.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented findings that describe how Latinx individuals experience and cope with discrimination using social aspects of religiosity. I restated the strategy for the study's design and analysis. My analytical approach to this study aligned with the theoretical framework designed to investigate the lived experiences of the participants. I provided a succinct narrative of each participant, providing insight into their lived experience. I discussed the data coding and

theme discovery process, as well as provided a comprehensive description for each of the 9 themes. Finally, I linked the findings to the three research questions, coming to the conclusion that although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This phenomenological study explored how Latinx individuals experience and cope with discrimination using social aspects of religiosity. I was interested in discovering how participants described this experience through personal accounts of their lived experiences. This study offers insight for researchers, mental health professionals, church leaders, community leaders, academic institutions, and the general population. My research intent was for study findings to add to the body of mental health related to the Latinx community. The lived experiences of 7 Latinx individuals from a predominately Latinx church community in Eastern Alabama were captured through virtual interviews, categorized into 9 themes, and then further analyzed in order to capture the essence of phenomenon being studied: although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity. This chapter weaves together the literature and findings, discusses clinical-based implications, and makes a case for future research.

Connection to the Literature

During the conceptualization of this study, I was interested in how my findings would enhance current literature. While previous research has not directly explored how Latinx individuals use social aspects of religiosity to cope with discrimination, I suspected there could be a unique phenomenon. Conducting this study helped me develop a deeper understanding in order to make parallels with previous literature, as well as to note differences. I was able to recognize where my findings overlap, where my findings differ, and where my findings examine something new.

Current literature highlights the importance of two separate concepts, religious coping and religious meaning making, in being essential in how people experience the world. Hayward and Krause's (2014) comprehensive review on the effectiveness of religiosity in increasing mental health concluded that religiosity has a modest but robust relationship with lower incidence and severity of mental illness and with greater psychological well-being overall. This was very much a true experience for the participants of this study. All the participants shared how they use their faith to make meaning of both positive and negative experiences in their lives. In addition, religiosity has been found to be used most frequently as a way to cope for individuals who report low income and lower socioeconomic status (Ojeda & Piña- Watson, 2013; Paez et al., 2018). In part due to the inaccessibility of mental health services, the participants turn to their faith to guide them through hardships. Essentially, their religiosity provides the main framework of how to navigate life and how they interact with others.

Religion historically has been a default way to make meaning of life and cope with life's challenges, especially for individuals who report low income and lower socioeconomic status (Ojeda & Piña- Watson, 2013). One could make the argument that the main reason for someone to make meaning of their hardship and their life in this way is because they have no other frame of reference. This idea is further exacerbated if we consider people's experiences with education, exposure to other ways of thinking, and accessibility to resources. Yet, about half the participants in this study had a least a year of college education completed at the time of their interviews which makes me consider that there could be something more than the simplistic conclusion that only a particular group of individuals makes meaning of the world and copes with life's challenges from a religious lens.

Regarding the sense of community and belonging, the literature highlights the importance of religious congregations and the well-being of the Latinx community (Guarnaccia et al., 2005; Ojeda et al., 2011). Furthermore, religious congregations and communities are particularly used when Latinx individuals experience some sort of hardship (Barden et al., 2016; Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2013; Soto, 2011) and are great hubs for the dissemination of resources and information (Livingston et al., 2008). Being a part of faith-based community seems to have a fundamental purpose in the lives of the Latinx community, especially for the participants of this study. Example after example was provided about the importance of having this space in the greater community in order to feel safe and thrive. Whether it was a faith-related need or a more practical need, all the participants knew that they could count on the safety net of their church community. Even for the participants who had negative experiences with other Latinx individuals in the church community, they had no doubt that if anything came up for them, that the church could provide aid. This assurance can be a rare certainty and comfort, especially in the lives of immigrants.

Finally, considering the complexity of various discrimination experiences, the literature suggests that acculturation, mastery of the English language, education level, socioeconomic status, and legal status all play a role in how Latinx individuals experience discrimination (Araujo, 2004; Ortiz & Telles, 2012; Ayón et al., 2010; NPR, 2017). When evaluating how the level of acculturation moderates the impact of discrimination, it has been suggested that the more involved a Latinx individual is in the community, the higher likelihood of them being exposed to these negative experiences (Ayón et al., 2010; Ortiz & Telles, 2012). In addition, Finch and their colleagues (2000) concluded that highly acculturated Mexican immigrant participants were more likely to experience discrimination than their less acculturated counterparts, but more highly

acculturated U.S. born respondents were less likely to experience discrimination, overall, compared to both immigrant respondents and U.S. born respondents. The existing literature supported the findings of this study. As presented in the Results chapter, there were two different experiences captured related to discrimination.

One of those experiences was related to the more acculturated participants, who take up space in predominately White majority spaces (e.g., the local university). They were the ones who had a variety of examples and seemed the most bothered by their experiences. Whereas the participants, who were less acculturated and did not really integrate themselves outside of the Latinx community, described few discriminatory experiences in the greater community. Interestingly, these individuals, although having few experiences of discrimination in town, seemed to experience more within their own community, and respectively, feel more distressed (compared to the more acculturated individuals). This finding was probably the most novel of all, given that I did not really consider this possible experience in my conceptualization of the study. Considering a phenomenological approach to this finding, it is appropriate that I would not have had the foresight to consider this or even bracket this possibility due to the concept of the “horizon.” The “horizon” in transcendental phenomenology focuses on the present experience, and thus the present experience cannot be suspended or bracketed because one is currently experiencing it (Office of Teaching and Learning Excellence, 2020; Peoples, 2021).

Implications of Findings

This study presented a portrait of social aspects of religiosity and the impact on discriminatory experiences on Latinx individuals. Their stories provided a new perspective about the lives of Latinx individuals in the Southeastern region of the United States, which is not historically known to be a desirable destination for Latinx individuals to plant roots in. And yet,

it seems to be an area of the country where people are moving to and building lives. In this particular sample, when I met with the church leadership to discuss recruitment strategies, I was informed that the Latinx congregation had grown so much over the past few years that the Spanish Masses are now being held at the bigger Catholic church in town. It seems that the church leaders had a need to meet the growing congregation size by moving to a bigger space. Yet, I wonder if that same enthusiasm can include resources to support an expanding community. This could look like increasing financial support from the Archdiocese and/ or increasing funds allocated to individuals in need and requiring parish leadership and visiting priests to learn Spanish. In addition, based on the diverse experiences of individuals at the church, I think it would be beneficial in considering new and more inclusive ways to create community. Considering that many Latinx individuals see the church as their primary way of connection, it would be beneficial for a variety forms of building community. This could look like more opportunities to do outdoor retreats, events centered around single/ non-married individuals, and cultural bridging programming. On a broader scale, all the recommendations I suggest could benefit other Latinx Catholic congregations in other rural communities. However, I would strongly encourage for church leadership and community organizers in other congregations to ask their members what their needs are rather than to assume in order to make a meaningful and effective impact.

Regarding how to practically incorporate the findings of this study into clinical practice, it could be beneficial to conceptualize mental health care more holistically. I think about how for all the participants, their mental health and religious worldview were practically intertwined. I think sometimes as clinicians we struggle to view other possibilities or causes of poor mental health that are not rooted in an empirically based theoretical orientation. Now, I am not saying to

throw the baby out with the bathwater, but maybe we seriously consider alternative explanations and approaches to the work. Hernandez et al. (2016) noted how major theories informing clinicians' understandings of psychological well-being draw heavily from Western-centric perspectives, often neglect cultural frameworks (Sue et al., 2009). This can become a severe hinderance in providing adequate and effective care, as well as making care inaccessible (Hernandez et al., 2016; Ojeda et al., 2011). One way to limit this is by truly embracing the person who sits in front of us in the therapy room. Although only for a few hours, I got to experience the essence of each person. All of them were eager to share and to talk about their lives. I made a conscious and intentional effort to be present. Intentionality is not only in line with transcendental phenomenology, but it also allows us to truly be empathetic. These may seem like simple concepts, but I know they were important to the success of this study and are important in clinical work.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are plenty of directions for next steps in the research. Considering the themes found and how they supported the research questions, there are multiple directions to expand on this study's findings. Regarding discrimination, the first research question aimed to determine the authentic experiences of the participants. During the conceptualization stage of this study, it was suggested to keep the study in the spirit of exploratory research, it was best not to openly and directly ask about discriminatory behaviors. Instead, I opted to ask a more general question and then asking probing questions as the interviewed unfolded. Some people were able to share their experiences without probing questions, simply responding to "negative experiences." However, there were others who needed the probing question in order to share their true

experience with discrimination. I noticed that the probing question that directly prompted an answer was “Have you been treated differently based on how you look like? Speak?”

In order to capture the participants’ true experiences with discrimination, I made sure to bracket my own preconceived ideas and previous experience to correctly capture the phenomenon. This process helped me obtain, analyze, and report the occurrence to the best of my ability, leading to the most accurate representation of how these individuals experience and process discriminatory behavior. This approach allowed me to capture the complexity of experiences, including the within- group discrimination experience. Future researchers can investigate this within-group discriminatory behavior, and potentially link it to existing literature on belonging and acculturation.

The second research question aimed to develop a bridge for the second half of the phenomenon in question. Trying to answer this question was more challenging than the first. This was partly due to being less direct than the first. No question in the interview guide got to this directly but rather it was more of a conglomerate of responses. During the formation of themes, it was clear that participants provided their experiences of coping with discrimination in various ways including using their positive view of self and identify, positive meaning making, and social support. Considering the wide array of responses, I would contemplate asking more direct questions, although not too direct. Unfortunately, this is the delicate balance of a phenomenology study—answering research questions sometimes have a roundabout way of being answered or, maybe never being answered at all. Although we ultimately answered the question, it was quite difficult to code for and codes fell under multiple themes. This made interpretation a bit more challenging and would have been quite impossible without an extra person (research assistant).

My third, and final, research question aimed to develop an understanding of the second half of the phenomenon in question. Trying to answer this question was the most challenging out of all the research questions. This was partly due in being the least direct and having minimal background in the literature. Similar to the second research question, there were no questions in the interview guide that directly captured this phenomenon; again, a cluster of themes helped answer the question. During the formation of themes, a pattern of participants emphasized the importance of community and belonging that they experience specifically in their church community which they do not experience anywhere else in the local area. They shared how this impacted their view of self, their place in the larger community, and overall well-being. It could be beneficial to further explore how social aspects of religiosity are present (or not) in other religious and ethnic groups. Considering how acculturation impacts discriminatory experiences, it is possible there could be moderating factors like level of acculturation that could impact the effects of social aspects of religiosity. Finally, future research should consider if there are specific social aspects of religiosity that are more important or helpful in relation to coping with discrimination.

Conclusion

Previous studies had limited understanding of the relationship between social aspects of religiosity and discrimination. As a researcher and mental health clinician interested in multicultural therapy and competence, my decision to explore this concept came from a place of genuine curiosity and care for the Latinx community. To address the void in scholarly literature, my study explored how Latinx individuals use social aspects of religiosity to cope with discrimination. My investigation utilized phenomenological methodology to form descriptive themes. I interviewed 7 Latinx individuals who met specific criteria to participate in this study.

Participants were selected from a local predominately Latinx church congregation in the Deep South. The semi-structured virtual interviews with the participants provided rich information of their experiences.

My findings revealed nine themes relating to their lived experiences: Religious Coping, Religious Meaning Making, Church Positives, Community Positives, Community Barriers, Discriminatory Experiences, Mental Health Experiences, Mental Health Barriers, and Urban versus Rural Experiences. All participants noted that religious coping and religious meaning making provided lenses for others to understand their lived experience. All participants also indicated the important role their church community plays in their lives, separate from personal religious coping and religious meaning making. They indicated the importance of not just having a physical space but the community of people that were a part of their church community. They shared about their understanding of mental health and their experiences with mental health struggles. All of them noted the significant lack of accessible mental health services in the community and how this impacted them. The participants shared about their experiences of discrimination and how they coped with the negative effects of such behaviors. Finally, the true phenomenon captured was that although Latinx individuals experience discrimination, they have a relatively positive outlook of their lives in large part due to their sense of belonging and community provided by their faith and social aspects of religiosity.

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Are you a Latino or Latina?

Are you interested in discussing your religious and spiritual experiences in your everyday life?



Please help us understand the religious and spiritual experiences of Latinos in the (local community). Would you be willing to share your story? You are invited to partake in an interview lasting no more than 2 hours. Your name will not be used in any way in this study. Your participation will be compensated with a \$25 gas gift card.

Please consider participating if you:

- Are a Latino/ Latina/ Hispanic
- Are 19 years of age or older
- Attend (local Catholic church)
- Are interested in discussing how your religious or spiritual beliefs and/or practices relate to your lived experiences in the greater community

If you would like to learn more details and participate, please contact me directly at (researcher's phone number) or email me at (researcher's email). If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact my program advisor, Dr. Marilyn Cornish, at (advisor's email). If you know of other individuals who might be interested in this study and meet the criteria, feel free to share this information with them as well. Thank you in advance for your interest and possible participation.

Thank you,
Melisa Martinez
Auburn University



¿Se identifica como Latino o Latina?

¿Se identifica como Hispano?

¿Está interesado en participar en un grupo donde pueda hablar sobre sus experiencias religiosas y espirituales?



Por favor ayúdenos entender las experiencias religiosas y espirituales de los Latinos que viven en esta comunidad. ¿Estarías dispuesto a compartir tu historia? Están invitados a participar en una entrevista de 2 horas. Su nombre no será usado en ninguna manera. Su participación y tiempo será compensada con una tarjeta de \$25 para gasolina.

Por favor considera participar si:

- Es Latino/ Latina/ Hispano
- Tiene por lo menos 19 años
- Vienes a (esta iglesia católica)
- Estas interesado en discutir cómo tus creencias, prácticas religiosas, o espirituales se relacionan con tus experiencias vividas en la comunidad

Si desea obtener más información y participar, comuníquese conmigo directamente a **(researcher's phone number)** o por correo electrónico **(researcher's email)**. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio, puede comunicarse con mi asesora, Dra. Marilyn Cornish por teléfono (advisor's phone number). Si conoce a otras personas que podrían estar interesadas en este estudio y cumplen con los criterios, por favor comparta esta información con ellos. Gracias de antemano por su interés y posible

Gracias,
Melisa Martinez
Auburn University



Appendix C. Screening Protocol with Preliminary Informed Consent over Phone- English

Hello and thank you for calling. My name is Melisa Martinez. I appreciate your interest in this study on understanding the common religious and spiritual experiences of Latinos and how they affect your everyday life.

I want to make sure you know what the study involves. I am looking into the religious and/or spiritual experiences of Latinos who have been strengthened by their faith particularly during challenging moments in their lives. I specifically want to learn more about the Latinos who live in the (local area). I am interested in asking these questions in part to find out to what extent Latinos feel supported within their lives by their religious experiences.

My study will be carried out in the form of virtual individual interviews, meaning that you will be speaking only to me. Participants will be asked questions about their religious and spiritual practices within and outside their faith community. Also, participants will be asked about their experiences living in a non-urban part of the country and how they relate to their community. Interviews will be recorded so that I can transcribe the discussion; however, your name will never be connected to your statements. The researchers will make every effort to keep the discussion confidential. However, there will be instances that I would have to break confidentiality. For example, if during the interview you share details about either abuse/neglect of a minor or dependent adult or the imminent harm to self or others, I may be mandated to break confidentiality and inform the appropriate authorities. You will only be asked to discuss your experience to the extent that you feel comfortable. Your participation is completely voluntary, and participation is expected to take a total of 2 hours. There are no direct costs associated with your participation. If you decide to participate, you will be compensated with a \$25 gas gift card for your time and effort.

May I take a few minutes to ask you some brief questions to make sure that your circumstances allow me to invite you to participate? Is that ok?

First, I will read a list of questions slowly so you can hear all of them. At the end of each question, I want you to tell me if your answer is “yes” or “no.” Do you understand?

The questions are:

Are you a Latino/ Latina/ Hispanic?

Are you 19 years of age or older?

Do you attend (local church)?

Now tell me, is your answer “yes” to all these questions?

If the answer is “no” to any of the questions:

I am sorry that this means that, unfortunately, I will not be able to interview you, the reason being that I can only interview people who say yes to all these questions. I want to thank you anyway for your interest and I hope you have a good day. Good-bye.

If the answer is “yes” to the questions:

Great! Based on everything I said, would you be interested in coming to one of the groups?

If individual says YES to participation:

When would you like to set up an appointment to be interviewed? I have the following dates and times available:_____. Thanks again for your cooperation and willingness to be a part of this

study. Please contact me if there is any change of plans or you need to cancel or reschedule. Have a good day. Good-bye.

If individual says NO to participation:

I appreciate your time and your call. If you change your mind, please feel free to contact me again. Have a good day. Good-bye.

Appendix D. Screening Protocol with Preliminary Informed Consent over Phone (Spanish)

Hola y gracias por tener interés en mi estudio. Me llamo Melisa Martinez. Le agradezco su interés en este estudio sobre la comprensión común religiosas y espirituales de esta comunidad.

Antes de comenzar, quiero que usted sepa lo que implica el estudio. Estoy interesada en las experiencias religiosas o espirituales que le han fortalecido particularmente durante momentos difíciles en su vida. Específicamente quiero saber más sobre los Latinos que viven en esta comunidad. Estoy interesada en este tema en parte para saber a qué grado los Latinos están apoyados en sus vidas por sus experiencias religiosas.

Mi estudio se llevará a cabo en forma de entrevistas virtuales, lo que significa que usted estará hablando conmigo por teléfono o por video. Usted va a escoger la manera en cómo hacer la entrevista. Le voy a hacer preguntas sobre acerca sus prácticas religiosas y espirituales dentro y fuera de su comunidad de fe. También, le voy a preguntar sobre sus experiencias viviendo en un lugar que no es una grande ciudad, como Atlanta o Los Ángeles, y cómo se relacionan con la comunidad de (esta ciudad). Voy a grabar su entrevista solamente vía audio, ósea no más su voz. Voy a hacer esto para transcribir la entrevista; sin embargo, su nombre ni identidad nunca se conectará con lo que usted diga. Yo como la investigadora principal voy a mantener confidencial la entrevista. Sin embargo, si durante la entrevista usted comparte detalles sobre cualquier abuso de menores, abuso de adultos dependientes, o daño inminente a sí mismo o a otros, yo podría romper la confidencialidad y reportar estos detalles por mandato de mi universidad. Sólo se le va a pedir que comparta experiencias al nivel que usted se sienta cómodo/a. Su participación es completamente voluntaria y participación se espera no más de 2 horas. No hay costos directos asociados con su participación. Si decide participar, se le compensaría su tiempo con una tarjeta de gasolina de \$25.

Ahora, le voy a hacer algunas preguntas breves para asegurarme que las circunstancias me permiten invitarle a participar. ¿Está bien?

En primer lugar, voy a leer una lista de preguntas despacio para que pueda escucharme bien. Al final de todas las preguntas, quiero que me responda con un "sí" o un "no." ¿Entendido?

Las preguntas son:

Eres un Latino / Latina / Hispano?

¿Tiene 19 años de edad o más?

¿Atiende (una iglesia local)?

¿Ahora dígame, es su respuesta "sí" a todas estas preguntas?

Si la respuesta es "no" a alguna de las preguntas:

Lo lamento que esto significa que no podré invitar lo/ la hacer una entrevista. La razón es que sólo puedo entrevistar a personas que dicen sí a todas estas preguntas. Quiero darle las gracias de todos modos por su interés y espero que tenga un buen día. Adiós.

Si la respuesta es "sí" a las preguntas:

¡Excelente! Basado en todo lo que dije, ¿estaría interesado/a en ser entrevistado/a?

Si el individuo dice que sí a la participación:

¿Cuándo quiere hacer una cita para que le haga la entrevista? ¿Cuándo es más conveniente para usted? Tengo las siguientes fechas y horarios disponibles: _____. El día antes de su entrevista, yo le voy a llamar para recordar le y preguntar de nuevo si quiere participar. Gracias de nuevo por su cooperación y voluntad a ser parte de este estudio. Si hay algún cambio de planes o si necesita cancelar o reprogramar, por favor llámeme. Que tenga un buen día. Adiós.

Si la persona dice NO a la participación:

Aprecio su tiempo y su llamada. Si cambia de opinión, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo de nuevo. Que tenga un buen día. Adiós.

Appendix E. Information Letter- English



DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, REHABILITATION, AND COUNSELING

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL CODE WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS STUDY.)

INFORMATION LETTER

You are invited to participate in a research study about Latinos and Latinas' experiences in the (local area). This study is being conducted by Melisa Martinez under the supervision of Dr. Marilyn Cornish in the Auburn University Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling. You were selected as a possible participant because you indicated that you identify as at least 19 years of age, a Latino or a Latina, attend (local Catholic church), and are interested in discussing how your religion and spirituality are a part of your daily life.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will participate in an individual interview. At the appointment, the researcher will ask you to answer some demographic questions and she will write them on a form. You will then participate in a discussion aimed at understanding your experiences. You will only be asked to discuss your experiences to the extent that you feel comfortable. The interview will be audio-taped so that the researcher can later identify the themes discussed. Your participation is completely voluntary, and participation is expected to take no more than 2 hours.

Are there any risks or discomforts? It is possible for the interview to cause uncomfortable emotions or reactions because of the sensitive nature of the issues being discussed. To minimize these risks, you are not required to answer any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel too uncomfortable. You are also free to choose to end your participation at any time. In addition, if needed or requested, we can provide referrals to mental health professionals in your local area.

Will you receive compensation for participating? After completion of the interview, you will receive a \$25 gas gift card. The gift card will be sent to you via mail.

Are there any costs? There are no direct costs associated with your participation. However, you are responsible for acquiring appropriate and functional technology (i.e. a computer screen, tablet, or phone) to complete the interview. In addition, if you choose to seek counseling for any concerns raised during your participation, the counseling would be at your own expense.

If you change your mind about participating, you can stop at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to stop, your experiences can be erased as long as it is identifiable. If you choose to end your participation early, you will still have the opportunity to be entered into the drawing.

Your privacy will be protected. Your participation in this study is voluntary and responses will be kept confidential. You will only be asked to share your name with the interviewer so that she may be able to reference you while the interview is taking place; however, your name will be substituted with a non-

identifying number during the transcription process of this study. You will be asked your birth country, but you will NOT be asked about your citizenship status. After the end of the study, all surveys and any other paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Additionally, the audio recordings and transcriptions of sessions will be stored on the research advisor's secure electronic research drive. The researchers are trained to keep confidential any information revealed by participants in this study, but there are limits to this confidentiality.

If during the interview a participant discloses to the researcher about either abuse/neglect of a minor or dependent adult or the imminent harm to self or others, the researcher may be mandated or permitted to break confidentiality and inform the appropriate authorities. However, you are welcomed to talk about your interview experience with people of your choosing.

Information obtained through your participation may be presented in a professional meeting and/or used in an academic publication. Information will also be included in a dissertation document written by the primary investigator. In general, responses from your participation will be combined with those from all other participants in this study. Because of the qualitative nature of this study, however, representative quotes from the interview may be included in a paper or presentation. The researchers will take care to omit any information from quotes that could be personally identifying.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact the Primary Investigator, Melisa Martinez, via phone, (researcher's phone number), or via email, (researcher's email address). You can also contact the faculty research advisor, Marilyn Cornish, at (advisor's email address). **If you have questions about your rights as a research participant**, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICPATE, THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. YOU ARE WELCOMED TO SAVE AND/OR PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Melisa Martinez
Investigator

Dr. Marilyn Cornish
Co-Investigator



DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, REHABILITATION, AND COUNSELING

(NOTA: NO ACEPTE PARTICIPAR A MENOS QUE SE HA APLICADO A ESTE ESTUDIO UN CÓDIGO DE APROBACIÓN DEL IRB CON FECHAS ACTUALES.)

CARTA INFORMATIVA

Usted esta invitado a participar en este estudio de las experiencias de latinos y latinas' en esta comunidad. Este estudio va a ser hecho por la Señorita Melisa Martinez con la supervisión de la Dra. Marilyn Cornish. Este estudio está conectado con el departamento de educación especial, rehabilitación y consejería en Auburn University. Se lo seleccionó como posible participante porque indicó que se identifica como mayor de 19 años, latino o latina, asiste a (iglesia local) y está interesado en hablar sobre cómo su religión y espiritualidad son parte de su vida diaria. Antes de que decida si va a participar o no, es importante que haya recibido una explicación oral de este estudio en un idioma que usted entienda. Las siguientes declaraciones representan lo que usted está aceptando cuando de inicial este formulario de consentimiento.

¿Que esta involucrado si usted participa? Si usted decide participar en este estudio de investigación, usted va a estar participando en una entrevista individual. Primero, la investigadora principal le va a hacer algunas preguntas básicas acerca de usted. Luego, participará en una conversación conmigo sobre sus experiencias. Sólo se le pedirá hablar de sus experiencias en la manera en que usted se sienta cómodo. Su entrevista será audio-grabado para que los investigadores más tarde pueden transcribir la conversación para identificar los temas principales. Su participación es completamente voluntaria y participación se espera de un total de **2 horas**.

¿Existen riesgos? Es posible que, durante la entrevista, hablemos de temas que provocan emociones incómodas debido a la naturaleza sensible de los temas. Para minimizar estos riesgos, no es necesario de responder a las preguntas que usted no desea contestar o que lo haga sentir muy incómodo. También es libre de terminar su participación en cualquier momento. Además, va a recibir referencias profesionales de salud mental localizados en su comunidad. Finalmente, yo voy a tomar precaución para que su identidad sea protegida.

¿Recibirá una compensación por participar? Después de la entrevista, usted va a recibir una tarjeta de gasolina de \$25. Esta tarjeta va a ser enviada por el correo.

¿Hay algún costo? No hay costos directos asociados con su participación. Sin embargo, usted es responsable de adquirir o tener tecnología adecuada como una computadora, tableta, o teléfono, para hacer la entrevista. Además, si decide buscar consejería o terapia para cualquier preocupación durante su participación, esto sería por su propia cuenta.

Si usted cambia de opinión sobre su participación, puede detenerse en cualquier momento durante el estudio. Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Si usted decide parar su participación, la información que usted da se puede borrar y todavía recibirá la tarjeta de gasolina.

Su privacidad será protegida. Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria y sus respuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. Sólo se le va a pedir compartir su nombre conmigo cuando hablemos; sin embargo, su nombre se sustituirá con un número durante el proceso de transcripción de este estudio. Se le va a pedir que diga su país de nacimiento, pero **NO se le preguntará sobre su estado de ciudadanía.** Al final del estudio, se mantendrán todas las encuestas y otros documentos de papel en un archivador bajo llave. Además, las grabaciones y transcripciones de sesiones se archivarán en una unidad de investigación electrónica segura del asesor de investigación. Los investigadores están capacitados para mantener la confidencialidad de cualquier información revelada por los participantes en este estudio, pero hay límites a esta confidencialidad.

Si durante la entrevista un participante revela información acerca de cualquier abuso o descuido de un adulto dependiente o menor o el daño inminente a sí mismo o a otros, el investigador puede ser mandado o permitido romper la confidencialidad para mantener seguridad de todos.

Información obtenida a través de su participación puede ser presentado en una reunión profesional o utilizado en una publicación académica. Información también se incluirán en un documento de tesis escrito por la investigadora principal. En general, las respuestas de su participación se combinarán con los de los demás participantes en este estudio. Debido a la naturaleza de este estudio, pueden incluirse citas representativas de usted en un papel o una presentación. Los investigadores se encargarán en omitir cualquier información de citas que se puede identificar personalmente.

Si usted tiene preguntas sobre este estudio, puede preguntar las ahora o ponerse en contacto con Melisa Martinez por teléfono (researcher's phone number) o por correo electrónico (researcher's email address). También puede contactar por teléfono a la facultad que aconseja a la Srta. Martinez: Dra. Marilyn Cornish (advisor's phone number). Si tiene preguntas con respecto a sus derechos como participante de esta investigación puede contactar la Oficina del Comité Institucional de Revisión [Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office] de Auburn al (334) 844-5966.

HABIENDO LEÍDO LA INFORMACIÓN PROPORCIONADA, DEBE DECIDIR SI DESEA PARTICIPAR EN ESTE PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN. SI DECIDE PARTICIPAR, LA INFORMACIÓN QUE COMPORTE SERÁ SU ACUERDO PARA HACERLO. USTED PUEDE GUARDAR UNA COPIA O IMPRIMIR DE ESTA CARTA PARA SU REFERENCIA.

Melisa Martinez

Nombre de investigadora

Dra. Marilyn Cornish

Nombre de coinvestigadora

Appendix G. Demographic Questionnaire

Age:

Do you identify as a man or a woman? *Man*() *Woman*()

Are you:

Single? () *Married?* () *Living with a partner?* () *Separated/Divorced?* ()

Widowed? ()

Country of origin: _____ If other than U.S., # of years in U.S.: _____

Highest level of education: _____

Are you employed: *Full-time? Yes* () *No* () *Part-time? Yes* () *No*()

If YES, current occupation: _____

If NO, () *Student?* () *Retired?* () *Unemployed?*

Number of children:

What is your current religion? _____

How often do you attend Mass?

() *More than once a week* () *Once a week* () *2-3 per month*

If no, why did you stop attending church?

Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at this church?

() *1-3 times per week* () *4-5 times per week* () *5 or more times per week*

Have you ever seen a medical professional for stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, or any other

mental health concerns? *Yes*() *No*()

How many nearby friends or family members provide emotional support?

Appendix H. Cuestionario Demográfico

Edad:

¿Como se identifica? *Hombre* () *Mujer* ()

Esta:

Soltero/a? () *Casado/a?* () *Viviendo con un compañero/a?* () *Separado/Divorciado?* ()

Viudo/a? ()

País de origen: _____

Si no es de los E.U., cuantos años tiene en los E.U.: _____

El nivel más alto de educación: _____

Situación laboral actual: ¿Tiempo completo? ¿*Si* () *No* () Medio tiempo? *Si* () *No* ()

Si respondió que sí, cuál es su ocupación: _____

Si respondió que no, es: () *Estudiante?* () *Retirado?* () *Desempleado?*

¿Cuántos hijos tiene?:

¿A qué religión pertenece? _____

¿Con que frecuencia asiste a misa?

() *Mas de una vez a la semana* () *Una vez a la semana* () *2-3 veces por mes*

Aparte de ir a misa, ¿con qué frecuencia participa en otras actividades en esta iglesia?

() *1-3 veces por mes* () *4-5 veces por mes* () *5 o más veces por mes*

¿Alguna vez a visto a un profesional médico para el estrés, la ansiedad, la depresión, el trauma o cualquier otro problema de salud mental? *Si* () *No*()

¿Cuántos amigos o familiares cercanos brindan apoyo emocional?

Appendix I. Interview Guide- English

Interview Guidelines and Questioning Route

Topic: Latinx Individuals Experiences with Discrimination and Social Aspects of Religiosity

Welcome: Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is Melisa Martinez and I am a graduate student at Auburn University and the Primary Investigator for this study.

Overview of Topic: You have been invited here today because you all identified as being Latinas/ Latinos/ Hispanics, are at least 19 years old, and attend this church. I am interested in hearing about your experiences living in this community and your involvement with this church. I intend to use the information gathered today to learn about your experiences and to inform others about how to better serve the Hispanic and Latino community in this area.

Ground Rules: There are several questions I will be asking today. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I expect that you will have many opinions and thoughts. Please feel free to share those freely. You do not need to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable in answering. If you do not understand the question, please let me know so I can better articulate what I am asking. If you are not saying very much, I may ask you to elaborate on your thoughts. As stated before, I will not be discussing anything you share with anyone who is not authorized to know. However, you are certainly able to talk to others about your own reflections.

I will be audio recording our conversation so that I do not miss any of your comments. I will also be taking a few notes throughout the interview. Only the researchers working on this project will have access to the recordings. In no way will the recordings be shared in a public forum. In addition, no names or identifying information will be included in the research report. All of your responses will be kept confidential. At this time, I ask that you keep distractions to a minimum. I also recommend that you be in a space or room that is quiet and comfortable for you to talk. If for some reason we need to pause our conversation, please let me know.

Introduction: Let's begin by telling me your name and how long you have been living in the (local area), and/ or the surrounding communities?

General Question #1: Think for a moment about your religious/spiritual life. What thoughts, feelings, or memories come up as you reflect on your religion/spirituality? I am interested in hearing anything and everything you have to tell me about your feelings, thoughts, and experiences regarding your religious or spiritual life.

Probes: How do you live out your religious or spiritual life at home? At work? With friends? In the community?

General Question #2: What made you come to this church?

Probes: What kinds of differences do you notice between this church community and the one (or multiple) that you may have been a part of in the past? What are some similarities?

General Question #3: How are you involved in the church community?

Probe: What kinds of things do you do? Church choir? CCD teacher? Liturgical minister? Parish council?

General Question #4: How does being involved in the church community influence your experience in (local area) and the surrounding communities?

General Question #5: How connected do you feel to the larger community of (local area), and/or the surrounding communities?

Probes: How do you define “connected?” What kinds of thoughts or feelings does this connectedness (or lack of connectedness) bring up for you? Do you have a group of people/ family/ friends/ neighbors that you feel connected to? Do you feel like you are treated differently because of the way you look? Do you feel like you are treated differently because of the way you speak?

General Question #6: Describe to me about a positive experience you have had while living here.

Probe: What thoughts or feelings did that bring up for you when you experienced that situation?

General Question #7: Now, tell me about a negative experience you have had while living here.

Probe: What thoughts or feelings did that bring up for you when you experienced that situation?

Have you been treated differently based on how you look like? Speak?

General Question #8: Based on the positive and negative experiences you have shared, in what ways, if any, is the church community supportive of your needs?

Probes: What are some of your sources of support within this church community? How do those sources of support help you when you feel like you don’t belong in the greater community?

General Question #9: Based on the experiences you shared, in what ways, if any, does your social support outside of the church community meet your needs?

Probes: What are some of your sources of support outside of the church community? How do those sources of support help you when you feel like you don’t belong in the greater community?

General Question # 10: Finally, is there anything I have not asked that you would like to tell me about?

Probe: Were you able to say everything you wanted to say?

[Wrap up: Summarize the comments made by the participant: I can use notes and the headings above to organize and summarize the comments made by participant.]

Debriefing:

Some of the conversations we had today might have brought up some difficult emotions or memories. If you are experiencing such concerns, I encourage you to seek confidential counseling at a local community mental health center or another mental health provider. I can provide you with a list of professionals, some who can provide services in Spanish, who can help you through these experiences. I also encourage you to seek out support from either (church leadership), if you need it.

Closing:

I want to, again, thank you for your time in participating in our study.

Appendix J. Interview Guide- Spanish

Interview Guidelines and Questioning Route

Topic: Latinx Individuals Experiences with Discrimination and Social Aspects of Religiosity

Welcome/Bienvenida: Gracias por tomar tiempo de su día para hablar conmigo. Mi nombre es Melisa Martinez y soy estudiante de posgrado en Auburn y la principal investigadora de este estudio.

Overview of topic/ Resumen del tema: Ha sido invitado/a aquí hoy porque usted es miembro/a de esta iglesia, y se identificaron como Latina / Latino / hispano, y tiene por lo menos 19 años. Estoy interesada en escuchar acerca de sus experiencias viviendo en esta comunidad y su involucramiento con esta iglesia. Tengo la intención de utilizar la información de hoy para conocer sus experiencias y para informar a otros acerca de cómo servir mejor a la comunidad hispana y Latina en este lugar.

Ground Rules/ Reglas de hoy: Le voy a hacer varias preguntas hoy. No hay respuestas correctas ni incorrectas a estas preguntas. Espero que usted va a tener pensamientos y opiniones similares y diferentes. Quiero escuchar todo lo que tengan que decir. No necesita necesariamente responder a cada pregunta, solo las preguntas que usted sienta que son importantes. Quiero recordarle que sólo se le pide que comparta en la manera en que usted se sienta cómodo/a y que no voy a compartir nada lo que usted diga hoy con alguien que no sea autorizado. Si quiere, usted puede compartir sobre su experiencia con otras personas.

Como le dije por teléfono, voy a grabar la sesión de hoy pero solamente el audio, ósea no más su voz. Voy a hacer esto para que no me pierda ninguno de sus comentarios. También voy a tomar algunas notas. Sólo los investigadores que trabajarán en este proyecto tendrán acceso a las grabaciones. En ningún caso las grabaciones se compartirán en un foro público. Además, no va a ver ningún nombre ni identificación en el informe de investigación. Todas sus respuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. En este momento, pido que mantenga distracciones a lo mínimo. También recomiendo que este en un espacio privado y tranquilo para que pueda concentrarse. Si por una razón tenemos que hacer una pausa, déjeme saber.

Introduction/ Introducción: Vamos a empezar con su primer nombre solamente, país de nacimiento, cuánto tiempo ha estado en los Estados Unidos, y cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en esta área.

General Question/ Pregunta # 1: Tome un momento y piense acerca de su vida religiosa y espiritual. ¿Qué pensamientos, sentimientos o recuerdos surgen cuando reflexionar en su religión/espiritualidad? Estoy interesada en escuchar todo lo que tenga que decirme acerca de sus sentimientos, pensamientos y experiencias de su vida religiosa o espiritual.

Sondas: ¿Cómo viven su vida religiosa o espiritual en el hogar? ¿En el trabajo? ¿Con los amigos? ¿En la comunidad?

General Question/ Pregunta #2: ¿Qué le hizo venir a esta iglesia?

Sondas: ¿Qué diferencias notas entre esta comunidad de la iglesia y otras comunidades religiosas del cual han sido parte anteriormente? ¿Cuáles son algunas similitudes?

General Question/ Pregunta #3: ¿Cómo participa en la comunidad de la iglesia?

Sonda: ¿Qué tipo de cosas hace? ¿Coro de la iglesia? ¿Maestro de catecismo? ¿Ministro litúrgico? ¿Consejo Parroquial?

General Question/ Pregunta #4: ¿Cómo su participación en la comunidad de la iglesia influye sus experiencias en (área local) o en otros pueblos por aquí?

General Question/ Pregunta #5: ¿Qué tan conectado/a se sienten con la comunidad más grande de esta área?

Sondas: ¿Para usted, que se significa el estar conectado? ¿Qué tipo de pensamientos o sentimientos sobre esta conexión (o falta de conectividad) tienen? ¿Tiene un grupo de personas / familia / amigos / vecinos con los quien se sienten conectados? ¿Siente que usted recibe un trato diferente debido a su apariencia? ¿Siente que usted recibe un trato diferente debido a la forma que hablan?

General Question/ Pregunta #6: Describa una experiencia positiva que ha tenido viviendo aquí.

Sonda: ¿Qué pensamientos o sentimientos relaciona con esto?

General Question/ Pregunta #7: Ahora, hablemos de una experiencia negativa que ha tenido mientras viviendo aquí.

Sonda: ¿Que pensamientos o sentimientos le trae recordando estas experiencias? Ha sido tratado/a diferente por cómo se ve o habla?

General Question/ Pregunta #8: Basado en sus experiencias positivas y negativas que ha compartido, ¿en qué maneras siente que la iglesia apoya a sus necesidades?

Sondas: ¿Cuáles son algunas de sus fuentes de apoyo dentro de esta comunidad de la iglesia? ¿Como es que este apoyo le ayuda cuando siente que no pertenece en la comunidad general?

General Question/ Pregunta #9: Basado en las experiencias que compartió, ¿de qué manera su apoyo social (por ejemplo, amigos, familia, esposo/a) fuera de la iglesia, cumple con sus expectativas de apoyo?

Sondas: ¿Cuáles son algunas de sus fuentes de apoyo afuera de la comunidad de la iglesia? ¿Como es que este apoyo le ayuda cuando siente que no pertenece en la comunidad general?

General Question/ Pregunta # 10: ¿Por último, hay algo que no pregunte que le gustaría decirme sobre lo que hablamos hoy?

Sonda: ¿Tuvo la oportunidad de decir lo que quería decir?

Wrap Up/ Recapitulación: Voy a hacer un resumen pequeño de lo que hablamos hoy. [*I can use notes and the headings above to organize and summarize the comments made by participant/ Puedo usar notas y los títulos anteriores para organizar y resumir los comentarios del participante.*]

Debriefing/ Conclusiones: La conversación que tuvimos hoy podría haber provocado emociones o recuerdos difíciles de afrontar. Si esto ha sido su experiencia, le aconsejo buscar apoyo confidencial con un terapeuta o (Padre y Hermana de la iglesia local). También le voy a dar una lista de profesionales de salud mental, quienes puedan ayudar con estas experiencias.

Closing/ cierre: Quiero volver a agradecerle por su participación.

Appendix K. Debriefing Form- English

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in my study. I am interested in your experiences here in the (omitted) area and how you find support. I appreciate your willingness to open up, knowing that this is not always an easy thing to do. My hope is that this study can bring awareness to the experiences of this population and inform the greater community on how to better serve you.

If discussing these experiences have brought up difficult emotions or memories, I encourage you to seek out support services. Below we have compiled a few referrals that you can utilize.

[Resources omitted in public version of this dissertation]

If you have any other questions related to this study, please feel free to contact the primary investigator, Melisa Martinez at (researcher's phone number) or (email address). You may also contact the faculty research advisor, Dr. Marilyn Cornish at (advisor's email address).

Appendix L. Debriefing Form- Spanish

Forma de Apoyo Adicional

Gracias por participar en mi estudio. Estoy interesada en sus experiencias en esta comunidad y formas en las que encuentra apoyo. Agradezco su honestidad y su voluntad en compartir, sabiendo que este tema puede ser difícil de abordar. Espero que este estudio pueda ayudar esta comunidad obtener más recursos de apoyo e informar a la comunidad en general sobre cómo servirles mejor.

Si hablando de estas experiencias ha traído emociones difíciles o recuerdos, los invito a buscar servicios de apoyo. Esta es una lista corta de algunas referencias que pueden utilizar.

[Recursos omitidos en la versión publica de esta investigación]

Si tiene preguntas sobre este estudio, por favor contacte a la investigadora principal, Melisa Martinez al (researcher's phone number) o por correo electrónico (email address). También puede contactar a la asesora, Dra. Marilyn Cornish por correo electrónico, (advisor's email).