Family support among undocumented Central American immigrants: a grounded theory

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Family support among undocumented Central American immigrants: A grounded theory

by

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation of

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For the Major Program
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to build a substantive theory of family support following the systemic design of grounded theory. In particular, the inquiry addressed the behavioral and attitudinal patterns of family support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States. In order to collect data, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine undocumented Central American immigrant families living in a metropolitan area of the Midwest and with three staff members from social institutions involved in assisting undocumented immigrants. These interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The collected data was systematically analyzed using the procedures of open, axial, and selective coding of the systematic design. Ten major categories and 41 subcategories were identified through this multiple coding. Family support, which emerged as the core category, was used to link all the emergent categories and subcategories. An organizational scheme, which replicates the grounded theory paradigm, visually depicts the multiple links that were found. A set of 20 propositions and 17 sub-propositions, which identified the relationships that occur among the main concepts of the theory, were also developed in order to test, refine, and expand the theory through further research. The resulting theory of family support offers instrumental information for policy makers, clinicians, and clergy.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this inquiry was to build a substantive theory of family support following the basic premises of grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998). The resulting theory was specifically grounded on the life experiences of undocumented Latino families that were living in the United States at the time of the inquiry.

The inquiry followed a research project that investigated the phenomenon of acculturative stress among Latino immigrants (Chupina-Orantes, 1999). Findings of the research project on acculturative stress led the researcher to design this inquiry, which focused on studying family support among undocumented immigrant families. Specifically, the inquiry's design sought to build theory on the behavioral and attitudinal practices of family support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States. The final report of the inquiry, which is organized into five chapters, uses the framework of a thesis presentation. The report also includes a section of references and four appendixes of research materials utilized in the inquiry.

In addition to the introduction, chapter 1 offers the readers an overview of the entire inquiry. Section 1 states the purpose of the inquiry within the methodological frame of grounded theory. Section 2 presents a set of general questions that were intended not only to organize the major research questions in specific domains, but also to partially guide the process of data collection and data analysis. Section 3 defines the concepts used in the inquiry such as ethnic identity, undocumented status, and family support. Some of these concepts are further divided into sub-concepts, which were utilized to account for the differences found among the participant families (Bean, Edmoston, & Passel, 1990; Chavez,
Section 4 discusses the rationale underlying the inquiry, especially in reference to the prevalent notion of familism (Vega, 1995), the selected methodology of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998), and the conditions that undermine family support (Menjivar, 1995, 1997). Special attention is given in section 5 to the significance of the inquiry, which is formulated in terms of the patterns, contextual circumstances, and social processes that are directly linked to family support. Section 6 briefly introduces the readers to the theoretical formulations that guided the inquiry and to the researcher’s position regarding the construction of theoretical interpretations (Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1991; Gergen, 1994; Gergen, 1997; Gergen 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 1991). This section also presents the basic tenets of the new economics of migration (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor, 1993), which explain some of the causes of international migration. Finally, section 7 introduces the readers to the main instrument of the inquiry, namely the researcher himself. Utilizing a reflective statement, the researcher makes explicit in this section not only his professional experiences, but also events from his life that could have influenced the research process. This reflective statement is indispensable for the readers to examine how the main research instrument could have influenced the outcome of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Richardson, 2000).

Chapter 2 reviews the demographic changes that occurred in the ethnic profile of the United States between 1980 and 2000. This review underscores not only the demographic growth of U.S.-born Latinos, but also the increase of foreign-born Latinos in the United States (Enchautegui, 1995; Therrien & Ramirez, 2000). In this context, chapter 2 introduces the readers to the new migratory patterns of internal migration that emerged in the 1990s.
(Johnson, Johnson-Webb, & Farrel, 1999). This phenomenon of internal migration is linked to regional labor in the Midwest, particularly to the employment market in the state of Iowa (Burke & Goudy, 1999).

Chapter 2 addresses the outcome of research designs that have focused exclusively on studying Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Latinos in the United States. The readers will find that special attention is given to the major causes that triggered the flow of undocumented Central American immigration to the United States in the 1980s. This migration is linked to the civil wars, foreign interventions, and economic disruptions that occurred in Central America during the cold war (Booth & Walker, 1999; Buckman, 2001; Gonzales, 2000; Mahler, 1995; Menjivar, 1999; Montes Mozo & García Vasquez 1980; Peters, 2001). In addition, the chapter underscores the role that natural disasters have played in the flow of undocumented Central American immigration to the United States in recent years (Buckman, 2001; Cody, 1986; Daltón, 2001; Gilbert, 1994; Jordan, 2001, Pop, 2001; Preston, 1988; Sullivan 2001, Martin, Larkin, & Nathanson, 2000; Valladares, 2001).

Chapter 2 acknowledges the plight of undocumented immigrant families in terms of the legislative action taken by the U.S. Congress. For instance, the chapter examines the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the Temporary Protection Status (TPS), the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRIRA), and the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) (Coutin, 1999; Gonzales, 2000; Malher, 1995; Menjivar, 1999). To complement this information, the chapter examines the link between the advocacy efforts on behalf of Central American immigrants and the legal initiatives that resulted in the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act

Chapter 2 also acknowledges the link between immigration and social networks. Some of the studies cited in the chapter, for instance, illustrate the association of family ties (Boyd, 1989; Malher, 1995; Tienda, 1979), ethnic ties (Hagan, 1998; Rodriguez, 1987), community ties (Malher, 1995; Menjivar, 1995), and friendship ties (Hagan, 1998) to the flow of immigration. Special attention is given to family ties, for they seem to constitute the most important social network among immigrants (Chupina-Orantes, 1999), although social class strongly influences the way immigrants use their kinship ties to migrate (Salaff, Fong, & Siu-Lun, 1999).

In addition to the link between social networks and immigration, chapter 2 considers the existence of support enactment within family networks. For instance, the chapter considers the practice of familism in terms of family reunification (Cohen, 1999) and remittances (Chavez, Flores, López-Garza, 1989; Montes Mozo & García Vasquez, 1988; Sheridan, 2001). To complement this exploration, the chapter also considers the influence that acculturation could have on the attitudinal familism of Latinos (Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987).

Chapter 2 examines some of the structural and contextual factors that undermine the practice of family support in the United States. This examination specifically considers studies that have explored the negative effects of poverty, marginalization, and restrictive policies upon social networks (Menjivar, 1995). In addition, studies that have focused on the negative effects of personal networks on immigrants’ lives are included in this chapter. These studies are important because they have pointed out that personal networks do not substitute
for the formal assistance that immigrants can obtain from public services in receiving countries (Pohjola, 1991; Purdy & Arguello, 1992).

Studies that have stressed the fact that networks can restrict immigrants' mobility in receiving countries are also included in chapter 2. These studies are particularly relevant because they have found that restrictive mobility is embedded in the social stratification of the immigrant community. For instance, unskilled immigrants find suitable jobs through horizontal relationships that occur within the same segment of the immigrant population. Skilled immigrants, however, are restricted in achieving better jobs because the same horizontal relationships preclude their mobility (Pohjola, 1991).

Chapter 2 ends with a brief statement about the aim of the inquiry that considers not only the information mentioned above, but also the theoretical premises of grounded theory. The theoretical premises of grounded theory are underlined, because they have directly guided researchers in building theories with sufficient explanatory power to describe the occurrences of a particular phenomenon (Glasser, 1993).

Chapter 3 underscores the circumstances that surround undocumented immigrant families and the advantages of using a qualitative research design to study family support. The chapter describes the researcher's philosophical assumptions and the process of institutional engagement that led to identifying potential participant families. To complement this information, the chapter also includes the criteria used in the selection of the participant families. In addition, the chapter describes at length the three phases of data collection implemented in the inquiry, especially in terms of the protocol utilized for interviewing the participant families. Likewise, a description of the four steps of data analysis can be found
here. As part of trustworthiness, the major indicators of rigor implemented in the inquiry are also introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the major characteristics of the participant families and the selected providers. Following this description, chapter 4 informs the readers about the specific procedures of data analysis that led to the emergent categories and the formulation of their properties and dimensions. To complement this information, chapter 4 also includes the procedures that led to identifying the emergent subcategories. The chapter shows the organizational scheme utilized to build the analytical story of family support. In this organizational scheme, major categories are linked to each other and conceptualized as causal, intervening, and contextual variables. The scheme also includes the strategic responses of the participant families and their most frequent interactions. In addition, the scheme names the consequences derived from the interplay of strategic responses and frequent interactions. Utilizing the information embedded in the organizational scheme, the readers can conceptually follow the construction of the theory of family support presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5 includes five sections. Section 1 summarizes the main aspects of the inquiry; section 2 contains a set of 20 theoretical propositions and 17 sub-propositions that were developed from the theory of family support. This set of theoretical propositions and sub-propositions identify relationships that occur among the main concepts of the theory. Section 3 presents the major limitations of the inquiry, and section 4 discusses some the findings embedded in the theory of family support. Finally, section 5 offers some research recommendations that might be instrumental for social researchers.
Purpose of the Inquiry

The main purpose of this inquiry was to build a substantive theory of family support following the basic premises of grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998). The inquiry focused specifically on identifying the major instances of support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States.

The story line of the substantive theory particularly addressed the integration of the major instances of support that continually emerged among undocumented immigrant families in response to contextual circumstances in the receiving country. Moreover, the story line stressed the inclusion of changes that could have a detrimental effect on the practice of family support, implementation of strategies, and survival of undocumented immigrant families.

As in any other substantive theory, the inquiry linked social phenomena in a set of specific relationships according to the paradigm suggested in the literature of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The contextual circumstances that prompted a personal response from undocumented immigrants, for instance, were linked to central categories identified through data analysis. Likewise, the deliberate actions that modified central categories were also identified through data analysis.

The final integration of the theoretical findings led to the construction of a substantive theory of family support, which has relative explanatory power to describe the major instances of family support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States, particularly in terms of their behavioral and attitudinal patterns.
of support. The resulting theory of family support answered relatively well the set of research questions proposed in the inquiry.

**Research Questions**

The research questions focused on getting information about the behavioral and attitudinal patterns of family support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States. The following set of general questions was intended not only to organize the major research questions into specific domains, but also to partially guide the process of data collection and data analysis:

- How do undocumented immigrant families describe the concept of family support in behavioral and attitudinal terms?
- What behavioral and attitudinal patterns among undocumented immigrant families elicit family support?
- What behavioral patterns of family support are more prevalent among undocumented immigrant families?
- What attitudinal patterns of family support are more prevalent among undocumented immigrant families?
- How do contextual circumstances facilitate or hinder the practice of family support among undocumented immigrant families?
- What strategies of family support emerge among undocumented immigrant families in response to the threat of deportation?
- What family changes among undocumented immigrant families decrease the practice of family support?
**Definitions**

In this qualitative inquiry, the researcher utilized a modified definition of ethnic identity (Marín & VanOss Marin, 1991) that considers the origin of the participant family members and their generational status within the extended family.

The term "first-generation Hispanic" in any family group, for instance, referred exclusively to individuals who were born in any of the six countries of Central America. Conversely, the term "second-generation Hispanic" referred exclusively to individuals who were born anywhere in the United States. In order to be more explicit with the latter definition, individuals classified as "second-generation Hispanic" had to have parents born in any of the six countries of Central America.

The researcher focused on selecting participants who were specifically "first-generation Hispanic," because this segment of the population seemed to be the primary source of undocumented immigration to the United States. Although the definition of "second-generation Hispanic" contained the minimal number of generational steps necessary to identify Hispanics (Zimmerman et al., 1994), individuals from this group were not included in this inquiry because they represented primarily the documented, non-immigrant segment of the Hispanic population in the United States.

Because immigrants have identified themselves as Latino immigrants instead of Hispanic immigrants, researchers have often considered these terms interchangeable. In some instances, this dual approach has facilitated the process of data collection. In this inquiry, however, the researcher utilized the term Central American immigrant instead of Hispanic or Latino immigrant because this term bypasses the ongoing debate on the appropriate form for identifying this segment of the population.
An undocumented immigrant in the United States, on the other hand, was succinctly defined in this inquiry as any person who had entered the country without a legal visa. The U.S. government usually classifies undocumented immigrants as “EWI’s” because they enter the country without inspection (Bean et al., 1990).

Similarly, any person who had entered the United States with a legal visa but had stayed in the country beyond an authorized period was considered to be an undocumented immigrant. The U.S. government usually classifies these immigrants as “Visa Over-stayers” because they simply remain in the country without official authorization (Bean et al., 1990).

In order to account for immigrants’ intentions to remain in the United States, social researchers have often classified immigrants into three nominal categories. The first category, which includes immigrants who want to remain in the United States, has been simply named *settlers* (Bean et al. 1990), while the second category, which comprises immigrants who intend to return to their countries of origin, has been called *sojourners* (Chavez, 1988). The third category, which encompasses immigrants who cross the border daily or almost daily with the intention of working in the United States, has been merely denominated *commuters* (Passel, 1986). These three categories seem to account for most of the migratory variations found in the field.

While sojourners can become settlers after staying in the country for a few years, commuters cannot become settlers because they always come to the country for a limited time. Because different immigration patterns directly influence the practice of family support, it seemed reasonable to work with immigrant families that belong to similar categories. The researcher of this inquiry, therefore, aimed exclusively at selecting
undocumented Central America immigrants that fit the criteria of the first two categories: settlers and sojourners.

Finally, in this inquiry, the researcher conceived family support as the group of supportive behaviors and attitudes that take place among members of a nuclear or an extended family with the specific purpose of meeting their expressive and instrumental needs.

**Rationale of the Inquiry**

Although social researchers have been using different theoretical frames to study Latino families, familism has exerted a considerable influence in their work. Research discussions about Latino families, for instance, have been framed in terms of familism or the behavioral manifestations of Latinos that reflect a strong emotional commitment to family life. Indeed, familism has been used extensively not only to study Latino families, but also to describe their internal functioning. In many instances, familism has been influential in spite of the diverse characteristics of the Latino families such as migratory status, family structure, and country of origin (Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Bernal & Shapiro, 1996; Garcia-Preto, 1996; Falicov, 1996).

Familism has been embraced long enough not only as a frame of reference for social research, but also as a frame of reference for policy development (Vega, 1995). However, familism has not yet been utilized as a frame of reference to generate theory on the social phenomenon of family support. This has limited the conceptual description of the patterns of support that occur among Latino families in the United States.

Such limitation is particularly relevant in the case of undocumented Central American immigrant families, since the empirical knowledge available on their behavioral and
attitudinal patterns of family support has not yet been theoretically integrated. In many instances, moreover, this knowledge has not been sufficiently grounded on their life experiences as undocumented immigrant families.

It seemed that building a substantive theory of family support following the premises of grounded theory was needed, for the methods of grounded theory aim to build middle-range theories on social phenomena through systematic data collection and data analysis. Using the methods of grounded theory, for instance, the major interactions of undocumented Central American immigrant families were significantly connected, which eventually led to the prevalent patterns of family support. Using the methods of grounded theory, moreover, the reciprocal changes in these patterns and their variability with changes in the internal or external conditions were also identified.

In this way, grounded theory enhanced the possibility of building a substantive theory of conceptual density and meaningful variation on the social phenomenon of family support. Within the resulting theory, concepts pertaining to the particular circumstances that surround undocumented Central American immigrant families were linked in a set of logical propositions with sufficient descriptive power to explain common patterns of support.

Building a substantive theory of family support was particularly relevant because undocumented immigrant families usually face conditions that hinder their emotional commitment to family life. Conditions of poverty and marginalization in the United States, for instance, impede the sharing of material resources among immigrant families (Menjivar, 1995, 1997). These circumstances seriously undermine the mechanism of reciprocity that is needed to sustain specific patterns of support.
Researchers have argued that unstable employment conditions and immigration policies that restrict access to social programs are some of the unfavorable circumstances that directly affect the quality of immigrants' kinship networks in the United States (Menjivar, 1997). Undoubtedly, a detrimental effect on kinship networks can undermine the structural family basis that immigrant families need to sustain their patterns of family support.

A theoretical understanding of the interplay of these contextual factors, however, requires a linkage between structure and social processes. While knowledge of the structure can facilitate an understanding of the circumstances in which the events take place, knowledge of the social processes can facilitate an understanding of the actions and interactions that take place in response to specific problems.

The methods of grounded theory examine not only the structure that determines the circumstances in which a particular phenomenon occurs, but also the social interactions of the people involved. Because of this dual approach, grounded theory can be utilized to build theory on a social phenomenon. In this inquiry, the rationale for utilizing the methods of grounded theory lied in the fact that these methods could facilitate the construction of a substantive theory of family support, which could conceptually integrate the patterns of support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States.

Significance of the Inquiry

Building theory on family support resulted in a conceptual description of the behavioral and attitudinal patterns of support that occur among immigrant families. This is significant because the knowledge available to describe these patterns was limited. Building theory on family support also represents a significant contribution to social research because
the resulting theory identified the patterns of support that are prevalent among those immigrant families who face the oppressive conditions of being “undocumented” or “illegal” in the United States.

The substantive theory of family support uncovered the intervening circumstances that directly influence the patterns of support of undocumented immigrant families. The substantive theory of family support, for instance, describes contextual circumstances that lead undocumented immigrant families to modify their patterns of support. This represents a significant contribution to social research because upon migration most undocumented immigrant families try to maintain the same patterns of support while facing different circumstances.

Because the support systems of immigrant families usually include relatives, friends, neighbors, and diverse providers in the sending country, it seemed necessary to know how these immigrant families substitute for these supportive links once in the United States. Family therapists, social workers, and clergy could utilize the resulting knowledge to assist undocumented immigrant families, particularly as they struggle to support family members.

Building theory on family support also represents a significant advancement in knowledge, for the substantive theory uncovered processes that are directly linked to common patterns of support. Specific processes that could be linked to common patterns of support, for instance, were organized into discrete stages similar to the five steps involved in the process of family migration (Sluzki, 1979). Through the lens of the substantive theory, the prevalent processes of family support were conceptualized to inform family therapists, social workers, and clergy about the most effective ways to assist undocumented Central American immigrant families.
The substantive theory of family support also uncovered some of the behavioral patterns that emerge among undocumented immigrant families in response to the threat of deportation. It is well known that undocumented immigrant families display limited behavioral responses because their migratory status restricts their lives. Some of these behavioral responses are identified in the substantive theory of family support. Hence, diverse policymakers could make use of this conceptual knowledge to ameliorate the burden imposed on immigrant families simply because of their "undocumented" status.

Overall, the theory of family support represents a significant contribution to social research because it has the potential to increase our knowledge about the support patterns of a sizable number of undocumented immigrant families. This knowledge is pivotal for professionals such as family therapists, social workers, and clergy who work with immigrant families because it has been reported that one of the significant predictors of successful coping with crises is precisely the presence of a support system (Cornille & Brotherton, 1993). Moreover, it has been emphasized that adequate social support can protect people in crisis from pathological states that include a wide number of physical and psychiatric illnesses (Cobb, 1976).

**Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical formulations of grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998) directly guided this inquiry. These theoretical formulations are defined as the systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build theoretical frameworks (Charmaz, 2000). Specifically, this inquiry implemented the procedures of open, axial, and selective coding suggested in the literature of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The researcher followed these methods in spite of the
strong controversies stirred by theoretical changes in grounded theory (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Instead of following the positivist epistemology of the earlier grounded theory, this inquiry gravitated around the epistemological domain of social constructionism (Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1991; Gergen, 1994; Gergen, 1997; Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen 1991; Smith, 1994). Because of this epistemological distinction, all conceptual propositions or explanations of family support were considered as co-creations of the multiple participants engaged in the process of constructing meaningful narratives.

Thus, interpretations were seen as emerging from at least two social domains or cultural spaces of exchange. The first social domain included the participants and the researcher interacting in the process of data collection, conceptual verification, and the document’s final changes. The second social domain, however, included occasional readers of the theory dialoguing in formal or informal settings.

To account for some of the causes of international migration, the researcher resorted to the theory of new economics of migration as described by Massey et al., (1993). This theory, which is a model of micro-level decisions, posits that larger units of related people, rather than isolated individuals, make migratory decisions. These larger units are normally households or families who act collectively to maximize expected income, to minimize risks associated with failures in the market, and to loosen market failure constraints (Espenshade, 1995; Joly, 2000; Massey et al., 1993).

The theory suggests that households can handle risks to their economic welfare, for they can diversify the allocation of resources such as family labor. While some family members can work in the local market of the sending country, for instance, other family
members can be sent to work in foreign markets whose employment conditions are weakly or negatively associated with those of the local market. If for any reason the local market in the sending country declines, households can rely upon remittances from family members located abroad.

Because most developing countries lack adequate mechanisms to handle risks to household income, households are motivated to diversify their risks through international migration. Although some countries may have mechanisms to handle risks, these are usually inaccessible to poor families. International migration therefore offers a mechanism of self-insurance, for households can secure some income if they have family members working abroad. International migration, for instance, can insure households against multiple risks such as crop failures, crop price fluctuations, unemployment, and disability.

Moreover, international migration represents for households an alternative source of capital to finance diverse improvements in productivity, because family members working in foreign markets can progressively accumulate savings. International migration also ensures households a stable rate of consumption, for family members abroad can transfer capital to households through periodic remittances.

On the other hand, the theory contends that households send family members abroad not only to increase their income in absolute terms, but also to increase their income in relation to other households, which can reduce their relative deprivation in sending countries. These are important assumptions because the theory of the new economics suggests that the likelihood of international migration increases in relation to change in other households’ incomes. When the income of wealthy households increases, for instance, poor households increase their relative deprivation if their income remains the same. Although international
migration does not guarantee an expected income, it represents a strong incentive for poor households because they could increase their relative income in relation to a reference group in the sending country.

Several theoretical propositions have been derived from the new economics of migration, and they have led to an alternative set of policy regulations. Some of these propositions are integrated in the following theoretical statements:

In spite of wage differentials between countries, households may have strong motivations to diversify risks through international migration. For instance, the economic engagement of households in local markets may increase the attractiveness of migration as a form of overcoming capital constraints. In this context, local employment and international migration are not mutually exclusive events, as the economic development of the sending countries does not necessarily diminish the pressure for international migration.

International migration, on the other hand, does not cease in those countries in which wage differentials have disappeared across borders. Motivations for migration may persist because of non-existent, unstable, or dysfunctional markets in the sending countries.

In addition, the same expected increase in income does not have the same weight on the likelihood of migration for households situated at different points of an income distribution. In spite of this fact, government policies can modify migration through plans that shape the insurance markets, capital markets, and unemployment insurance. Likewise, government policies that influence income distributions can change the relative deprivation of households, consequently altering their motives to migrate. However, government policies that produce a higher mean income in specific areas of sending countries may increase international migration if poor households do not benefit from the economic growth.
The Researcher as Instrument

It is necessary for social researchers to reflect critically on the self in the process of conducting a qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Richardson, 2000), for all interpretations of social phenomena are invariably influenced by researchers' ideologies, discourses, and cultural biases. Because of the widespread effects of this methodological insight, researchers have to make explicit not only their professional experiences, but also life events that could have influenced the outcome of their inquiries. This would enable readers to examine the influence of the main research instrument on the outcome of any inquiry.

At the time of this research project, I am a Latino immigrant from Central America pursuing a doctoral degree in human development and family studies at a predominantly white, Research I University in the Midwest. I have worked as a bilingual family therapist (English-Spanish) in diverse clinical settings across the United States for approximately 12 years.

Because of my clinical work as a bilingual therapist, I have dialogued with a substantial number of Latino clients in different clinical settings. Working for a home preservation program, for instance, I dialogued individually with gang members, drug abusers, and juvenile delinquents. While employed in hospitals, I dialogued with individuals suffering from depressive-anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and relational conflicts. In mental health clinics, I dialogued with families that had experienced domestic violence, sexual abuse, and family disintegration.

While dialoguing with these clienteles about their clinical problems, I coincidentally started uncovering the multiple ordeals that Latino immigrants undertake in the United
States, particularly the family ordeals of undocumented Latino immigrants labeled illegal immigrants. Embroiled in their clinical narratives, I often found cases of work abuse, discrimination, blatant racism, and oppressive poverty. Although I was an eye-witness to the oppressive conditions of social injustice in Guatemala, some of these ordeals were relatively new to me. For instance, I had not had experience with the social construction of skin color as the principal reason for discriminatory actions.

Over the years of dialoguing with these clienteles, I learned that not only skin color, but also migratory status and language difficulties were some of the circumstances that made their living in the United States a constant ordeal. This led me to start questioning the benefits of being an undocumented Latino immigrant worker in the United States, for the disadvantages seemed to be greater than the economic gains. Thus, I became progressively sensitized to the multiple plights of Latino immigrants, especially of disenfranchised immigrants living under the fear of deportation, work abuse, and blatant racism.

At a young age, I started working as a group leader and peer counselor in a national youth movement in Guatemala City. Because of my performance as a group leader, I was selected to study group dynamics and cross-cultural adaptation abroad. After receiving some additional training, I was hired to work on national projects that focused on the youth. These projects included programs that involved the youth in extracurricular education, leadership training, and leisure activities. Armed with these working experiences, I decided at the age of 22 to pursue higher education in Guatemala City.

Although I was keenly interested in studying law, the treacherous political situation in Guatemala led me to pursue a career in sciences. It was well known in the 1970s that law students committed to promoting social justice could be assassinated at any time. This could
happen regardless of students’ academic standing, social status, or political affiliation. Over
the years, I had learned of so many cases of tortures and assassinations that I had no better
choice at the time but to enroll in Electronic Engineering at the National University in
Guatemala City.

However, after my enrollment in the school of engineering, academic life became
progressively crippled at the National University. The military regime in power had already
perceived the academic institution as a political threat because of the ideological orientation
of faculty members. Extreme activists opposing the military regime had led Guatemalan
military forces to view the institution as a new military target. When political violence finally
reached academic circles, it seriously disrupted the lives of faculty, staff, and students. I
painfully endured as best as I could the selective disappearances, tortures, and assassinations
of faculty members, colleagues, and friends. When the political violence shifted to random
executions, I left school.

The ideological confrontation between the United States and the former Soviet Union
had polarized multiple sectors of Guatemala’s society and intensified the socioeconomic
conflict of the country. This eventually led to an irregular, low-intensity war that had
disastrous consequences for the country. Guatemala City became the violent scene of random
assassinations, armed fights, and terrorist attacks. Guatemala’s countryside, on the other
hand, suffered the systematic genocide of the indigenous people. In this irregular war,
thousands of Guatemalans lost their lives while others fled the country. Hence, a large
number of Guatemalans became internal refugees in their own country or external refugees in
other countries.
Some years later, when I started working as a family therapist in the 1990s, I learned that these political refugees had been denied political asylum in the United States, while political refugees from other parts of the world had often been granted political asylum. Additionally, I learned that social institutions across the United States had often marginalized Latino immigrants because of their skin color and migratory status.

The interplay of my life experiences in Guatemala and my professional practice with Latino clienteles in the United States undoubtedly sensitized me to the vicissitudes of undocumented immigrant families displaced by civil wars, extreme poverty, and social marginalization. As a social researcher, I strongly feel that this background constantly influences my theoretical interpretations of the social world. This is why I decided to use qualitative research methods to study the social phenomenon of family support. It is my hope that making explicit my personal and professional experiences will enhance the trustworthiness of the inquiry.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic Trends

A comparative analysis of the five major ethnic groups in the United States revealed that three groups substantially increased their numbers between 1980 and 2000. These increases became visible after computing the demographic changes that occurred in each group between 1980 and 2000 and carefully comparing the figures. These increases can easily be spotted in the following ethnic distribution, which depicts demographic increases for the five groups under analysis: Whites, 7.5%; Blacks, 32.6%; Hispanics, 141.7%; American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut; 86.7%; and Asian and Pacific Islander, 198.7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a, 2001b).

A close examination of this ethnic distribution revealed that Hispanics or Latinos had the second highest demographic growth after the Asian and Pacific Islander group. With a remarkable increment of 141.7% between 1980 and 2000, Latinos experienced an unprecedented demographic growth that affected the ethnic distribution of the United States. In 1980, for instance, Latinos accounted for 14.6 million people nationwide; however, in 2000 they increased to 32.8 million people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1981, 2001a). Because of this demographic growth, in 1999 Latinos became the largest ethnic minority group in the history of the United States.

The unprecedented demographic growth of Latinos in the United States can be partially explained in terms of their high fertility rates and the substantial numbers of new immigrants that arrived between 1980 and 2000. According to a demographic report on Latinos, for instance, the Latino foreign-born segment grew approximately 84% between
1980 and 1990 while the native Latino segment grew only 32% in the same period (Enchautegui, 1995).

Because of the large proportion of Latino immigrants, demographers reported that in 1990 approximately 35.8% of the 21.9 million Latinos in the United States were foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). In 2000, this percentage increased to 39.1%, according to population reports from the Census Bureau. This figure represented approximately 12.8 million foreign-born Latinos at the time. Of this group, 29.7% had arrived in the 1980s and 43.0% had entered the United States in the 1990s (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000). Nowadays, sizable numbers of new immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America who have contributed to increasing the presence of Latinos across the United States can be easily found in the states of California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, New Jersey, Colorado, and Massachusetts.

Although the metropolitan areas of the Western, Southern, and Northeastern regions of the United States have attracted most of the Latino immigrants in the past, it seems that a new migratory pattern of internal immigration emerged in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1994, for instance, eight states experienced a demographic Latino growth above the national Latino growth of 28%. Within this new migratory pattern, the state of Nevada experienced the highest growth (41%) followed by Arkansas (34%), Minnesota (33%), Iowa (32%), Tennessee (32%), Nebraska (31%), Maryland (30%), and Georgia (29%). These demographic increases are noteworthy because these states, excluding Nevada for its geographic location, have not traditionally been magnets for Latino immigration (Johnson et al., 1999).
It has been suggested that small to medium size metropolitan areas and rural communities in the Midwest and the Sunbelt have indeed attracted Latino immigrants in the past years. This phenomenon has been linked to the fact that most of the employment growth that occurred between 1980 and 1995 took place in those areas rather than in the metropolitan centers of the industrial heartland of the Northeast and Midwest (Johnson et al., 1999).

The migration flow to metropolitan areas has developed because jobs in manufacturing, services, and construction normally offer immigrants an opportunity to work year-round (Burke & Goudy, 1999). Between 1985 and 1990, for instance, Latinos settled primarily in two metropolitan areas in Iowa: Des Moines and Davenport. While the city of Des Moines received most of the Latino settlers from abroad, the city of Davenport received Latino settlers from Illinois and rural areas in Texas (Johnson et al., 1999). Likewise, demographic reports have indicated that Latino immigrants have also settled in Sioux City in recent years (Beaumont, Krantz, & McCormick, 2001).

During the 1990s, non-metropolitan communities in Iowa also experienced a surge of international and domestic migration of Latino immigrant workers. These immigrants sought jobs in food processing industries such as meatpacking, poultry, egg processing, corn detasseling, and horticulture. Given the fact that most food-processing plants can operate year-round, non-metropolitan communities experienced important demographic changes because of unprecedented concentrations of Latino workers (Burke & Goudy, 1999). Thus, some of the major demographic changes that occurred in metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan communities in Iowa were unequivocally linked to the labor trends of the last two decades.
Overall, it has been reported that Latino immigrants were over-represented in some sectors of the Midwestern economy during the 1990s. In the transformative sector, for instance, they were over-represented in manufacturing and construction jobs, while in the distributive sector, they were over-represented in transportation, communication, wholesale, and retail sale jobs (Johnson et al., 1999).

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, as of 1999, Latinos represented the largest ethnic minority group in the state of Iowa (Chew, 2001). With approximately 62,000 people, Latinos comprised approximately 2.1% of the state’s total population. However, sociologists have argued that these estimations did not reflect the rapid demographic growth of Latinos in Iowa (Burke, 2000). Using K-12 school enrollment data on Latino youth, for instance, sociologists reported that Latinos amounted to approximately 82,598 people in 1999, instead of 61,570 people as was estimated and reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Demographic reports based on the U.S. Census 2000 have indicated that Latinos in Iowa increased approximately 153% between 1990 and 2000. Because of this substantial increase, as of 2000, Latinos represented approximately 2.8% of the total population of Iowa. This percentage comprised approximately 82,473 people, which is closer to the independent demographic estimates that sociologists reported for 1999 (Burke, 2000; McCormick, 2001; Rood & McCormick, 2001). It has been argued on several occasions, however, that these numbers could likely increase if all Latino immigrants across Iowa were included in the figures of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In addition to those Latinos that do not respond to the census, a sizable number of undocumented Latino immigrants, for instance, could easily increase the present figures.
Social Research with Latinos

In the social sciences, there has been a growing interest in studying Latinos, most likely because of their unprecedented demographic growth in the last two decades. Many disciplinary studies have already contributed to expanding our knowledge on the social circumstances and specific problems of Latinos in the United States. Some of these studies, for example, have paid attention to the demographic development (Bean & Tienda, 1987), sociocultural characteristics (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998), family functioning (Cortés, 1995; Keefe, Padilla, & Carlos, 1979), and sex roles (Vasquez-Nuttall, Romero-García, & De Leon, 1987). Other studies have focused on the migration patterns (Betancur, 1996; Rouse, 1991), use of social services (Salcido, 1982), and mental health issues (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987; Salgado de Snyder, 1987).

These social studies, however, have focused mainly on Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican, for these subgroups of the Latino population have for many years represented the largest number of Latinos in the United States. Because of this narrow focus, little information seems to exist concerning the social circumstances and specific problems of other Latino immigrants in the United States.

The Central American sub-group of the Latino population in the United States, for instance, has rarely been studied on its own. To a certain extent, this sub-group has been studied as part of a larger sample that represented one or more of the main ethnic subgroups mentioned above. There has not been any systematic research on Central American immigrants, either. Instead, a relatively small number of social studies on five disparate research areas have addressed some of the most pressing problems affecting this segment of the population.
Central Americans have been studied as political refugees (Carrillo, 1990; Dorrington, 1995; Ferris, 1987; Leslie, 1993; Melville, 1991) and suburban immigrants (Mahler, 1995). Some studies have focused on the mental health issues (Arredondo, Orjuela, & Moore, 1989; Griffin-Arocena, Stucky, & Terr, 1990; Leslie & Leitch, 1989; Molesky, 1986) or have paid attention to the working conditions (Repak, 1994, 1995). In addition, Central Americans have been included as sub-samples in studies of acculturation stress (Padilla, Cervantes, Maldonado, & García, 1988; Salgado de Snyder, Cervantes, & Padilla, 1990; Sánchez & Fernández, 1993) and studies of post-traumatic stress (Cervantes, Salgado de Snyder, & Padilla, 1989).

Nevertheless, Central American immigrants have been included in the demographic profile of the United States, since in the last two decades they have increased the numbers of foreign-born Latinos in the country. As an immigrant group, Central Americans started to arrive in large numbers in the 1980s because of the civil wars, political persecutions, and economic disruptions that took place in their home countries during the Cold War confrontation.

**Contextual Factors**

It is well known that, within the context of the Cold War, the irregular low-intensity warfare that occurred in Guatemala intensified toward the end of the 1970s. This warfare increased the political violence to unprecedented levels, which profoundly affected all sectors of Guatemalan society. The average political murder rate in the country, for instance, increased in 1982 to nearly 303 murders per month. Several estimates of the political violence placed the death toll from armed attacks, which occurred in the countryside between 1982 and 1985, at approximately 150,000 persons (Booth & Walker, 1999; Buckman, 2001).
This political violence, combined with the pervasive economic instability of the country, set in motion an unprecedented exodus of Guatemalans. Thus, a sizeable number of Guatemalans became either internal refugees in their own country or external refugees in other countries such as Honduras, Costa Rica, Mexico, the United States, and Canada (Ferris, 1987; Gonzales, 2000; Peters, 2001).

Conversely, a massive rebellion led by the Sandinista Liberation Army (FSLN) in Nicaragua toppled the Somoza dynasty in mid 1979. This political change set in motion a foreign intervention that eventually launched a trade embargo, cut off international lending channels, and supported a counterrevolutionary army known as “Los Contra.” Because the intervention focused on stopping the Sandinista revolution at all costs, the FSLN had no choice but to counterattack in order to defend the revolution. In this counterattack, the Sandinista government used approximately 50% of the national budget, which brought to a halt many social programs in Nicaragua (Booth & Walker, 1999; Menjivar, 1999).

Nicaragua suffered a serious socioeconomic crisis because of the combined effects of foreign intervention and the costs of the war that toppled Somoza. It has been estimated, for instance, that approximately 50,000 people were killed during the war. The property losses soared to $1.5 billion while the government inherited an international debt from the old regime of $1.6 billion. Austerity measures and lack of investment led to shortages and deterioration of living standards and services. Initially, the wealthy people fled the country; but later on professionals and businessmen followed. Toward the end of the 1980s, the flow of Nicaraguans included, among others, urban workers and peasants who were fleeing civil unrest and the country’s wrecked economy. (Booth & Walker, 1999; Buckman 2001; Ferris, 1987; Menjivar, 1999). Social researchers have indicated that approximately three-quarters of
the Nicaraguan-born immigrants in the United States entered the country in the time span between 1980 and 1990 (Menjivar, 1999).

Around the same time, a group of army officers in El Salvador who intended to reform the country overthrew the Salvadoran government in late 1979. This political intervention was set in motion because of declining standards of living, rising unemployment, and intensification of political repression in the country. In addition, a growing number of political coalitions that strongly opposed the Salvadoran government and the Sandinista's victory in Nicaragua were part of the decisive catalysts that prompted the political intervention. In 1980, however, sudden destabilization of the reformist group known as “La Junta” and foreign intervention fueled the political conflict that triggered a twelve-year civil war. In this armed conflict, approximately 42,000 people died between 1980 and 1982. By the time the parties involved in the conflict finally signed a peace accord, which went into effect in 1992, another 30,000 people had died in El Salvador (Booth & Walker, 1999; Buckman, 2001; Menjivar, 1999).

As the armed conflict intensified in the 1980s, the numbers of Salvadorans fleeing their country increased dramatically. Thousands of Salvadorans who were displaced by the war and the deteriorating economy relocated to other countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and the United States (Montes Mozo & García Vasquez, 1988). In 1980, for instance, demographic estimates placed the number of Salvadorans in the United States at approximately 94,000; however, in 1990, those estimates soared to 565,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981, 1993). An independent survey conducted in El Salvador and the United States, on the other hand, estimated that the number of Salvadorans in the United States was closer to one million in 1988 (Montes Mozo & García Vasquez, 1988). Approximately 75%
of those immigrants entered the United States after 1979, when political repression intensified in El Salvador.

Although these Central American immigrants left their home countries because of the political turmoil in the area, the United States government did not recognize them as political refugees. Throughout the 1980s, for instance, the INS granted political asylum to 2.6% of the Salvadoran applicants and 2.1% of Guatemalans; however, in the same period 62% of Iranian, 60% of Rumanian, and 37% of Afghan applicants were granted political asylum (Malher, 1995). Because this situation remained the same through the 1980s, a large proportion of Central American immigrants remained undocumented or, as a last resort, entered the United States without authorization.

In addition to the political instability that set in motion the biggest wave of undocumented Central American immigration to the United States, the natural disasters that sporadically occur in the region also contribute to increase the flow of undocumented immigration to the United States. Between 1986 and 2001, for instance, a sizeable number of Central Americans felt compelled to relocate because natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and droughts destroyed parts of the agricultural sector and damaged the physical infrastructure of their countries. These migrants sought new jobs in their own countries, neighboring countries, and the United States because natural disasters had not only killed thousands of people, but also had left a sizeable number of people homeless and unemployed. A large number of these migrants presumably left their home countries to seek jobs as undocumented immigrant workers in the United States (Valladares, 2001).

In the last two decades, the sequence of natural disasters that most likely increased the flow of undocumented Central American immigration to the United States began with an
earthquake in the most populated country of the region. In 1986, San Salvador suffered an earthquake that killed more than 1,500 people and destroyed or damaged a large number of homes and small buildings (Cody, 1986; Sullivan, 2001). In 2001, El Salvador suffered again when two earthquakes killed approximately 1,200 people, destroyed or damaged more than 300,000 houses, and adversely affected 1.5 million inhabitants (Buckman 2001; Daltón, 2001). The bill for reconstruction after the first earthquake alone was estimated at $1.5 billion (Jordan, 2001). Approximately 40,000 people left El Salvador between January and February of 2001 because of the twin earthquakes that occurred that year (Valladares, 2001).

In 1988, Hurricane Joan swept along the Caribbean coastline of Nicaragua, leaving 85,000 people homeless and causing damages estimated at more than $1 billion (Gilbert, 1994; Preston, 1988). Moreover, in 1998, Hurricane Mitch struck Nicaragua, leaving approximately 3,811 people dead or missing and more than 867,000 people adversely affected. With 71 bridges destroyed, 70% of the roads damaged, and 30% of the banana crop wiped out, the Nicaraguan economy suffered considerable losses.

Hurricane Mitch also struck Guatemala, causing destruction in some parts of the country. It was reported that approximately 389 people died or were missing and 734,198 people were adversely affected by the hurricane. The country struggled financially because the hurricane destroyed 98 bridges, damaged 60% of the roads, and ruined between 45-60% of the corn crop for domestic consumption (Buckman, 2001).

The greatest losses that Hurricane Mitch caused in Central America, however, occurred in Honduras, where the floods swept away parts of large cities. The combined effect of winds and floods also swept away small villages along the Caribbean coast. Honduras reported that approximately 13,715 people died or were missing and thousands of people
were left homeless. With 170 bridges destroyed, 70% of the roads damaged, and 90% of the banana crop lost, this country suffered the most from this natural disaster (Buckman, 2001). Honduran authorities, who were cited in a world migration report, indicated that approximately 300 people a day were leaving for the United States in January, 1999 (Martin et al., 2000).

In 2001, Central American countries suffered a severe drought that wiped out the corn and bean fields of tens of thousands of small farmers. This natural disaster left approximately 1.5 million people in the region without enough food to eat, for these crops have been traditionally harvested for domestic consumption. At the same time, the tenfold increase in coffee production in Vietnam and the abundant production of coffee in Indonesia increased the international supply of coffee. This overproduction considerably diminished the prices on the international market, which logically caused significant economic losses in Central America. Suddenly, Central America, one of the world’s largest exporters of coffee, became non-competitive in the international market. This compounded the dismal economic scenario in Central America, because the coffee industry that usually employed thousands of workers to cultivate, harvest, and sell coffee ceased to hire people. Instead, thousands of workers were laid off, which significantly increased the unemployment rate in the region (Jordan, 2001; Pop, 2001).

Due to the combined effect of these natural disasters and the international supply of coffee, unemployment has been on the rise in Central America. As a result, there has been an increased flow of migrants from countries like Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to richer countries like Costa Rica, Mexico, and farther north to the United States (Jordan, 2001).
Legislative Initiatives

The plight of Central American immigrants intensified when the U.S. Congress approved the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Although IRCA granted amnesty to unauthorized immigrants who had entered the United States prior to January 1, 1982, IRCA did not benefit Central American immigrants because most of them arrived throughout the 1980s. Approximately three-quarters of Salvadoran and Nicaraguan immigrants, for instance, entered the United States between 1980 and 1990 (Menjivar, 1999). Seeking to curb the flow of undocumented immigrants to the United States, IRCA made a large proportion of Central American immigrants ineligible to file applications for permanent residency. However, Central American immigrants benefited from the advocacy efforts that civil right lawyers, the sanctuary movement, and left-wing organizations orchestrated on their behalf through the 1980s. These efforts led to two breakthroughs toward the end of 1990 (Coutin, 1998; Gonzales, 2000).

In October of 1990, for instance, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that allowed Salvadorans to request “temporary protection status” while in United States. Under this bill, abbreviated thereafter as TPS, all Salvadoran immigrants who had arrived in the United States prior to September 19, 1990, had the right to apply for temporary protection. This bill allowed them to live and work in the United States for a period of 18 months while waiting for the end of the political conflict in El Salvador (Coutin, 1998; Gonzales, 2000; Menjivar, 1999). The TPS program was extended several times, and it was later renamed the “deferred enforced departure” program (DED). The TPS/DED programs ended in January 1, 1995, but the work permits obtained through the DED programs were extended several times until they finally expired on April 30, 1996 (Coutin, 1998; Mahler, 1995).
On December 19, 1990, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and the legal advocates for Central American immigrants settled a five-year lawsuit against the U.S. government. This class action suit, which is known as *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh (ABC) (1990)* claimed that, under the refugee act of 1980, the U.S. government had not decided on the granting of political asylum in a neutral, non政治 manner as required by the law (Malher, 1995). Between 1983 and 1990, for example, the INS granted political asylum to only 1.8% of the Guatemalan applicants fleeing their country. During the same period, however, the INS granted political asylum to 25.2% of Nicaraguan applicants who were supposedly fleeing a communist government (Gonzales, 2000). Under the ABC settlement, Salvadorans who had been in the United States since September 19, 1990, and Guatemalans who had been in the country since October 1, 1990, had the right to de novo asylum interviews (Coutin, 1998). In fact, ABC overturned 100,000 cases in which the INS had denied political asylum to Central American people (Gonzales, 2000). The terms of the ABC agreement expired in January 1996.

In September 1996, the introduction of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) reduced the likelihood that those who were denied asylum under the ABC could benefit from other forms of legalization. However, advocacy efforts on behalf of Central American immigrants led again to legislative action in the U.S. Congress (Coutin, 1998).

In November 1997, Congress passed the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA). Under NACARA, Nicaraguans who had entered the United States before December 1, 1995, were granted “amnesty.” In addition, this bill restored eligibility for suspension or cancellation of removal for those Salvadorans and
Guatemalans who had applied for political asylum before April 1, 1990 (Coutin, 1998; Menjivar, 1999).

Although Central American immigrants have gone through innumerable vicissitudes in order to legalize their migratory status, a large number of individuals, couples, and families remain undocumented in the United States. Demographic estimates, for instance, placed the numbers of undocumented Central Americans at approximately 767,000 people in 1995. This figure represented approximately 15% of the undocumented immigrant population of the United States at the time (Passel, 1999). Although the overall number of undocumented immigrants was estimated at approximately 5.1 million people in 1995 (Passel, 1999), social researchers have not agreed on the current numbers. There is a growing consensus among social researchers that the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States ranges between 9 and 11 million people. This is much higher than the official figure of 6 million people estimated by the U.S. government (Cohn, 2001).

**Social Networks and Support**

The wave of undocumented immigrants to the United States cannot be explained completely in terms of the traditional causes of immigration. In addition to political instability, natural disasters, and economic factors that have triggered Central American immigration, other intervening variables should be taken into consideration to explain this phenomenon.

The study of family relationships seems necessary to explaining undocumented immigration. Social researchers working with undocumented immigrant families, for instance, need to study the influence that family ties have upon migratory decisions. This follows from the fact that social researchers have reported that family ties represent an
"intervening opportunity" for immigrants who usually place a higher value on the social insurance obtained from family members than on the prospects of socioeconomic advancement (Tienda, 1979).

The study of family ties also represents an important factor in studying undocumented immigrants because of the relationship between the use of social ties and low socioeconomic status. It has been reported that the economy of survival among the poor depends more on managing diverse social ties, which allow access to resources, than on carefully planning how to handle goods and services (Espinoza, 1999). In order to obtain diverse resources, for instance, the poor have to contact relatives, friends, neighbors, and institutions because survival strategies seem to be embedded in social relationships.

The link between the use of social ties and socioeconomic status represents an important insight for studying Latinos in the United States, given the fact that, between 1980 and 1999, the percentage of Latinos below the poverty level varied between 22.8% and 30.7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a). Because undocumented Central American immigrants certainly exceed these figures by far, they might be using social ties more frequently than any other Latino group in the United States. This makes the study of family ties an almost indispensable task.

Indeed, undocumented Central American immigrants have reported on multiple occasions that they sought jobs in the United States after consulting with members of the nuclear family, the extended family, or with close friends about the advantages of relocation (Chupina-Orantes, 1999). Before leaving the sending countries, undocumented Central American immigrants normally use social ties to secure the instrumental information they
need to relocate in the receiving country. They usually receive, for instance, information from relatives about the living and working conditions in the United States.

Undocumented immigrants also utilize family ties to obtain financial resources to travel from the sending countries to the United States. Once in the United States, they normally secure temporary housing through relatives or close friends who usually assist them in finding jobs within days (Chupina-Orantes, 1999; Malher, 1995).

On other occasions, the intervening opportunities for undocumented Central American immigrants emerge from the interface of diverse social ties. These social ties have usually developed in the home country, and they normally include the ethnic group (Rodriguez, 1987), close friends, and the local community.

The Maya community in Houston, Texas, for example, started forming with the arrival of a young agricultural worker who found paid work in the area in the fall of 1979 (Hagan, 1998). A few months after his arrival, he successfully recruited from his hometown in Guatemala a brother-in-law, male kin, and some friends. Moreover, after the arrival of his wife and his two children in 1981, female Mayas from the same Guatemalan town were soon recruited to work as domestic employees and child-care providers in Houston. Nowadays, there are more than 1,800 people living in that Maya community in Houston.

In regard to this chain migration, it has been suggested that a self-sustaining flow of immigrants reflects precisely the establishment of personal networks of information and personal assistance between immigrants in the receiving country and their relatives in the sending country (Boyd, 1989).

Network analysis has recently pointed out the importance of kinship networks in the process of international migration (Salaff et al., 1999). Working-class immigrants can
entertain the idea of leaving their home countries because of the existence of kinship networks. Through their kin ties, working-class immigrants can obtain instrumental support and lower the cost of migration to receiving countries. In contrast, kin ties seem to be less important to affluent and middle-class immigrants. Although affluent immigrants such as businessmen and professionals normally have more kin living abroad than nonimmigrant people, the effect of kin on their decisions to leave the home country seems to be minimal. Because of their financial independence, middle-class immigrants do not require the same material support that working-class immigrants do. Instead, they benefit from the emotional support received from colleagues and peers. This support usually conveys instrumental information about good jobs, neighborhoods, and schools in the receiving countries.

It has also been reported that Latinos involved in the process of chain migration show "efforts to build kin-based communities in which the roles of relative, neighbor, and friend overlap" (Schweizer, Schnegg, & Berzborn, 1998). Among undocumented Central American immigrants, however, interactions with other Latino groups seem to be part of a survival strategy (Chavez, 1990). Because they have to survive with a limited income and have to minimize the negative consequences of deportation, they seek co-residence with more established immigrant groups in the United States such as the Mexican group. In addition, co-residence with other Spanish-speaking immigrants helps undocumented Central American immigrants to cope with social isolation and loneliness.

In fact, in a study conducted with undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America, it was found that Central American interviewees in San Diego were twice as likely as Mexicans to live in an extended family household (Chavez, 1990). They were also twice as likely as Mexicans to co-reside with another family. It has been suggested that
co-residence constitutes a first level of defense against the economic and political constraints that undocumented immigrants have to face in the United States.

Regardless of the Central American immigrant group studied, it seems that direct activation of kinship, friendship, and community networks plays an important role in the permanent flow of undocumented Central American immigration to the United States. The activation of networks that occurs through family ties, for instance, can be easily launched among Central American immigrants because their traditional practice of familism promotes a close and permanent contact with the family. As a cultural trait, familism reflects the existence of a strong emotional commitment to family life. This commitment guarantees not only the survival of the family, but also of family members.

Studies that have addressed the strength and maintenance of family ties seem to suggest that family ties normally manifest themselves in remittances from undocumented immigrants in the receiving country to close relatives in the sending countries (Chavez et al., 1989). In the case of Salvadoran immigrants, for example, it has been reported that family remittances have totaled more than $1.3 billion per year (Montes Mozo & García Vasquez, 1988). A recent report citing official information from the Salvadoran Embassy in Washington indicated that family remittances were expected to reach $2 billion in 2001 (Sheridan, 2001).

Family reunification has better exemplified, however, the existence of the enduring emotional commitment to family life among Latino immigrants. Most Latino immigrants make extraordinary efforts to bring spouses, children, and members of the extended family to the United States because there seems to be a pressing need to keep families intact. In many instances, family reunification occurs after prolonged separation from family members.
(Cohen, 1999). This is particularly the case among undocumented immigrant mothers who have had to leave their children at home because of the financial cost of immigration, the legal restrictions that impede migration between countries, and the risks associated with undocumented immigration.

Equally important in this context are findings concerning the potential effects of acculturation on the attitudinal familism of Latinos in the United States. A study conducted with Hispanics and White non-Hispanics, for instance, indicated that a high level of perceived family support represented the most distinctive dimension of familism among Mexicans, Cubans, and Central Americans (Sabogal et al., 1987). In this particular study, perceived support comprised those items dealing with the perception of relatives not only as reliable agents of help, but also as a source of support to solve diverse problems. Perceived support among Hispanics seemed to remain invariable in spite of participants’ level of acculturation. It represented, moreover, the only factor unaffected by generation, place of birth, and place of growth. This study also found that perception of family obligations was the only item that appeared to diminish as the level of acculturation increased.

Unfortunately, undocumented Latino immigrants constantly face contextual obstacles that could hinder the practice of familism or their emotional commitment to family life in the receiving country. Lack of contact with the nuclear family, for instance, could progressively diminish the importance of individual loyalties, family obligations, and reciprocity.

Researchers have specifically argued that unstable employment among Latino immigrants as well as immigration policies that deny immigrants’ access to social programs are some of the unfavorable circumstances that directly affect the quality of kinship networks.
Researchers have also argued that extreme poverty and marginalization preclude the exchange of family resources among immigrant families (Menjivar, 1997). These contextual factors certainly undermine the mechanisms of reciprocity that are part of social networks. Undocumented immigrants, for instance, could lose their family ties because of bitter arguments with relatives about lack of financial resources to pay for financial debts or lack of resources to fulfill individual obligations in the nuclear or extended family (Chupina-Orantes, 1999). Because of these contextual factors, moreover, family support could decline drastically among undocumented immigrant families. This seems to occur, for instance, among some Salvadoran immigrant families in the United States (Menjivar, 1995).

Because structural constraints in the receiving country could influence immigrants' kinship patterns (Foner, 1997), structural constraints might also influence the patterns of support that emerge among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States. A contextual appraisal of the social circumstances in the receiving country, however, can help to uncover the influence of these structural constraints on immigrants' lives, particularly in reference to family support.

It has been pointed out that social networks can limit immigrants' access to external sources of support in the receiving country (Pohjola, 1991). While social networks can function as sources of direct support from which immigrants can obtain personal assistance, social networks can also impede access to social institutions that provide services to immigrants. Immigrants rely less on institutional services because social networks provide them with direct access to effective sources of support. However, social networks cannot
substitute for the services that immigrants need from social institutions in the receiving country.

Along these lines, it has been argued that familism, which could be considered the most important social network among undocumented Latino immigrants, prevents the utilization of external sources of support (Purdy & Arguello, 1992). This occurs when Latino family members, for instance, willingly play the roles of informal caregivers in the family. This common practice often has negative consequences for Latino families because individual caregivers have to sacrifice their own economic opportunities in order to care for others in the family.

A sociological survey conducted in the city of Chicago on the process of migration, settlement, and adjustment to the city showed that kinfolk are indeed the most important sources of help for migrants (Choldin, 1973). Kinship networks are extensively involved in the process of chain migration because they directly assist migrants in obtaining material support, establishing social connections, and maintaining morale. However, this survey also found that migrants without kinship ties and support maintain higher morale than migrants who join kinfolk. This outcome suggests that continued attachment to kinfolk does not contribute to keeping high morale, for kinfolk often remind migrants of their sending communities.

It has also been reported that social networks create certain uniformity in the stratification of the immigrant community in the receiving country (Pohjola, 1991). Social networks normally consist of horizontal relationships with family members and friends that belong to the same economic level and ethnic group. The social support that immigrant workers receive, therefore, takes place within a particular segment of the immigrant
population. Because of restricted socialization, immigrant workers usually find jobs in specific sectors of the economy. This fragmentation seems to be beneficial to those immigrants without formal education, job skills, and work experience; however, for those immigrants who have the potential to achieve better job positions, social networks can restrict their mobility.

In spite of the consequences that social networks can have on immigrants, it seems that social networks emerge out of immigrants' supportive behaviors. In fact, social networks are sustainable because families continually enact forms of support whether in the receiving or sending country. While an appraisal of social networks can be achieved from consulting diverse sources, a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of family support can be particularly achieved from studying immigrant families.

Thus, the aim of this qualitative inquiry was to build a substantive theory that could conceptually expand the knowledge of family support. Following the basic premises of grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998), this inquiry focused specifically on identifying a central phenomenon that could integrate the major instances of family support that occur among undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States. The theoretical integration of the findings attempted to provide a theoretical frame with sufficient explanatory power to describe the phenomenon of family support, particularly in terms of the behavioral and attitudinal patterns of support that occur among undocumented immigrant families.
CHAPTER 3. METHODS

General Methodological Approach

In this inquiry, the researcher used a qualitative research design to build a substantive theory of family support. It seemed suitable to build theory of family support utilizing a qualitative research design, because qualitative research methods provided the research procedures to deal with the social circumstances of undocumented immigrant families in the Midwest region of the United States.

Undocumented immigrant families have reported that they constantly run the risk of being deported to their home countries. They have clearly indicated that facing the ominous risk of deportation has always represented a disturbing threat because of the negative consequences that deportation can have in their lives. Indeed, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the United States can detain undocumented immigrants anywhere in the country at any time. When detentions occur, undocumented immigrants are incarcerated before being deported to the sending countries. Because of deportation, thousands of undocumented immigrants have been forced to abandon their families, possessions, and jobs in the United States.

Thus, undocumented immigrant families normally tend to react with ambivalent feelings toward unfamiliar people, especially toward social researchers soliciting their personal participation in surveys or other kinds of research that specifically require involvement with strangers. Undocumented immigrant families fear that responding to research questions that involve personal information could compromise their migratory status or affect close relatives and friends.
Undocumented immigrant families, however, could test their fears about the presence of social researchers in their communities. This exploration could take place when social researchers intentionally sustain a prolonged engagement with undocumented immigrant families in the area of study.

In addition, a prolonged engagement with undocumented immigrant families could facilitate the process of data collection, for these families normally consider family issues to be private matters. For instance, undocumented Central American immigrant families have stated that marital discord and disputes with members of their nuclear or extended family are private issues that must be discussed only among family members. According to these families, family members could easily interpret any inquiry into these sensitive domains as disrespectful intrusions. This perception obviously has the potential to disrupt or halt the progress of any research project.

Because the research questions guiding this inquiry dealt directly with the practice of family support, a safeguard seemed necessary to avoid regretful intrusions. A prolonged engagement seemed suitable in order to create the conditions that could help the researcher build a relationship with each participant family, especially in terms of the cultural script of "simpatia" or the emphasis that Latinos put on behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant interactions (Marín & VanOss Marín, 1991). Within personal relationships, the researcher ventured into sensitive domains pertaining to the practice of family support without losing the collaboration of participant families.

Indeed, the pilot study for this inquiry showed that undocumented immigrants tended to respond positively to qualitative research that focused on specific domains of life such as acculturation and stress (Chupina-Orantes, 1999). This unusual response, however, occurred
exclusively in those cases in which the researcher sustained a prolonged engagement and followed the cultural script of "simpatia" with the selected participants. Because of these two strategies, for instance, the selected participants agreed to be interviewed at home several times. Given the fact that prolonged engagement has been a research procedure utilized in most qualitative studies, a qualitative research design seemed suitable to address the questions about family support proposed in this inquiry.

**Philosophical Assumptions**

As does any researcher in the field of social sciences, this researcher holds a set of personal beliefs that influences his actions. These beliefs normally manifest themselves in his personal world-view, which invariably determines the nature of his inquiries into the social world.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), these personal beliefs, along with the philosophical assumptions underlying a researcher’s approach, can be easily uncovered when the researcher answers three fundamental questions that deal with some of his ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions.

The first question addresses the researcher’s ontological assumptions, or personal beliefs, about the form and nature of reality. In this inquiry, the researcher simply assumed that reality is made of multiple and indivisible social constructions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This reality emerges, for instance, from the constructions that participants and researcher co-created while engaged in research; therefore, its form and content depend on the interacting parts. In this inquiry, however, the researcher followed Guba’s insight (1981) suggesting that reality tends to diverge rather than converge as more is known about a social phenomenon.
The second question focuses on the researcher's epistemological assumptions, or the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. In this inquiry, the researcher conceived participant families and researcher as interacting in the same frame of reference; therefore, he visualized participant families and himself as linked to each other and subject to mutual influences. Because of this particular distinction, the researcher conceptualized all discoveries about family support as co-creations made by the participant families and himself.

In this epistemological approach, moreover, the researcher envisioned the locus of knowledge situated at the inter-subjective domain between participant families and himself. This conception displaced the notion that mental constructions represented the locus of knowledge. Neither researcher nor individual participants represented the domain within which knowledge could be found. In this inquiry, an understanding of how the world “is” became secondary to the concern with the way it is perceived, interpreted, and constructed (Paré, 1995).

Based on these epistemological assumptions, the researcher conceived that multiple realities emerged from at least two subjective domains or cultural spaces. First, they emerged from the space created between the participant families and the researcher while they interacted in the inquiry. Second, they also emerged from the space that occasional readers of the inquiry created while they interpreted the findings in formal or informal settings. Following Lincoln and Guba's insight (1994), however, the researcher maintained the position that these multiple realities did not represent the “truth” in absolute terms. They represented only a more or less informed point of view.
The third question deals with the researcher’s methodological assumptions, or how the researcher uncovered whatever he believed could be known. Given the social nature and variability of all constructions, it has been suggested that constructions can be elicited and refined only through interactions between researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition to considering himself the key instrument for data collection and data analysis, the researcher assumed that a natural setting would include participant families as the direct source of data collection (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1998).

Following an inductive approach, the researcher directly experienced how data emerged in the inquiry and how this data gradually started making sense through data analysis. This inductive approach provided the researcher with sufficient context-bound information that eventually led him to uncover patterns which could explain the social phenomenon under investigation (Cresswell, 1994), in this particular case, the practice of family support among undocumented Central American immigrant families.

**Research Approach**

The specific approach used in this inquiry was introduced in the social sciences as grounded theory in the late 1960s (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pidgeon, 1996). This research approach has been recently defined as the systematic guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build theoretical frameworks (Charmaz, 2000).

Moreover, in this approach, a theory is conceptualized as the plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Any theory in this approach, however, is classified as substantive or formal theory, depending on its theoretical scope. A formal theory differs from a substantive theory, because formal theory comprises the analysis of substantive theories (Glaser, 1982). Because building a formal theory implies
analyzing substantive theories, the researcher aimed at developing theory on family support at the substantive level only.

The two major characteristics that have distinguished grounded theory from other qualitative research methods are its emphasis on theory construction and its comparative method of constant analysis. First, grounded theory aims to build or develop middle range theories through systematic data collection and data analysis. For instance, researchers using grounded theory focus on connecting the multiple actions and interactions of the participants in significant theoretical patterns. Researchers try to discover the reciprocal changes in these patterns and their variability with changes in the internal or the external conditions. In this way, grounded theory enhances the possibility of building theory of conceptual density and meaningful variation (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Second, grounded theory is a method of comparative analysis in which theory development is the outcome of the constant interplay between data analysis and data collection. In grounded theory, data analysis starts with a coding procedure that takes place as soon as the first data are collected. In this procedure, the researcher carefully examines the data, line by line, in order to identify emerging categories as well as their differences and similarities. This categorization, which constitutes the building block of theory development in grounded theory, sets in motion a comparative analysis, because the categories and their multiple relationships are compared and verified in a recursive way.

Although it has been suggested that the conversation in grounded theory is centered on data analysis, grounded theory methodology directs the researcher to pay attention to "in vivo" concepts that reflect participants’ concerns (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).
Participants

The researcher initially focused on locating places where undocumented immigrant families could be contacted. After analyzing the research potential of several places, the researcher identified four social institutions assisting undocumented immigrants in the Midwest region of the United States.

The first institution was a Catholic church that had collaborated in a similar inquiry conducted in a metropolitan area of the Midwest. Specifically, staff members of this church had collaborated with the researcher in the pilot study on acculturation and stress. On several occasions, they had provided information about potential Latino participants for the pilot study. This collaboration reflected the prolonged engagement that the researcher had sustained with staff members of the church for three years. As a bilingual Latino immigrant, for instance, the researcher had volunteered to work at the church as a consultant on cross-cultural issues. As a marriage and family therapist, the researcher had also volunteered to work with members of the congregation; the researcher counseled individuals, couples, and families on a weekly basis.

The second institution was a Methodist church that has assisted undocumented immigrants in the Midwest for the last 15 years. Staff members of this church agreed to collaborate on the proposed inquiry of family support, for the researcher has played the role of a participant observer at the church for four years. Specifically, the researcher has regularly attended the meetings of a group of Latino families who meet at the church every week. In these meetings, the families usually discuss their personal ordeals as well as their safety issues as undocumented immigrants in the United States.
The third institution was an organization affiliated to a Protestant church in the Midwest. This institution advocated for the legal rights of immigrants, regardless of national origin. Given the institution's mission, staff members agreed to provide information about potential Latino participants for the proposed inquiry and also volunteered to identify staff members, within other institutions attending to immigrants in the Midwest, who could volunteer to take part in the inquiry.

Following an approach similar to that used with the previously mentioned institutions, the researcher intentionally sustained a prolonged engagement with staff members of this institution. Through volunteer work, he tried to maintain regular contact with staff members and clients of the institution. When the institution sponsored an INS outreach program to assist undocumented immigrant families in the community, for instance, the researcher participated as volunteer. The researcher also volunteered in the immigrant rights project of the institution to assist undocumented immigrant families.

The fourth social institution was a Baptist church assisting a group of monolingual families of Latino origin. Two of the main gatekeepers of this church immediately encouraged members of the congregation to participate in the inquiry because teachers in the local program of English as Second Language (ESL) had personally introduced the researcher to the church. After attending church's meetings for approximately three weeks, the researcher started getting information about potential participant families for the inquiry. This positive response occurred because the researcher had not only sustained a prolonged engagement of five years with one of the ESL teachers, but also because of the fact that the families and the researcher had similar cultural backgrounds.
In addition to selective sampling, the researcher identified undocumented immigrant families through the snowball technique. The use of this sampling technique has been reported to result in a low refusal rate among undocumented immigrants, particularly when researchers worked with immigrants' networks such as kinship and friendship networks (Cornelius, 1981). This technique has also permitted social researchers to interview subgroups of undocumented immigrants who were less visible in the community, such as employees working in households, itinerant workers, and temporary immigrants working in specific areas (Cornelius, 1981).

Because the snowball sampling technique has a strong tendency to lead social researchers toward long-staying immigrants or those denominated as settlers, the researcher of this inquiry purposely requested referrals that included both categories of immigrants: settlers and sojourners.

In order to collect data that could help him start building or developing the substantive theory of family support, the researcher focused initially on creating a selective sample from the referrals of the four social institutions mentioned above. The selected families agreed to take part in the inquiry according to the conditions stipulated in the consent form (see Appendix A). Moreover, all the participant family members were selected according to the following research criteria:

- self-identification as an adult or 18 years old;
- self-identification as immigrant;
- self-identification as Central American immigrant;
- self-identification as an undocumented immigrant living in the United States.
Data Collection Procedures

In this inquiry, the researcher collected data in three consecutive phases. These phases comprised twelve months of fieldwork as described in the following procedure.

In phase one of data collection, which comprised three months of fieldwork, the researcher contacted 12 undocumented Central American immigrant families that were living in the Midwest region of the United States. These undocumented families were contacted through the social institutions described earlier.

After explaining the nature of the inquiry to the potential participant families, the researcher invited each family to meet with him individually before starting any formal interviews. In these meetings, the researcher focused on obtaining a selective sample of six participant families. After obtaining his selective sample, the researcher invited each participant family included in the selective sample to take part in the inquiry on family support. Their formal participation in the inquiry, however, started when family members that met the research criteria described above signed a consent form to be interviewed (see Appendix A).

In phase two of data collection, which comprised seven months of fieldwork, the researcher interviewed each selected participant family at least three times for approximately one hour to one and a half-hours each time.

In the first interview, the researcher invited members of participant families to answer five general questions in five basic domains (Patton, 1990) as follows:

- **Personal Background:** Can you tell me about your family?
- **Experience:** What is it like to receive support from your family in the United States?
- **Knowledge:** Can you tell me how your family members manage to support each other?
- Values: What kind of support does your family value the most?
- Feelings: How do you feel when you receive support from your relatives?

In addition to this set of questions, the researcher asked participant family members the following question: Is there anything that you think I should know about supporting a family member?

The researcher tape-recorded the first interview with the participant family, and he transcribed verbatim this tape recording within the following two days. A careful analysis of the transcript enabled the researcher to obtain information that guided the formulation of specific questions for the second interview.

In the second interview with the participant family, the researcher shared with the family his interpretation of the first meeting. After obtaining feedback on his interpretation, the researcher asked the family those specific questions formulated beforehand. Furthermore, in this second interview the researcher included some questions formulated with information gathered from field observations and other interviews.

In the third interview with the participant family, the researcher shared with the family his interpretations of the second meeting. After obtaining feedback on his interpretation, the researcher tried to expand the focus of the interview following the same questioning procedure described in the second interview.

After the third interview, the researcher gave the participant family a written statement that summarized the views and feelings expressed in the interviews. He invited the family to evaluate the accuracy of this written statement. Thus, the participant family added information that seemed relevant to them or deleted information that did not reflect their views.
To complete phase two of the data collection, the researcher requested the assistance of the participant families in contacting other undocumented immigrant families. At least six more potential participant families were found following this technique, which is known as snowball sampling.

In phase three of the data collection, which comprised two months of fieldwork, the researcher contacted six undocumented immigrant families referred to him through the snowball sampling technique previously described.

The protocol followed in contacting these potential participants was similar to the procedure used in phase one. For instance, the researcher explained on the phone or in person the nature of the inquiry to potential participant families; moreover, he met individually with each family to generate an adequate sample. After obtaining a theoretical sample of three participant families, the researcher invited each family included in the sample to take part in the inquiry according to the terms of the consent form.

Likewise, data collection followed the same protocol used in phase two. In the first interview, the researcher invited the participant family to answer five specific questions on family support in five basic domains. After obtaining a transcript from the recorded interview, the researcher proceeded to carefully analyze the transcript. An analysis of the transcript allowed the researcher to identify important information with which to formulate a set of questions for the second interview.

In the second interview with the participant family, the researcher shared with the family his interpretation of the first meeting. After obtaining feedback on his interpretation, however, the researcher asked the family specific questions that were formulated while analyzing the information embedded in the first transcript. In this second interview, the
researcher also asked the family some questions formulated with information gathered from field observations and other interviews.

In the third interview with the participant family, the researcher shared with the family his interpretations of the second meeting. After obtaining feedback on his interpretation, the researcher tried to expand the focus of the interview. He asked the family a set of questions formulated with the information embedded in the transcript of the second interview and the information from field observations.

After the third interview, the researcher gave the participant family a written statement that synthesized the views and feelings expressed in the interviews. He invited the family to evaluate the accuracy of the written statement. Thus, they added information that seemed relevant or deleted information that did not reflect their views.

The recursive procedure described above added considerable detail to the emerging data and reassured the researcher that participant families had shared a significant amount of information about the phenomenon of family support.

In addition to these interviews, the researcher interviewed three staff members from the social institutions mentioned before. Each staff member was invited to answer a set of five questions on family support. These interviews were tape-recorded in order to obtain a verbatim transcript for data analysis.

Finally, the researcher obtained data from public records and organizational reports (Charmaz, 2000) pertaining to undocumented Latino immigrants in the Midwest region of the United States. This information was added to the researcher's field observations, but in other instances, it was added to his personal journal or incorporated into his individual reflections for data analysis.
Data Analysis Procedures

The process of data analysis followed in this inquiry began as data started to emerge from the first interview. Its levels of conceptualization, however, unfolded in a sequence of four analytic steps according to the original design of the research proposal (see Table 1).

Table 1. Levels of Conceptualization in Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Transcribing</td>
<td>Transcription of recorded interview</td>
<td>Engagement with the transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examination of its accuracy, narrative style, and content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Open Coding</td>
<td>The analytic process through which concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions are discovered in data</td>
<td>Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of theoretical memos that summarized emerging information in five analytic domains</td>
<td>Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Axial Coding</td>
<td>The process of relating categories to their subcategories in terms of their properties and dimensions. Denominated &quot;Axial&quot; because it occurs around the axis of a category</td>
<td>Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subcategories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Selective Coding</td>
<td>Through the use of a paradigm, the researcher links all categories to structure and process</td>
<td>Structural links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The process of building the theory</td>
<td>Process links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The process of refining the theory</td>
<td>Substantive theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first step, the researcher transcribed verbatim the first interview held with the participant family. Soon after transcribing the interview, the researcher carefully examined the transcript line by line against its recorded version. Based on this examination, missing parts and errors in the transcript were corrected. After verifying the accuracy of the
transcript, the researcher studied the text in order to familiarize himself with the content and the narrative style of the interview.

In the second step, the researcher broke down the transcript of the recorded interview into discrete parts such as sentences, paragraphs, and observations. Then, he conceptualized all the events, ideas, and incidents within these discrete parts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the process of conceptualizing or naming these multiple parts, which is known as the open coding procedure of grounded theory, the researcher made use of the constant comparative method of analysis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). This method enabled him to conceptualize similar phenomena with the same idea because it required constant comparison of all the multiple parts that were embedded in the fragmented transcription.

After reducing the narrative to conceptual units of analysis, the researcher singled out all concepts or names that seemed conceptually similar in order to group them at a higher level of abstraction. These encompassing units of abstraction were merely named categories according to the traditional methodology of grounded theory.

Subsequently, the researcher meticulously compared concepts to categories in order to identify the properties or attributes of all categories. After obtaining at least one property for each category, the researcher dimensionalized each property along a continuum or dimensional range. Following this analytic procedure, the researcher obtained a specific profile for each of the properties that gave specificity to each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Because of the large quantity of information that emerged in this analysis, the researcher organized all information in a written framework denominated theoretical memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The researcher, for instance, registered in single memos the
empirical data that linked specific categories to the central phenomenon of family support. All properties and dimensional variations of the specific categories were also registered in these single memos. Likewise, along the dimensional variations of the categories, the researcher located the occurrence of family support. Each specific category was classified in each specific memo as causal, intervening, and contextual in order to facilitate the theoretical integration of the next level of analysis denominated axial coding.

The researcher followed the above procedure to analyze all subsequent interviews held with the participant family. As the number of interviews increased, the researcher developed a comprehensive set of theoretical memos on the topic of family support.

In the third step, the researcher started reassembling the conceptual data obtained in the methodological procedure of open coding. The researcher examined, for instance, how all categories crosscut and linked. Thus, some categories were identified as subcategories because they provided information that could specify when, where, why, who, and how a particular category occurred. Moreover, the categories and subcategories were related along the lines of their properties and dimensions to form an integral explanation of the phenomenon under examination (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), in this case the phenomenon of family support.

Moreover, the researcher used the axial coding procedure to link several categories to a central category in a set of specific relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). To organize these relationships, the researcher worked with the paradigm suggested in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) (see Fig 1). Social researchers have frequently used this paradigm to study social phenomena (Creswell & Brown, 1992; Feen-Calligan, 1995; Greder, 2001).
In the paradigm, the researcher systematically organized the data so that structure and process were linked theoretically. Specifically, the researcher identified the structure or set of circumstances that surrounded the phenomenon. He classified, for instance, the set of circumstances that influenced the phenomenon as causal conditions. Likewise, he classified the set of circumstances that influenced participant families as intervening conditions and those situations that prompted a response from the participant families as contextual conditions.

As part of the central phenomenon, the researcher also identified the process or sequence of actions and interactions that emerged among the participant families. The researcher classified, for instance, the strategic responses to the events that arise under specific structural conditions as strategies. Likewise, he classified the interplay of interactions and strategies as outcomes. To facilitate the theoretical integration, the researcher relied on the theoretical memos obtained in the open coding procedure, because
they contained specific information about the categories as causal, intervening, and contextual variables.

In the fourth step, the researcher identified a core category that adequately reflected the theme of the whole inquiry. This core category allowed the researcher to integrate theoretically all the other categories to form an explanatory whole (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). To select this core category, the researcher followed some of the major propositions suggested in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These propositions indicate that

- all the major categories of the inquiry should be related to the core category;
- the core category should appear frequently in the data;
- the explanation that emerges from relating the categories should be logical and consistent;
- the core category should be able to explain variation as well as contradictory cases found in the field.

To facilitate the final integration of the categories, the researcher used the theoretical memos obtained in the open coding procedure, because they contained multiple cues for theoretical integration. It has been suggested, for instance, that reviewing memos in terms of categories and dimensional connections leads to significant theoretical integration (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Design Issues**

In this inquiry, the researcher used four indicators of rigor. These indicators were implemented along the three phases of data collection and the four steps of data analysis as follows: First, the researcher addressed the credibility of the inquiry using a prolonged
engagement with the staff of the participant institutions, the selected participant families, and the local community (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher sustained a prolonged engagement with the personnel of the Catholic church that collaborated on the inquiry. Through volunteer work at the site, he directly assisted the personnel of the church for three years. He played the role of a cross-cultural consultant for the personnel of the church and the role of a marriage and family therapist for the Spanish-speaking members of the congregation.

Likewise, the researcher sustained a prolonged engagement with the personnel of the Methodist church and with Latino members of the congregation. As a participant observer (Becker & Geer, 1982), for instance, the researcher interacted with members of a group of undocumented immigrant families that met at the church every week. This allowed the researcher to simultaneously sustain a prolonged engagement with personnel of the church as well as potential participant families for the inquiry.

Similarly, the researcher sustained a prolonged engagement with the organization that advocated for the legal rights of undocumented immigrants in the Midwest. Through volunteer work, he tried to maintain close contact with staff members of this organization. When the organization sponsored an INS outreach program to assist undocumented immigrants in the community, for example, the researcher participated as a volunteer. The researcher also volunteered in the immigrant rights project of the organization to assist undocumented immigrants through outreach community events.

The researcher also sustained a prolonged engagement of five years with one of the ESL teachers who helped him to contact the Baptist church. This prolonged engagement paved the way to obtain the unconditional collaboration of the church's gatekeepers, who
immediately encouraged members of the congregation to take part in the inquiry. Because members of the congregation deeply trusted the gatekeepers, the researcher started getting information about potential participant families after visiting the congregation for approximately three weeks.

The researcher kept a visible presence in the community as a source of help for immigrant families. He usually assisted undocumented families of Latino origin on a free consultation basis. He provided therapy services for uninsured Spanish-speaking families dealing with acute crises and lack of financial resources.

In phases one of data collection, the researcher held two meetings with potential participant families. It seemed beneficial to sustain an early engagement with these potential participant families, because the pilot study of the inquiry had shown that a prolonged engagement offers participants an opportunity to test their personal biases and examine their distortions.

In phase two of data collection, the researcher started a personal journal to identify the atypical characteristics of the participant families and their special circumstances. After each meeting, for example, the researcher wrote in this personal journal his impressions about the participant family and any information relevant to the phenomenon of family support. The content of this personal journal, which records the researcher’s observations in the field, helped him to support the credibility of the inquiry (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Moreover, the researcher shared this information with a naturalistic inquirer who has research experience with undocumented Latino immigrant families. These consultations occurred every other week, and they constituted the peer-debriefing procedure that examined
the researcher's insights. As part of the debriefing procedure, each meeting with this naturalistic inquirer was audio taped. These records were included in the referential materials for the final audit of the inquiry (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

At the time of this inquiry, the naturalistic inquirer was a 46-year-old Latina immigrant from Central America holding a Ph.D. candidature in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. Her qualitative research experience included 2-years participation on a research team that designed and implemented the initial phase of a 5-years longitudinal study on K-12 multicultural education and the completion of three exploratory research projects on adult education with Latino immigrants in Iowa.

The naturalistic inquirer was bilingual in the Spanish and English languages. She had a good understanding of the Latino culture, and she was familiar with the experiences of undocumented immigrants in the United States. She had also been researching a church-based program for Latino immigrant families in Iowa for three years. In addition, she had worked for two years as a resource counselor for first-generation college students from underrepresented ethnic groups in Iowa State University's McNair Achievement Program.

The researcher of this inquiry also utilized member checks to increase the credibility of the research outcome. This research procedure, which is the most important action that researchers can take in qualitative studies (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), allowed the researcher to obtain participants' feedback to confirm and expand the information gathered in the interviews. As part of the second and third interviews, for instance, the researcher sought participants' feedback in order to confirm the accuracy of the findings. In most cases, participants added information that expanded their views, while in some other cases they
opened additional domains of information that led to additional questioning. After finishing the third interview, the researcher gave participants a written statement that summarized the content of the three interviews. Participants assessed the accuracy of these written statements as part of the research process of member checks.

Second, the researcher assumed that building true statements with general applicability was an impossible task, for all social phenomena are context-bound in many ways. Consequently, the researcher addressed the transferability of the findings through an explicit description of the context in which the inquiry took place (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For instance, the researcher can provide a description of the context to those researchers that might want to discern the fitness of the inquiry for different social milieus. This description would include information from the verbatim transcripts, the personal journal, and public records. In addition, the researcher initially used a purposive or selective sampling technique to maximize the range of information uncovered. This sampling technique enhanced the transferability of the inquiry (Guba, 1981).

Third, the researcher assumed that instability in data gathering arises as different sources of information are discovered. Some of these instabilities might result from the researcher's own insights, for the researcher is the main instrument of data collection. In order to address the dependability of the inquiry, the researcher utilized three method of analysis. The use of these methods of analysis resembled the use of different methods in tandem. Through the method of open coding, for instance, the researcher compared multiple concepts in order to cluster them in several categories. Through the method of axial coding the researcher linked these categories in terms of their relationships. Through selective
coding, the researcher finally linked all categories around a core category in a logical and consistent manner.

After completing the second phase of data collection, the research procedures were examined in an audit trial as part of the dependability criteria (Guba, 1981). An auditor, in this case the student’s major professor, examined the adequacy of the procedures of data collection and the consistency of data analysis. At the time of this inquiry, the auditor was a 54-year-old white male professor in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at Iowa State University, where he has taught advanced studies in qualitative research and has directed the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy. His research background of 30 years included 18 years of research experience in qualitative studies.

Fourth, the researcher addressed the confirmability of the inquiry through theoretical triangulation (Guba, 1981). After finishing the selective coding, for instance, the researcher ran member checks to verify the accuracy of the findings. Following this verification, the researcher undertook the task of comparing the substantive theory of family support to the findings reported in the literature of family support. In addition, the researcher checked every datum and interpretation against the collected data to avoid internal conflicts in the final report of the inquiry.

Finally, a member of the student’s graduate committee performed an external audit for confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and certified that every piece of information extracted from transcripts, theoretical memos, and documents was supported by the reference materials.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Description of the Participants

In this qualitative inquiry, the researcher interviewed nine undocumented immigrant families following the procedure described in the section on data collection. The major characteristics of these families are summarized in the following profile.

All the participant families were undocumented immigrant families who had immigrated to the United States from Central America. These families included not only undocumented adult immigrants, but also children with different migratory statuses. Of the nine families interviewed, for instance, three families had undocumented immigrant children, four families had U.S.-born documented children, and two families had both undocumented immigrant children and U.S.-born documented children.

Within the group of families interviewed, two couples were on the verge of marital separation because of past extramarital affairs, while another family was involved in an intense marital conflict because of adolescent children. None of the families, however, reported attending family therapy or participating in support groups of any kind. All families voluntarily agreed to take part in the inquiry according to the terms of the consent form (see Appendix A).

The numerical composition of the families interviewed ranged from 2 to 5 persons. Within this composition, the number of adult family members usually varied from 1 to 3 adults between 18 and 61 years old; the number of children varied from 1 to 3 children between 2 and 18 years old. The average age of the family members was 21.6 years. Without the children, however, this average increased to 33.7 years.
The group of participant families involved 18 adults who identified themselves as first generation according to the operational definition described in chapter 1. All interviews were conducted in Spanish (see Appendix B), because the participants spoke Spanish as either their first or only language.

Within the group of families, 11 adults had completed between 1 and 3 years of elementary school and 5 adults had completed between 2 and 3 years of high school. In addition, two adults had previously earned a Bachelor's degree. However, only one of them had received his Bachelor's degree in the United States. Similarly, only one individual had received technical training in Central America before migrating to the United States.

The group of participant families included 8 adult women and 10 adult men; all of them except one woman were working full time. These individuals reported working primarily to support their families in the United States and other relatives such as parents, wives, and children in Central America. They had jobs in the service and manual sectors of the economy. For instance, 5 individuals worked in the service sector earning minimum wage, while 11 individuals worked as manual laborers earning slightly higher wages. Three individuals, on the other hand, each held two jobs to make ends meet. Only one individual worked in the technical sector. None of the individuals worked in the managerial or professional sectors of the economy.

The researcher also interviewed three staff members from social institutions that were assisting immigrant Latino families in the Midwest. These members were two European Americans born in the United States and one Latina immigrant born in Central America. All three were fully bilingual (English-Spanish) and their formal education included two Bachelor's degrees and one Divinity degree. As a group, they had a total of 34 years of work
experience with Latino immigrant families in the United States. The average age of the staff members was 50 years.

**Description of Data Analysis**

The researcher tape-recorded each interview held with the participant families and selected staff members. In order to analyze the data, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim within the following 48 hours. Following the procedure of open coding described in the section on data analysis, the researcher identified in these transcripts the building blocks for the substantive theory of family support (see Appendix C). Then he clustered these building blocks into several categories. After this partial analysis, the researcher examined the categories to obtain their main properties and dimensions (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enabling factors</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Single to multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financial resources</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Scarce to abundant</td>
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<td>3. Pressing desire</td>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>High to very high</td>
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<td>4. Image</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Negative to positive</td>
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<td>5. Enactment of support</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Tangible to intangible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Unconditional to conditional</td>
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<td>6. Disabling factors</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Legal to professional</td>
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<td>7. Undocumented Status</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Abandonment to death</td>
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<td>8. Self-support</td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Ideation to reminders</td>
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<td>Modality</td>
<td>Praying to encouragement</td>
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<td>10. Reframing</td>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>Negative to Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Individual to familial</td>
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<td>11. Migratory mobility</td>
<td>Degree</td>
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<td>12. Travel avoidance</td>
<td>Type</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
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<td>13. Illness</td>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>Sudden to progressive</td>
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<td>Course</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Abuse to emotional distress</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>Self reliance to dependency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Fear to strenuous conditions</td>
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<td>15. Interaction</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
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<td>16. Migratory perception</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Sojourner to settler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>Fear to disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Structural disintegration</td>
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<td>Unplanned to planned</td>
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<td>22. Family structure</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Partial to total disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Family losses</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Physical contact to death</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Adoptive families</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Short to very long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Boundaries</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Impermeable to permeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Information processing</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Interpersonal to family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Constraints</td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Family privacy to pride</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Institutional support</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Expressive to instrumental</td>
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<td>29. Utilization</td>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Limited to unlimited</td>
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<td>30. Significant support</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Familial to institutional</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Public to private</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Non-selective to selective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Sporadic to constant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Personal bond to service record</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Perception of support</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Single to multiple</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Family support</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Partial to total</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Internal to external</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Family communication</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Sharing to non sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Physical proximity</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Sporadic to constant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Close to very close</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. Media</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Audio to video</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Moral support</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Encouragement to praising</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Individual to familial</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Cohesion</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Low to high</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Affect exchange</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Low to high</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Contact</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Interpersonal to familial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>Verbal to non verbal</td>
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<td>40. Marital support</td>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>Attentive to active listening</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Expressive to instrumental</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Worthiness to unworthiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Gender</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>High intimacy to low intimacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. Sibling support</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>High trust to moderate trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Same roles to same family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Caring to nurturing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Wife role to mother role</td>
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<td>Type</td>
<td>Immediate to delayed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Physically to emotionally draining</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Decision</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Oldest to youngest</td>
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<tr>
<td>44. Job consequences</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Oldest to youngest</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. Hierarchical support</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Men to women</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Role reversal</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Single to multiple</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Undefined roles</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Oldest child to most knowledgeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Parental subsystem</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Confusion to divided loyalties</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. Discipline</td>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Guiding to caring</td>
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<tr>
<td>50. Support</td>
<td>Means</td>
<td>Narratives to understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Expressive to instrumental</td>
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</table>
Subsequently, the researcher wrote several theoretical memos that summarized the basic information that linked the emergent categories to the central phenomenon of family support (see Appendix D). For instance, each theoretical memo included the empirical data that linked a specific category to the phenomenon of family support. Each theoretical memo also included all properties and dimensional variations of the category under analysis. Moreover, the researcher located the occurrence of the phenomenon of family support in each dimensional range. Finally, in each theoretical memo the researcher classified the specific category under analysis as causal, intervening, or contextual.

The researcher utilized these theoretical memos to group the emergent categories at a higher level of abstraction. All the emergent categories were re-classified into categories and subcategories. For instance, some of the categories were amenable to classification as subcategories because they specified when, where, why, and how a particular category occurred (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Emergent Categories and Subcategories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Enabling factors</td>
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<td>4. Migratory mobility</td>
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<td>5. Family structure</td>
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<td>6. Information processing</td>
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<td>8. Perception of support</td>
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<td>9. Marital support</td>
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<td>10. Hierarchical support</td>
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After re-classification, the researcher followed the procedure of axial coding to find how the emergent categories under analysis crosscut and linked. To do this, the researcher linked all the categories under analysis within an organizational scheme that closely replicates the paradigm of grounded theory (see Fig 2).
The researcher also identified, through selective coding, the core category that adequately reflected the central theme of the inquiry. To achieve this task, the researcher wrote a descriptive story that led him to identify the phenomenon of family support as the core category. This category, which appeared frequently in the data, was selected in part because it had meaningful links to other major categories. Moreover, these links seemed to be logical and consistent during examination. The core category in question not only helped to theoretically integrate all categories to form an explanatory whole, but it also helped to explain variations or negative cases.

The researcher used an organizational scheme to write the story line or the analytical story of family support. This organizational scheme was effectively utilized, to examine the internal balance of the substantive theory of family support. For instance, poorly developed categories led to additional theoretical sampling, while overdeveloped categories led to additional synthesis. This organizational scheme was also utilized to check the internal consistency of the substantive theory.

The organizational scheme illustrates how the presence of the causal conditions (enabling and disabling) lead to the manifestation of the central phenomenon (family support). As part of the central phenomenon, the participants (undocumented immigrants) display behaviors (frequent interactions and strategies) that result in specific outcomes (favorable, unfavorable, and other).

For instance, the presence of four causal conditions in the sending countries (desiring to support relatives, lacking financial resources, holding a positive image of the receiving country, and deciding to leave the sending country) leads potential immigrants to seek financial resources abroad. Because of the presence of disabling factors (denying visas,
lacking professional education, and lacking technical training), potential immigrants engage in undocumented immigration. Although the primary intention for engaging in undocumented immigration is to financially support their own families, potential immigrants paradoxically seek the support of relatives in the United States.

Initially, potential immigrants contact those relatives (frequent interactions) already positioned in the United States with the intention of getting help to relocate (manifestation of the central phenomenon of family support). For instance, they try to elicit the support of relatives in their nuclear and extended families (internal family support). Then they contact close friends and other immigrants (individual support). In this way, they invariably obtain personal loans (tangible and conditional forms of support) to travel to the United States, where they receive housing (tangible and unconditional support) and information about jobs (intangible support). This process leads potential immigrants to the status of undocumented immigrant workers trying to support relatives in the sending countries (outcome).

Thus, each outcome in the organizational scheme can be easily traced following a similar conceptual path, for the scheme is simply a graphic design of the substantive theory of family support (see Fig 2).
Causal Conditions

Enabling Factors
* Desiring to support relatives (e.g., responsibilities, divorces, and losses)
* Lacking financial resources (e.g., low paying jobs and unemployment)
* Holding a positive image of the receiving country
* Deciding to leave the sending country

Disabling Factors
* Denying visas
* Lacking professional education
* Lacking technical training

Central Phenomenon of Family Support

Manifestations
* Eliciting support (e.g., tangible to intangible)
* Maintaining multiple contacts (e.g., verbal to nonverbal)
* Maintaining family communication (e.g., sharing to non-sharing)
* Maintaining hierarchical support

Perceptions
* Experiencing moral support (most important form of support)
* Experiencing affect exchange (determines degree of communication)
* Experiencing physical proximity (e.g., close to very close)
* Perceiving cohesiveness (e.g., low to high)
* Receiving marital support (e.g., expressive and instrumental)
* Receiving siblings support
* Receiving institutional support (e.g., church and school)

Fig 2. Organizational Scheme
Contextual Conditions

- Undocumented status
- Undocumented Jobs
- (abuse, discrimination, and harassment)
- Restrictive mobility

Interactions/Strategies

Frequent Interactions
- Interacting with nuclear-extended family
- Interacting with close friends
- Seeking purposive contact (e.g., smugglers)
- Seeking purposive contact (e.g., church/school)
- Establishing limited contact (e.g., outsiders and other institutions)

Pre-migratory Strategies
- Co-creating significant ties
- Accessing sources of support
- Using personal reminders (e.g., self sacrifice)
- Engaging in group praying
- Engaging in positive reframing

Post-migratory Strategies
- Enacting auto restriction to travel
- Using social ties and seeking jobs
- Practicing reciprocity
- Pairing with Spanish speaking workers (eliciting interpersonal support)
- Seeking family reunification
- Establishing semi-impermeable boundaries
- Seeking exclusive engagement
- Developing personal bonds vs. service records
- Maintaining constant communication
- Using distance-communication means (e.g., phone, video, and tape recordings)
- Engaging in same gender conversations
- Playing multiple roles
- Engaging in collaborative partnerships
- Assuming conciliatory attitudes

Intervening Variables

- Network support (e.g., nuclear-extended family to friends)
- Family needs
- Language barriers (e.g., fear social contact)
- Hierarchical support
- Undefined roles
- Family communication

Outcomes

Unfavorable
- Selecting undocumented immigration
- Engaging in high risk behaviors (e.g., abandonment to death)
- Losing physical contact (e.g., nuclear and extended families)
- Feeling emotional distress at work
- Experiencing different levels of anxiety
- Engaging in structural disintegration (e.g., unplanned to planned)
- Feeling unable to support relatives
- Using limited institutional support

Favorable
- Accessing jobs (e.g., unskilled to semiskilled)
- Using chains of support
- Accessing selective services (e.g., legal, medical, and sanctuary)
- Seeking reliable sources of support (e.g., individual providers)
- Praising relatives
- Valuing family communication
- Maintaining family cohesion
- Developing high trust/intimacy

Other
- Changing migratory perceptions (e.g., from sojourner to settler)
- Selecting restrictive information process
Building Theory on Family Support

The theoretical integration of the findings suggests that three causal conditions of undocumented immigration between Central American countries and the United States are directly linked to the central phenomenon of family support. Undocumented immigrant families invariably associated these three causal conditions with family support.

First, potential immigrant men have usually developed in the sending countries a pressing desire to better support relatives in the nuclear or the extended family. This pressing desire normally emerges from perceived family responsibilities and represents one of the manifestations of the strong emotional commitment to the family group that is prevalent among Central Americans. Similarly, potential immigrant women also develop in the sending countries a pressing desire to support relatives in the nuclear or extended family. However, in these cases the pressing desire emerges not only from perceived family responsibilities but also from other pressing circumstances. For instance, potential immigrant women leave Central American countries when they have divorced or lost their husbands. They also leave Central American countries in order to join husbands or close relatives in the United States. Regardless of gender and the pressing motives that potential immigrants experienced in the sending countries, the urgency to financially support relatives seems to be more prevalent among potential immigrants from the lower socioeconomic stratum of the Central American population.

Second, potential immigrants have frequently struggled in the sending countries to cover the basic needs of relatives, for they have continually lacked the financial resources to support them. For instance, low paying jobs have often impeded potential immigrants from obtaining financial resources to support relatives. High unemployment rates have also
frequently prevented potential immigrants from obtaining steady income to adequately support their families.

Third, potential immigrants have also developed in the sending countries a positive image of the receiving country. The United States as the receiving country represents for potential immigrants the place where they can easily obtain the financial resources to afford a better life for their relatives, to improve their own living conditions, and to become financially independent. Because of this pre-migratory perception, potential immigrants are highly motivated to migrate to the United States. They always expect to obtain financial resources through unskilled and semiskilled jobs in the employment market of the receiving country. This occurs in spite of the migratory status or previous work experience.

In this pre-migratory context, the intervening variable that strongly influences potential immigrants to migrate is precisely the enactment of support within social networks. For initial support, potential immigrants usually rely on members of the nuclear family, the extended family, or close friends already positioned in the United States. This initial support, which could be categorized as conditional support, plays a major role in the process of undocumented immigration, because it becomes a tangible source of support. It is through personal loans, which are later repaid to supportive members of the family or close friends, that potential immigrants are able to cover their travel expenses to the United States. Through this conditional and tangible support, moreover, these immigrants are able to obtain the material resources to cover their basic needs once they are in the United States.

Nevertheless, the process of undocumented immigration between Central American countries and the United States seems to be driven above all by the pressing needs of the nuclear family. Indeed, it seems that family needs generally compel potential Central
American immigrants to seek external sources abroad. In addition, other causes such as political motives, conflicts within the nuclear family, and family reunification have also compelled Central Americans to relocate to the United States.

Once potential immigrants have reached a personal decision to leave Central America, they start confronting the disabling factors that directly restrict their migratory mobility and that determine the pattern of undocumented immigration to the United States. For instance, large numbers of potential immigrants seeking work in the United States normally do not qualify to obtain a work visa for entering the country. Because they have not received any technical training or professional education, they are unable to secure a visa to work in the United States. Even potential immigrants with technical training or a professional background are normally excluded from entering the United States. They do not usually meet, for example, criteria to work in sectors of the economy that have resorted to the hiring of foreign workers in order to meet market demands.

Because potential immigrants are unable to obtain a work visa to enter the United States, they usually try to obtain a tourist visa to be admitted into the country. This represents a better choice than facing the ordeals of undocumented travel across countries. However, large numbers of potential immigrants who want to work in the United States are also prevented from obtaining tourist visas for entering the country as visitors because they cannot show evidence of financial accountability to support themselves while visiting the host country. Most of these potential immigrants cannot fulfill the consular requirements that are considered hard evidence of financial accountability for granting a tourist visa, such as bank accounts, round trip airplane tickets, and property deeds.
Because of these disabling factors, large numbers of potential immigrants are compelled to travel without visas. They resort to the status of undocumented immigrants because they cannot overcome the legal obstacles that impede their migratory mobility or the restrictions that curtail the influx of immigrant workers. However, undocumented immigrants soon become easy prey while traveling to their final destinations, especially when they try to cross the borders between countries.

At the U.S.-Mexican border, undocumented immigrants have to hire a knowledgeable smuggler or “coyote” to cross the border, for these immigrants lack the knowledge to outwit the constant presence of the border patrol. They usually venture across the border hoping only to finish the journey alive, for smugglers have often abandoned undocumented immigrants in the desert. Dozens have died in this way because the weather conditions of the desert offer a very slim chance of survival. Undocumented immigrants have also been victimized because of their precarious circumstances. For instance, smugglers have often assaulted them with total impunity while Rancheros have apprehended them for trespassing. In this context, undocumented immigrant status becomes the main frame of reference for immigrants’ perceptual experiences.

In this extraordinary journey, undocumented immigrants resort to activating internal sources of support that could encourage them to endure the ordeals of undocumented migration. While confronting their migratory ordeals, for instance, they simply remind themselves that they are undergoing a “self-sacrifice” driven by the desire to afford a better life for their relatives. Reminders of this kind seem to function as a source of self-support that constantly motivates immigrants to face the ordeals of undocumented migration.
On the other hand, immigrants also resort to activating external sources of support that encourage them to face the multiple risks involved in reaching their final destinations as undocumented immigrants. While traveling under treacherous conditions, for instance, they resort to praying in small groups, imploring God for protection and guidance. Group events of this nature seem to function as sources of personal support that often motivate undocumented immigrants to face migratory risks.

Overall, the disabling factors that supposedly impede the migratory mobility of potential immigrants have set in motion a permanent wave of undocumented immigration to the United States. This wave has obviously ignored the regulatory norms of migration between countries. Unfortunately, the wave of undocumented immigration is associated with forms of individual mobility that can be considered high-risk. Dozens of immigrants have died while engaging in undocumented traveling to their final destinations.

Nonetheless, the tragic consequences of undocumented immigration have failed to restrain the migratory mobility between Central American countries and the United States. On the contrary, this mobility has continued because immigrants have successfully secured different sources of support that encourage them to endure the ordeals of undocumented immigration. Through their attitudinal responses, for instance, undocumented immigrants continually reframe their migratory ordeals as meaningful events in their lives, for they are seeking above all to afford a better life for their families. Thus, the wave of undocumented immigration seems to have been sustained because the welfare of families is paramount for undocumented immigrants.

Once in the United States, undocumented immigrants are normally compelled to remain inside the country in order to avoid the burdensome ordeals of covertly re-crossing
the border. Obviously, the existence of migratory constraints normally leads undocumented immigrants to avoid any traveling to their home countries. They fear, for instance, the risks associated with crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. As mentioned before, these risks usually range from being deported by the immigration officers of the border patrol to being abandoned in the desert by smugglers. Further, for those undocumented immigrants who have already managed to bring their close relatives to the United States, re-crossing the border represents a potential risk that could lead to the disintegration of the nuclear family. They could simply fail to reenter the United States after several attempts or they could be apprehended and deported while trying to cross the border.

It seems that travel avoidance, which constitutes a response to the gamut of potential risks associated with undocumented traveling, involves a deliberate restriction on travel to Central America. Because undocumented immigrants abide by this restriction, after their arrival in the United States they do not usually go back to their home countries. If they are unable to bring relatives to the United States, they usually lose physical contact with members of the nuclear and extended families for several years.

For undocumented immigrants, the sudden illness of a close relative represents a unique personal dilemma, because their strong family values prescribe that they must support close relatives in times of crisis. However, it is usually the trajectory of the ailment, which normally oscillates between improvement and deterioration, which determines their travel decisions. In most cases, undocumented immigrants have to stay in the United States, for their close relatives have become financially dependent on their periodic remittances.

Similarly, the sudden death of a close relative represents an unparalleled dilemma for undocumented immigrants. They always feel obligated to be present in their home countries
to mourn their relative's death. As family members, they also feel obligated to be present in their home countries to emotionally support other family members. However, undocumented immigrants usually have to mourn family losses in the United States, for they cannot afford to leave their only source of income or to risk travel between the United States and Central America.

Overall, it seems that the contextual circumstances that strongly constrain the mobility of undocumented immigrants lead to the behavioral strategy of an auto-restriction on travel. This specific strategy, in turn, causes undocumented immigrants to start looking at themselves as permanent settlers instead of sojourners, for they necessarily co-create in the United States significant relationships with other people over the years.

Upon arrival in the United States, undocumented immigrants are compelled to work within days. They urgently seek jobs to obtain the financial resources to start supporting close relatives in Central America. This process normally comprises two sequential steps that involve other people. In the first step, potential undocumented immigrants co-create significant ties with relatives, friends, and other potential immigrants in Central America. In the second step, they utilize these ties as sources of direct support to find jobs in the United States.

It appears that immediate access to sources of personal support results from the significant ties that immigrants have progressively built through frequent and interpersonal interactions with other people. Although most of these ties have been co-created in their home countries, it is in the United States where these ties become instrumental for undocumented immigrants. In fact, undocumented immigrants can utilize sources of instrumental support in the United States because they have developed familial and
friendship ties in their home countries. These ties are pivotal in the first months of adjustment, especially among undocumented rural immigrants who rely more on cooperative forms of support than anything else. In addition, these ties are indispensable for those undocumented immigrants who are in need of immediate support upon arrival.

Through relatives and close friends already positioned in the United States, undocumented immigrants usually have access to unskilled and semiskilled jobs in the U.S. employment market. Although they also secure jobs through Latino acquaintances and sporadic contacts with countrymen, their relatives and close friends remain the primary source of support in finding jobs. Although many undocumented immigrants find jobs within days, thanks to the direct support of other immigrants, they are not expected to reward in any form these casual associates.

The frequent interactions among undocumented immigrants seem to ensure forms of personal support that are usually sustained through the practice of reciprocity. Because of regular acts of reciprocity, undocumented immigrants maintain in motion chains of personal support. They normally propel these chains through the behavioral and attitudinal manifestations of personal gratitude. For instance, undocumented immigrants feel obligated to support other undocumented immigrants out of personal gratitude for the support they have received.

However, the prevailing notion among undocumented immigrants is that they constitute an easy target for exploitation in the employment market of the United States. The underlying rationale for this perception rests on the fact that an undocumented immigrant cannot legally work in the United States; consequently, most of them feel that their legal rights can be violated with total impunity. Regardless of this perception, it seems
that the prevalent patterns of work abuse involve interpersonal interactions that reflect the interplay of cultural, economic, educational, legal, and psychological variables.

For instance, undocumented immigrant workers endure abuses that range from extenuating labor conditions to unpaid wages. As undocumented workers, they usually abstain from claiming their legal rights; they fear that disagreements with employers and supervisors might lead to deterioration of work conditions or dismissal. As undocumented immigrants, they are also afraid to denounce these abuses to the authorities. They fear that the authorities could immediately deport them, for undocumented immigrants are keenly aware of the consequences of working with false documentation. Although these abuses could be interpreted as racial discrimination, from the perspective of recently arrived undocumented immigrants these abuses occur because of their undocumented status. Nevertheless, after some years in the country, undocumented immigrants integrate racial discrimination into their frames of reference.

In many instances, undocumented immigrant workers initially endure extraordinary ordeals at work because they urgently need the money to support themselves and to begin supporting relatives in the sending country. In other instances, they desperately need work references to start looking for other jobs elsewhere, although their status as undocumented immigrant workers drastically limits their opportunities for employment.

At the work sites, native English-speaking workers often target undocumented immigrant workers as easy prey for harassment and work abuse. This occurs because most undocumented immigrant workers lack the skills to communicate in English. For instance, undocumented immigrant workers endure situations that range from mockery to more demanding work assignments because of their poor English comprehension. While their
English-speaking counterparts are often given preferential treatment, undocumented immigrants have to endure these work ordeals. Lack of documentation to work elsewhere keeps undocumented workers stuck in their jobs.

When there are Spanish-speaking workers at the work site, undocumented immigrants feel at ease with them, especially if they have to work together. Undocumented immigrant workers strategically pair with Spanish-speaking workers, seeking to elicit forms of interpersonal support through acts of reciprocity. In those sites in which English is the predominant work language, however, undocumented immigrant workers often feel completely inadequate. The manifestations of this experience usually go from shame to utter confusion. Without any knowledge or with very limited knowledge of the English language, undocumented immigrant workers feel incapable of responding effectively to their English-speaking coworkers.

At their work sites, undocumented immigrant workers often experience different levels of emotional distress while accomplishing their work duties. This happens because they have to make an extraordinary effort to understand instructions in English. The level of emotional distress could be more intense in those cases in which workers periodically receive new instructions because the nature of the job demands constant changes.

Undocumented immigrants cannot easily leave their jobs because they rapidly become financially dependent on their salaries to support close relatives in their home countries. When they start comparing the economical advantages of staying on the job versus the disadvantages of having to look for another job as undocumented workers, they simply prefer to stay. Thus, they have to endure work ordeals out of necessity.
Likewise, undocumented immigrants logically choose to stay in the United States when they start comparing their current salaries to their former salaries received in Central America. Maintaining an income in American dollars means more financial capacity to support relatives in the home countries. The convertibility of the American dollar to the various Central American currencies is usually high.

The status of “undocumented” represents a constant source of anxiety for undocumented immigrant workers and their relatives. Different levels of anxiety, for instance, can be found among undocumented immigrants. This anxiety becomes more visible when the INS implements programs to curb the presence of undocumented immigrant workers at work sites or when the media announces the detention of undocumented immigrants elsewhere. Because undocumented immigrants constantly have to face these contextual conditions, they live under restrictive conditions that drastically diminish their freedom.

In contrast, the term of “undocumented immigrant family” commonly implies that the nuclear family has gone through the process of structural disintegration. This process is regularly set in motion when members of the nuclear family travel individually to the United States. The process regularly varies between planned to unplanned disintegration of the nuclear family, because of the personal plans of those family members who have decided to leave the nuclear family. In addition, other factors such as political turmoil, legal constraints, and personal wealth exert considerable influence on the development of this process of family disintegration.

As more relatives venture to follow the first immigrant member of the nuclear family, the family structure experiences a disintegration that typically varies from partial to total
structural disintegration. Because the task of reintegrating all members of the nuclear family normally takes several years, the nuclear family in many instances remains partially disintegrated. Thus, the nuclear family that has engaged in undocumented immigration runs the risk of losing its pre-migratory family structure forever.

The structural disintegration that occurs in the nuclear family unquestionably leads undocumented immigrants to experience the loss of family members. Because of the multiple obstacles that impede the mobility of undocumented immigrants, they are usually compelled to leave behind close family members. They initially lose physical contact with relatives such as parents, spouses, and their own children. Later, they start losing family members because of the deaths that normally occur in the nuclear or extended family over the years.

Conversely, members of the nuclear family who were left behind, such as small children and preadolescents, usually re-experience family losses when the nuclear family reunites in the United States years later. This is especially the case, for instance, with those children who have already established paternal relationships with other relatives in the extended family such as grandparents, aunts, and married siblings. The re-experience of family losses normally occurs because undocumented immigrant parents usually make extraordinary efforts to bring their children to the United States. The adoptive family logically experiences a partial structural disintegration when the adopted family members leave the home country.

Once reunited in the United States, the undocumented immigrant family habitually keeps semi-impermeable boundaries with the outside world. For instance, family members usually have limited contact with outsiders. Family members are highly aware that the status of undocumented immigrant involves a potential disintegration of the reunited family.
because members of the family can be apprehended and deported to Central America at any
time.

Because a strong sense of family privacy prevails within the immigrant family,
members of the family usually refrain from sharing information with outsiders. Family
members usually limit themselves to sharing information about the family with members of
the nuclear family and occasionally with some members of the extended family in the home
country. Moreover, family members normally do not seek help from outsiders because of the
cultural script of family pride. This script prescribes that family members should process and
resolve their problems within the nuclear family.

The undocumented immigrant family normally confronts strong language barriers
while adjusting to the United States. These language barriers seem to induce in some family
members a moderate fear of social contact. This occurs when these family members cannot
figure out the motives behind verbal requests from strangers. This experience has the
potential to disrupt their social lives, for these family members often feel incapable of
responding to social inquiries or initiating social contact with strangers. Without any
knowledge of the English language, these family members also feel incapable of adequately
responding to the demands of everyday life. For instance, they feel unable to run basic
errands, such as shopping for groceries, or taking care of important family events, such as
attending school meetings and making medical appointments.

The enactment of semi-impermeable boundaries with the outside world diminishes
the external support that undocumented immigrant families could receive from social
institutions in the United States. Undocumented immigrant families usually have limited
access to external sources of institutional support. This also occurs because of the interplay of causal conditions, contextual variables, and family interactions.

As a social institution, the church represents for most undocumented immigrant families the safest institutional source of external support in the United States. Besides attending the church to fulfill their spiritual needs, undocumented immigrant families obtain from the church tangible support, which usually varies from clothing to food items. The church also offers social programs designed specifically for undocumented immigrants. Through these social programs, undocumented immigrant families file petitions to adjust their migratory status in the United States, access medical services for low-income families provided especially to women and small children, and obtain sanctuary in case they need immediate protection.

Public schools represent the second institutional source of external support that is available to undocumented immigrant families with small children, although school personnel usually limit themselves to assisting only immigrant families who have children enrolled in the educational system. For instance, school personnel often make an effort to support undocumented immigrant families in monitoring their children's academic progress.

Because most undocumented immigrant families are not aware of their legal rights and the procedures to follow in case of being detained by the INS, they usually do not contact the institutions that could legally assist them. Obviously, undocumented immigrant families distrust officers of the local government, especially if they represent the police enforcement in the community. Undocumented immigrant families also seem to have a limited knowledge of community programs, because they seldom utilize the services of social institutions. This
limited access to institutional sources of external support logically affects how these families contact providers.

Undocumented immigrant families strategically contact providers through a very selective process of engagement. In this process, family members normally seek bilingual providers who can help them to resolve their problems. Family members usually engage providers individually, because they prefer the formation of personal bonds with providers instead of establishing service records with institutions. Once a trustworthy relationship has been formed between a family member and a provider, the undocumented immigrant family informally incorporates the provider as part of the family resources. Thus, this provider is considered a reliable source of external support that family members can utilize or recommend to other undocumented immigrant families.

In this context, undocumented immigrant families assume that most acts of support result directly from the ongoing relationships among the interacting parts. Because undocumented immigrant families often engage in reciprocal behaviors, these families assume that acts of support that involve tangible or intangible means will likely result in more reciprocal behaviors. They make an important distinction, however, between a form of partial support and a form of total support. According to this categorical distinction, for instance, a form of total support occurs when there is a personal understanding of the circumstances that surround the undocumented immigrant family in need of support. Without this comprehension, the act of supporting an undocumented immigrant family represents only a form of partial support, regardless of the means involved.

In addition, undocumented immigrant families normally perceive that family support occurs when family members continually share their needs, concerns, and problems with one
another. Because of this familial perception, undocumented immigrant families consider that constant communication among family members is paramount, for constant communication implies a source of perceived support that motivates undocumented immigrants to keep going in odd circumstances. In fact, undocumented immigrant families feel that family members should frequently contact each other to exchange information about themselves and their working conditions in the United States.

Undocumented immigrant families perceive that verbal communication is the vehicle that carries most of the expressions of family support in the nuclear family, although close family contact, which is characterized as visual and physical contact between family members, is highly valued as a vehicle of support. Undocumented family members, for instance, extensively use distance-communication means to contact close relatives in the home countries. They often send messages to spouses, children, and other relatives via videotapes, audio recordings, and phone calls.

It is through verbal communication, which in the case of disintegrated families takes place mostly through international phone calls, that undocumented family members convey messages of moral support. This type of support is considered the most important form of support among undocumented immigrant families. Moral support dictates that family members should encourage each other to behave according to their family values. The behavioral implementation of these values seems to function as a form of personal support for family members. These behaviors vary from praising undocumented immigrant parental figures for their good work performance in the United States to praising adolescent children for correctly disciplining their younger siblings in Central America.
Undocumented immigrant families consider, however, that the quality of family communication is given in terms of the affect that family members effectively exchange among themselves. Simultaneously, they perceive that the exchange of affect, which varies between low and high, normally determines the degree of family cohesion in the nuclear family. In this regard, some undocumented immigrants consider that the nuclear family constitutes the source of affect that could help individuals to have a stable life and stimulate their emotional growth.

Because undocumented immigrant families perceive family support in highly cohesive families, they try to maintain cohesive family structures. Undocumented immigrant families, for instance, favor the physical proximity of close relatives because physical proximity is perceived as a direct source of support. Undocumented immigrant families also favor forms of direct communication that could promote highly cohesive families. Some undocumented immigrant families believe that family conversations could promote a strong spiritual union of the nuclear family that could transcend the distance between the sending countries and the receiving country.

The notion of having cohesive families indirectly supports undocumented immigrants in the United States. When they sense a high degree of family cohesion, they feel encouraged to endure their migratory ordeals. They also find indirect support in their families because they are able to link the well-being of their families to their personal ordeals as undocumented immigrant workers. They positively reframe their personal ordeals and find these reframings meaningful because of their families’ welfare. Among some undocumented immigrants, to care for the family is to care for oneself, for the satisfaction of caring for the family is a source of individual well-being.
Undocumented immigrants indirectly resort to their families while facing adverse circumstances in the United States. For instance, when they feel sad or discouraged, undocumented immigrants remind themselves that someday they will see their close relatives. These reminders or positive ideation have a powerful effect on their daily struggles, for these cognitive strategies are at the core of the practice of self-support.

The practice of marital support includes specific attitudinal patterns, because undocumented immigrant women use distinctive behaviors to deal with their predicaments in the United States. Undocumented immigrant wives who are in need of marital support initially expect their husbands to assume an attitude of personal "understanding." This understanding implies that husbands have to develop a thoughtful attitude toward their wives. This has to be combined with active listening, since the wives frequently feel isolated in the new milieu.

In this context, undocumented immigrant wives find that receiving verbal encouragement from their husbands plays a pivotal role in their lives, for this encouragement can considerably ameliorate their problems. In addition to marital encouragement, they also expect their husbands to assume an attitude of caring regarding their personal needs as immigrant wives, immigrant mothers, and undocumented immigrant workers.

Undocumented immigrant women also expect to receive instrumental support from their husbands in order to keep playing their roles of wives and mothers in the receiving country. However, in many instances the husbands do not know how to respond to this situation, for they are confused about the emergent needs of their wives. Thus, undocumented immigrant women rely on talking more frequently about their needs to other women in their extended families or to close female friends at work. In some instances, they also do so
because they feel more comfortable talking to women than to men. This might be due to the fact that gender differences play a significant role in their lives. Undocumented immigrant women feel more supported by other immigrant women, especially if the other women are members of their nuclear or extended families or have been playing the roles of mothers, daughters, or sisters.

Undocumented immigrant wives seem to get frequent support from their female siblings in the United States. This support normally involves a high degree of personal intimacy, and it is characterized by a high degree of trust. In this particular form of support, undocumented immigrant women do not normally keep personal secrets while supporting each other. They perceive that receiving support from an older female sibling represents not only an act of personal care, but also a gesture of nurture. This perception usually promotes a sense of peace among immigrant women, which is considerably enhanced when their older siblings carefully listen to their tales of marital discord and familial conflict. A very significant source of support among immigrant women comes from their biological mothers, for after several years of family separation, mothers try to reconnect with their daughters when they reunite in the United States.

When undocumented immigrant women initially discontinue their usual pattern of communication with their families, especially with significant female figures, they start complaining about lack of meaning in their lives or show symptoms of depression. This situation is exacerbated when communication with their own adolescent children starts to diminish because of their dissimilar proficiency in English. Undocumented immigrant women usually endure these circumstances by positively reframing their lives in terms of the roles of mothers and wives. This reframing often brings some meaning to their lives.
Undocumented immigrant women who find themselves in need of assistance in the United States usually elicit more support from the extended family than from their male counterparts. This is particularly the case with undocumented immigrant women who frequently seek the support of other women in the extended family. This usually happens when they divorce their husbands or they have to leave the house because of marital conflicts. It seems that sibling support, along with the breach of trust in the marital subsystem, are the decisive factors among undocumented immigrant women seeking marital separations.Sibling support, for instance, guarantees in many instances the survival of single mothers with small children because it makes viable alternative family structures composed only of single mothers and small children.

The practice of marital support is often hindered because of the scarce financial resources of undocumented immigrant families. With limited financial resources, any poor financial decision taken by either spouse implies a potential family conflict that could eventually undermine the practice of marital support. To deal with this financial limitation, undocumented immigrant women strategically rely on conservative measures to save money. For instance, in order to care for a family with scarce financial resources, undocumented immigrant women frequently play multiple roles such as workers, baby sitters, and students. These situations usually compel immigrant women rather than immigrant men to engage in collaborative partnerships with siblings, members of the extended family, and close friends.

Unfortunately, the contextual working conditions surrounding undocumented immigrants often lead immigrant workers, irrespective of gender, to neglect their partners. They often feel emotionally drained and physically exhausted because of demanding jobs. Immigrant men usually explode at home, causing domestic disputes with partners or family
members, for they have often reached their limits at work. Losing marital support because of internal disputes seems to have a very negative impact on both spouses, for undocumented immigrants intimately link support to individual self-esteem. Lack of support is normally interpreted in immigrant dyads as lack of personal worth. This is especially the case for young couples who perceive that a spouse represents a direct source of encouragement. To deal with these circumstances, some immigrant women strategically resort to utilizing conciliatory attitudes with their husbands to avoid conflicts; moreover, they carefully verbalize any marital deterioration in conciliatory terms.

Because undocumented immigrant families are organized according to a structural hierarchy, the oldest child usually assumes a supportive role, regardless of gender. This usually happens when a spouse is unavailable in the marital dyad. The oldest child very often takes a significant role in the immigrant family as parental figure and main supporter. This substitution varies from short to long periods depending on the parents' work schedules, English skills, and role boundaries. In some instances, a role reversal in favor of the oldest child takes place, for there is an urgency to deal with daily family matters such as the school system, which seems to represent an insurmountable obstacle for the parents because of their limited knowledge of the English language.

If family reunification takes place after several years of family separation, undocumented immigrant parents usually struggle to enact clear roles within the families. This is particularly the case with parents who have to deal with adolescent children, for these children usually hold different loyalties after years of family separation. Undefined family roles often lead parental figures into conflicting practices of family support. Parental subsystems initially strive to function as caring-guiding subsystems, because their parental
competencies diminish considerably in the United States. For instance, undocumented immigrant parents often have difficulties providing effective guidance for their children in the receiving country. To face such limitations, parents often enact hierarchical roles within the family in order to discipline their adolescent children. They also frequently rely on personal narratives of family failures to encourage their children to avoid trouble and to do their best in school. In addition, personal understanding becomes a preferred strategy for dealing with oppositional adolescents in the family. This strategy is commonly used by significant female figures in the nuclear and extended families. These strategies are especially important during the first years of immigration, since young undocumented immigrants perceive families as their main source of guidance. Indeed, young undocumented immigrants try to maintain close communication with their families, especially during conflictive times. Moreover, perceived family support makes a substantial difference for young undocumented immigrants when dealing with peer pressure, social isolation, and drug abuse.

Altogether, the interconnected statements about family support presented above integrate the major findings of the inquiry. An additional presentation of these findings, which complements the preliminary construction of the substantive theory of family support, can be found in the following chapter under the subheading, Theoretical Propositions.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In this qualitative inquiry, the final integration of findings led to the construction of the substantive theory of family support that is presented at length in chapter 4. This theory was specifically grounded in the life experiences of several undocumented immigrant families that were living in the United States at the time of the inquiry.

To build the grounded theory, the researcher interviewed nine undocumented Central American immigrant families in three consecutive phases. This process, which is described in detail in chapter 3, comprised approximately 12 months of fieldwork. In addition to interviewing these immigrant families, the researcher also interviewed three staff members from social institutions that were assisting immigrant Latino families in the Midwest region of the United States.

The researcher analyzed the collected data following the procedures of open, axial, and selective coding of the systematic design of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). This multiple coding facilitated the theoretical integration of the findings, which led to the construction of the theory of family support. The theory is divided into interconnected statements that address the phenomenon of family support at different levels. While the statements seem to offer dissimilar points of view, their separate contents complement each other relatively well. Moreover, as part of the theoretical integration process, the major concepts of the constructed theory were linked within an organizational scheme (see Fig 2). Thus, the concepts of the constructed theory can be easily connected to one another, for this organizational scheme is basically a graphic design of the theory.
Theoretical Propositions

The purpose of developing a set of theoretical propositions and sub-propositions from the theory of family support was three-fold: (1) to identify the relationships that occur among the main concepts of the theory, since building theory within the framework of grounded theory requires the identification of such relationships; (2) to formulate the theoretical propositions that could help the researcher to test, refine, and expand the theory through further research; and (3) to summarize the theory in a few theoretical propositions that can give the reader an overview of the theoretical findings.

According to this three-fold purpose, the following 20 propositions and 17 sub-propositions were developed from the substantive theory of family support that is presented at length in chapter 4.

1.0.0 The causal conditions that precede the migration of Central American immigrants to the receiving country (e.g., the United States) are directly linked to the social phenomenon of family support.

1.1.0. In the sending countries, potential immigrants are more likely to engage in undocumented immigration if (a) they have developed a pressing desire to support relatives; (b) they have experienced lack of financial resources to support others; (c) they have formed a positive image of the receiving country as a place where they can obtain financial resources; and (d) they have decided to leave the sending countries.

2.0.0. Potential immigrants are more likely to engage in undocumented immigration if they have successfully elicited the support (e.g., tangible and conditional) of family members (e.g., nuclear-extended), friends (e.g., close-distant), or other immigrants (e.g., documented-undocumented) in the receiving country.
3.0.0. In the sending countries, the pressing needs (e.g., financial and material) of the families (e.g., nuclear-extended) represent the decisive factor or intervening variable that compels potential immigrants to engage in undocumented immigration.

4.0.0. Undocumented immigrants closely link their personal ordeals to the well-being of their families (e.g., nuclear-extended) in the sending countries.

5.0.0. Undocumented immigrants usually access two major sources of support (e.g., internal and external) while traveling to the receiving country.

5.1.0. Undocumented immigrants use personal reminders in the form of positive ideation (e.g., internal source vs. external source) while traveling under difficult circumstances.

5.2.0. Undocumented immigrants use group prayers to support each other (e.g., external source vs. internal source) while facing treacherous circumstances.

6.0.0. Undocumented immigrants who have developed and maintained personal ties with relatives, friends, or countrymen are more likely to receive instrumental support upon arrival in the receiving country than undocumented immigrants who have not developed or maintained any personal ties with relatives, friends, or countrymen.

7.0.0. Undocumented immigrants who have co-created significant relationships in the receiving country are more likely to shift their migratory perceptions (e.g., from sojourners to settlers) than undocumented immigrants who have not co-created significant relationships with others in the receiving country.

8.0.0. Undocumented immigrants normally sustain forms of interpersonal support through regular acts of interpersonal reciprocity.
8.0.1. Undocumented immigrants feel obligated to support other undocumented immigrants out of personal gratitude for support received.

8.0.2. Undocumented immigrants who actively seek to work with Spanish-speaking co-workers try to elicit interpersonal forms of support through acts of reciprocity.

9.0.0. Undocumented immigrants working under difficult circumstances endure diverse work ordeals because they are likely supporting close relatives in the sending countries.

10.0. Undocumented immigrant families who are facing strong language barriers in the receiving country are likely experiencing a disruption of the patterns of family support.

11.0. Family members who engage in undocumented immigration to support relatives simultaneously engage the nuclear family in a process (e.g., planned or unplanned) of structural disintegration (e.g., partial to total).

11.1. Undocumented immigrant families who are in the process of structural disintegration might eventually experience family losses (e.g., temporal to definitive).

11.2. Extended families who have “adopted” relatives from nuclear families that have engaged in undocumented immigration would likely suffer a partial form of family disintegration.

12.0. Undocumented immigrant families keep semi-impermeable boundaries if they:

(a) have a high degree of family privacy or (b) a high sense of family pride.

12.1. Undocumented immigrant families who maintain semi-impermeable boundaries in the receiving country have limited access to external sources of institutional support.
13.0. Undocumented immigrant families find that religious institutions represent the main source of institutional support in the receiving country.

13.1. Undocumented immigrant families obtain though religious institutions instrumental support such as material assistance, legal advice, and medical attention.

14.0. Undocumented immigrant families frequently utilize a selective process of engagement while seeking support from social institutions.

14.1. Undocumented immigrant families frequently engage bilingual providers (English-Spanish) who can help them to resolve their problems.

14.2. Undocumented immigrant families in need of institutional support favor the formation of personal bonds with providers instead of the establishment of service records with institutions.

15.0. Undocumented immigrant families perceive that most acts of support occur within ongoing relationships.

15.1. Among undocumented immigrant families, the manifestation of family support occurs when family members share their concerns, needs, and personal problems with one another.

16.0. Undocumented immigrant families consider moral support to represent the most important form of support.

17.0. Undocumented immigrant families perceive that constant communication among family members represents a solid source of family support.

17.1. Undocumented immigrant families consider verbal communication to be the vehicle that carries most expressions of family support.
17.2. Undocumented immigrant families consider verbal communication among family members to represent the main resource for promoting family cohesion.

17.3. Undocumented immigrant families frequently utilize distance-communication means (e.g., telephone, videotapes, and audiotapes) to convey messages of moral support to family members.

17.4. Undocumented immigrant families consider the quality of family communication to be measurable in terms of the affect that family members can exchange among themselves.

18.0. Undocumented immigrant families perceive that exchange of affect (e.g., low or high) among the family members determines the degree of family cohesion.

18.1. Undocumented immigrant families presuppose that highly cohesive families are equally supportive families.

19.0. Undocumented immigrant families presuppose that the physical proximity of family members indicates the degree of cohesion in the family.

20.0. The knowledge of having a cohesive family represents a source of personal support for most undocumented immigrants.

**Limitations**

The inquiry has three limitations that deserve attention, because they influenced the construction of the theory of family support. These limitations are linked to the research methods of the inquiry, the selection of the participant families, and the initial unit of analysis.

First, while assisting the researcher to analyze the collected data, the methods of grounded theory progressively transformed the narratives of the participant families into
theoretical representations. The methods of analysis of the systematic approach (open, axial, and selective coding), for instance, enabled the researcher to perform a sequential analysis of the collected data at different levels of abstraction. But these methods progressively transformed the narratives of the participant families into conceptual units as the analysis progressed. Transforming the collected data into conceptual units significantly reduced the richness of the narratives, which vividly represented the "presence" of the participant immigrant families in the inquiry. This outcome constitutes a serious limitation because the same methods that led to the construction of the substantive theory of family support also diminished the "presence" of the participant immigrant families in the final integration of the collected data.

Although some researchers might consider that the constructed theory of family support should have included quotations, other researchers might consider that theory construction precluded the use of quotations altogether. While the former could argue that quotations allow participant families to have an active voice in the theory, the latter could argue that participants' voices are embedded in the multiple concepts of the constructed theory. After pondering these arguments, the researcher concluded that the methods of analysis of the systematic design, which directly guided this inquiry, offered a direct answer to this dilemma.

Unlike other designs of grounded theory, the systemic design explicitly utilizes a sequential analysis of the collected data. This analysis aims at transforming the text into conceptual units at different levels of abstraction, which eventually leads to a conceptual description of the phenomenon studied. Because of this process, the researcher acknowledged that theory construction, within the system design, basically occurred at a
conceptual level. Thus, he utilized conceptual descriptions rather than quotations or descriptive narratives in the construction of the theory. However, in the future the researcher intends to use alternative methods of data analysis that could facilitate the inclusion of quotations without violating the basic principles of the research design utilized.

Second, the selection of the participant families limited the scope of the inquiry while simultaneously reflecting the presence of the undocumented immigrant families in the area of study. The researcher intended to select an adequate sample of Central American families, but the geographic distribution of these families reduced the representation of the sample considerably. In spite of the researcher’s efforts to obtain a representative sample, most of the recruited families were from Guatemala and El Salvador. Only a handful of other Central American families were found in the area of study, and these families were documented. Even though this might represent a research limitation, the sample obtained merely underscores the fact that Central American families have settled unevenly in different regions of the country.

Although the same research design could be used to select a sample of families in different regions of the United States, the settlement pattern of Central American families would likely influence the composition of the sample obtained. Nevertheless, Salvadorans and Guatemalans would likely be more represented in the sample, because they constitute the two largest groups of undocumented Central American immigrants in the United States.

Third, the composition of the participant families seriously limited the construction of the substantive theory of family support, while expanding considerably the sources of information. Following the original research design, the researcher focused exclusively on interviewing undocumented Central American immigrant families, because they had been
previously identified as the unit of analysis. However, after conducting interviews with a few Central American families, the researcher found that the proposed unit of analysis did not embrace the composition of the participant families found in the field. Moreover, most of the families did not fit the criteria of an intact nuclear family, although they emphatically considered themselves families.

For instance, the researcher found that most of the families were partially disintegrated families. Among them were (a) families in which both parents were living with some of their children in the receiving country, but the rest of the children were living with relatives in the sending country; (b) families in which one parent was living with some of the children in the receiving country, but the other parent was living with the rest of the children in the sending country; (c) families in which one parent was living in the receiving country, but the rest of the family was living in the sending country; (d) families that were living in the receiving country, but had family members who had been deported and were living in the sending country.

In addition to these families, the researcher also found disintegrated families. These included (a) divorced women living with their children in the receiving country; and (b) remarried parents living with their new families in the receiving country, but with offspring from their first marriage living either in the receiving country or in the sending country.

Although these variations in family composition obviously imposed a limitation on integrating the findings of the inquiry, the resulting theory of family support likely reflects more closely the heterogeneous composition of undocumented Central American immigrant families in the United States.
Discussion

The inquiry uncovered some aspects of family support that deserve to be discussed within the frame of the available literature. These aspects are linked to (1) the association between undocumented immigration and family support; and (2) the perceptions of support reported in the inquiry.

First, the participant family members invariably established a strong association between family support and undocumented immigration. This association likely occurred because these family members forcefully engaged in undocumented immigration in order to financially support relatives in the nuclear or extended family. These family members frequently indicated, for instance, that some of the major causes that led them to engage in undocumented immigration (e.g., desiring to support relatives and lacking financial resources) also became factors that enabled them to financially support relatives in the sending countries. Undoubtedly, the information available on the amount of periodic remittances that immigrants sent to relatives in the nuclear or extended family (Chavez et al., 1989; Montes Mozo & García Vasquez, 1988; Sheridan, 2001) seems to confirm the fact that financial support represents a significant component of family support for undocumented immigrants. This financial support has been found among undocumented Central American immigrants with close relatives in the sending countries. For instance, an interview with 278 undocumented Central American immigrants in San Diego, California, and Dallas, Texas, indicated that 82.9% had sent remittances to relatives in the sending countries. In the three months preceding the interviews, these immigrants had sent a median of $130 a month to their relatives (Chavez & Flores, 1988).
An alternative explanation to the association that family members established between family support and undocumented immigration can also be given in terms of the theory of new economics of migration. According to this theory of micro-level decisions, international migration offers households a mechanism of self-insurance against multiple risks such as crop failures, crop price fluctuations, unemployment, and disability. In the sending countries, for instance, households can secure income through family members working in foreign markets (Massey et al., 1993). The self-insurance that households could have against multiple risks, however, can be reinterpreted as a manifestation of the financial support that undocumented immigrants regularly provide to their families in the receiving or sending country (e.g., external, tangible, partial, and instrumental support). When this conceptual shift occurs, the association that undocumented immigrants established between undocumented immigration and family support becomes more evident.

Second, although family members usually framed family support in terms of the financial assistance that they could provide to relatives, they also framed family support in terms of the frequency of communication, exchange of affect, and degree of cohesiveness. The family members interviewed, for instance, frequently stated that verbal communication represents the vehicle that carries most of the expressions of support in their families, but they also indicated that the quality of this communication directly depends on the exchange of affect that takes place among the interacting parts. According to them, the exchange of affect directly determines the degree of cohesiveness in the nuclear and extended families.

The participant family members reported this set of interrelated perceptions because they had probably received specific information that enabled them to identify the presence of family support in their lives. It has been suggested, for instance, that social support normally
conveys information that leads individuals to one or more of the following outcomes: (a) the feeling of being cared for and loved; (b) the belief that one is esteemed and valued; and (c) the sense of belonging to a network of communication and reciprocal obligations (Cobb, 1976). Indeed, all three outcomes were often mentioned in the inquiry, especially in terms of the frequency of communication, exchange of affect, and degree of cohesiveness of the participant families.

On the other hand, family members might have reported the existence of this set of interrelated perceptions because of familism or their strong emotional commitment to family life. It has been suggested, for instance, that a high level of perceived support represents the most distinctive dimension of familism among Mexicans, Cubans, and Central Americans. This perceived support includes not only relatives as reliable agents of help, but also as sources of support to resolve diverse problems (Sabogal et al., 1987). Coincidentally, family members reported that the enactment of support within family networks (e.g., nuclear and extended), along with family needs, represents the strongest intervening variables that led them to engage in undocumented immigration.

Although the resulting theory of family support describes some of the major ordeals that undocumented family members face in the receiving country, the construct of hardiness better accounts for the personal resources of these family members. Kobasa (1979) defined hardiness in terms of (1) the belief that one can control or influence the events of one’s experience; (2) the ability to feel deeply involved in or committed to the activities of one’s life as opposed to purposelessness; and 3) the inclination to face novelty as an exciting challenge. Apart from having control over one’s fate, almost all undocumented family members showed the inclination to face novelty with a sense of challenge. This inclination,
which invariably included the family as frame of reference, usually appeared as a positive reframing of the adverse circumstances that undocumented family members have to face in the receiving country in order to financially support close relatives. Undocumented family members also showed a strong sense of commitment as opposed to purposelessness. This commitment, which focused on the family, was particularly prevalent among undocumented immigrant workers who had parental and marital responsibilities in the receiving or sending countries.

Finally, although the interconnected statements of the resulting theory address the phenomenon of family support at different levels, the content of the resulting theory is far from being complete. The theory provides information about the forms of support that family members in the receiving country considered significant, but the theory does not inform researchers how these family members received support from relatives across the border. This lack of information occurred because the research design initially omitted the fact that most undocumented immigrant families consisted of disintegrated family structures. Chavez & Flores (1988), for instance, reported that more than half of 271 undocumented Central American immigrants interviewed in San Diego, California, and Dallas, Texas, had a spouse, children or both spouse and children in the sending countries.

Overall, the resulting theory of family support should be considered in the best of cases a preliminary theory of family support because of the shortcomings of the inquiry.

**Recommendations**

Despite of the limitations of the inquiry, the resulting theory of family support offers information that might be instrumental for mental health workers, policy makers, and clergy. They can utilize the resulting theory independently, since the theory is composed of
interconnected statements that offer information about the behavioral and attitudinal patterns of support that occur among undocumented immigrant families.

Marriage and family therapists, for instance, can utilize those sections of the theory that deal with the perception of family support in order to design therapeutic interventions that rely on verbal communication, exchange of affect, and family cohesiveness. As part of the assessment process, marriage and family therapists can also utilize the theory to determine the immigration stage of the family, the availability of network support, and the composition of the family structure. Likewise, policy makers can utilize the theory to estimate the multiple ordeals that undocumented immigrant workers suffer in the receiving country or to estimate the consequences of the restrictions imposed upon undocumented immigrant families. Clergy can particularly utilize those parts of the theory that deal with the phenomenon of familism to elicit forms of reciprocal support among family members and to help reconnect family members across borders.

Apart from these instances, researchers can also utilize information derived from the resulting theory of family support. For instance, the set of 20 propositions and 17 sub-propositions that were developed from the substantive theory of family support can be used in surveys and scale designs that focus on family support. Some of the propositions can also be used to narrow the topic of family support to more manageable areas of study. The propositions can help researchers to study family support at the individual, marital, and parental levels instead of focusing on the family as the unit of analysis. In social research, it has been recommended that researchers collect data about individuals rather than households because researchers can always aggregate data collected on individuals, but researchers can never disaggregate data collected on groups (Russell Bernard, 1995)
On the other hand, knowing that the structural composition of most undocumented immigrant families precludes interviewing all members of the family in the receiving country, researchers could utilize the confirming and disconfirming sampling strategy (Creswell, 2002). By incorporating this sampling strategy, researchers could conveniently contact deported family members in the sending countries and test out specific findings. The utilization of this sampling strategy could help researchers to avoid the shortcomings of snowball sampling, to increase the sources of information, and to explore specific findings.

While the methods of the systemic approach of grounded theory (i.e., open, axial, and selective coding) enable researchers to perform a sequential analysis of the collected data at different levels of abstraction, researchers should keep in mind that these methods of analysis systematically transform the narratives of the participants into conceptual units as the analysis progresses. To avoid a meaningless reduction of the collected data, researchers might consider the use of an alternative approach to studying family support. For instance, researchers could utilize the constructivist approach articulated by Charmaz (2000) which focuses on seeking subjective meanings. In this approach, researchers could eschew the use of predetermined categories while looking for views, values, beliefs, feelings, and ideologies of the participants (Creswell, 2002). The resulting narrative, therefore, would be more discursive and explanatory in nature.
APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study on the topic of family support. The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of the practice of family support among undocumented immigrants from Central America, and to satisfy an academic requirement in the doctoral program of Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

As a participant, you will be interviewed three times, for 1.5 hours each time, within a period of three months. These interviews will be recorded on audiotape and scheduled at your convenience. The terms of participation in this study are:

1. The data obtained in this study will be used to write a doctoral thesis and several articles on the topic of family support. All written accounts, therefore, will be available in academic reports to the public.

2. Your participation is strictly confidential; consequently, the researcher will use personal pseudonyms in written accounts and oral presentations. He will also delete personal information from transcripts, field notes, and research reports that could lead to identify any participant. In addition, all data will be filed in a secure place accessible only to the researcher.

3. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. In this case all your data will be destroyed or returned to you upon request. In addition, the researcher will have the obligation to answer any questions regarding the procedures of the study.
4. There are no foreseeable risks to you as participant in this study other than mild discomfort in case of personal disclosure. In case of extreme discomfort, you will have the option of stopping the interview at any time.

5. You will meet with the researcher at your convenience to assess the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations and negotiate necessary changes.

If you consent to participate in this study and grant permission to be quoted directly according to the above terms, please sign below.

Participant name (printed): ________________________________

Signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

Researcher's signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

If you have questions or concerns about this study or your participation please do not hesitate to contact me:

Miguel Chupina-Orantes

4380 Palmer Hall, HDFS Building.

Iowa State University. Ames, IA 50011.

Telephone: (515) 294-0534 Office (515) 296-1133 Home.

E-mail: i95@iastate.edu.
Forma de Consentimiento

Usted está cordialmente invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación cualitativa sobre apoyo familiar. El propósito de este estudio es el de obtener información que nos permita comprender la práctica de apoyo familiar entre los inmigrantes indocumentados de Centro América y satisfacer un requerimiento en el programa doctoral de terapia matrimonial y familiar de la Universidad del Estado de Iowa.

Como participante usted será entrevistado tres veces, aproximadamente 1.5 horas cada vez, dentro de un período de tres meses. Estas entrevistas serán programadas a su conveniencia y grabadas en audiocintas. Los términos de participación en este estudio son los siguientes:

1. La información que se obtenga en este estudio será usada para escribir una tesis doctoral y varios artículos sobre el tema de apoyo familiar. Toda información escrita estará disponible al público en reportes académicos.

2. Su participación es estrictamente confidencial. Por lo tanto, el investigador usará pseudónimos personales para organizar la información escrita así como para efectuar presentaciones orales de la misma. El investigador eliminará también toda información que pueda identificarlo personalmente en las transcripciones de las entrevistas, notas de campo, y reportes de investigación. Además, toda la información será archivada en un lugar seguro y únicamente accesible al investigador.

3. Usted tiene el derecho de retirarse de este estudio en cualquier momento sin ningún perjuicio personal o material. En el caso que decida retirarse, toda la información obtenida será destruida o devuelta en caso que usted lo solicite. Además, el investigador
tendrá la obligación de contestar cualquier pregunta acerca de los procedimientos del estudio.

4. En este estudio no se preveen riesgos para usted como participante, excepto ligera incomodidad en caso de revelaciones personales. En caso de extrema incomodidad usted tiene la opción de parar la entrevista en cualquier momento.

5. Usted se reunirá a su conveniencia con el investigador para determinar la exactitud de las interpretaciones hechas por el investigador. Igualmente usted podrá negociar cualquier cambio que considere pertinente.

Si usted consiente a participar en este estudio y dar su permiso para ser citado textualmente de acuerdo a los términos mencionados anteriormente, por favor firme este documento.

Nombre del Participante (En letra de molde): ________________________________

Firma del Participante: ________________________________ Fecha: ________

Firma del Investigador ________________________________ Fecha: ________

Si usted tiene preguntas o alguna preocupación acerca de su participación en este estudio por favor no dude en establecer contacto conmigo.

Miguel Chupina-Orantes

4380 Palmer Hall, HDFS Building.

Iowa State University. Ames, IA 50011.

Teléfonos: (515) 294-0534 Oficina (515) 296-1133 Casa.

Correo Electrónico: i95@iastate.edu.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Information

Researcher: _____________________________

Institution: _____________________________

Participants: _____________________________ Pseudonyms: _____________________________

Profession: _____________________________ Site: _____________________________

Age: ___________ Sex: ___________

Ethnicity: _______

Site of interview: _____________________________ Date: _____________________________

Audio-tape: _____________________________ Transcript #: _____________________________

Observations:

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
General Questions

Conversational Low Structure

- Personal Background: Can you tell me about your family?
- Experience: What is it like to receive support from your family in this country?
- Knowledge: Can you tell how your family members manage to support each other?
- Values: What kind of support does your family value the most?
- Feelings: How do you feel when you receive support from your relatives?

In addition to this set of general questions, the researcher also asked family members the following question: Is there anything that you think I should know about supporting a family member?
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW CODING

Transcript A-1

R=researcher, P=participant, /=quick rephrasing

[hm]=thinking sound, [p]=brief pause, [lp]=long pause, underlined=emphasis

R: Bueno, la primera pregunta dice: qué me puede usted decir acerca de su familia?

Cualquiera de los dos.

P1: Bueno la familia, nosotros, eh, pues, tenemos muy poca, verdad, aquí.

R: [hm]

P1: La familia, solo está con nosotros, eh, pues la hermana de ella. A1{FAMILY COMPOSITION} Pues ellos, bueno, la hermana de mi esposa la . Este, siempre nos, nos dio apoyo cuando llegamos. Pues, recibimos apoyo también.

A2{INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT} Ellos han sido buena gente.

A3{SUPPORTIVE RELATIVES} Este, también este [p] pues recibimos apoyo del, del esposo de ella. A2{INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT} Ellos pues en cierta forma nos apoyaron A4{FORMS OF SUPPORT} un gran apoyo

A5{MAGNITUDE OF SUPPORT}. Pues todos, todos han cooperado verdad.

A6{FAMILY COOPERATION} Pues nosotros acá en la familia, acá ya hicimos ya, pues solo la familia. Cuando vino pues se le dio apoyo también. A se le ha dado apoyo también. A2{INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT} Todos, todos nos hemos tratado de ayudar A6{FAMILY COOPERATION}. Este, no faltan problemas en la familia. A7{FAMILY PROBLEMS} Pero si, apoyo siempre ha
habido. A8{CONSTANT FAMILY SUPPORT} Este, toda la familia siempre ha
estado casi unida. A9{FAMILY COHESION} Eh, [lp]
P2 Bueno, en mi aspecto pues, eh, aquí acerca de la familia yo me he sentido solo
cuando nos alejamos de , nos venimos a vivir aquí a .
A10{LONELINESS} Pero, yo le agradezco mucho a mi esposo pues el me apoyó
cuando yo me traje a mis hijos. A2{INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT} El siempre
ha tratado de ayudarme para salir adelante con ellos. A11{PARENTAL
SUPPORT} Pues con mi hermana también nunca hemos tenido ningún problema.
Con ella siempre hemos convivido. Nos hemos ayudado ambos. A6{FAMILY
COOPERATION} Pues lo único que yo aquí si me siento muy sola,
A10{LONELINESS} ha sido, me he sentido que mi vida no tuviera sentido en
este Estado. A12{MEANINGLESS LIFE} El apoyo familiar que no tengo.
A13{LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT} Aquí con quien, comunicarme,
A14 {LACK OF COMMUNICATION} es, ha sido pues el problema lo que más a
mi si me ha deprimido, me he sentido muy mal.
AC-15{DEPRESSION} A veces que he sentido que ya ni ganas de seguir adelante.
AC-16{LACK OF MOTIVATION} Pero nomás estoy aquí en este Estado por
mis hijos. AA-17{FAMILY DUTIES} Que aquí es diferente la forma de vivir aquí
en este Estado, por que no hay pues gangas y corrupción verdad, aquí en este
Estado. Por eso es que le sigo haciendo frente aquí, no, AA-18{FAMILY
SAFETY} por que yo aquí de sentirme bien no me siento bien.
CODES FROM INTERVIEW A-1

A1{FAMILY COMPOSITION}
A2{INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT}
A3{SUPPORTIVE RELATIVES}
A4{FORMS OF SUPPORT}
A5{MAGNITUDE OF SUPPORT}
A6{FAMILY COOPERATION}
A7{FAMILY PROBLEMS}
A8{CONSTANT FAMILY SUPPORT}
A9{FAMILY COHESION}
A10{LONELINESS}
A11{PARENTAL SUPPORT}
A12{MEANIGLESS LIFE}
A13{LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT}
A14{LACK OF COMMUNICATION}
AC-15{DEPRESSION}
AC-16{LACK OF MOTIVATION}
AA-17{FAMILY DUTIES}
AA-18{FAMILY SAFETY}
AC-19{RECIPROCITY}
AC-20{RESCUING}
AC-21{WORTHINESS}
AC-22{DRUG INDUCTION}
AC-23 {DEBT}
AC-24 {PERDURABLE FEELINGS}
A25 {FINANCIAL SUPPORT}
A26 {INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT}
A27 {MORAL SUPPORT}
A28 {FAMILY CONFLICT}
AC-29 {FAMILY SEPARATION}
A30 {FAMILY STRATEGIES}
A31 {UNDERSTANDING}
A32 {PROFESIONAL HELP}
AC-33 {MOTIVATION}
A34 {SELF-SUPPORT}
AC-35 {ACCEPTANCE}
AC-36 {EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES}
A37 {TRANSMISSION OF SUPPORT}
A38 {UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT}
A39 {CHAIN OF SUPPORT}
AC-40 {GRATITUDE}
A41 {INTANGIBLE SUPPORT}
EMERGENT QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEW A-1

A1 {FAMILY COMPOSITION}
Qué familia tienen ustedes en los Estados Unidos?
Properties: Number: Small to large
Structure: Integrated to disintegrated

A2 {INITIAL FAMILY SUPPORT}
Cómo recibieron apoyo cuando llegaron?
Properties: Range: Limited to unlimited
Form: Unconditional to conditional

A3 {SUPPORTIVE RELATIVES}
De quiénes recibieron apoyo en la familia?
Alguien les negó el apoyo?
Properties: Type: Unconditional to conditional

A4 {FORMS OF SUPPORT}
Qué tipo de apoyo recibieron de la familia?
Properties: Type: Individual to familial

A25 {FINANCIAL SUPPORT}
A26 {INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT}
A27 {MORAL SUPPORT}
A32 {PROFESSIONAL HELP}
A34 {SELF-SUPPORT}
A38 {UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT}
A41 {INTANGIBLE SUPPORT}
A5{MAGNITUDE OF SUPPORT}
Cuánto apoyo recibieron/reciben ustedes de la familia?
Properties: Range: Limited to unlimited

A6{FAMILY COOPERATION}
Cómo cooperó su familia para apoyarlos cuando llegaron?
Cómo cooperó su esposo para ayudarle a traer a A/B a los Estados Unidos.
Properties: Type: Unconditional to conditional

A7{FAMILY PROBLEMS}
Qué problemas de apoyo han tenido ustedes en la familia/con la familia?

A8{CONSTANT FAMILY SUPPORT}
Qué tipo de apoyo ha existido siempre en su familia/con la familia?
Properties: Amount: Small to large

A9{FAMILY COHESION}
Usted menciona que la familia casi ha estado unida, podría explicarme más?
Existen algunas diferencias que desunen a la familia? Cómo se mantienen ustedes unidos?
Properties: Structure: Disengaged to enmeshed.

A10{LONELINESS}
Porqué se siente uno solo?
El moverse de un lugar a otro contribuye a sentirse mas sola?
Properties: Depth: Bearable to unbearable

A11{PARENTAL SUPPORT}
Cómo le ayudó su esposo para salir adelante con sus hijos?
Properties: Frequency: Sporadic to constant
A12{MEANIGLESS LIFE}

Puede usted explicarme por qué su vida no tiene sentido/significado en este Estado?

Properties: Frequency: Sporadic to constant

A13{LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT}

Qué tipo de apoyo familiar les hace falta?

A25{FINANCIAL SUPPORT}
A26{INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT}
A27{MORAL SUPPORT}
A38{UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT}
A51{INTANGIBLE SUPPORT}
A32{PROFESSIONAL HELP}

A14{LACK OF COMMUNICATION}

Cómo explica usted la falta de comunicación en su familia?

Podría explicarme cómo es que le afecta la falta de comunicación?

Properties: Frequency: Sporadic to constant

Modality: Outside the family to inside the family

AC-15{DEPRESSION}

AC-15{DEPRESSION}

Properties: Duration: Short to long

AC-16{LACK OF MOTIVATION}

AC-16{LACK OF MOTIVATION}

Properties: Frequency: Constant to sporadic

AA-17{FAMILY DUTIES}
AA-17 {FAMILY DUTIES}
Properties: Importance: Low to high

AA-18 {FAMILY SAFETY}
Properties: Degree: Low to High

AC-19 {RECIPROCITY}
Properties: Direction: Individual-familial

AC-20 {RESCUING}
Properties: Type: Individual to familial

AC-21 {WORTHINESS}
Properties: Impact: Low to high

AC-22 {DRUG INDUCTION}
Properties: Type: Sporadic to frequent

AC-23 {DEBT}
Properties: Amount: Low to high

AC-24 {PERDURABLE FEELINGS}
Properties: Intensity: Low to high
A25 {FINANCIAL SUPPORT}

Properties: Amount: Small to large
Modality: Offered to requested

A26 {INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT}

Properties: Usefulness: High to low

A27 {MORAL SUPPORT}

A-28 {FAMILY CONFLICT}

Existe conflicto familiar por la falta de dinero?
Properties: Duration: Short to long
Stress: Intense to very intense

AC-29 {FAMILY SEPARATION}

La falta de dinero afecta la familia?
Properties: Duration: Short to long

A30 {FAMILY STRATEGIES}

Properties: Modality: Verbal to nonverbal

A31 {UNDERSTANDING}

Properties: Condition: Absent to present

A32 {PROFESIONAL HELP}

Properties: Impact: Effective to ineffective

AC-33 {MOTIVATION}

Properties: Strength: Weak to strong
A34 {SELF-SUPPORT}
Properties: Modality: Verbal to nonverbal

AC-35 {ACCEPTANCE}

Properties: Degree: Nuclear to extended family

AC-36 {EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES}
Properties: Type: Institutional to individual

A37 {TRANSMISSION OF SUPPORT}
Properties: Structure: Nuclear to extended

A38 {UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT}
Properties: Limits: Limited to unlimited

A39 {CHAIN OF SUPPORT}

AC-40 {GRATITUDE}
Properties: Type: Individual to familial

A41 {INTANGIBLE SUPPORT}
Properties: Effect: Supportive to nonsupportive
Properties and dimensions of family support

Because family support involves multiple forms of support, its central characteristic should embrace them all. In general terms, the central characteristic has to deal with the modality of support received. Its dimensional variations, therefore, could be placed along a linear continuum that goes from intangible to tangible support. For instance, moral support as intangible support can be found at the beginning of the continuum; however, financial support or material support can be found at the end. In this way, all the reports of gratitude (intangible) can be distinguished from all the reports of financial debt (tangible) along a linear continuum.

On the other hand, family support seems to have a second characteristic that deals with the conditions of the support received. For instance, the participants reported on multiple occasions that family support clearly varies from unconditional to conditional support.

Likewise, another encompassing property of family support deals with the type of the support received. The type of support received, in particular, varies from expressive to instrumental support. The support received also seems to be perceived as either limited or unlimited support.
Conversely, the source of family support seems to be perceived as either internal or external support. Thus, family support could take place at either end of the continuum. For instance, parental support is conceived as internal support, but family therapy is conceived as external support.

The following properties and dimensions seem to summarize the preliminary information about the emergent category of family support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modality of support</td>
<td>Intangible to tangible support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions of support</td>
<td>Unconditional to conditional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Expressive to instrumental support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>Limited to unlimited support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Internal to external support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it seemed that family support could be located at either end of the dimensional continua: intangible to tangible; unconditional to conditional; expressive to instrumental; limited to unlimited; internal to external. Moreover, the category of family support could be classified as intervening or contextual depending on the collected data.
REFERENCES


