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A Mixed Method Exploration of Spirituality in Second Generation Mexican Americans

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology

By

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September 2024

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ABSTRACT

A Mixed Method Exploration of Spirituality in Second Generation Mexican Americans

by

Erick Nicandro Felix

Mexicans accounted for over 60% of the population of Hispanic origin living in the U.S. in 2021 (Moslimani et al., 2023). Second generation (i.e., people born in the U.S to first generation immigrant parents; Karthick Ramakrishnan, 2004) Mexican Americans report challenges such as feeling like foreigners (Huynh et al., 2011) and experiencing microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Despite facing this and many other barriers as they navigate a bicultural identity, literature suggests this population remains resilient (Holleran & Jung, 2008; Morgan Consoli et al., 2011, 2015; Safe & Umaña-Taylor, 2021). Spirituality appears to be a component of how they overcome adversities (Morgan Consoli et al., 2015). Little research has been conducted on this important facet of resilience, nor do we fully understand what spirituality looks like with these individuals. A mixed methods approach was used to explore spirituality in second generation Mexican American emerging adults. In the qualitative component, interviews were conducted in person. Participants shared experiences with spirituality and challenges they have faced which were captured in four group experiential themes: *Evolving Spirituality*, *Adversities*, *Overcoming Adversity Through Spirituality*, and *Meaning Made in Overcoming*. For the quantitative component a multiple regression analysis and found high levels of spiritual transcendence, high meaning making, and high levels of *familismo* significantly contribute to participants' resilience. This dissertation contributes to the literature on spirituality in second generation Mexican American emerging adults and how they overcome adversities. Findings have implications

for clinical practitioners and academic researchers working to better understand cultural values and resilience among Mexican American emerging adults.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Latinx populations (i.e., a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, origin regardless of race) continue to be one of the fastest growing racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). Latinx account for approximately 19% of the total U.S. population, a stark increase from 7% in 1980 (Moslimani et al., 2023). Mexicans in particular accounted for over 60% of the population of Hispanic origin living in the U.S. in 2021 (Moslimani et al., 2023). There is recent population growth with this group being driven by newborns, not immigrants (Krogstad et al., 2023). This is a reversal of historical trends from the 1980s and 1990s where immigrants drove the growth of Latinx populations. This is partly explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration legislation but needs to be better understood (Krogstad et al., 2023).

Latinx immigrants to the U.S. often experience a multitude of complex and chronic stressors associated with their immigration journeys (Garcini et al., 2016; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Psychological, physical, verbal, and sexual violence are prevalent traumatic events experienced by Latinx immigrants as they cross various terrains to arrive in the U.S. (Garcini et al., 2017). Once in the U.S., further stressors experienced include discrimination (Ryan et al., 2006), fear of deportation (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2007; Cowen et al., 1997), socioeconomic disadvantage (Garcini et al., 2016), acculturation (Abraído-Lanza et al., 2016), and possible substance use (Negi, 2011).

The general experiences of Latinx immigrants' children, or second generation (i.e., people born in the U.S to first generation (immigrant) parents; Karthick Ramakrishnan, 2004)

Mexican Americans has found to be that they experience feeling like foreigners (Huynh et al., 2011) and are prone to experiencing microaggressions based on their identity (Sue et al., 2007). This population continues to grow with 79% of Latinx between the ages of 18 to 29 being born in the U.S. (Krogstad et al., 2023). Latinx identity incorporates both heritage (e.g., Latinx) and national (e.g., American) cultural systems into their sense of self, referred to as a bicultural identity (Safa & Umaña-Taylor, 2021). Having a bicultural identity may cause additional stressors with dual pressure to maintain ties to mainstream White culture and their own ethnic group culture (French & Chavez, 2010; Jimenez, 2004). However, social, and cultural contextual factors that second generation Latinx individuals have to navigate can cause significant stressors and create barriers. U.S. born Latinx experience many psychosocial challenges and adversities in the form of discrimination (Pérez et al., 2008), poverty (De La Rosa, 2000; Enchautegui, 1997), health care access (Vargas Bustamante et al., 2009), and substance use (Guerrero et al., 2013). Latinx individuals have been found to be resilient and to use several strategies for overcoming adversity (Morgan Consoli et al., 2011).

Resilience is the ability to continue to develop and experience expected achievements after adversity (Garmezy, 1993). Findings in the literature suggest that religion and spirituality are central to Latinx immigrant individual's resilience and adjustment through adversity (Bekteshi & Kang; 2020, Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Morgan Consoli et al, 2018; Sanchez et al., 2012; Silva et al., 2017). Religious and spiritual involvement fosters resilience by providing a supportive community with like-minded individuals that share similar values (Padilla & Borrero, 2006). Furthermore, spirituality and religious involvement has been

found to foster meaning and enhance purpose for many Latinx immigrants facing adversities (Garcini et al., 2022; Parra-Cardona et al., 2006).

Protective factors (i.e., personal, social, and institutional condition or resources that promote successful development and help people deal with stressful events) (Deković, 1999; Luthar, 1993) may help Latinx immigrants adapt to the complex stressors they experience. Protective factors such as religion and spirituality (Austin & Falconier, 2013; Bekteshi & Kang, 2020, Morgan, 2023; Morgan Consoli et al., 2018, 2015; Morgan Consoli & Gonzales, 2017), family connectedness (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Garcini et al., 2022), cultural traditions (Chapman & Ferreria, 2005; Morgan-Consoli & Unzueta, 2018), and nuclear and extended family networks (Bender & Castro, 2000) have been found to be important in dealing with distress.

Research on second generation Latinx individuals has often focused on comparing them to their U.S. ethnic counterparts (Anderson & Mayes, 2010; Mikolajczyk et al., 2007; Perez-Stable et al., 1994; Sharkness et al., 2010). Rendón (2019) brings attention to early scholars that often hypothesized children of low-skilled Latinx immigrants would experience “downward assimilation” (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Haller et al., 2011) or “second-generation decline” (Gans, 1992), noting that it would wipe “away the hard work ethos and perseverance of their immigrant parents in a single generation” (Rendón, 2019, p.152). In the early stages of second generation Latinx research this was a common theme with other scholars highlighting the *immigrant paradox*, a phenomenon that observes more assimilated immigrants as being less successful at navigating life in the U.S. when compared to newly arrived immigrants (Crosnoe, 2012). Much of the research on the immigrant paradox has focused on Latinx adolescents (Bacio et al., 2013; Fuller et al., 2009; Guarini, et al., 2011;

Marks et al., 2014) and the results have varied widely depending on the point of comparison, domain of interest, stage of development considered, or the degree of attention to socioeconomic circumstances (Crosnoe, 2012).

Several hypotheses exist attempting to explain the immigrant paradox. The first is that immigrants who have uprooted their lives to seek a better living in a different country are thought to be highly capable, self-disciplined, and healthy individuals (Salas-Wright et al., 2014) and for this reason are less likely to be involved in health-risk behaviors such as substance use (Rubalcava et al., 2008). A second explanation is that immigrants may be cautious about bringing attention to themselves and may abstain from high-risk or illegal behaviors in a foreign criminal justice system (Hacker et al., 2011). Vaughn et al., (2014) posits the *cultural armamentarium hypothesis* that immigrants bring with them cultural practices and norms that are consistent with anti-drug use and high moral behaviors.

Statement of the Problem

While much resilience in Latinx individuals work has focused on children and youth, research looking at resilience with Latinx adults is growing (i.e., Holleran & Jung, 2008; Kupermine et al., 2009; Miller & Csizmadia, 2022; Morgan Consoli et al., 2011; Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Morgan Consoli et al., 2015; Morgan & Unzueta, 2018; Perreira et al., 2019). Such studies have generally found Latinx to be resilient through a blend of maintaining traditional cultural beliefs and being able to adapt to the mainstream U.S. culture for resources (Morgan et al., 2011; Morgan & Unzueta, 2018).

Relying on family and engaging in religious practices and beliefs are cultural values that promote healing within this population. Indeed, sense of community through religious involvement, family support, and close relationships with friends and significant others are

helpful for overcoming adversities and facilitate resilience in Latinx individuals (Morgan Consoli & Gonzales, 2017; Morgan & Unzueta, 2018). The relationship between spirituality, religiosity, traditional Mexican values, meaning making and resilience in second generation Mexican Americans is also not fully understood. Of particular importance is what type of spirituality (e.g., religiosity, meaning making, general spiritual awareness) these individuals may endorse in helping them overcome adversities (Morgan Consoli et al., 2015).

Understanding the type of spirituality this population relies on would provide insight into the evolution of spirituality between first generation and second generation Mexicans living in the U.S.

Trends indicate the share of Latinx individuals who are religiously unaffiliated (i.e., self-identify as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular”) has grown to 30% in 2023, an increase from 10% in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2023). Spirituality has been a construct within second generation Latinx literature that has garnered interest. Morgan Consoli et al., (2015) found that among a sample of majority second generation Latinx college students, spirituality predicted thriving but not resilience. Much of the second generation Latinx literature regarding spirituality and meaning making is centered in university settings (Barriga, 2020; Triana et al., 2020). Additionally, the researcher is interested in whether second generation Mexican Americans rely on cultural values such as spirituality as part of their resilience process. Information on how these individuals practice spirituality and define purpose could provide knowledge to better serve this population and center future research on their experiences.

Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the lived experiences of second generation Mexican American emerging adults to understand the role of spirituality in overcoming adversities. The researcher focused on a Mexican American sample to challenge the assumption of homogeneity in research with Latino or Hispanic populations (Rodriguez, 2013). However, literature was reviewed from studies with broader Latinx populations due to the scarcity of Mexican American-specific research focusing on the constructs examined. Appropriate terminology will be used in situations where specific ethnicities from other studies were reported.

An exploratory, concurrent, mixed methods design was used. In this design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged. Interviews were conducted in person at locations selected by participants. A multiple regression model was used to understand the relationship that religiosity, spirituality, traditional Mexican cultural values and meaning making have with resilience. This provided the researcher with contextual information that is not adequately explained in the current literature of second generation Mexican Americans, and that was triangulated with qualitative interview data. An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used to explore spirituality in second generation Mexican Americans and how they overcome adversities. These descriptive and in-depth experiences from participants highlight the unique process these individuals undertake to be resilient in their daily lives.

Current literature on resilience in Latinx individuals has identified multiple factors related to family strengths, cultural values, ethnic identity, and community. The cultural values of religiosity and spirituality have been associated with meaning making, which has

been linked to resilience, for Latinx populations and requires further examination in second generation Mexican American communities. Particular focus was given to emerging adulthood as emerging adulthood is a time of exploration and identity formation, during which individuals seek to define their beliefs, values, and place in the world (Arnett, 2000, 2007). While Arnett (2007) provided an age range of 18-29 for emerging adulthood, the researcher focused on 18-25 years old to explore the initial transition into emerging adulthood as second generation Mexican Americans negotiate between cultural and religious traditions from their family and the influences of the broader society in which they are raised (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2007).

Ungar (2013) posits that resilience is observed in individuals who engage in behaviors that help them navigate their way to culturally meaningful resources as their social context allows. Mexican Americans born to immigrant parents navigate unique ecologies as part of their lived experiences and it is important to understand this process by exploring their spirituality in relation to how they overcome adversities. This research provides narrative accounts as to how spirituality develops and helps second generation, Mexican Americans emerging adults overcome adversities as well as helps to understand the relationship of spirituality, religiosity, meaning making, cultural values, and resilience is better understood.

Research Questions

In order to investigate spirituality in second generation Mexican Americans, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. What is the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, traditional Mexican cultural values, meaning making and resilience in second generation, Mexican American emerging adults?

2. What is the role of spirituality in overcoming adversities for second generation, Mexican Americans emerging adults?

Previous findings on spirituality and its role in resilience for second generation Latinx individuals (Holleran & Jung, 2008; Morgan Consoli et al., 2011, 2015; Safe & Umaña-Taylor, 2021) provided a glimpse of what second generation Mexican American emerging adults may endorse. Additionally, meaning making seemed to be connected to how spirituality promotes resilience (Cavazos et al., 2015; Snodgrass & Sorajakool, 2011). Mexican American cultural values have been linked to positive functioning in Latinx populations (Corona et al., 2017; Sanchez, 2022). Given the previous literature with Latinx populations, it was hypothesized that the quantitative component of this mixed methods study will show that spirituality, meaning making, and Mexican cultural values are significant contributing factors of resilience for second generation Mexican American emerging adults.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the literature related to the major constructs in this study are discussed: resilience, Mexican cultural values, religiosity, spirituality, and meaning making. An overview of how resilience has been historically studied within a Western epistemological perspective is presented followed by Ungar's (2013) social ecological model of resilience, which the researcher used as a theoretical framework for the present study. The increased interest in spirituality in second generation Mexican Americans is highlighted.

Resilience

The concept of human resilience first originated in the field of medicine where doctors attempted to understand how they could reduce the susceptibility to illness of their patients (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). In the 1970s the social science field used the term resilience to describe the human experience of rebounding from hardships (Patterson, 2002). Used primarily as a metaphor at first taken from the concept of resilience in the physical sciences, researchers sought to establish a definition of resilience among the field of social sciences (Luthar et al., 2000). Various operationalizations and measurements of the construct have resulted in defining resilience as a trait, process, or outcome (Luthar et al., 2000). For example, resilience has been described as competencies, as capacities of people, and as positive functioning after experiencing an adversity (Van Breda, 2018). The American Psychological Association (APA) definition of resilience is “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands” (APA, 2015). Another definition refers to resilience as an action or ability to adapt, cope, and engage in protective resources when experiencing an adversity (Morrison & Cosden, 1997).

Ungar (2011a) proposed viewing resilience as the process observed when an individual's behaviors help guide them toward resources they require to flourish in moments of adversity.

Perhaps one of the most influential definitions was proposed by Luther et al., (2000) and describes resilience as a dynamic process that consists of two core concepts: experiencing a *significant adversity* and experiencing *positive adaptation*. A *significant adversity* is described by Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) as negative life circumstances that are “known to be statistically associated with adjustment difficulties” (p. 858). This has led to the overall view of resilience as an outcome-based process (Van Breda, 2018). However, Hart et al. (2016) brought to attention the concerns of applying outcome-based perspectives to marginalized populations as it may take away from their own interpretation of resilience and therefore risks further marginalizing their experience.

The second core concept Luther et al., (2000) identified as part of the resilience process was *positive adaptation*. *Positive adaptation* has been described as the process of coping with an adversity (Richardson, 2002). Resilience is therefore thought to be a process in which individuals cope with adversity, stressors, or change in a way that results in a positive mental state (Richardson, 2002). There are concerns, however, that what coping means is heavily influenced by the culture of the majority in western society (Ungar et al., 2013). What it means to be developmentally healthy is thus centered around western culture that may not align with marginalized population's views or experiences of development (Ungar et al., 2013). The resilience concept of *significant adversities* and *positive adaptation* may thus limit other ways of being and emphasize how individuals should function, without sufficient attention to culture (Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014).

In the field of human development, researchers have conceptualized resilience in terms of risk and protective factors (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Risk factors are defined as environmental and interpersonal influences that increase the likelihood of harmful or negative outcomes (Coie et al., 1993). Several risk factors include socioeconomic status, low parental education, exposure to violence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014). Protective factors are defined as environmental factors (Luther et al., 2000) and personal qualities (Masten, 2001) that emphasize individual characteristics. Early resilience research emphasized risk and protective factors by focusing on children and adolescents who thrived, despite being raised in poverty and with parent's suffering from mental health illness (Garmezy, 1991).

Resilience can also be described as a trait in which an individual's characteristics enable them to adapt to adversities they may encounter. The idea that resilience is a trait was first proposed by Block and Block (2014), who termed an individual's trait that help them function in response to environment demands "ego resilience" (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Rutter (1985) first proposed characteristics such as ego resilience traits be labeled protective factors and viewed what they called psychological resilience as the positive individual differences in how people respond to stress and adversities (Rutter, 1987). Protective factors such as spirituality, self-esteem, positive affect, positive emotions, and self-efficacy have since been identified in the literature (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).

Despite the prevalence of research on risk and protective factors, however, they may not be applicable across race, ethnicity, and cultures (Bottrell, 2009; Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Collectivist traditions that promote resilience are often missing, for example, from the literature which describes resilience as an individual process or trait (Ungar et al., 2013).

Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) suggest an ecologically sensitive approach to understanding positive adaptation by emphasizing overcoming adversities within the cultural context of an individual's community. Ungar (2008; 2013) puts forth a social-ecological definition of resilience consisting of four concepts: navigation, negotiation, resources (opportunity), and meaning. This model accounts for the complex, contextual, and cultural factors related to the positive development of this population under stress (Ungar, 2008, 2013). In situations of adversity, resilience is observed when an individual's behaviors help them navigate toward resources they require to flourish (Ungar, 2011a; 2013). Ungar (2013) notes that these processes can only occur when the individual's social networks are able to provide resources in a culturally meaningful manner. Political influences, socio-economic status, family structures, and cultural norms impact whether an individual will experience resilience (Leadbeater et al., 2005; Ungar et al., 2013).

For the purposes of this study, resilience was defined using Ungar's social ecological conceptualization. This ecological definition of resilience de-centers the individuals' behaviors and instead contextualizes the individual's social ecology and existence of culturally meaningful resources (Ungar et al., 2013). We must first understand this population's social ecology which is comprised of strong family ties, community, and cultural values to contextualize their lived experiences through adversity and how they make meaning spiritually.

Resilience in Latinx Populations

Some literature on resilience in Latinx populations has shifted from focusing on risk factors and deficit-based characteristics (Morgro-Wilson, 2011; McLoyd, 2006) to protective factors and strength-based approaches to inquiry (Gomanzalez, 2020; Jenkins & Cofresi,

1998; Morgan Consoli et al., 2011; Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Morgan Consoli et al., 2015). The major protective factors that have been found to promote resilience in Latinx individuals are family (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Kenny et al., 2002), community support (Portes, 1984; Ramirez-Valles & Brown, 2003) and cultural practices and values (Cardosa & Thompson, 2010; Morgan & Llamas, 2013).

Cultural Values

The valuing of family has been documented as one of the most prominent cultural values among Latinx communities (Bermudez & Mancini, 2013). *Familismo* in Spanish, familism emphasizes close and supportive family relationships and prioritizing the family over the self (Freeberg & Stein, 1996). There are three related facets of familism: familial obligations, perceived support and emotional closeness, and family as referent (Sabogal et al., 1987). Familial obligations refer to the belief that family members have a responsibility to support each other economically and emotionally. Perceived support and emotional closeness encompass the perception that family members are dependable sources of help and have close relationships. Family as referent is the belief that family behaviors should meet familial expectations (Sabogal et al., 1987). The value of familism is thought to be passed from generation to generation in Latinx families and allows for maintaining close ties with family members over long distances (Falicov, 2005). Family involvement, help with child supervision, and good communication are thought to be resources that lead to Latinx communities being resilient (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Familism has been linked to well-being (Schwartz et al., 2010), and improving psychological health through family closeness and social support (Campos et al., 2014).

Other family-related factors have also been found to contribute to Latinx resilience. Cardoso and Thompson (2010) highlight family involvement, family support, and strong kin networks. Family involvement assists family members in dealing with distress (Mackay, 2003).] For example, among Latinx immigrant families, Latinx youth with parents that promoted communication and strong relationships displayed resilience in their development (Bermudez & Mancini, 2013). It has been theorized that the role of family may promote resilience by acting as a buffer against stress experienced during adversity (Chavez-Korell et al., 2014; Romero et al., 2014). Family is an important cultural resilience factor within the Latinx community as it provides a “ready-made support system” (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002, p. 271).

Cultural traditions and ethnic identity within Latinx communities have been linked to resilience in response to stress (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006). Cultural traditions promote ethnic identity within Latinx families and can consist of cultural rituals and spiritual systems. These are referred to as “cultural protections” by Cardoso & Tompson (2010, p4.) and are thought to increase family connectedness through the values of *personalismo*, *respeto*, *consejos*, *dichos*, and fatalism. Clauss-Ehlers & Levi (2002, p. 270) label these values as *cultural community resilience factors* due to their ability to protect Latinx individuals in the environment.

Personalismo is the value of emphasizing interpersonal relationships and maintaining social harmony (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Relationships are valued on their own merit and not as a means to an objective or end (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002). *Personalismo* has a broad influence on the well-being of Latinx adults (Davis et al., 2019). For example, in health care settings, research has encouraged health practitioners to practice *personalismo*

with their Latinx patients to promote treatment adherence (Flores, 2000, Jucket, 2013). This value is also key to shaping Latinx adults' social network, influencing their access to emotional support and resources (Davis et al., 2019). Maintaining social harmony within their family and facilitating strong social networks are important cultural protections.

Respeto emphasizes obedience to authority and appropriate behavior given a situation in relation to other people, particularly elders (Calzada et al., 2010). It is thought to complement *familismo* by acknowledging the authority of elder family members and facilitating trust in their relationship (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002). Research suggests that *respeto* contributes to the resilience of Latinx youth by exposing them to positive role models and mentors that are able to guide them in social actions. By learning to respect family members, Latinx individuals continue to show respect to new people they meet in their environment (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002)

Consejos are advice or narratives provided by elders intended to influence attitudes or behaviors (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). *Consejos* are considered a cultural communication practice and research suggests it nurtures resilience, determination, and perseverance in youth (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). The communication practice of *consejos* has primarily been researched in the education field with Latinx families (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lopez & Vazquez, 2006) and further research is required to understand its influence in resilience with adult Latinx individuals (Ruiz et al., 2021). Similarly, *dichos* are popular sayings or proverbs used to communicate values and life lessons (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). They are also considered cultural communication and are considered a fundamental aspect of Latinx family discourse (Bermudez & Mancini, 2013). It is common for *dichos* to

have a positive disposition and be rooted in spiritual beliefs, intended to strengthen the recipients' sense of resilience (Bermudez & Mancini, 2013).

Fatalism refers to the belief that all events are predetermined and within the Latinx community emphasizes acceptance of life events (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). It is important to not confuse acceptance with helplessness in being able to change one's fate and instead coming to terms with an expected outcome. Fatalism has been thought of as a factor of resilience due to its tendency to reduce symptoms of despair (Abraido-Lanza et al., 2007). It is also thought of as being a part of religiosity and spirituality in Latinx communities and serving as a meaningful purpose of suffering through illness (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Powe, 1997). Beliefs about fatalism involved the idea that suffering is inevitable and can be a transformative experience (Holleran & Waller, 2003). Fatalism has been linked to resilience in patients suffering from depression and chronic illness (Cohen, 2022; Fu et al., 2021). Spiritual beliefs of fatalism have also been associated with meaning making around suffering within the context of end-of-life care (Bonavita et al., 2018).

Ethnic Identity. Ethnic identity is a multi-dimensional concept relating to self-identification, a sense of belonging, and the affective and cognitive meaning one has toward their group membership (Phinney and Kohatsu, 1997, p. 422). Phinney (1992) identified three key elements of ethnic identity, including: self-identification, a sense of belonging, and attitudes towards one's own group. Ethnic identity has been linked with higher self-esteem and resilience among Latinx raised in the U.S. (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). While defined as an individual construct, ethnic identity can also be an experience within a group. Having a collective sense of ethnic identity has also been found to serve as a protective factor among Latinx communities involved in activism (Romero et al., 2014).

Ethnic identity and social support are related constructs in the Latinx educational and mental health literature (Cole et al., 2007; Diaz & Bui, 2017). Social support and community are important concepts for Latinx individuals as they provide relationship building and a space to express fellowship with others of similar backgrounds (Rojas Perez et al., 2022). Having a sense of belonging and feeling part of a community have been found to contribute to Latinx well-being (Rojas Perez et al., 2022). Sense of Community was particularly important in environments where Latinx individuals were the minority population but were able to find community with individuals sharing similar values and ethnic identity.

All of these cultural values have been seen to help in overcoming adversities by increasing family connectedness in a Latinx individual's family system (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Specifically, these cultural values encourage thoughts and behaviors in Latinx individuals that seemingly allow them to remain resilient when experiencing adversities (Abraido-Lanza et al., 2007; Bermudez & Mancini, 2013; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002).

Religiosity

Religiosity is an important cultural value in Latinx communities, with 91% of Latinx individual's in the U.S. reporting high levels of religious commitment (Hernández Dubon et al., 2022; Pew Research Center, 2014). The present study focuses on this cultural value to better understand its relation to spirituality and overcoming adversities. Religion is a system of beliefs characterized by practices, rituals, and a faith in God. Religiosity, specifically, is the practice of these beliefs (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Findings on religious commitment show that it mediates (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018a; Moreno et al., 2018b) and moderates (Corona et al., 2017; Jankowsky et al., 2020) acculturative stress and mental health outcomes among

Latinx populations. Religiosity in the Latinx community has been linked with positive well-being (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018b), resilience (Morgan Consoli et al., 2018), greater quality of life (Luna & MacMillan, 2015), and as a source of social support for Latinx immigrants (Dun & O'Brien, 2009; Silva et al., 2017). Catholicism is the primary religious institution that many Mexican immigrants identify with, often influencing their beliefs and customs (Matovina et al., 2002; Pardo, 2006).

Religiosity is also important in teaching religious-specific morals and guidelines in Latinx families (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018b). Religious involvement is positively associated with a sense of meaning (Koenig, 2012), and is a prominent protective factor in the Latinx resilience literature due to its multifaceted influence on mental health including resources to cope with stress through prayer, fostering community and social support through church services, and its values in teaching followers to love and serve others (Koenig et al., 1997; Revens et al., 2021). The community created through shared religious beliefs provides Latinx individuals a space to support each other through hardships and allows them to be resilient through adversities (Bekteshi & Kang; 2020, Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Silva et al., 2017). Religious involvement in Latinx communities has also been found to foster meaning making, enhance purpose, and promote hope in the face of adversity (Garcini et al., 2022; Parra-Cardona et al., 2006).

Religiosity is often noted as an interrelated construct of spirituality (Wood & Hilton, 2012). In the U.S. religion is often tied to institutional activities and rituals while spirituality is perceived as an individualistic experience (Campesino & Schwartz, 2006). For many, religion and spirituality are both experienced in a social context and are not distinguished from each other. Koenig et al. (2001) describes the polarization of religiousness and

spirituality in the U.S. as the former being representative of institutionalized, authoritarian, inhibiting expression while the latter is described an individualized subjective and emotional experience freeing expression. This perception of religion may be a contributor to the growing trend of young individuals of the U.S. identifying as spiritual but not religious (Zhang et al., 2022).

Spirituality versus Religion

In the past few decades there have been significant changes to religious and spiritual involvement in the U.S. Traditional religious involvement specifically has been on the decline among young people and the number of individuals who identify as spiritual but not religious (SBNR) has been increasing (Zhang et al., 2022). Recent polls estimate 22% of U.S. identifying as SBNR and 21% of U.S. adults identifying as neither spiritual nor religious (Pew Research Center, 2023b). Streib (2021) described causes of this trend as religious deconversion, those leaving their religious institution, having increased in recent years.

Among Latinx populations a similar trend can be observed. Hodge et al., (2007) found that younger Latinx individuals tend to identify as spiritual but not necessarily religious. It has been theorized this incongruity has to do with the Latinx cultures' continued pursuit to fight social inequities including those found in religious institutions (Isasi-Díaz, 2004; Morgan Consoli et al., 2018). Assimilation is another factor in the U.S. that appears to be related to lower levels of religiosity among Latinx (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018b). This is a growing trend that has been observed in the last two decades. In recent polls, 30% of Latinx identified as unaffiliated with any religion (Pew Research Center, 2023a). Trends among U.S.-born Latinx are similar with 23% reporting they were raised in a

faith but are now religiously unaffiliated, compared with 16% of foreign-born Latinx individuals (Pew Research Center, 2023a).

Individuals who no longer identify as religious, termed “religious nones,” are still found to exhibit adherence to religious emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (Zhang et al., 2022). Religious nones encompass a variety of groups including secularists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, disaffiliated, never affiliated, and the loosely affiliated (Mercadante, 2020). The term “none” implies a lack of something rather than a quality and may even be perceived as offensive. The term originates from the commonality of checking “no religion” on a census (Saunders et al., 2020). Individuals who identify as SBNR tend to define spirituality as personal and authentic while claiming religion is external and structured in a non-essential manner (Mercadante, 2020).

Nonreligious spirituality (NRS) has been growing as an interest in the field of psychology (Aird et al., 2010; Buxant et al., 2007; Coates, 2012; Houtman et al., 2009). Research has found a relationship between NRS and positive mental health (Smith et al., 2009), active exploration of self (Coates, 2012), and fostering a sense of belonging (Namini & Murken, 2009). There have also been negative relationships found between NRS and emotional well-being (Buxant et al., 2010; Pretorius, 2014). NRS has been associated with higher levels of mental disorders such as depersonalization (Demmrich et al., 2013), narcissism (Wink et al., 2005) and delusions (Aird et al., 2010). Zhang et al., (2021) found mixed results between the relationship of NRS and meaning making and called for further research on the topic with a more diverse sample.

Spirituality

Spirituality or *espiritualidad* is a core cultural value in the Latinx community (Abraido-Lanza et al., 2004). This cultural value is the primary focus of the present study as it sought to better understand spirituality second generation Mexican American emerging adults and how they overcome challenges. Spirituality has been defined as the search for meaning in life and a belief in a transcendent power (Coyle, 2002). Social science researchers became interested in studying spirituality through the cultural shifts of the 1960s (Albanese, 2001; Wuthnow, 1976). Spirituality can be experienced through religion, but it is not limited to organized systems of faith. Instead, spirituality can refer to values and beliefs that influence existential questions such as one's purpose in life, who they are, and the meaning of life and death (Coyle, 2002). The contrast between religiosity and spirituality may be useful for researchers but it may also cause several dangers and misconceptions (Hill et al., 2000; Pargament, 1999). Hill and Pargament (2003) caution against the polarization of religion and spirituality into institutional and individual domains as this conceptualization overlooks the fact that both take place in the social context and provide meaning to how one should behave in personal affairs (Wuthnow, 1998). Furthermore, this type of bifurcation leads to the simple perspective that spirituality is good, and religion is bad (Hill & Pargament, 2003). It is important to recognize that these two constructs can be both distinct and interconnected.

Psychologists in particular grew interested in defining spirituality in an effort to better understand its role in mental health. Experiences of faith, including behaviors such as church attendance, are embedded within Latino family and communities (Campesino et al., 2009). Several researchers have stated that spirituality is one of the basic characteristics that predict

resilience (Manning, 2013; Smith et al., 2013). This has been attributed to the purpose that comes from spiritual beliefs (Schwalm et al., 2021).

In Latinx communities, researchers note that *espiritualidad* involves phenomena that should be interpreted in the cultural context of individuals and not limited to the belief of otherworldly being(s) (Franco Palacio et al., 2018; Wood & Hilton, 2012). Among social science researchers, there is a consensus that spirituality is a universal human phenomenon that is part of the process of finding one's meaning in life (Snodgrass & Sorajjakool, 2011). There have been significant links between spirituality, religion, and health. In the last two decades research has attempted to make sense of these associations (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Spirituality serves as a protective factor and buffer against the onset and development of mental illness (Luna & MacMillan, 2015) and, like religiosity, has been found to be an important shared value among Latinx groups (Rojas Perez et al., 2022). For example, Harris et al., (2010) mentions the prevalence of spirituality in patients suffering from cancer or chronic illness, which supports adaptation and resilience to improve their quality of life.

In general, Latinx tend to describe their spirituality as an intimate relationship with God, family, and community and associate these relationships with their well-being (Hilton & Child, 2014). Further research is required on Latinx resilience and spirituality to understand its nuances more clearly. Current research has focused on Latinx college students spirituality and resilience (Cavazos Vela et al., 2015; Morgan Consoli et al., 2015; Fregeau & Leier, 2016) or populations with chronic illness (Hunter-Hernández et al., 2015; Wildes et al., 2009) but research on general Latinx communities is required to progress our understanding of how this population overcomes adversities and if spirituality is related as part of this process and their resilience.

Second Generation Latinx and Spirituality

Spirituality among second generation Latinx is often comprised of a blend of traditional religious practices and personal, individualized expressions of faith (Espinosa, 2003, 2014). Second generation Latinx individuals need to navigate between the religious traditions inherited from their parents and the secular, pluralistic influences of the U.S. (Espinosa, 2003, 2014; Matovina, 2014). This dual influence creates a unique spiritual experience that is rooted in both cultural heritage and adaptation to new environments. Noyola et al., (2020) found that Mexican-born participants reported social support and positive influences on behavior as benefits of their spirituality in navigating difficulties while U.S.-born Mexican Americans identified meaning-making as the most helpful benefit of spirituality. Findings such as this suggest the bicultural identity, second generation Latinx experience changes the way spirituality and religiosity provides support when facing adversities (Safa & Umaña-Taylor, 2021).

A theme in second generation Latinx literature is the balance between cultural retention and adaptation. Spirituality, and by extension religiosity, as cultural values undergo a similar process in this “inbetweenness” (Nabhan-Warren, 2016). Through this unique experience, second generation Latinx create hybrid practices by incorporating elements of indigenous spirituality, diasporic religions, and new age beliefs (Nabhan-Warren, 2016). Spirituality also plays a role in identity formation with spiritual practices providing a sense of continuity with their cultural heritage, anchoring second generation Latinx’s ethnic identity (Calvillo & Bailey, 2015; Campesino et al., 2009).

Meaning and Meaning Making

Spirituality and religiosity have served as a form of meaning making for Latinx populations as outlined above. For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand how meaning and meaning making is defined in the literature for a better understanding of the results in this study. Meaning has been defined as possible relationships among things, events, and relationships and the connection between them (Baumeister, 1991). The conceptualization of what is meaning in the human experience has varied through different disciplines of study. Park and Folkman (1997) categorized the various ways meaning making had been studied in their attempt to create a framework, including: general life orientation (Antonovsky, 1987; Baumeister, 1991); personal significance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Leventhal et al., 1992; Pearlin, 1991); as causality and attributions as to why an event occurred (Bulman & Wortman, 1977); as a coping strategy in finding transcendent features in an event (Thompson, 1985); and as an outcome in the process of dealing with traumatic events (McIntosh et al., 1993). In their presentation of a model for meaning making, Park and Folkman (1997) proposed a stress-and-coping theoretical framework that emphasized the role of beliefs and motivation in meaning making.

There has been an increase in interest in meaning-making at the turn of the 21st century as a method of coping with adversity. Much of the research as to how meaning relates to mental health has been focused on meaning making in the context of highly stressful situations. In particular, meaning making is often related to life narratives in the face of stressful encounters (Crossley, 2000), reorganization of one's narrative after a stressful experience (Bluck & Habermas, 2001), or cognitive reconfigurations (personal construct theory; Walker & Winter, 2007).

Meaning making has been used to describe coping-related phenomena due in part to the various interpretations of how it looks in lived experiences. Two types of meaning are situational meaning and global meaning. Situational meaning is the significance of a particular occurrence in terms of its relevance to a situation (Park & Folkman, 1997). Global meaning is broader and includes a person's values and beliefs in addition to their goals in how they find purpose of their experiences (Park & Folkman, 1997). Global meaning can be defined as the most abstract level of meaning, that is, the basic goals and fundamental assumptions, beliefs, values, and expectations about their world (Park & Folkman, 1997). Global meaning is thought to be derived early in life depending on an individual's social context and is a powerful influence on an individuals' thoughts, emotional responses, and actions (Park, 2010). Religion is also viewed as an example of global meaning in that it is a belief system that provides a way of understanding suffering and loss (Baumeister, 1991; Kotarba, 1983; Wortman & Silver, 1992).

Having a sense of purpose is important in maintaining a healthy psychological well-being (Melton & Schulenberg, 2008). There is a significant relationship in having a higher sense of purpose and acceptance of the self and fuller awareness of one's own emotional reactions (Melton & Schulenberg, 2008). Similarly, participants who reported being in an active search for meaning felt their life was much more meaningful (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009). Religiousness is an orientation that affects an individual's understanding of the world and can be used to make reality and suffering both understandable and bearable (Park & Folkman, 1997; Wuthnow et al., 1980). Activities such as meditation, contemplation, spending time in nature, and religious services can resonate with one's own spirituality which

has been found to be an important part of making meaning in one's own life (Manning, 2012).

Second generation Latinx members often grow up in an environment that presents a global meaning based on religion. The researcher hopes to understand what experiences these individuals have with their global meaning and how it has shaped their spiritual beliefs. Secondly, the researcher wanted to gain insight into how this relates to second generation Mexican American emerging adults process of resilience.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter contains a review of the methodological procedures implemented to explore spirituality in second generation Mexican American emerging adults and their experiences overcoming adversities. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and quantitative data was collected through the use of self-report surveys. The philosophy of science guiding this study is outlined below to provide context on why a mixed method approach was chosen and how the data was triangulated. Specific information about participants, the researcher's positionality, measurement instruments, and procedures are outlined.

Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science refers to the conceptual underpinnings of how knowledge is acquired (Ponterotto, 2005). Within philosophy of science there are several beliefs or assumptions, including: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2002). The assumption of ontology refers to the nature of reality and being (Ponterotto, 2005) and more specifically addresses the question of what can be known about that reality. As a mixed-method study incorporating both statistical and interpretive phenomenological analysis, the ontology will consist of a paradigm based on realism (Hays & Wood, 2011). Scientific realism is defined by Schwandt (1997) as "the view that theories refer to real features of the world. 'Reality' here refers to whatever it is in the universe (i.e., forces, structures, and so on) that cause the phenomena we perceive with our senses" (p. 133). Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge; how knowledge is acquired and the relationship between research participants (the knower of knowledge) and

the researcher (would-be knower) (Ponterotto, 2005). The quantitative portion of this study will produce numerical data which will provide knowledge through statistical interpretation of the results, essentially based in post-positivism. The qualitative portion was based on constructivism, in that scientific knowledge is constructed by the researcher and participant and not discovered from the world per se (Hays & Wood, 2011). The assumption of axiology concerns the role that values have on the research process. The axiology of this study concerns values that the researcher seeks to understand in the process of spirituality in second generation Mexican American emerging adults as it relates to overcoming adversities. Methodology involves the process and procedures of research that follow the assumptions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As stated above, the methodology in this study is mixed methods.

Research Design

Quantitative research primarily relies on numerical data (Charles & Mertler, 2002). A post-positivist paradigm is used to investigate claims and understand knowledge, such as hypotheses and research questions, test of theories, or understanding cause and effect thinking. An investigator is able to examine variables and the magnitude or frequency of their relationship to other variables (Sukamolson, 2007). The researcher determines which variables will be focused on, including instruments, using information such as their reliability and validity (Sukamolson, 2007).

Qualitative research, alternatively, can be described as an inquiry process of understanding individuals through a complex, holistic approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Qualitative studies are conducted by examining participant's perspectives in a natural setting with consideration given to their context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this approach the

researcher often uses themes to make claims of knowledge based on a constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In conducting a qualitative study, data is collected from participant's experiences and knowledge gained through immersion in their everyday life in which the context of the study is framed (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Data analysis is based on the values of the researcher as well as the participant's perception of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

A mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011) design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data was used in this study. The mixed method design required collecting and analyzing two different types of data to better understand possible answers to the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The rationale for utilizing a mixed methods design is for a more thorough understanding of the spiritual beliefs and meaning making that second generation Mexican American emerging adults engage in to overcome adversities. In combination, using a quantitative and qualitative paradigm provided a more holistic analysis of the complexities underlying these individual's spiritual beliefs (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011).

In conducting a mixed methods approach, the researcher builds on knowledge through pragmatism (Creswell & Clark, 2017) and asserts that truth is understood through a triangulation of methods (Denzin, 1978; Howe, 2012). The term triangulation in research is used to describe using more than one approach to generate knowledge about a phenomenon (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). In this study, methodological triangulation was the type of triangulation used to gather data. Triangulation can include using two or more sets of data gathered using the same methodology, such as qualitative data, or the researchers may use two different data collection methods as seen in mixed methods studies. When combining

both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate research questions, there are three possible outcomes in the analysis: converging, divergent, or complementary results. Results that are converging lead to the same conclusions, whereas divergent results may contradict each other. Complementary results can supplement the results from the other approach to provide context or additional evidence for the researcher. The researcher in this study used triangulation to gain complementary results (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).

In carrying out a mixed methods study, three issues needed to be considered: priority, implementation, and integration (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Priority refers to the method that will be emphasized in the study. Implementation refers to the data collection and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data which can be done sequentially, chronologically, or concurrently. Integration is the phase in the research process where the mixing of the quantitative and qualitative data occurs. In this study, the researcher gave the qualitative design priority due to qualitative research having philosophical assumptions and values shown to be appropriate for multicultural and cross-cultural research (Romero & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). The quantitative data collection occurred concurrently, and integration provided further understanding of spirituality's role in overcoming adversities for second generation Mexican American emerging adults. Thus, this was a qualitative plus quantitative approach (QUAL + Quan; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021).

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a cisgender, male, counseling psychology doctoral student who identifies as second generation Mexican American. He has been working with Latinx communities and other minoritized racial/ethnic communities for more than 7 years and has been trained to conduct research through a multicultural and social justice lens. The

researcher was born and raised in Southern California in a predominately Mexican American community. He was raised in a bilingual language household (i.e., English and Spanish) and is bilingual in Spanish and English. Additionally, the researcher was raised in a Catholic household and participated in typical milestones within the religion including completing his first communion and being baptized. The researcher began to distance himself from religion and identified as atheist as an emerging adult. After experiencing adversities and family loss, the researcher began to incorporate practices learned from childhood rooted in indigenous teachings with Catholic influences. The researcher had become interested in his own development of spirituality and sought to better understand how spirituality develops and contributes to resilience.

His personal and professional background in psychology has led him to become interested in the Latinx/Mexican American community and the factors that contribute to their success. The researcher takes a multicultural, social justice, and collaborative approach to understanding individual's experiences. He believes that second generation Mexican Americans have faced a number of challenges and hardships being raised in the U.S. by immigrant parents having to navigate a bicultural identity. Additionally, he believes that the cultural values that were taught to them by their immigrant families contributed to their development of self and their capacity to overcome hardship. After having spent the last decade in academia, the researcher is both an insider and outsider in the Mexican American community.

An insider in qualitative research is a researcher who shares similar characteristics, roles, or experience with the participants while an outsider has characteristics and roles that set them apart from the participants being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The researcher,

as a second generation Mexican American, is considered an insider to this this community, in general. At the same time, the researcher is also an outsider by approaching this population as an academic researcher seeking to understand a phenomenon (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This in-between has been called *the space between* by Dwyer & Buckler (2009) and is an important consideration when conducting qualitative research. As the researcher is in-between the role as an academic and as a community member in the population being studied, careful consideration into achieving trustworthiness, as outlined further in this chapter, should be considered.

Participants

Selection criteria for both the quantitative and qualitative samples of the study were self-identified: (1) second generation Mexican American (individual's born in the U.S. and whose parents were born in Mexico), (2) emerging adults (ages 18-25), and (3) living in the United States. The researcher used a purposive sampling approach in order to determine the "essence" of the experience of spirituality for second generation Mexican American adults (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ramakrishnan's (2004) definition of second generation (i.e., both parents are first generation immigrants to the U.S., born in another country) was used for recruitment purposes. Additionally, emerging adults were recruited due to this developmental periods' distinct identity exploration during the transition of adolescence into adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Participants for the qualitative sample were recruited through the use of social media flyers, community list serves, and snowball sampling (Goodman, 1962). Participants who believed they met the study criteria were asked to contact the researcher through email indicating their interest in participating in an interview. Flyers provided information about the study, how to participate by contacting the researcher, and incentives offered.

Communication was done through the researchers' university email account affiliated with a large U.S. public university on the west coast. The study was approved by the researcher's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The qualitative component of the study involved 9. **Table 1** summarizes relevant participant demographic information. Six participants identified as “man” and three as “woman.” Participants ranged from 19 to 25 years of age at the time of data collection with a mean age of 22.67 years. Five participants identified “Spanish” as their first language and four participants as “English.” Highest education degree attained varied with four participants reporting a “high school diploma”, two listed “Associate’s degree”, one “Bachelor’s degree”, and two “Master’s degree.” Pseudonyms are used to protect participant privacy.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym Name	Age	Sex	Generational Status in US	First Language	Occupation	Education Degree
Rudy	22	Man	2 nd	Spanish	Analyst	Associates
Karma	24	Woman	2 nd	English	Teacher	Bachelor's
Ernie	19	Man	2 nd	Spanish	Undergraduate Student	High School
Desiree	20	Woman	2 nd	English	Security	High school
Ale	25	Woman	2 nd	Spanish	Graduate Student	Master's
Rusty	23	Man	2 nd	Spanish	Bartender	High School
Manny	22	Man	2 nd	Spanish	Phone Operator	High School
Rogelio	25	Man	2 nd	English	Teacher	Master's
Jaime	24	Man	2 nd	English	Librarian	Associates

Recruitment for the quantitative portion aimed to yield a sample large enough to meet power, which was calculated as a sample size of at least 77 using G* Power (Faul et al., 2009) and a medium effect size (Cohen, 2013). The researcher aimed for approximately 130 survey responses to account for missing responses, incomplete data, or participants not meeting study criteria. After data collection, 132 participants were used in the analysis. All participants identified as second-generation Mexican Americans, 54.5% identified as men, 40.9% identified as women, 3.8% as gender non-binary, and 0.8% as transgender men. Ages ranged from 18-25 years old, and the average age of participants was 21.73 ($SD = 2.334$). A majority of participants (58.3%) indicated English as their first language, with 41.7%

reporting Spanish as their first language. Participants were asked to report their average household income with 14.4% of participants indicating less than \$20,000, 39.4% between \$21,000-\$50,000, 31.1% between \$51,000-\$99,000, and 15.2% more than \$100,000. Participants highest education achieved varied with 3.79% reporting less than high school, 21.21% reporting high school, 36.36% reporting some college, 22.73% reporting an Associate's degree, 12.88% reporting a Bachelor's degree, and 3.03% reporting a Master's degree.

Measurement of Constructs

Demographic characteristics. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher to collect information about participants' age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, immigrant status, and socioeconomic income (see Appendix D).

Semi-structured interview protocol. A semi-structured interview was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of second generation Mexican American emerging adults' spirituality and how it has helped them overcome adversities. Sample interview questions include "What helps you to keep going and continue to overcome hardships in your daily life?" and "Can you talk about traditions or values that you continue to practice today?" (See Appendix E).

Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES; Piedmont, 2014). Religiosity and spirituality were measured together using the 35-item ASPIRES scale. The ASPIRES scale is a combination of two previous scales, the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS), described as measuring the motivation one has to create a broad sense of personal meaning for their life; and the Religious Sentiments Scale (RSS), which measures the extent that individuals are involved in and committed to the practice and teachings of a

specific religious tradition. The STS is comprised of three correlated sub-scales: Prayer Fulfillment (PF), the capability for someone to create a space that enables them to feel a connection with some larger reality; Universality (UN), the belief in a purpose to life and larger meaning; and Connectedness (CN), or feelings of responsibility and belonging to a larger human reality across generations and groups (Piedmont, 2014). The RSS is made up of two correlated sub-scales: Religious Involvement (RI) reflecting how active individuals are in religious activities; and Religious Crisis (RC) which is defined as an individual experiencing conflict or difficulties with the God of their understanding (Piedmont, 2014).

Items in the ST are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree”. Alpha reliability for the STS self-report sub-scales were .60 for CN, .96 for UN, .95 for PF and .93 for the total STS (Piedmont, 2014). RSS items were scored using a second-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “never” to (7) “several times.” The alpha reliability for the RSS self-report sub-scales were .89 for RI and .78 for RC (Piedmont, 2014). The ASPIRES scale has also been validated with a Latinx adult population with alpha reliability as follows: .92 for PF, .77 for CN, .80 for UN and .84 for RI (Simkin, 2018). Internal reliability for this study was .906 for the Religious Sentiments subscale and .875 for the spiritual transcendence subscale.

Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS; Knight et al., 2010). Cultural values were measured using the MACVS. The MACVS is a 50-item scale that assesses both traditional and mainstream values of Mexican Americans through subscales (Knight et al., 2010). The traditional values subscales include familism support, familism obligations, familism reference, respect, religion, and traditional gender roles. The mainstream values subscale include material success, independence and self-reliance, and competition and

personal achievement (Knight et al., 2010). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will only be using the traditional values subscales to explore the adherence to traditional cultural values by second generation Mexican Americans.

The three familism subscales (familism support, familism obligations, and familism referents) encompass the construct of *familismo* and have alpha reliabilities of .67, .65, and .67, respectively (Knight et al., 2010). The Respect subscale measures intergenerational behaviors within families and has an alpha reliability of .75 (Knight et al., 2010). The Religion subscale which includes spiritual beliefs and faith, had an alpha reliability of .78 (Knight et al., 2010). Traditional gender role subscales focused on differential expectations of males and females and had an alpha reliability of .73 (Knight et al., 2010). The Familism subscales were used in total for this study to focus on the primary construct of *familismo* and had an internal reliability of .929. Religion subscale had an internal reliability of .964. The *Respeto* subscale had an internal reliability of .888 and the gender role subscale had an internal reliability of .844.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006). Meaning making was measured using the MLQ. The MLQ is a 10-item scale is used to measure two meaning making processes consisting of the presence of meaning and the search for meaning. The scale is scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “absolutely untrue” to (7) “absolutely true.” The scale has two subscales: search and presence. Search subscale represents a search for meaning in life and presence is the perception of presence of meaning in life. The MLQ has an alpha reliability range from .87 to .90 for Search and .70 to .93 on Presence subscales (Dunn & O’Brien, 2009; Park, 2010). The Search for Meaning subscale was reverse coded and combined with the presence of meaning subscale to provide a score

indicating participants' perception of having a valued meaning and purpose and not actively exploring that meaning (Stegar et al., 2006). This was done to measure participant's satisfaction with their understanding of what makes life meaningful and what they want to do with their life to better fit within the cross-sectional design of this study. Cavazos Vela et al., (2015) has provided evidence of validity with Mexican American populations with alpha reliability of .86 for the Search subscale and .75 for the Presence subscale. Internal reliability for this study was .922.

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008). Resilience was measured using the Brief Resilience Scale. The BRS is a 6-item scale used to measure an individual's ability to bounce back from stress. The BRS is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." Sample items include "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times" and includes reverse coded items such as "It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens." The BRS had an internal consistency ranging from .80 to .91 (Smith et al., 2008). This scale was used due to its broad definition of resilience, which is the ability to bounce back after adversity. Consideration was given to measure this specific process in its literal definition due to the researcher's interest in how it relates to the dependent variables. The BRS has been validated for Latinx populations in the U.S. with an alpha reliability of .78 (Karaman, et al., 2019). Internal reliability for this study was .947.

Procedures

Data was collected from April 2023 through May 2023. The researcher secured Institutional Review Board approval from the university before starting data collection. Individuals who reached out to the researcher and met study criteria were provided with a consent form outlining confidentiality, risks, and benefits, participants' rights, and the

researchers' goals (see Appendix C). Once participants gave consent, they were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire to collect information about participants' age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, generational status, and socioeconomic income (see Appendix D). The interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were conducted in person at the participants' choice of time and location. Example locations included: local parks, outside on a community college campus, and outside coffee shops. Participants were given a \$25 Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for their participation. With participant consent interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Audio files and interview transcripts were stored in a password-protected computer and will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Participants for the quantitative sample were recruited using the Crowdsourcing recruitment platform CloudResearch. Through the CloudResearch platform, participants were provided information on study criteria, a Qualtrics survey link containing the consent form shown in Appendix B, and information on how to contact the researcher. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the consent and interview process, prior to participation and completed a brief demographic questionnaire before starting the survey with the instruments above. Monetary incentives were offered as a thank you for participation and participants were rewarded \$3 per completed survey via the CloudResearch platform. The researcher compiled the data into an excel file for data cleaning and then imported it into SPSS for data analysis. Survey data has been de-identified so as not to be traced to individual participants.

Chapter IV

Analysis

This chapter discusses the details of the mixed methods analysis approach for both the qualitative and quantitative components. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the primary qualitative approach used. A linear regression analysis was used to identify the factors that contribute to resilience in the quantitative approach; specifically, whether spirituality, religiosity, Mexican American cultural values, and meaning making were significant determinants of resilience.

Qualitative Analysis

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the research approach due to its emphasis on participant's personal lived experience, the meaning making process, and how individuals interpret and understand their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The phenomenological nature of this approach is suited for exploring participant's subjective experience and the meanings they attach to those experiences, important characteristics when seeking to understand a personal concept such as spirituality (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is an extension of the original phenomenological approach to qualitative research created by Jonathan Smith (Smith et al., 2009). IPA focuses on existential meaning as well as the historical, contextual, and political systems a participant navigates in their experiences and lives (Miller et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2009). IPA differs from traditional phenomenology, which is based on a constructivist and interpretivist epistemology (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). IPA instead has an ontology of realism and epistemology of constructivism (Hays & Wood, 2011). These differing distinctions in ontology and epistemology between traditional

phenomenology and IPA will inform the methodology of this study and the role the researcher has during the entire process of conducting the study.

Phenomenology combines participants' experiences into an 'essence' of the phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011) while IPA follows an idiographic and double-hermeneutic approach (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al., (2009) describes IPA as idiographic due to the focus on detailed examination of each particular participant's experience. The double-hermeneutic process is a way of exploring a participant's experience by acknowledging that the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their own world (Smith et al., 2009, p. 53). This allows for contextualizing the participants' narratives within historical, social, political, and cultural factors (Miller et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2009).

The steps to conducting an IPA analysis begin as an individual process (Smith et al., 2009). Once the researcher has transcribed an interview, they begin to identify patterns in participants' experiences and the way they make meaning of those experiences. This is done through the use of printed transcripts and multiple (2-3) rounds of line-by-line coding. A reflective journal was used by the researcher to document self-reflections and insights about various aspects of the research that will assist with the analysis process, similar to memoing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reflective journal provided a space to consider how the researchers own experiences, biases, and assumptions may influence data interpretation (Finlay, 2002). This reflective practice where the researcher reflects on preconceived ideas of the phenomenon being studied is primarily used in phenomenological research (Stutey et al., 2020). The reflective journal was used from the data collection phase through the analysis and reporting the results phases of the study. During the last phase of the data analysis, the

reflective journal helped explore contextualization, interpretations, and alternative conclusions that were consistent with the process in IPA data analysis (Smith et al., 2022). Member-checks will be conducted with participants to finalize the final themes and confirm the summaries reflect their views, feelings, and experiences. Member-checks is the process of sharing research findings with participants to make sure the categories, constructs, or interpretations are accurate to their experience (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

After going through the individual interviews, the patterns and emergent themes across all participants was condensed. This process included the information gathered through the reflective journal to combine the contextual factors including cultural influences, the time events took place, and the narrative the participant shared with the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). The idiographic and double-hermeneutic approach is suited for the study of the complex, diverse, and nuanced lived experiences that many second-generation Mexican Americans face in the U.S. In IPA, similarities and differences among themes can be explored instead of only focusing on themes by similarities between experiences. This approach prevents the over-generalization of experiences.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed a criterion for evaluating qualitative content analysis, termed *trustworthiness*. Historically, trustworthiness criteria proposed for evaluating qualitative studies had focused on reporting the content analysis process accurately (Emden et al., 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuendorf, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) instead proposed four components for trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following contains information as to

what each component entails and how the researchers met the criteria for each in conducting the qualitative portion of this study.

Credibility. Credibility has been described as the fit between participant's viewpoints and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). There are multiple methods for the researcher to obtain credibility including reflexivity, thick description, multiple coders, and member checks. Guba and Lincoln (1989) further claim the credibility of a study is determined when readers are shown an experience, and they are able to recognize it. This includes how participants feel about the interpretations drawn from the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study addresses credibility by utilizing a semi-structured interview which allowed for concepts to be explored further with follow up questions for clarification. Additionally, an external auditor served as an external check on the research process by reviewing participant's quotes and themes the researcher identified. Member checks were conducted at the conclusion of data analysis to determine how participants feel about the researcher's interpretations. The researcher's use of a reflective journal also provided further contextual information needed to meet credibility.

Transferability. Transferability in qualitative work refers to the degree to which the results can be transferred to other contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morrow, 2005). In qualitative studies this refers to the case-to-case transfer or how the findings from the study can be applied to a different group of people (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is important to recognize that in qualitative inquiry, there is no single "true" interpretation and traditional perspectives of "generalizability" need to be reframed (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The responsibility of the researcher is to provide thick descriptions of the data through the use of quotes so that others who seek to transfer findings can do so under their own judgment

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). In this study the researcher increased the transferability of the results by using thick descriptions in reporting the findings by providing rich quotes representing the themes that emerged from the data. Demographic information and cultural contextualization were further provided for the reader's consideration of transferability. It is important to note that the idiographic nature of IPA recognizes that transferability is not the main goal of the findings, instead the readers can determine through the rich descriptions provided if the findings are transferable.

Dependability. Dependability is the process of making sure the content analysis follows a logical, traceable, and clearly documented process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). A study that reflects good dependability will allow readers to examine the research process through the methodology section and provide enough information for them to draw their own conclusions on dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process includes researchers disclosing their reflexivity where they state information about their self, their values, and prior insights. Another researcher should be able to follow the process of the analysis to identify themes and the logic behind the conclusions. Dependability was further supported through the reflective journal. The journal will provide a written documentation of the research process and the researcher's interactions with the research. Similar to an audit trail, the journal provides a "trail" to help potential readers further understand the results, the researchers process in presenting the findings. The researcher also discloses their reflexivity to better understand their interpretations.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the researcher's interpretations and findings in a qualitative inquiry being clearly derived from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This includes the researcher demonstrating how they arrived at the conclusions and interpretations

in the study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is supported by having researchers provide thought-out reasoning for their theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout their study (Koch, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that confirmability is established in a study when all other parameters are met: credibility, transferability, and dependability. The present study achieved confirmability through attending to the prior concepts as well as providing information regarding theoretical background in the literature review, disclosing methodology in the methods, and describing the analyses process well.

Trustworthiness within Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA has specific trustworthiness considerations in addition to the general trustworthiness considerations within qualitative research (Smith, 2011). Smith's (2011) guidelines center around four principles: (1) the research clearly follows the theoretical principles underlying IPA of phenomenology, idiography, and hermeneutics, (2) what was done in the study is sufficiently transparent for the reader, (3) there is coherent and plausible analysis of the data, (4) and there has been sufficient sampling of the participants' experience to support the evidence for each theme. Strong IPA research has a clear focus, is rigorous, and has sufficient space in the presentation of each theme that includes interpretative (not strictly descriptive) analysis following the presentation of each theme. This study implemented the criteria outlined by Smith (2011) by following the underlying IPA phenomenology, idiography, and hermeneutics during conceptualization. The methods section and analysis section clearly described what was done in the study in a transparent manner. Lastly, there was a thorough sampling of participants until each theme is sufficiently supported.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical analysis package, SPSS, to answer the quantitative research question: What is the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, traditional Mexican cultural values, meaning making and resilience in second generation Mexican American emerging adults? A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the associations of the dependent variables of meaning making, spirituality, and Mexican cultural values, with the outcome variable of resilience. Multiple linear regression models are an extension of the simple linear regression model that is used to find the statistical relation between a predictor variable and an outcome variable (Eberly, 2007) Thus, the assumptions are the same for multiple regressions as they are for linear regressions.

There are four assumptions associated with a linear regression model: linearity, homoscedasticity, independence, and normality. Linearity is the assumption that the relationship between X and the mean of Y is linear. Homoscedasticity is constant variance, or that the variance of a distribution is the same for all Y. Independence refers to the observations being independent of each other. Normality is the assumption that for any fixed value of X, Y is normally distributed. Using SPSS, the four assumptions associated with a linear regression model were satisfied by visualization provided by the graph outputs and correlation tables.

Reliability and Validity. Reliability and validity of the instruments is important in quantitative research for reducing errors that may come up in measurement. Reliability in quantitative research is the accuracy of a measurement procedure (Thorndike, 2005). Internal consistency reliability analysis were measured on the Likert-type scale to assess how well the various items in a measure appear to reflect the attribute. Validity is the degree to which the

study accurately reflects or assess the specific concept or construct that is being measured (Thorndike, 2005). This is done by establishing content, criterion-related, and construct validity of the survey instrument. Content validity refers to the extent to which the survey items and the scores are representative of all the possible questions about second generation Mexican American emerging adults and resilience.

The researcher used previous literature to operationalize the independent variables (meaning making, Mexican American cultural values, spirituality) and dependent variable (resilience) to address construct validity. External validity was met using random sampling to increase generalizability of the results to a diverse sample of second generation Mexican Americans (Ferguson, 2004). Internal validity was accounted for by using counterbalance items in Qualtrics as well as randomly presenting survey sets to participants. Reliability of measurements were accounted for by using measures that have been statistically analyzed to have Cronbach's alphas of 0.70 or higher. Per Nunnally and Berstein (1994), 0.7 is the commonly accepted threshold for Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

This chapter details the results of this mixed method study. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) findings will be presented, first outlining group experiential themes and personal experiential themes that were derived from these second generation Mexican American participant's experiences with religiosity, spirituality, and making meaning through their adversities. Group experiential themes include (1) Evolving Spirituality, (2) Adversities, (3) Overcoming Adversity Through Spirituality, and (4) Meaning Made in Overcoming. Results for this study will be presented in line with IPA's idiographic process of presenting experiential statements, or emergent themes, to identify personal experiential themes through analysis of single cases as well as group experiential themes by looking across cases for patterns of convergence and divergence.

The quantitative results will then be presented to better understand the relationship between resilience, religiosity, spirituality, meaning making and the cultural values of *familismo*, *respeto*, and traditional gender roles. It was hypothesized that spirituality, meaning making, and traditional Mexican American cultural values would be significant contributors of resilience in this population. A multiple regression was used to determine which independent variables were significant factors in the resilience of participants.. Preliminary analyses were conducted to verify assumptions needed before moving forward with analysis.

Qualitative Sample

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explore the interviews. An overview of the four emergent themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 2. Definitions and representative quotes for each of the themes will be provided.

Table 2

Group Experiential Themes

Group Experiential Themes	Definition	Subthemes
Evolving Spirituality	Changing spiritual views through experiences with various belief systems and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Catholicism • Family Influence on Religion • Institutionalized Religion • Questioning Beliefs
Adversities	Challenges and hardships participants have faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use • Family Concerns • Moving Away
Overcoming Adversity Through Spirituality	Participants' beliefs and practices that have helped them through hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They Are Not Coincidences" • Asking God Help • Energy as Spirituality • Strengthening Relationship with Nature • The Right Way to Behave • Quieting the Mind • Helping Comfort
Meaning Made in Overcoming	Participants descriptions of how they find understanding after going through challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grateful For What I have • Progress with Yourself • Hope That It Gets Better • Parental Responsibility

Evolving Spirituality

The group experiential theme of Evolving Spirituality includes the changing spiritual views participants experienced through learning about various belief systems and practices. Participants shared how they were taught about religion growing up and how their beliefs developed as they reflected on their values and identity. Subthemes included (1) Cultural Catholicism, (2) Family influence on Religion, (3) Institutionalized Religion, and (4) Questioning Beliefs.

Participants shared their exposure with religious imagery and customs as part of their cultural Catholic upbringing. Rusty, for example noted he saw Catholic influence when visiting his parent's hometown in Mexico and compared it to the imagery he sees growing up in the US,

It really says a lot about the difference between both cultures. Like the center of town. In my grandpa's hometown, the center of town, you know, multiple times a day, you hear the bell ring. You know, signifying, okay, church, you know, mass is... mass is about to start. You know, it's the center of...it's basically the center of our culture, you know, being Mexican or having Mexican descent. Catholicism is in the center of that, you know, that as opposed to here, you know, it's definitely hits definitely, you know, a watered-down version of that, you know, a poor man's version of that, I'd say.

Participants also shared that some of this imagery had been part of their household decorations growing up as Rudy described, "There's cultural Catholicism and there's, you know, if you're Mexican, you're a cultural Catholic. My mom has, we have images of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, we've got, you know, we've got that stuff in our house." Rudy shared

that he saw the cultural imagery as part of his culture “this is just like sort of my opinion, but it's also kind of like a cultural kind of like observation. You know, like, for Mexico to be one of the biggest Catholic countries in the world.”

Participants reflected on their Family’s Influence on Religion through customs, teachings, and support. Rusty spoke about how he was involved in religious practices from an early age,

I was baptized as a baby. But like, as far as I remember, I would go to church, you know, every Sunday. As soon as I was able to go to kindergarten. My mom and my dad put me into private school, like a Catholic private school.

Some participants spoke about their experience of not wanting to continue with religious activities and feeling lucky their family was supportive. Karma shared, “I didn't want to go to church anymore. So, they were kind of like, ‘why?’ and I was like, I don't want to go. And luckily, my parents are very supportive of my spirituality and of who I am.” Karma shared her experience in a relieved manner that there was no anticipated conflict in her decision to stop attending church.

Other participants spoke about how teachings were passed down through generations, Rudy shared:

For me it's part of what my parents were brought up with, you know, so I remember I remember my grandma's house in Mexico. You know, they had the Catholic imagery in their house. So yeah, I think that's where my mom gets it from. And I think it's just like belief that it blesses your house, like having a cross on top of the door you know, blesses anyone who enters the house

As participants continued to talk about their experiences with religion, they began to take note of the complex relationship they have with the formal aspects of religion, referred to as Institutionalized Religion. Ale spoke about not needing the church to teach her how to practice her beliefs:

I guess the institution of what Jesus shows, you know, more like what the church shows you. Hmm. Yeah. So, almost like following Jesus kind of teachings and what he did, as opposed to like, the interpretations of a church. I don't need the church to tell me how to pray. I thank God and the universe every day. I wake up, and I'm like, I'm so grateful. I wanted to say, Jesus, thank you. I don't need to donate money. I could donate to like an organization, or an individual person, but not a church.

Participants described how they make distinctions between their own beliefs and those of the church, Rudy stated:

Without, you know, being like, full heartedly, like, oh, 'I believe everything the Catholic Church' says, no, like, obviously not. I can remove myself from that criticism from, like, the institutional perspective and see it as a culture, you know, and I know, there's a lot of criticisms about the church

Criticisms of the formal aspects of religion seemed to be a recurring experience that participants discussed influencing their spirituality. Desiree explained her complex view of recognizing the benefit of church while disagreeing with leadership,

I don't like how a Catholic church, like, the people higher up abuse that power, because I still see the good in the Catholic Church. You know, I see good, I understand, like, how important is to have a sense of community.

Participants further discussed a growing skepticism about religion as they reflected on their experiences in Questioning Beliefs. For example, Ernie found himself becoming disillusioned with his beliefs after his mom was diagnosed with cancer:

I was raised Catholic, but I never really identified with it. And then that kind of like, that entire situation with my health and my mom's health cemented that I'm not Catholic. And I remember having a conversation about it with I forget who it was, but they just kept bugging me like, 'Why don't you believe in God?' and I kind of just snapped and I was just like, 'if God is so great if God is so real, like why do you give my mom cancer?' like, I still kept like spirituality in a sense, you know, like, I do believe that there is something more than just the material but I don't think it falls within the realm of like a God or some sort of God that we try to, like believe it and stuff.

Another participant recalled his experience of finding inconsistencies in the teachings of his church. Jaime talks about the hypocrisy he witnessed:

Like, hey, that doesn't make sense. Like, that's hypocritical. Like, you can't say this one thing, and then say another thing, it just for me, it was like, I saw too many inconsistencies in what they taught. And all they would tell me was, 'Well, you know, we're not perfect men. So, it's not going to be a perfect religion, you know, like, we're imperfect. So, things are going to be imperfect.' But over time, things change, and things become our trend, like things move towards a more perfect state.

Adversities

This group experiential theme encompassed challenges and hardships participants had faced. Participants shared struggles with substance usage, moving far from home, and

difficulties their family had experienced that had also affected them personally. Subthemes included (1) Substance use, (2) Family Concerns, and (3) Moving Away.

Some participants disclosed the adversity they experienced were related to substance use. For example, Manny disclosed a mistake he made after a night of drinking:

oh, my DUI (driving under the influence) or DWI (driving while impaired)...just drank a lot. That night was funny because I was like 'should I go out?' and then I went out and...yeah, I just over drank and wanted to continue to party, and one thing led to another and unfortunately, I hit another vehicle that had been in an accident already on the side of the road.

Manny continued to reflect on the positives: "More or less...I lost the car but luckily, I was fully insured so that kind of...minimized the overall impact of the hardship...definitely the monetary impact. Could have been worse definitely, the outcome could have been worse you know?" Karma spoke about a similar hardship with her drinking habits: "I think it's something a challenge that I recently had to go through was controlling my... controlling my habits with drinking." Karma admits this was a realization she had come to after thinking about her behaviors:

Yeah. so, I think that was challenging for me to admit, maybe like things that have happened because of it and take accountability for them. And then I think it was challenging to live my life without kind of having the identity that I have built around that- maybe drinking socially, persona. And doing it...not necessarily sober. But, you know, just doing it in a way, I wasn't used to. I think socializing in a way I wasn't used to doing in a healthier way, for me at least.

Rudy disclosed how substance use led to him having to drop out of college and return back home:

Well, because it's been a couple years, but dropping out of school, and then moving back home and then, you know, going through the whole process of like, you know, I don't know, I guess feeling, you know, guilty or, you know, what, what's the word? Yeah, I guess just feeling bad about not being able to complete your, your goal, and then coming back home, and then going through all that. So that's been in the past, you know, whatever, three, four years, since I've moved back...But yeah, I was kind of like fucked up on, I was drinking a lot and doing Adderall, smoking weed, you know, occasionally cocaine. So mainly a lot of drinking and Adderall is what really got to me, and I couldn't handle the stress.

Several participants described challenges their family faced that has impacted them in Family Concerns. Ale shared her experience of a hardship she experienced as an adolescence when both her parents were deported: “When I was little, my parents, both my parents were arrested, and they were deported. So that was hard. Then my dad was in a detention center.” Other participants such as Ernie faced family health issues while undergoing their own which impacted their development:

I think personally, for me, the biggest hardship, or one of the biggest hardships that I had to go through myself was probably my chest surgery when I was around, I think 13. I was born with a condition called pectus excavatum. And so, essentially, what that is, is, your chest is kind of like indented. And so, since I have like asthma, and like scoliosis, my, my lungs, and my heart didn't have enough space. And around that time my mom got diagnosed with cancer. And so like, that took out a lot out of me. Just like trying to process like, my own health. And then like, not only that, but

worrying about my mom's and everything. And so, the way that I like to, like, explain that entire situation was that like, it just made me grow up

Jaime had experienced a family loss which he was still processing at the time of his interview due to the traumatic nature of his family member's passing:

My uncle passed away recently in October of 2022 and he kind of he overdosed, because he was trying to kill himself. But, but he kind of didn't kill himself. He ended up in the hospital. And then his organs started to fail. And because of this, because of the reason he was there, and because of his history of being a drug addict, they were not inclined to give him any of those organs. So, he died in the hospital. over a couple of weeks

For a few participants Moving Away from their family and friends was a hardship they have had to navigate. Rogelio talked about moving away from his family to attend college: "School was a challenge for me, it was challenging like leaving everything behind or whatever. I went up north and there was no friends, no family, no nobody...just me up there." Rusty similarly moved north and shared his hardship with adjusting:

Moving up there and making my transition from southern California to northern California. I really enjoyed the culture and honestly the living wage was a lot cheaper. So, the biggest thing for me was like 'Okay it's nice and it's cheaper, I can break away find independence. That was great at first but my first winter I started to feel really alone being away from everyone. It's still something I am working through and try to visit my family as much as I can.

Overcoming Adversity Through Spirituality

The group experiential theme of Overcoming Adversity Through Spirituality was defined as participant's beliefs and practices that have helped them through hardship. Participants shared how they have used spiritual beliefs they have adopted from their religious upbringing to get them through adversities. Subthemes included (1) They Are Not Coincidences, (2) Asking for Help, (3) Energy as Spirituality, (4) Strengthening Relationship with Nature, (5) The Right Way to Behave, (6) Quietening the Mind, and (7) Helping Comfort.

Participants explained how they gave spiritual meaning to signs and experiences to overcome hardships, noting that They Are Not Coincidences. Ale shared how she looked for signs as a source for guidance: "look for signs, because they will lead you to the right way. Even animals mean things. If you see an animal, like, staring, I can never see that as a coincidence. They're not." Rogelio shares how he saw a bird after his grandfather passed away and saw it as a sign:

You asked me if he's still with me. Yeah, so he had died there. And the day that he died we were all outside and a hummingbird had chilled, like we're just a couple feet off, you know? Somebody had said, "oh that's grandpa" and that's all we needed you know for us to... it stuck with us and every time we see a hummingbird, you know...that's gramps.

As participants experienced hardships, they reported believing in a spiritual force that would provide safety or guidance, categorized as Asking for Help. Ale shared her experience of praying together with her family after her father was deported for his safe return:

So, she was just like the harder we're praying, the better he's gonna have and then we would also have people come to our house to come help pray. You know, all these different things can help my dad, God's gonna let us be together. So, it's just like this, this

family kind of thing, where it were a family practice of really just asking him, asking God, for help.

Rudy shared learning to pray for guidance from his mom who he would see pray whenever she was unsure: “Whenever she has problems, I remember there was a time when like, she was uncertain about her job. I would see her pray the rosary. She's told me that she still prays the rosary every morning before work.”

For some participants, their spiritual beliefs offered a sense of safety during difficult periods as captured under the subtheme Helping Comfort. Manny shares how he has processed a car accident he was involved in while driving under the influence with his mother: “Luckily for the grace of, you know...my mom says my angels, my guardian angels. She used me as an example of what had happened and how I got lucky as a lesson to my younger sister.” Karma shared a similar sentiment of engaging in spiritual practices as a form of comfort:

I think for me it's kind of like, it's almost like a habit now if something like that kind of happens, I think it's more a habit, but I do like to practice them. Yeah. And I don't know if they necessarily help it's just more like a comfort. It's a helping comfort.

Participants used their own version of spirituality to help them navigate adversities. One example is Energy as Spirituality which was a subtheme describing how they use their intuition to be attuned to the energy around them. Ale shared how she gauged her own energy to be in touch with her emotions: “I'm very big on energy to where like, if you're feeling if you have anxiety, I'm like yo, and I prepare energy. It's like tonight we are sad, I feel your energy is low. I'm a present.” Ale continues to share her efforts to protect her own energy from external forces such as social media:

Yeah, it hit me like, you have to be careful that there's certain to be careful with what you're consuming, because that's going to affect your energy. Like, I sound stupid, I blocked the Kardashians, my Instagram, because they're not good energy. You know? That's just stupid. It does it. Like I got regular people from my Instagram, like certain people, and I'm like, you're just not good energy, maybe you are posting good stuff. But to me, I don't want to like compare myself to you.

Another participant relied on her natural environment as a way to connect with her spirituality. This subtheme was called Strengthening Relationship with Nature and captured the participants experience of reconnecting with nature as a way to ground themselves.

Karma shared her experience:

I think I just want to be in it, like to be present in it, like to experience it. I think also just you can, I don't know learning a lot about what is around you can strengthen that spirituality around you like learning the food you're eating and learning about , what land has to offer, I guess, what it has growing on it. I think doing that and doing kind of practices that kind of like, help you become reconnected like gardening or planting or whatever it is. Hiking even I feel for me, like just can strengthen on that.

Karma further shared how she has always been drawn to nature:

I think those activities are just the things that strengthen it for me at least. But I think yeah, I've always been really, I don't know what the word is very just oh my almost you can feel the knowledge or the I don't know, the little life or spirits in like around you when you're in nature. Like I've always felt that way.

These unique experiences capture the essence of how participants spirituality shifts toward a more personal process. For some participants, their spiritual beliefs provided moral guidance

as captured in the subtheme, The Right Way to Behave. Ale shared how her spiritual background provided her with a moral foundation that taught her spiritual practices with the intention to control:

Like, tarot readings would be bad, like palm readers would be bad, seeking the dead would be bad. So, it's like black magic, you know? And I always say ...I think it's mainly the intention, because you're purposely trying to control something that you shouldn't control, like, love, the future, all these things.

Jaime explained his thoughts on religion being a foundation for his morality: “But that's the whole thing is you get to these questions on morality, when did these lines become blurred? So, I feel like having that religion in the beginning, gave me a good base.” Rogelio shared a similar sentiment of being disciplined in being consistent with the morality instilled from a religious upbringing: “no matter what the circumstances are you hold down to those morals and beliefs. You're set, you stick with them, you're consistent with them, you were... you know disciplined. There's the right way and the wrong way.”

Quieting the Mind is a subtheme that entails how participants manage stress and emotional turmoil through introspection. Ernie spoke about meditating as a way to slow down his thoughts:

But when it's literally you are sitting down, eyes closed with yourself, it's, it's you, like, you're trapped within your own mind. And not like, necessarily trapped, but, you know, like, when you meditate, especially when you're super stressed out, or when you have so much going on, there's just so many thoughts that are just flowing through your brain.

Manny shares a similar experience of practicing breathing techniques: “...I've tried again, they're not something that I practice too much. But when I do practice it feels good, breathing

in breathing out... trying to shut off your mind” Participants described these activities as practices they have incorporated into their own take on spirituality.

Meaning Made in Overcoming

The group experiential theme of Meaning Made in Overcoming captured how participants sought to find understanding after experiencing adversity. Participants shared having gained new perspectives as well as better understanding their values. The first subtheme in this group experiential theme is Grateful For What I have, and it captures participants appreciating the positive aspects of life through gratitude. Angie shared how she intends to practice gratitude by giving back to her younger sister: “I give my thanks by giving back, like my time passing it forward. Like I tried to like that my sister and I have a scholarship money. I buy her laptop, or something.”

Ernie expressed his new perspective of how delicate life can be after his mother’s cancer treatment and his own health concerns:

And so, the way that I like to, like, explain that entire situation was that like, it just made me grow up. And it kind of just made me appreciate life more, because, you know, all around me between like me and like my mom, life seems so delicate.

Rudy shared his perspective in looking at the big picture of life after going through an adversity:

I think going back to what I said about, like, when I like, when I go, or when, you know, I guess you even say when I pray or when I go to church, like being grateful. And then also, yeah, being grateful for what I was given, you know, and what I have, because that in the grand scheme of things, you know, doesn't it's like, well, that

actually is not even that big of a deal. You know, like, you're healthy. You know. So, yeah, I guess in that sense, yeah.

Some participants shared how overcoming adversities through spirituality has promoted growth as highlighted in the subtheme Progress with Yourself. This subtheme was defined as a continuous process of growth through introspection and awareness. Ernie recounted how being honest with oneself and taking responsibility can help with processing adversities:

I feel like when you want to show real progress with yourself, you have to be honest with yourself. And you might not be proud of things that you've did. But I mean, that's the kind of first step of like, making yourself feel better is to at least acknowledge that what you did was wrong, or like, not wrong, but you know, like that. It wasn't true to what you feel like you should be doing.

Karma noted how her process of growth was not a single event but a series of multiple experiences that have led her to be more in tune with herself:

I think maybe just me allowing myself to become more spiritual is what maybe helped with that... I think there's just a series of things, series of events, maybe that weren't that big, or maybe just little things that accumulated maybe that led me to become more aware and more in tune.

A common sentiment shared by participants in overcoming adversities was having hope for the future. The subtheme Hope That It Gets Better is described as participant's optimistic outlook and persisting through challenges with anticipation of better times ahead. For example, Ale described believing that God would not give her a challenge she could not handle and used that as a means to persist:

I would always say like you are in the right place at the right time, and it sounds it will be like God will not give you something that you cannot handle. Or like the universe gave you know, they always say between two things I would say God will not give him anything you cannot handle and the universe is putting that in your life for a reason.

Rudy shared his experience of believing that things get better after overcoming his challenges:

I've always had that, but because this was such, the one that like, you know, was such a big deal for me. And now that I see that there is , "oh, it gets better" that, e I said that in itself gives me like it's already like showing me like, okay, you know, it gets better...it gives me hope that things are getting better. Or they can get better, you know? I mean, , if you're grateful for what, you know, you have, you know, the past... isn't that big of a deal. And so, it is hopeful because it's not where you were.

For some participants who had children, they found overcoming challenges in life has instilled a sense of responsibility in their role as parents to pass on what they have learned, including how they have made sense of their spirituality. Parental Responsibility is a sub theme that captures participant's sense of duty and commitment they feel toward ensuring the success of their children. Rogelio, for example, had found meaning in what is important as a parent: "meaning would be, you know, just setting up my kids for success, showing them... showing them discipline sticking, sticking with something and following through that...that gives me meaning." Jaime reported a similar experience after reflecting on his own hardships he has had to overcome:

So, my son does not have to experience the same traumatic hardships I've experienced to know what the outcome is. And for me to explain that to him, explain,

you know, the truth about what it could be, and you know, other things like that, and makes him know, like, you know, prepares him for these things, like, prepares him for the inevitability of my death, or something like, I won't talk about that now. But it's important that he knows those things as he gets older. So just like being a father, and teaching your son all these things, like in terms of maintaining good relationships, terms of like, kind of building your self-awareness.

Quantitative Sample

Preliminary and Descriptive Analysis

The researcher cleaned the data by removing 13 participants who did not select second generation Mexican American, reported an ethnicity other than Mexican, or reported their age being greater than 25 years old. Diagnostic plots were used to determine that there were no significant outliers remaining in the data. A total of 91% of responded or 131 participant responses were retained and used for analysis. The high percentage was credited to using a crowdsourcing recruitment platform that screened for participants based on requirements.

Before beginning the multiple regression analysis, measures were tested to determine whether they met the assumptions needed for multivariate normality. In order to meet the assumption of normality of distribution for each variable and determine extreme outliers, the researcher observed graphs, Histogram, and a Normal Q-Q Plot for a visual inspection which appeared to be normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). Skewness and kurtosis were assessed to be between the recommended value criteria of 2.0 and 7.0 (George & Mallery, 2020).

An independent t-test was conducted to determine if there was any significant difference between the male and female participants. There was no significant effect for sex and the variables in this study: Spiritual transcendence $t(124) = -.684, p = .464$, religious sentiments $t(124) = -1.054, p = .839$, meaning making $t(124) = .227, p = .392$, *familismo* $t(124) = 2.462, p = .239$, religion $t(124) = -1.014, p = .086$, *respeto* $t(124) = 1.561, p = .080$, and gender roles $t(124) = 2.108, p = .181$.

Correlations and a multiple regression analysis were carried out to investigate whether there was a relationship between spirituality, religion, traditional Mexican cultural values, and resilience. Correlations determined a high multicollinearity between the subscale Religion and the subscales Spiritual Transcendence and Religious Sentiments as seen in Table 3. The cultural value *respeto* also had a high multicollinearity with the cultural value of *familismo*. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2018), a high multicollinearity between predictor variables can lead to increased variance of the coefficient estimates and difficulty in assessing the importance of predictor variables. A decision was made to remove the Religion subscale and the *Respeto* subscale before proceeding with the multiple regression analysis. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics and correlations for the independent variable, resilience, and the dependent variables.

Table 3*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Resilience	3.134	1.106							
2. Meaning Making	3.773	.805	.588**						
3. <i>Familismo</i>	3.253	.812	.332**	.146*					
4. <i>Respeto</i>	3.020	.877	.329**	.187*	.822**				
5. <i>Religion</i>	2.500	1.334	.276**	.194*	.536**	.555**			
6. <i>Gender Roles</i>	2.008	.900	.199*	.001	.597**	.587**	.549**		
7. <i>Religious Sentiments</i>	3.187	.805	.192*	.133	.440**	.402**	.801**	.378**	
8. <i>Spiritual Transcendence</i>	2.914	1.006	.355**	.266**	.444**	.430**	.868**	.432**	.782

**

Note. N=131. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation. * indicates $p < .05$ ** indicates $p < .01$.

The means for the variables were as follows: Resilience was 3.134 (SD = 1.106), Meaning Making was 3.773 (SD = .805), *Familismo* mean was 3.253 (SD = .812), *Respeto* had a mean of 3.020 (SD = .877), Religion was 2.500 (SD = 1.334), Spiritual Transcendence had a mean of 2.914 (SD = 1.006), Religious Sentiments had a mean of 3.187 (SD .805), and Gender Roles mean was 2.008 (SD = .900). There was a significant correlation between Resilience and all the independent variables meeting the assumption of linearity. This is important for a multiple regression analysis for reliability and interpretability (Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2012).

Regression Analysis

The researcher sought to understand the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of Resilience. The purpose was to better understand if second generation Mexican Americans' religious or spiritual beliefs contributed to their resilience. Additionally, cultural values of *familismo*, traditional gender norms, and meaning making were of interest to see if they affected resilience as well. Results showed there is a significant cross-sectional relationship between the independent variables Meaning Making, Spiritual Transcendence, and the cultural value of *Familismo* with the dependent variable of Resilience. The results indicate that higher levels of Meaning Making, Spiritual Transcendence, and *Familismo* are significant determinants of Resilience in second generation Mexican Americans.

Results of the multiple regression are displayed in Table 4. Results show that as Meaning Making increases by one unit, Resilience increases by .71 ($\beta = .709$, $p < .001$). As Spiritual Transcendence increases, Resilience increases by .28 ($\beta = .275$, $p < .05$). As *Familismo* increases, Resilience increases by .27 ($\beta = .27$, $p < .05$). The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 41% of the variation in the resilience of participants, as indicated by the adjusted R-squared value, $R^2 = .41$, $F(5, 130) = 19.033$, $p < .001$). The final model was:

Resilience = 68.809 + (.709*Meaning Making) + (.275*Spiritual Transcendence) + (.27**Familismo*).

Table 4*Regression Coefficients for Resilience*

Variable	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Meaning	.709	[.514-.904]	.516	7.196	<.001
Making					
Spiritual	.275	[.022-.527]	.250	2.149	.034
Transcendence					
<i>Familismo</i>	.270	[.032-.508]	.199	2.242	.027

Note. R adj = .410 (N = 131, p <.001). CI = confidence interval for *b*.

Chapter VI

Discussion

This chapter will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the information collected in response to the research questions by combining different data sources and methods to interpret through a methodological triangulation approach (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Both findings related to existing literature and novel findings will be presented. In this chapter the researcher will outline limitations to this study, present implications for further research, and provide considerations for working with second generation Mexican Americans in the field of psychology.

Triangulation and Integration

Evolving Spirituality

Participants described their spirituality in the group experiential theme of “evolving spirituality.” Participants experience in using spiritual beliefs to help overcome adversities was shaped by an evolving spirituality and using this new individualized spirituality to not only get through adversities but to gain a better perspective and meaning concerning the challenges they faced. This was supported in statistical analysis through the finding that spiritual transcendence was a significant determinant of resilience; indicating that spiritual practices (i.e., praying and meditation) and beliefs (believing in a higher plane of consciousness and that life is interconnected) are contributors to resilience in this population. These findings are consistent with literature on second generation Latinx individuals (Nabhan-Warren, 2016). Second generation Mexican Americans face numerous challenges based on their identity including navigating a bicultural identity and generational gaps (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). The complexity of a bicultural identity means having to

balance their Mexican heritage with American cultural norms which can present challenges in identity formation. Phinney (1990) describes this process as the integration of multiple cultural identities that may lead to second generation individuals to feel torn between embracing their ethnic heritage and assimilating into a more mainstream American culture. Generational gaps refer to the differences in attitudes, values, behaviors, and communication styles between individuals from different generations (Bengston, 1970).

This finding of more individualized spirituality echoes the literature on second generation, unlike their first-generation counterparts, Mexican Americans increasingly identifying as spiritual but not religious (SBNR). This shift aligns with a broader societal trend in which spirituality is seen as an individualized experience distinct from organized religion (Pargament, 1999). Variables from the quantitative component of the study provide a lens to contextualize the themes that emerged from the qualitative component in the study. For example, the quantitative findings suggested that participants are retaining some type of spiritual beliefs as evidenced by the significance of the Spiritual Transcendence variable (i.e., items such as “There is an order to the universe that transcends human thinking” and “I find inner strength and/or peace from my prayers and/or meditations”). Additionally, the Religious Practices and Customs variable was not significant, indicating that participants are not retaining religious practices or have not been exposed to them growing up. These findings were also reflected in the qualitative portion of the study through the group experiential theme of evolving spirituality in which participants discussed how they learned about their spiritual beliefs and shifted toward a more personal belief system as they continued to develop through adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Another finding from the qualitative component is that for most participants, their spirituality was influenced by cultural values and practices they witnessed growing up. Narratives provided by most participants described their initial engagement with religion as they experienced it intertwined within cultural practices. For example, many participants described their upbringing in culturally Catholic households, where religious practices were part of daily life but often centered more on cultural traditions than personal beliefs. This foundation of traditional practices was passed down through generations. This finding highlights the role of cultural Catholicism in shaping initial spiritual perspectives while allowing room for personal reinterpretation in adulthood. Family influence was important in participant's spirituality as they noted that their early experiences with spiritual practices were shaped by familial expectations and a desire to maintain cultural continuity. This qualitative finding was supported by the quantitative results indicating participants scoring high on the cultural value of *familismo* and as a component for their resilience. Part of adhering to the cultural value of *familismo* may have meant partaking in religious practices even when participants may not have agreed with them.

As all the participants matured, they began to experience disagreements with the institutional aspects of their religion and shared accounts of moving away from formal religion towards a spirituality that was described as personal and inclusive. This individual spirituality was characterized by an acceptance of diverse beliefs and practices based on participants' personal experiences. For example, several participants expressed discontent with the Catholic church, citing disagreements with the church's stance on social issues and perceived hypocrisy. These disagreements often led to questioning long-held religious beliefs

and practices, which is consistent with broader trends of declining institutional religiosity and increasing spiritual individualism (Pew Research Center, 2014a; Barry & Abo-Zena, 2014).

The majority of participants reported beginning to question their religious beliefs during adolescence and early adulthood, often coinciding with exposure to diverse perspectives and a desire for a more inclusive and accepting spirituality. This period of questioning is critical for identity development and aligns with Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, which emphasizes identity exploration. Participant's individual spirituality allowed a more open and flexible approach to their beliefs allowing them to adhere to their cultural heritage, but with a more universal perceived sense of connection and acceptance. Participant's ability to adapt their spiritual beliefs to align with their personal experiences and challenges seems to demonstrate a dynamic process of meaning making. This process is crucial in developing a resilient self-concept which helps them as they continue to navigate life's challenges more effectively.

Overcoming Adversities

Another area discussed by participants was how they overcame their various adversities. Participants shared their experience in overcoming these adversities through different methods such as symbolism. Some participants described seeing symbolism in what others may describe as coincidences. For example, participants described interpreting animals as signs from deceased loved ones which provided a sense of comfort and reassurance. These symbolic encounters may help them feel connected with their loved ones who passed, offering emotional support during difficult times (Neimeyer, 2019). This finding is consistent with existing literature on how symbolic experiences can aid in grief processing (Klass, et al., 2014). The quantitative results also indicated that meaning making is an

important part of resilience in this population. Meaning making and spiritual transcendence, which includes some components of meaning making, were significant factors of resilience.

As another example of how participants overcame the adversities they reported, many participants shared that they asked a higher being for help in moments of distress, finding solace and guidance through prayer. Individual participants had their own spiritual practices that helped them overcome their challenges. One participant described sensing the energy of others and using it as a guide to either support a loved one, or in situation where they felt bad energy, distance themselves from others. Another participant found peace and grounding in natural settings and described how they practice spirituality as strengthening their relationship with nature. This helped them to reconnect with themselves and the world around them. Nature has been shown to have restorative effects on mental health, promoting well-being and reducing stress (Bratman, et al., 2012). Meditation emerged as a practice for quieting the mind and managing stress. Some participants reported that they were able to achieve mental clarity when they practiced meditation, making it easier to face and overcome adversities (Davidson & McEwen, 2012). Meditation has been widely recognized for its benefits in reducing anxiety and enhancing emotional regulation (Goyal et al., 2014). Furthermore, spirituality was also described by a select number of participants as a helping comfort and offered a sense of hope and resilience that allowed them to endure challenges (Koenig, 2012).

Other participants relied on beliefs they had learned from their religious upbringings and practices to help overcome future adversities they may experience. For example, some participants shared their experiences with using moral principles instilled in them from a young age when they were involved with the church and using it as emerging adults as a

framework for making ethical decisions and maintaining a sense of purpose. Moral guidance from religion can offer a sense of purpose and ethical direction, supporting resilience (Koenig, 2009).

These findings are in contrast with how religiosity and spirituality has been seen in first generation Mexican immigrants. For first generation Mexican parents, religion served as a community support where they were able to connect with other immigrant populations with similar values (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018a). The shift in values discussed by these second-generation Mexican American participants may be at least partially due to having to balance this bicultural identity and blend values and beliefs from both cultures into what they describe as their spirituality. As previously stated, this new form of spirituality is more individualized and participants' narratives about overcoming adversities provided a glimpse into how their individual take on spirituality may have fostered resilience. Participants in the qualitative portion of this study shared numerous challenges they have faced including substance use, family loss, and moving away from their community. Despite these challenges, several key findings emerged that illustrate how spirituality served as a critical resource for participants in navigating challenges.

Most participants described valuing familial relationships and described the benefits of their spiritual practices in a manner that emphasized the importance of taking care of themselves so they can better connect with others. The supportive relationships participants maintained with family, peers, and their broader spiritual environment provided essential emotional and practical resources. It is important to note this is different than the manner that first generation immigrant parents have been found to use spiritual beliefs to build relationship and community (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009; Moreno & Cardemil, 2018a). The key

difference seems to be that the spiritual practices endorsed by the participants in this study focused on the mental wellbeing of the self while literature on religion as a social support for first generation immigrants (participants' parents) highlights the importance of the shared experience (Moreno & Cardemil, 2018a).

Making Meaning After Overcoming

After overcoming adversities, participants described engaging in a process of meaning making that was intertwined with their cultural values of *familismo* and spirituality. Studies have shown that individuals who engage in meaning-making activities are better able to cope with and recover from traumatic events (Collie & Long, 2005; Dunn & O'Brien, 2009). This process allows them to transform their adversities into opportunities for growth and personal development (Park, 2010). For second generation Mexican Americans, spirituality has been found to provide a framework for this transformation, offering a sense of continuity and stability amid the complexities of bicultural identity (Schwartz et al., 2010). This process reflects Ungar (2015)'s concept of negotiation, where individuals adapt to available resources to meet their needs and advocate for themselves. Spirituality serves as an important form of meaning making, helping second generation Mexican Americans make sense of their experiences and derive purpose from their struggles (Park, 2010; Frankl, 1963). The ability to find purpose and meaning in their experiences appeared to contribute to a positive self-concept and a sense of control over their lives. The qualitative findings revealed several key group experiential themes in how participants made meaning after overcoming adversity. One prominent theme was the expression of gratitude. Participants frequently mentioned feeling a sense of gratitude for the support they received and the lessons they learned during their hardships. This gratitude fostered a positive outlook and also reinforced

their resilience by helping them appreciate their strengths and resources (Bono et al., 2004; Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Another significant theme was measuring progress and personal growth. Some participants reflected on their journeys and recognized the personal growth they achieved through their struggles. They spoke of becoming more resilient after learning from the adversity they experienced. This provided a deeper understanding of themselves and their capabilities. By acknowledging their progress, participants reinforced their belief in their ability to overcome future challenges (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Having hope was another aspect of meaning making. Participants described how overcoming adversity instilled a sense of hope for the future. This hope was rooted in their belief that they could face and overcome future difficulties and draw from lessons of their past experiences. This forward-looking optimism is a key component of resilience, as it motivates individuals to persist in the face of new challenges (Snyder, 2002).

As participants reflected on their changed perspectives after adversity, some participants who were parents spoke about their parental responsibility. A few participants who were parents shared they intention to pass on what they learned about life and overcoming challenges to their children in an attempt to make it easier for them to adapt. This sense of responsibility was often linked to their cultural value of *familismo* and how growing up their family was intentional in passing on values and beliefs, including spiritual beliefs, to help get through hardships. This intergenerational transmission of resilience-enhancing knowledge and values – provides further evidence of the role of family in fostering long-term well-being and adaptive capacities (Falicov, 2005). By integrating their evolving spirituality with their cultural background and personal experiences, parent

participants were able to navigate life's challenges more effectively and pass on this knowledge to their children.

Critical Resilience

Critical resilience extends the concept of traditional resilience by emphasizing the systemic and structural factors that contribute to adversities. Furthermore, it derives from an enhanced critical consciousness and understanding of power structures and oppression, and often results in people wanting to give back to society (Morgan, 2023). For second-generation Mexican Americans, choosing spirituality over institutionalized religions may reflect a broader socio-cultural adaptation and consciousness developed through overcoming adversities related to religion. Many of the participants, for example, discussed their difficulties with the Catholic church and its oppressive belief system. The qualitative findings reveal that participants use spirituality for meaning making, which is central to critical resilience. The process of finding gratitude, measuring personal growth, maintaining hope, and recognizing parental responsibilities are all aspects of meaning making that empower individuals. By framing their adversities within a spiritual context, participants transform their challenges into opportunities for growth and empowerment, reinforcing their resilience against systemic inequities (Frankl, 1963; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Participant's shifts from organized religion to individualized spirituality can be seen as an act of resistance against the rigid structures and perceived hypocrisies of institutional religion. This shift aligns with critical resilience in that participants challenged the socio-cultural norms that did not resonate with their personal and collective experiences. By adopting a personalized spirituality, these second-generation Mexican Americans were asserting control over their

spiritual identities and rejecting external authoritative narratives that did not accommodate their lived experiences and social environments.

Systemic issues such as discrimination, socio-economic challenges, and cultural dissonance can undermine traditional forms of support that parents of second-generation Mexican Americans may have used when practicing their religion. As previously discussed, first generation Mexican immigrants leaned on organized religion as a way to foster community in a new country and environment, while in contrast second-generation of these Mexican American participants seem to be shifting away from organized religion ideologies. Critical resilience emphasizes understanding and addressing the systemic barriers that affect well-being, in this case, institutional religion. This critical reflection and action is a key aspect of critical resilience, as it involves not only personal growth but also a critique of existing power structures (i.e., within religious institutions).

Spirituality offers a more flexible and inclusive framework that can adapt to unique cultural contexts. The transition to a more individualized spirituality reflects a broader societal trend towards personalized meaning making (Pew Research Center, 2015; Snodgrass & Sorajjakool, 2011). This individualized spirituality often emphasizes inclusivity, acceptance, and adaptability, qualities that are essential for navigating the complex social realities faced by second-generation Mexican Americans. By creating a spirituality that is more accepting of others and adaptable to personal needs, these individuals are fostering a sense of agency and empowerment, essential components of critical resilience. This adaptive spiritual practice may even help mitigate the impacts of common systemic barriers by providing a source of hope, purpose, and moral guidance that is personally relevant and culturally resonant.

Limitations

While a lot of time and consideration went into implementing a study to explore the role of spirituality in how second-generation Mexican Americans overcome adversities, several limitations must be acknowledged. Limitations pertained to the research design, methodology, and generalizability of the findings, and were largely within the quantitative portion of the study. One significant limitation was the reliance on self-reported data, which, in a post-positivistic framework, may lead to self-report bias. Items in the surveys, for example, contained questions regarding meaning making, spirituality, and cultural values which participants may have answered with responses they would ideally want to endorse while their lived experience may be different. Attempts were made to minimize this limitation through prompts in the survey reminding participants to report on their current experiences.

Although the measures used to assess spirituality, meaning making, and resilience were validated and supported through literature, they may not have fully captured the complexity and multifaceted nature of these constructs. Spirituality, in particular is a personal variable experience and standardized measures may not reflect the full spectrum of participants' spiritual beliefs and practices. Adding the qualitative portion was an attempt to minimize this specific limitation inherent to quantitative exploration of nuanced constructs, however it must still be recognized as a limitation and taken into consideration.

A limitation for the qualitative portion was the challenge of finding private spaces to conduct interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted in public spaces such as local parks and seating areas close to coffee shops. Privacy is crucial in qualitative research to ensure participants feel comfortable and secure when sharing personal information. In some

instances, interviews had to be conducted in semi-private or less ideal environments which might have impacted the openness and depth of participant's responses or the interviewer's later understanding of the responses given when transcribing. Although every effort was made to ensure confidentiality, the lack of consistent private space may have influenced the data collected. This is often the nature with community data collection and future planning should consider more private locations that are easily accessible by the population being recruited.

Another limitation of this study was the recruitment process for the qualitative data, which was primarily conducted through social media platforms and a snowball technique. While social media is a helpful tool for reaching a broad audience quickly, it inherently comes with a bias towards individuals who are more active online and possibly more engaged in social justice issues, given the pages utilized for advertising were tailored toward a left leaning and educated audience. This recruitment strategy may have led to a sample that is a microcosm of the quantitative sample which recruited individuals from a wide variety of individuals from across the U.S. Consequently, the findings may reflect the perspectives of a more socially conscious and engaged demographic.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the understanding of how second-generation Mexican Americans overcome adversities and the role spirituality has in processing their hardships by providing perspective and meaning. Additionally, we have a better understanding of spirituality, meaning making, and *familismo* as contributing factors of resilience in second generation Mexican American emerging adults. Future research addressing these limitations could provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between spirituality and resilience in this populations.

Implications

The findings from this dissertation have significant implications for the field of Counseling Psychology, particularly in supporting second-generation Mexican Americans. The insights into the role of spirituality in fostering resilience provide valuable guidance for culturally responsive counseling practices and interventions. Historically, it has been assumed the Mexican-American population endorses primarily Catholic religious values. It has become clearer that the assumption is an overgeneralization of the Mexican immigrant population, and there appears to be a shift in values in subsequent generations. The shift from institutional religion to individual spirituality, as observed among participants, is a reminder for counselors to practice cultural humility to understand how this population they serve defines their own individual take on spirituality. Careful consideration should be given to the client's upbringing and how spiritual or religious beliefs may have influenced their current belief system and how they process adversities.

For clinicians from different cultural backgrounds including White clinicians, it is a reminder to remain curious as to how clients define their spirituality and both the support it may provide or the conflict that their beliefs may cause within their nuclear family. As supported in this study, spirituality appears to be an individual experience. When working with clients living within bicultural contexts, exploration and interventions within the therapeutic setting should consider the client's positionality within the multiple identities they navigate. Recognizing that therapy is a personalized process part of the work of the clinician is to remain conscious of the collective community that clients bring with them into the therapeutic room when working toward their therapeutic goals, including religious and spiritual beliefs.

More broadly, counselors can use the findings highlighted in this study by considering implementing interventions such as existential therapeutic approaches that promoting-making to make sense of the adversities they may have experienced. Further findings from the qualitative component may show promise in focusing on therapeutic techniques that encourage gratitude, hope, and symbolism as a way to help clients reflect on experiences of hardship.

For researchers, it is important to consider some of the findings and what it means when we study Latinx populations. The researcher of this study was intentional in not treating Latinx populations as homogenous and sought specific experiences from second-generation Mexican Americans (though also acknowledging that this is a broad group with its own within group differences as well). The quantitative findings found *familismo* as a significant component of resilience, which has been a common finding in Latinx research as more interest on this particular cultural value has grown (Sabogal et al., 1987). It is important to not fall into the same patterns the literature on Latinx populations has perpetuated by not remaining curious and categorizing cultural values, much like the use of Latinx to cast a large net on multiple identities, as homogenous constructs that look the same across context. A growing body of literature has highlighted the double-edge sword that comes from adhering to the cultural value of *familismo*, as it can act not only as a sense of support but also a sense of pressure for some individuals (Sanchez, 2022). Findings in this study also showed *familismo* as a significant determinant of resilience but the qualitative findings suggested tension between some participants and their families concerning religious practices and beliefs.

As we continue to study the cultural value of *familismo*, researchers must consider examining the construct beyond face value to better understand the mechanism of familial obligation and approach this value from the perspective of the individuals who endorse it. Researchers should continue to consider constructs of cultural values and what they mean in order to not perpetuate colonization of constructs as being understood by mainstream psychology at any point in time. Social norms and cultural values continue to change with sociopolitical considerations and the use of qualitative inquiry may be able to assist in capturing participant's voices to capture the nuance meanings of these constructs.

This was the goal for the research design implemented in this study, in which the researcher sought to further understand the relationship of spirituality and resilience. Approaching it using mixed-methodology provided a glimpse of the nuanced construct of spirituality with the hopes of broadening the scope of future research. For the study of cultural values and in particular *familismo*, consideration should be given to shifting from a categorical lens to a more holistic understanding of how this cultural value has continued to develop in the U.S. for subsequent generations.

Future Directions

Building on the findings of this study, several future research directions can be pursued to further our understanding of spirituality and resilience among second-generation Mexican Americans. These directions aim to explore specific spiritual practices, guide future methodological approaches, and broaden the scope of participant recruitment. One key future direction would be to delve into the specific spiritual practices that second-generation Mexican Americans find most beneficial for overcoming adversities. By examining practices identified in this study such as medication, prayer, presence in nature, or rituals, researchers

can better understand the mechanisms through which spirituality fosters resilience. This study found meaning making to be an important component in the use of spiritual beliefs; practices, however, may provide a different mechanism for participants to overcome adversities. Detailed investigations into these practices can provide insights into how they are integrated into daily life.

Implementing a sequential data collection approach can potentially enhance the depth and integration of the quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, a sequential data collection approach with the same participants would be of particular interest. Future studies can begin with a survey to gather broad quantitative data, followed by in-depth interviews with a subset of survey participants. This may provide a more comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and additional context to the quantitative findings. Incorporating focus groups into the research design can also provide collective discussions on the topic of spirituality. Focus groups can encourage participants to share and reflect on their experiences in a group setting with the intention of fostering dynamic interactions and diverse perspectives.

To capture the diversity within the second-generation Mexican American community, future research should also consider recruitment efforts for participants from specific religious backgrounds. In targeting individuals with particular religions, such as Catholicism, Jehovah's Witness, or Mormonism, researchers can explore the unique spiritual practices that remain in second-generation individuals. This focused recruitment can provide a more detailed understanding of how different religious traditions influence spirituality and impact resilience. Additionally, expanding recruitment to include participants who identify as atheist or having a non-religious upbringing can provide insight into how they make meaning after

adversities. Recruitment of individuals who identify as currently being religious can also provide insights into the contemporary role of institutional religion in participants lives. Understanding how second-generation Mexican Americans engage in the practices, beliefs, and community support systems within religious institutions can help researchers shed light on the continuity and evolution of religious practices across generations.

To gain a better understanding of the transmission of values, future research should also consider including interviews with parents of participants. Parental interviews can reveal how values, beliefs, and spiritual practices are communicated and instilled within families. This intergenerational perspective can provide insights into the role of family dynamics in shaping resilience and spiritual practices among second-generation Mexican Americans. These approaches can continue this line of inquiry into understanding the dynamic cultural values this population endorses and the way they navigate dual cultures to overcome adversities.

Conclusions

The researcher's goal conducting this study was to explore the experiences of second generation Mexican Americans and how they overcome adversities using spiritual beliefs. Using a mixed-method approach allowed for a multi-angle inquiry that provided context to the overall experience of participants. Second generation Mexican Americans appeared to hold onto some values and practices passed down through family such as spiritual beliefs and *familismo*, according to the quantitative surveys. Qualitative findings provided a clearer understanding of how these participant's' spirituality evolved from religious beliefs to a more individual take on spirituality. Participants discussed different practices and beliefs they used

to make meaning after adversity and to manage their mental health, all-encompassing their own definition of what spirituality means for them.

Meaning making in particular was an important process that participants used to make sense of what they went through and to reflect on lessons learned. This provided them with a new perspective with some expressing gratitude for their experience and others sharing that they rely on having hope to get through challenges. Quantitative findings supported these findings with spiritual transcendence, meaning making, and *familismo* being significant contributing factors of resilience. Participants who were interviewed reflected on disagreements they had with their religious beliefs that conflicted with the more inclusive social environment they were raised in. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of this growing group of people and the need to broaden the lens we use in working with people who identify this way, beyond our current yet dated understanding of the cultural values and factors that impact their daily lives.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Script

I am a researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara, under the supervision of Melissa L. Morgan, Ph.D. and am currently in the process of collecting data for my dissertation study. I am hoping to explore your experiences with hardship, cultural beliefs, and being a second generation Mexican American in the U.S. If you identify as a second generation Mexican American, are between the ages of 18-25 years old, and would like to participate in an initial briefing, one interview (approximately 60-90 minutes) or survey (approximately 30 minutes) about your experiences, please contact me.

Your participation in this study would be completely voluntary and there are no anticipated risks for your participation other than possible emotional discomfort in recalling difficult experiences you have had. However, you may decide what to share and one benefit of your participation may be increased awareness of your own life experiences.

Thank you for your consideration in participating. We anticipate that results will help us better understand how second generation Latinx experience in the U.S. get through challenges and gain meaning from their experiences.

Erick Felix, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology
erickfelix@ucsb.edu

Appendix B

Quantitative Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

Title of the Study:

A Mixed Method Exploration of Spirituality in Second Generation Mexican Americans

Lead Investigator's Name, Department, Telephone Number, and E-Mail:

Erick Felix, Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology, UCSB
(714)422-4319, erickfelix@ucsb.edu

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to examine factors that predict resilience in second generation Mexican American emerging adults.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete online self-report measures assessing spirituality, religiosity, and meaning making. Your participation will take approximately 25-30 minutes. Please be aware that you do not have to participate in this research, and you may stop your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any questions you prefer not to answer.

RISKS

The possible risks associated with your participation in this study are minimal. You may experience some unpleasant feelings or might remember difficult life events if you choose to complete the surveys. Should this occur, participants will be referred to local and appropriate mental health or other resources. There is no risk of physical injury anticipated.

BENEFITS

You do not directly gain anything as a result of your participation in this study, however you may learn more about yourself and contribute to knowledge about factors of resilience in second generation Latinx adults who have experienced and overcome an adversity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data collected will be kept anonymous and confidential. It will not be linked to your identity in any way. The only exception would be if you were to indicate distress or intent to harm yourself or another. Should this occur, appropriate actions will be taken. Your

confidentiality will be protected by anonymously completing the online surveys. There will be no opportunities for participant identities to be revealed in the publication of research.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may change your mind about participating in the study and decide to not continue at any time without any negative consequences.

COSTS/PAYMENT

Participants will be rewarded with \$3 credited to their CloudResearch account as an incentive for their participation. No deception or coercion will be used.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR'S PERSONAL & FINANCIAL INTERESTS IN THE RESEARCH

The investigators in this study will not benefit monetarily from this study

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured a result of your participation, please contact Erick Felix at 714-422-4319, erickfelix@ucsb.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

CONSENT

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. CONTINUING WITH THIS SURVEY INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE

Appendix C

Qualitative Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

Title of the Study:

A Mixed Method Exploration of Spirituality in Second Generation Mexican Americans

Lead Investigator's Name, Department, Telephone Number, and E-Mail:

Erick Felix, Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology, UCSB
(714)422-4319, erickfelix@ucsb.edu

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of second generation Mexican American emerging adults and how they have dealt with challenges in their life.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate, you will have the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured qualitative interview about your life experiences. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes and will be audio recorded to capture the accuracy of the information you provide, given your permission and consent. The interview will be conducted in-person with your choosing of time and location. After the interview, the researcher will contact you at a later time to clarify any interview data for accuracy. The lead researcher will notify you ahead of time when he will contact you.

RISKS

The possible risks associated with your participation in this study are minimal. They include possibly remembering some difficult life experiences and feeling some slight emotional discomfort if you choose to discuss personal topics with the interviewer. You have the right to disclose topics at your discretion. If you experience any uncomfortable feelings, the researcher can provide you with referral resources.

BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to you as a result of your participation in this study. Potential benefits associated with the study include gaining more knowledge about yourself and contributing knowledge about experiences of dealing with challenges among second generation Latinx adults living in the U.S.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data we collect will not be linked to your identity in any way. Your responses will be made confidential. The only exception would be if you were to report child or elder abuse or intent to harm yourself or someone else. Should this occur, appropriate actions will be taken. Your confidentiality will be protected by not having you write your name on the written materials, only on the consent form which will be kept separate from the study data.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may change your mind about being in the study and discontinue participation at any time without any negative consequences.

COSTS/PAYMENT

Participants will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card as a reward for your participation in the study.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR’S PERSONAL & FINANCIAL INTERESTS IN THE RESEARCH

The investigators in this study have no financial interest in this research and will not benefit monetarily from this study.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured a result of your participation, please contact Erick Felix at 714-422-4319, erickfelix@ucsb.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

CONSENT

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW WILL INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

Signature of Participant _____ **Date:** _____

Witness: _____

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Please provide the following information about yourself.

1. How would you identify your ethnicity? _____
2. How old are you? _____
3. With which gender do you most identify?
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Transgender
 - d. Non-binary
 - e. Prefer Not to Answer
4. What is your generational status in the United States?
 - a. 1st generation (not born in the United States)
 - b. 2nd generation (born in the United States, parents born in another country)
 - c. 3rd generation (you and your parents were born in the United States)
 - d. 4+ generation+ (you and your parents were born in the United States, one of your grandparents was born in another country)
5. What was your first language?
 - a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Portuguese
 - d. Other language _____
6. Please circle your approximate annual household income bracket
 - a. \$20,000 or below
 - b. \$21,000 to 50,000
 - c. 51,000 to 99,000
 - d. \$100,000 or above
7. What is your occupation/student status? _____
8. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
 - a. Less than a high school diploma
 - b. High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
 - c. Some college, no degree
 - d. Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS)
 - e. Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)
 - f. Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, M.Ed.)
 - g. Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, JD)
 - h. Doctorate (e.g., PhD)

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. We will be spending approximately 60-90 minutes for this interview. I will be asking you some questions about your spiritual beliefs and challenges you have experienced, how you overcame these challenges, and your view in how you have dealt with hardships in your life. Would it be okay to audio record this interview so I can reference back during data analysis? Do you have any questions for me before we begin? Let us begin.

- 1) Tell me about a hardship or challenge you have experienced

Prompt: How did you deal with that situation or event?

Prompt: How was your family involved in this hardship?

- 2) What helps you to keep going and continue to overcome hardships in your daily life?

Prompt :How do your spiritual beliefs influence your will to keep going?

- 3) Is there any way you make sense of the hardships you have overcome?

Prompt: Tell me about any traditions/practices that have helped?

- 4) Can you talk about any traditions or values that you continue to practice today?

Prompt: How does that connect to your culture for you?

- 5) What has been your experience with religion?

Prompt: What has shaped your spiritual beliefs?

- 6) What advice would you give to someone else who is going through a hardship or challenge?

- 7) Is there anything else I have not asked you about that you think I should know to best understand your experience?