

# INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION AND COPING STRATEGIES MEANT TO FACILITATE SOCIAL ADAPTATION IN MIGRANT POPULATIONS



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**ABSTRACT:** Migration is a psycho-socio-cultural phenomenon that impacts different aspects of an individual's life. Migrants and their families must face a variety of changes and stressors while attempting to reach an optimal level of social adaptation. This necessitates the development of certain cognitive and instrumental skills. This article examines the different styles of coping used by migrants and the ways in which they establish, foster, and strengthen social support networks by using communication as a tool. Our sample comprised 178 Mexican immigrants in the United States. The *Inventario de Estilos de Comunicación* (Communication Style Inventory; Nina, 1991) and the multidimensionality section of the *Escala Multidimensional y Multisituacional de Estilos de Enfrentamiento* (Multi-situational and Multidimensional Coping Scale; Góngora and Reyes, 1998) in its abridged Likert version were adapted for the purposes of this study. Statistical analysis revealed that the subjects used two styles of communication and two coping strategies. At the same time, the data suggests that there are some indicators that favor the preservation, fostering and multiplication of social support networks, as these can serve as resources that help them reach an optimal level of social adaptation.

**KEYWORDS:** Adjustment, Migration, Communication, Confrontation, Support.

**RESUMEN:** La migración es considerada como un fenómeno psicosociocultural que influye en diversas esferas del individuo que emigra. En su intento por alcanzar un nivel de adaptación social óptimo, los migrantes y sus familias se enfrentan a una serie de cambios y estresores asociados, viéndose en la necesidad de desarrollar ciertas habilidades cognitivas e instrumentales. El presente artículo tuvo como objetivo conocer los distintos estilos de afrontamiento que utiliza el migrante en respuesta a los cambios por los que atraviesa y en qué forma se focaliza por establecer, fomentar y fortalecer sus redes sociales de apoyo, utilizando la comunicación como medio. La muestra estuvo constituida por 178 inmigrantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron la *Escala de Estilos de Comunicación* (Nina, 1991) y la sección de multi-dimensionalidad de la *Escala Multisituacional y Multidimensional de Afrontamiento* (Góngora y Reyes, 1998), en versión corta, tipo likert, adaptados para este estudio. Los análisis estadísticos permitieron observar que son dos estilos de comunicación y dos estrategias de afrontamiento utilizados por el grupo estudiado. Al mismo tiempo los datos presentes, sugieren algunos indicadores que favorecen el mantener, fomentar y multiplicar las redes sociales de apoyo, con el objeto de potencializar sus recursos para alcanzar un nivel de adaptación social óptimo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Adaptación, Migración, Comunicación, Afrontamiento, Apoyo.

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**M**igration is a psycho-socio-cultural phenomenon that impacts different aspects of an individual's life, from social insertion and communal stability to individual, family, and economic issues. Immigrants' actions are a consequence of being uprooted, facing the stress associated with leaving, and encountering a new culture and lifestyle. This is why they are thought to have a high risk of psychological and mental health problems (Berry, 1992). The migration process, however, also affects the family members left in the place of origin. These slow and gradual changes require a certain amount of social adaptation, or what is known as «adjustment» (Bhugra, 2004).

In order to adjust optimally, immigrants must, on the one hand, develop emotional/affective adaptation. This comprises a subjective sense of wellbeing and satisfaction regarding their new, adopted lifestyle and the new daily circumstances they encounter and with which they must cope. On the other hand, they must develop sociocultural and behavioral adaptation, which entails acquiring culturally appropriate skills and knowledge. These include openness to initial contact, exchange, and feedback, as these elements allow them to cope with daily problems in a new context (Ataca & Berry, 2002).

According to Ataca and Berry (2002), satisfactory psychological adaptation depends on immigrants' individual personalities, their skill to manage and adjust to pertinent changes, and their access to support or social networks. Sociocultural adaptation depends on the individual's depth of knowledge about the new culture, existing cultural gaps, cultural identity, knowledge of the receiving society's language, time spent living in the host culture, and the amount of contact the individual has with members of the host culture. Torres and Rollock (2004) refer to this as «cultural learning.»

Processes of psychological and sociocultural adaptation are interrelated. They can both serve as tools (either individually or together) that enable the immigrant to handle unexpected situations and ongoing stress better. When combined, they promote positive interactions and the vulnerability needed to foster cultural learning. At the same time, they can both be seen as necessary tools for the management of «culture shock», which can impact psychological health, life plans, and short, medium and long-term goals, as well as strengthen or decrease support networks.

The command of instrumental and functional skills and the ability to be socially self-sufficient and undertake certain cultural tasks in specific contexts serve as measures of an immigrant's level of cultural learning (LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Ogbu, 1981).



## COPING STRATEGIES: A WAY OF RESPONDING TO CHANGES AND THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION

Lazarus (1982) defines coping as part of an individual's personal resources; it is expressed through all cognitive and behavioral efforts designed to respond to, diminish, reduce, minimize, control, dominate, tolerate or solve problems in stressing and emotionally negative situations brought about by external (the environment) or internal sources (the family) in a sociocultural context (Góngora, 2000). It entails managing and adjusting to said changes (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

These skills, strategies or cognitive efforts can be split into two categories (LaFramboise *et al.*, 1993; and Ogbu, 1981):

- a) *Individual coping skills*. These involve skills prescribed by the host culture. Individual coping involves a configuration of personal characteristics or internal processes used to establish person-environment relations in response to specific demands. This problem solving process has been linked to high levels of competency across many U.S. ethnic groups (Tyler, Brome, & Williams, 1991).
- b) *General coping skills (cultural response)*. Specific group skills rooted in the cultural traditions of the society of origin, which are needed to succeed in the new environment. (Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). Ethnic minorities develop their own coping theories and strategies for dealing with the new environment; these are based on the traditional culture and their experiences, and are representative of them (Hobfoll, 1998; Ogbu, 1981).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984/1991) describe four coping modes: 1) direct action: meant to deal with the threat or stressor in a precise and direct way while implementing new solving strategies; 2) intrapsychic behavior: meant to regulate or minimize the resulting emotional conflict by reducing the value given to negative emotions while seeking self-affirming positive emotions –that is, by altering the personal feelings and perceptions caused by the event; 3) inhibition of avoidance-escape behavior: strategies that avoid confrontation and seek to disregard the event, waiting for things to solve themselves with time; 4) information seeking or planned solution: strategies that look for instrumental ways of planning a solution (e.g., asking for counsel, mobilizing social networks that provide emotional support, seeking internal peace, praying) in order to think more calmly, write down the pros and cons of the event, possible steps and their viability.

As far as general coping and cultural response skills are concerned, Bouchard (2003) posits two types of coping strategies based on their nature and purpose: problem-focused strategies and emotional ones. While the first entail planful problem-solving (Parker & Endler, 1996), the latter involve effecting changes in emotional and internal responses to the stressing situation, which is also known as escape/avoidance (Chang, 1998). In order to decide if an individual is «planning» for or «avoiding» conflict, the impact and significance of the event must



first be gauged through a primary appraisal: «Does this situation threaten my wellbeing?» A secondary appraisal must consider all the resources available to the individual and answer the question, «Do I have the necessary skills to deal with this problem situation?» In other words, «Should I learn to manage this situation and how competent do I feel I am (do I have the skills and knowledge to respond).»

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), in order to understand the relationship between individual coping efforts and mental health influences an individual's wellbeing we must realize that coping always benefits the individual in some way and to some degree, assuaging the negative impact of any stressor. This is independent of the nature or stress level of the conflict, the ultimate effects of coping, or whether the emotional conflict gets solved or not.

McCrae (1991) emphasizes that, although modes of coping with adversity will vary depending on specific cultural characteristics (as in the case of immigrants' sociocultural and behavioral adaptation), there are some constant factors:

- a) Most coping efforts are seen as responses to external (e.g. sickness, divorce, mourning) and internal stressors.
- b) Responses to said stressors are conscious.
- c) When coping, change is a response to having identified the root of the problem.

Bouchard's (2003) found that migrants with little access to emotional resources (which is equivalent to an emotional conflict) tend to opt for a primary appraisal of the situation and come up with emotion-based responses. They thus seek to change themselves so that the threatening situation does not affect them as strongly (Terry, 1994). Those who tend to analyze the problem from a variety of perspectives and take into account the contents of the problem and not only what they feel manage to plan a strategy aimed at solving the issue (Costa, Somerfield & McCrae, 1996).

Some authors (e.g., Aldwin and Revenson, 1987; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984/1991; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978) agree that what people do –or fail to do– in order to deal with their problems can be crucial to their wellbeing. Whether the problem is catastrophic in nature, unforeseen, uncontrollable, vital, or just a minor annoyance is not as important as how it is perceived and handled.

## STUDIES ON MIGRATION

Giunta and Compas (1993) have examined coping mechanisms in couples subjected to stressful situations, both as individuals and a dyad. They studied 153 middle-class immigrant couples from different places, all of whom resided in



northeastern Vermont (USA), and applied Folkman and Lazarus' Ways of Coping Scale (1985). Their results show that styles of coping are associated to certain psychological symptoms. Also, the coping mechanisms of partners are associated with each other. In that particular, escape/avoidance mechanisms often used by wives were linked to the psychological symptoms of their husbands. The coping mechanisms of husbands were not associated with the psychological symptoms of their wives.

In their longitudinal study on stress, acculturation and mental health, Aldwin and Revenson (1987) studied 291 immigrants from different countries who resided in Los Angeles, California, and found a mutually reinforcing causal cycle between poor mental health and desadaptive coping strategies. The higher the initial level of emotional conflict and the severity of the problem, the higher the risk of desadaptive coping. This further increases degree of emotional conflict and could also increase future proneness to problems. In the case of problem-focused coping, it is not enough to inquire about strategies: more information is needed regarding the results of said strategies (Felton and Revenson, 1984).

Finally, studies of non-migrant, culturally homogeneous populations show that men and women have different ways of coping. Some Mexican studies focused on youths found that, the closer the individual is to the problem, the higher the affective responses. This is to be expected in a collectivist culture where family and close bonds with others play an important role. Góngora and Reyes (1998) found that, though both men and women provide direct and instrumental responses, women tend to make use of emotional coping. These findings coincide with those of Harada, Alfaro and Villagrán (2002) in their study of Mexican youths.

#### FROM COPING TO ACCULTURATION: COMMUNICATION AS A BRIDGE

Once the immigrant has coped with the changes brought about by his or her insertion in the host culture, the migration process moves from an adaptation and adjustment phase into one of adoption of predominant response patterns. This is known as acculturation and refers to cultural adaptation in the most ample sense of the word. An immigrant can become acculturated by: a) completely assimilating into the new culture and forgetting the culture of origin; b) splitting completely from the new culture and maintaining the practices and traditions of the culture of origin; c) integrating and practicing some of the host culture's traditions while maintaining some or all of the practices of the culture of origin. One last, marginalizing possibility that is not interpreted as acculturation and is reflective of substantial psychological conflict and profound culture shock is the failure to practice the host culture's traditions while failing to maintain any practices from the culture of origin (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Pierre, 1999).



Acculturation can thus be understood as a process of expansion and adaptation on the psychological and sociocultural levels. It is exemplified by features such as command of the language, choice of foods, social encounter preferences, the celebration of certain festivities, and the observance of certain cultural values (Berry, *et al.*, 1999). Because of this, some authors have opted for the phrase «psychological acculturation» (Graves, 1967). Lin, Tazuma and Masuda (1979) have found that immigrants who move from sociocentric to egocentric societies, as is the case of Mexicans in the United States, can find it difficult to adjust because the expected patterns of behavior differ considerably from the ones to which they are accustomed. They examined four types of immigrant family organizations: nuclear families, extended families, divorced or single women, and single men. They found that lone women had the least amount of personal, social adjustment resources and tended to suffer from depression. Single men had the most energetic disposition and showed the most willingness to adjust to the new culture.

Immigrants rely on social networks to cope with their social vulnerability. These provide them with a sense of belonging and social significance, aiding their adaptation process (Weiss, 1989; cited in Bhugra, 2004). Immigrants rely on their family and significant network acquaintances to foster personal closeness, divide household chores, share values, give continuity to their identity, interact and exchange meanings, things, feelings, ideas, and ways of looking at life (Sátir, 1986). They also receive strategic information regarding ways of responding to the structural restrictions in which they find themselves, often without knowing; they learn about work opportunities, ways of improving their quality of life and their physical infrastructure, and ways of creating defense and support mechanisms for immigrants in the United States (Ariza, 2002).

In order for the immigrant to adapt and function satisfactorily in the host society, the family organization must change along with the circumstances. These changes must be assimilated so that they become part of the family philosophy and establish a congruous bond between the individual and the social identity of each member. Communication is the symbolic medium via which social networks can be increased and preserved. In order to know the immigrant's level of social adaptation, communication must be examined and analyzed (Sátir, 1986).

Sánchez Aragón and Díaz Loving (2003) have undertaken an exhaustive examination of communications styles among adults and noticed that, in the literature, authors tend to speak of communication styles that strengthen bonds, personal development, and couple growth as «positive», while self-centered styles that show little willingness to listen or open up to another person's needs are usually classified as «negative.» As far as the fostering of close relationships and support networks is concerned, the two most commonly observed categories are intimate communication and functional communication. Intimate communica-



tion seeks to strengthen subjective dialogue and foster emotional bonds; functional communication is established in order to organize household chores and take care of the children. It has been observed that immigrant couples maintain a more functional type of communication; that is, their members only communicate in order to address marital and household chores (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Ojeda, 2006) and leave intimate communication aside.

One of the main questions this research set out to answer was which strategies favor social and functional adaptation among Mexican immigrants in the United States. Our first step was to learn what kinds of coping strategies and communications styles are used by immigrants. The next step was to find out which ones foster, maintain or expand their social networks, thereby aiding their processes of social adaptation and acculturation.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The sample comprised 178 married Mexican immigrants residing in the United States: 124 women (56.4%) and 96 men (43.6%). Their age range spanned from 18 to 60 years old with a mean of 36.5 and a standard deviation of 10.8 years. The length of marriage went from 1 to 38 years of age with a mean of 13.4 and a standard deviation of 9.7, and 84.3% of participants said they currently live with their partner. The education level went from no formal education to unfinished graduate degrees. The mean was unfinished middle school, with a standard deviation below uncompleted primary school and above uncompleted high school or technical school. Non-probabilistic accidental sampling selection was employed.

### *Instruments*

*Inventario de Estilos de Comunicación (Communication Style Inventory; Nina Estrella, 1991), in an abridged version adapted for the purposes of this study.* Some of the 36 adjectives in this inventory were eliminated after a pilot study with the target population showed that they were non-discriminating. The inventory was pared down to 17 characteristics in semantic differential format with 5 spaces and in pictorial version. Although the original version is comprised by two sub-scales (one focused on the answering partner's style and the other one focused on the couple's style as seen from the answering party's point of view –with a reliability of  $\alpha = .78$  y  $\alpha = .91$ , respectively), it was decided that only the self-descriptive sub-scale would be used, as it provides the respondent's first person point of



view. Adjective combinations can yield the following categories: positive communicator ( $\alpha = .8808$ ), negative communicator ( $\alpha = .8982$ ), reticent/reflective communicator ( $\alpha = .7997$ ), and violent communicator ( $\alpha = .7355$ ).

*Escala Multidimensional y Multisituacional de Estilos de Enfrentamiento (Multi-situational and Multidimensional Coping Scale; Góngora and Reyes, 1998), abridged version.* Out of the five environments considered by the original test, only the family and work environments were used to monitor, on a daily basis, the types of coping used by immigrants when faced with problems in these areas. This multi-situational and multidimensional scale measures a stable, permanent dimension (coping as a feature) and a second, changing and temporary dimension (coping as a state) and applies them to six problem areas: life (general situation), health, family members, partners, friends, school and/or work (more specific situations). Every situation included 18 variables for a total of 108, with pictographic Likert-style format and a continuum of seven points that ranged from «always» (7) to «never» (1).

### Procedure

The sample was collected with the aid of immigrant institutions in the United States and the Mexican mobile consulates in the United States covering the areas of San Bernardino, Palm Desert, Bloomington, Riverside, Thermal, Coachella Valley, Mecca, Indio, Palm Springs and Duros. As required by U.S. law in the event of an audit, participants were asked to sign a voluntary consent form that ensured confidentiality. The instruments were applied both individually and in group format. Whenever this was necessary, questions were read aloud to individual participants and the interviewer then wrote down their answers.

## RESULTS

Since the scales were not designed for immigrant populations but adapted for this study, we first looked at how the variables worked for the chosen sample. A frequency and Pearson chi-square test analysis showed two types of communication and coping strategies (Table 1). In the first case, the factors explain 63.34% and, in the second, 61.35% of the variant. In order to find out the internal consistency, these factors were tested using Cronbach's Alpha (Table 1).





TABLE 1  
Results of each one of the inventories applied to the sample

NINA ESTRELLA'S (1991) COMMUNICATION STYLE INVENTORY, SHORT VERSION ADAPTED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY					
F1= NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION	N = 8	X = 1.8.2	S = .007	$\alpha = .8973$	FACTORIAL WEIGHT
Dominant					.824
Conflictive					.767
Confused					.766
Evasive					.755
Curt					.733
Aggressive					.719
Loud					.648
Silent					.627
F2= POSITIVE COMMUNICATION	N = 3	X = 2.2	S = .006	$\alpha = .8045$	FACTORIAL WEIGHT
Conciliatory (not conciliatory)					.858
Affectionate (not affectionate at all)					.817
Respectful (not at all respectful)					.745
MULTI-SITUATIONAL AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL COPING SCALE (GÓNGORA AND REYES, 1998), SHORT VERSION					
F1= ACTIVE COPING	N = 20	X = 12.02	S = 4.5	$\alpha = .964$	FACTORIAL WEIGHT
Even if I cannot completely solve everything, I try					.931
I plan how to solve things and carry out the plan					.927
I analyze problems in order to solve them					.925
I try to learn from them and find positive things					.903
I know what I must do and I put all my effort toward satisfactorily solving things					.893
I try to employ new strategies to solve problems					.891
I look at my options in order to solve problems					.886
I reflect on what I might say or do					.870
I have faith that this will get solved at some point					.815
I worry					.803
I think this is life testing us					.753
I wish for the situation to end or disappear					.753
I promise to myself it will not happen again					.737
I speak with someone to clarify my thoughts					.732
I imagine how things could go					.720
I take responsibility for what happens (the opposite of blaming others)					.712
I calm down so as to not act impulsively and get carried away by my initial response					.678
I talk to someone about my problems seeking counsel					.644
I pray					.548
I look for the understanding of others					.418
F2= PASSIVE COPING	N = 4	X = 2.2	S = .002	$\alpha = .6885$	FACTORIAL WEIGHT
I imagine I am not going through this and that I am in a better situation					.762
I forget about my problems by doing other things					.740
I let time solve things					.736
I pretend nothing is happening					.666



## Where

*Negative communication:* the type of communication carried out with the purpose of taking control of the information used in the relationship; there is no openness and no desire to exchange ideas. That is, communication is curt, with little dialogue, somewhat conflictive, lacking in affection, and aggressive and evasive.

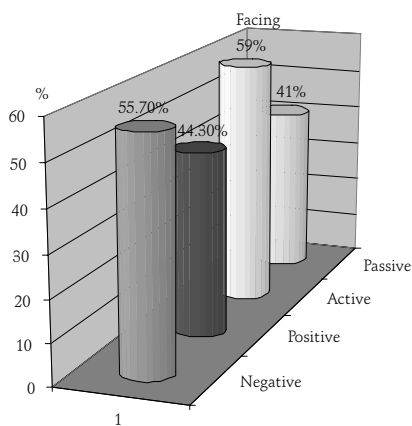
*Positive communication:* the type of conciliatory communication that seeks to deal with the partner in an affectionate and respectful way.

*Active coping:* a problem-solving strategy that involves taking action, planning, reflecting on the event and its consequences, asking for counsel, talking to someone else to clarify ideas, trying new ways of solving the issue, and even worrying and praying.

*Passive coping:* a strategy that avoids taking action and lets things be, waiting for somebody else to solve the problem or imagining that the problem is not there.

Once communication and coping styles had been brought together we looked at the frequency with which they took place, as this would show response tendencies and throw light on whether these modes of facing daily problems favored emotional bonds between emotionally close individuals. Graph 1 shows the factor distribution of the applied scales. The Communication Style Inventory showed a higher frequency of negative communication (55.70%), while the active coping style was used more often (59%). This allows us to infer, on the one hand, that the sampled immigrant population had little interest in caring for and nurturing close relationships. On the other hand, they showed substantial interest in responding appropriately, strategically, successfully, and assertively to problems in their attempts to attain a functional level of adaptation.

GRAPH 1  
Distribution by Communication and Coping Styles





In order to find the ways in which close social networks and active problems resolution were related, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used. Table 2 shows the high positive and significant interscale correlation coefficients between «positive communication» and «active coping.» In other words, these results show that when the couple members interact affectionately and respectfully and are willing to reconcile ideas, they are more likely to face stressful life events in an active manner. That is, they are more likely to a) look for alternatives, confront the problems, learn from them, and take responsibility for them, or b) remain passive but talk about the issues, await external council, worry over the event or pray for a solution.

Sadly, the participants in our sample exhibited a tendency toward negative forms of communication, a factor with a significant negative correlation to more constructive methods, adaptation, the positive communication style ( $-.389^{**}$ ), and active coping ( $-.319^{**}$ ). It has a positive correlation with passive coping ( $.308^{**}$ ) in daily situations.

TABLE 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient between the abridged *Inventario de Estilos de Comunicación* (Communication Style Scale; Nina, 1991) and the abridged *Escala Multidimensional y Multisituacional de Estilos de Enfrentamiento* (Multi-situational and Multidimensional Coping Scale; Góngora & Reyes, 1998)

FACTORS	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	ACTIVE
Negative	–		
Positive	$-.389^{**}$	–	
Active	$-.319^{**}$	$.707^{**}$	–
Passive	$.308^{**}$	–	$.257^{**}$

Note:  $** p = .001$ ,  $* p = .01$ . Discussion

The main goal of this study was to find which strategies promote functional and social adaptation among Mexican immigrants in the United States. The results show a tendency to use active coping strategies when dealing with daily problems. As far as the fostering, preservation, expansion, and multiplication of social networks are concerned, communication strategies tend to be negative: there is no openness or desire to exchange ideas; communication is carried out with the purpose of taking control of the information used in the relationship and is curt, aggressive, evasive, with little dialogue, somewhat conflictive, and lacking in affection. This data would seem to indicate that the sampled immigrant population had little interest in caring for and nurturing emotional bonds and prospective social networks, which leads us to think that their main interest in developing these aspects might lie in the latter's potential as instrumental and informative strategies that can help them cope with external stressors (Araiza, 2002; Lazarus



and Folkman, 1984/1991), as does their tendency to solve problems (McCrae, 1991).

This study shows that immigrants have a tendency to try many types of problem resolution strategies and are open to cultural learning (Torres and Rollock, 2004). These attitudes are part of their emotional, psychological and/or sociocultural struggle against migration-related stressors and their attempts to achieve optimal adaptation (Ataca & Berry, 2002). They will try to solve all possible aspects of a conflict; implement new strategies; learn from the problem by focusing on its positive aspects; reflect and analyze the issue; take responsibility for the consequences, and even look for others' understanding. The fact that active coping was the favored strategy among Mexican immigrants in the United States coincides with instrumental coping strategies and general skill performance (LaFramboise *et al.*, 1993; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). Every effort made by an individual is a way of confronting a direct problem, which is why it is considered beneficial: it reduces emotional conflict and buffers stress by paying attention to the problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984/1991) and responding (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), rather than being evasive or avoiding the problem. This response is the most important factor.

Participants in this study were presented with a variety of options with which to associate different ways of responding to a conflict, but the factorial analysis grouped their responses as part of the active coping category. This somewhat contradicts Lazarus and Folkman's stance (1984/1991) that any type of coping strategy favors social adaptation in the host culture as long as it is fitting and in harmony with the chosen problem-solving cognitive effort and the individual's concomitant mental health. Thus, a large variety of problem-solving options could, most of the time, reduce the effectiveness of these strategies.

An item-by-item qualitative analysis of the active coping strategy revealed that direct ways of actively dealing with the problem were the preferred methods. Direct-evaluative responses –that is, thinking about alternative ways of tackling the problem and finally taking action (e.g., getting things done, asking for counsel, worrying, or praying)– came in second place. In other words, trying new strategies opens up a number of possibilities that can make life easier and turn the experience into a more peaceful, comforting, and constructive event in the acculturation process (Berry *et al.*, 1999).

In short, interaction with other variables could be a sign of mental health. The results found in this study suggest that dialogue is more strongly based on actions than on exchanging thoughts and ideas, since the preponderant communication style among the sampled population was negative (Sánchez Aragón and Díaz-Loving, 2003). That is, they are less concerned about nurturing emotional bonds than they are about promoting communication with close acquaintances who can serve as part of strategic and informative social networks. A correlation of the coping and communication styles adopted by the sample showed the pos-



itive coping style (active style) being linked to positive communication (positive style), and the negative coping style (passive style) being linked to negative communication (negative style). This agrees with immigrants' tendency to adapt, function socially, and build real and effective social networks.

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