

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

5-1999

Latin American Immigrants' Perceptions of Discrimination and Acquisition of English as a Second Language as a Result of Using a Community Social Support Center

Holly McFarland
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McFarland, Holly, "Latin American Immigrants' Perceptions of Discrimination and Acquisition of English as a Second Language as a Result of Using a Community Social Support Center" (1999). *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 6118.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/6118>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS' PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND
ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AS A RESULT OF
USING A COMMUNITY SOCIAL SUPPORT CENTER

by

Holly McFarland

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Psychology

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1999

ABSTRACT

Latin American Immigrants' Perceptions of Discrimination and
Acquisition of English as a Second Language as a Result of
Using a Community Social Support Center

by

Holly McFarland, Bachelor of Science

Utah State University, 1999

Major Professors: Dr. Carla J. Reyes and Dr. Lani M. Van Dusen
Department: Psychology

The associations between Latin American immigrants' use of a community social support center and perceived discrimination and language acquisition were investigated. All variables were measured by respondents' self-reports on a questionnaire designed to obtain demographic data as well as describe the needs of the Latin American community in rural Northern Utah. Chi-square analyses indicated a statistically significant association between use of the center and acquisition of English as a second language. No relationship was found between use of the center and perceived discrimination. The results of this study provide valuable demographic data as well as describe some of the experiences Latin American immigrants face upon immigrating to the United States.

(71 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my thanks to my committee members, Drs. Carla Reyes, Lani Van Dusen, and Nick Eastmond, each of whom has contributed significantly to my professional development. I would also like to thank Leo Bravo and the Board of Directors at the Hispanic Community Center for their help and support.

I give special thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support, encouragement, and help. I could not have done it without all of you.

Holly McFarland

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
METHOD	23
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	27
CONCLUSION	38
REFERENCES	45
APPENDIXES	51
Appendix A Survey of the Hispanic Population of Cache Valley--Spanish	52
Appendix B Survey of the Hispanic Population of Cache Valley--English	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Items Used in Analysis	26
2	Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Hispanic Center by Perceived English Ability	30
3	Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Service Type by Perceived English Ability	32
4	Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Hispanic Center by Perceived Discrimination	33
5	Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Service Type by Perceived Discrimination	36

INTRODUCTION

Hispanics are one of the fastest growing minorities in the United States (Bureau of Census, 1990). According to the Bureau of Census, Hispanics now represent approximately 10.2% of the general population, as compared to 73.6% White, and 12% Black. By the year 2050, the Bureau of Census estimates that Hispanics will comprise 22.5% of the general population.

In Utah, it is estimated that Hispanics comprise approximately 5% of the total population, numbering at 84,597 (Bureau of Census, 1990). These numbers continue to increase with each passing year. As the number of Hispanics and immigrants increases, it becomes increasingly important and challenging for the state to meet their medical, social, and mental health needs. There are numerous challenges immigrants must face associated with immigration. Upon settling in the United States, Hispanics must secure employment and residence, and learn to utilize social, medical, and other services. As this population continues to grow, social service providers must also grow to meet the needs of this population.

The 1990 Bureau of Census estimated the Hispanic population in Logan and surrounding Cache Valley areas to be 1,780. This number represents approximately 2.5% of the total population. More recent estimates of the Latin American population in Cache Valley suggest that this number has grown in the past few years. The Hispanic Community Center of Cache Valley reportedly served almost 2,000 Hispanics between 1997 and 1998 (Leo Bravo, personal communication, April 20, 1998).

The term "Hispanic" is generally used as a blanket term and can refer to numerous cultures, including Spanish Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, Cuban Americans, and other Spanish-speaking peoples. Some authors have argued that the term "Hispanic" is inaccurate, in that it incorrectly implies an origin from Spain (Comas-Diaz, 1990). The subjects used in this study are exclusively descendants of Latin American countries; hence, this paper will use the term "Latin American" while recognizing that it is more accurate because it is more specific than "Hispanic," but that it can also refer to numerous cultures.

While not all of one culture, Latin American immigrants do share some common cultural characteristics as well as similar experiences. The objectives of most Latin American immigrants are clear: find employment and residence, earn money, learn English, and provide a better life for themselves and their children. Interestingly, many Latin American immigrants also maintain a desire to return to their countries of origin once they have established financial security (Romanucci-Ross & DeVoss, 1995).

As Latin American immigrants settle in the United States, they experience the process of acculturation. Acculturation is defined by Negy and Woods (1992) as "the transfer of culture from one group of people to another group of people" (p. 225). The term "acculturation" has also been used to describe the process and experiences associated with the adoption of the majority group's culture by a minority group (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). This process is frequently viewed as a form of adaptation (Berry, 1980). Hence, as it relates to the United States where the dominant or majority culture consists primarily of Anglo Americans, those from non-Anglo cultures are said to have

become acculturated when they have adopted the language, social customs, values, behaviors, and other characteristics of the Anglo American culture (Negy & Woods, 1992). Some of the experiences of acculturation can have negative impact on immigrants' psychological well-being. Among these shared experiences are stress associated with leaving behind their homes and ways of life, difficulty obtaining medical and other social services, discrimination, and stress associated with learning English as a second language. These experiences comprise what is known as "acculturative stress." Smart and Smart (1995) defined acculturative stress as the stress that is created when adapting to the rules and behavioral characteristics of another culture.

There is a host of literature examining the effects of acculturative stress on immigrants, as well as first- and second-generation Latin Americans. While there are multiple factors in acculturative stress, only Latin American immigrants' experiences with two elements of acculturative stress will be examined in this thesis. These are acquisition of English as a second language and discrimination.

The majority of findings in this line of research indicate that acculturative stress can affect nearly every part of immigrant life (including home and family life, finding and maintaining employment and residence, obtaining medical, social and other services, etc) and can have severely negative consequences on these areas (Cervantes, Salgado de Snyder, & Padilla, 1989; Mena et al., 1987; Smart & Smart, 1995). Research has shown that acquisition and use of English and the perception of discrimination are among the most important elements of acculturative stress, and can have the most impact on acculturation (Cardo, 1994; Matsumoto, 1994).

One of the most important adaptations to a new culture involves learning the language of the dominant culture. The acquisition of a second language is affected by numerous variables, including motivation level, age, employment, socioeconomic status, and competence in the native language, as well as access to support systems and opportunities to learn and practice a new language (Cummins, 1984; Langdon & Merino, 1992). There are other variables that may affect acquisition of a second language that have not been researched. One such variable is the role community support centers play in facilitating English acquisition among Latin American immigrants.

Language acquisition and use has been a well-documented measure of acculturation (Epstein, Botvin, Dusenbury, Diaz, & Kerner, 1996; Langdon, 1996). Some research suggests that as Latin American immigrants become more proficient in the language of the dominant culture, they may perceive more discrimination (Burnham, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987). Other literature suggests that acculturation (as measured by language acquisition and use) contributes to psychological well-being (Amaro, 1990; Tran, 1994; Zea, Jarama, & Bianchi, 1995). Clearly, a consensus has not been reached.

Another fairly well-researched element of acculturation is the discrimination Latin Americans frequently encounter in the United States. Latin Americans frequently perceive more discrimination than Anglos, and in more settings than reported by Anglos (Balcazar, Petersen, & Cobas, 1996; Golding & Burnham, 1990; Negy & Woods, 1992). Because discrimination fits under the umbrella of acculturative stress, it can also impact nearly every aspect of immigrants' lives, including employment, residence, and access to medical

and social services. In itself, discrimination comprises a large and significant element of the acculturative stress faced by Latin American immigrants (Smart & Smart, 1995).

While many aspects of perceived discrimination have been researched, the role community support centers play in perceived discrimination has not been well documented. As stated, the literature is also incomplete and inconclusive when addressing the role community support centers play in language acquisition. Indeed, to date no studies have been conducted that examine the effect of community support centers on either acquisition of English as a second language or perceived discrimination using a Latin American immigrant population. Thus, currently, it is unclear what support services do to combat these two aspects of acculturative stress in this population.

Identifying and exploring the relationship of community support centers to Latin American's acquisition of English as a second language may yield valuable information which can help to influence the feasibility, location, quality, and usefulness of services offered to this population. Additionally, if Latin Americans' perceptions of discrimination can be shown to have a direct relationship to use of community support centers, this may have important implications for developing community support centers and offering services to this population.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to U.S. Census data, Hispanic¹ people comprise one of the largest and fastest growing minority groups in the United States today. This population now represents almost 10% of the U.S. population (Bureau of Census, 1990).

The Hispanic population tends to be a young population. The median age for Hispanics is 25, compared to 31.4 in the general population (Bureau of Census, 1990). Hispanics also tend to have larger families. On average, they have approximately 50% more children (i.e., 5 vs. 2.3) than Anglos (Bureau of Census, 1990). It is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately account for all documented and undocumented immigrants who enter the United States. Immigration laws require documentation for temporary or permanent residence in the U.S. Immigrants who are undocumented often face deportation. The Bureau of Census estimates approximately 16.9 million documented Hispanics. While unreliable, some estimates of undocumented immigrants living in the United States are as high as 500,000 (Hispanics, 1994).

Latin American immigrants often experience acculturative stress as identified by Smart and Smart (1995), including difficulty finding and maintaining employment and residence, financial stress, difficulty associated with minimal familiarity with the dominant culture and language, as well as discrimination and prejudice across a variety of situations. These experiences tend to differ across Latin American groups based on characteristics such as age, family size, educational attainment, country of birth, language acculturation,

¹ The Bureau of Census used the term "Hispanic" to refer to Latin American and other primarily Spanish-speaking groups.

social isolation, and years of residence in the United States. Acculturative stress appears to be less severe for immigrants who are more educated and who speak English upon entering the U.S. Additionally, immigrants with larger families may experience more severe economic stress because of the responsibility of caring for numerous children (Krause & Goldenhar, 1992; Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991).

On average, Latin American immigrants receive less education, employment, income, medical care, mental health care, and other social rewards than other populations in the United States. Researchers have speculated that this may be due to Latin Americans' unfamiliarity with the dominant culture, their lack of use of the English language, as well as the dominant culture's reluctance to integrate Latin Americans (Korzenny & Schiff, 1987; LeVine & Padilla, 1980; Sue, 1981). Avila and Avila (1988) stated that "the Mexican American is looked upon as a foreigner who has to be acculturated . . . usually at the expense of his or her own cultural heritage" (p. 311). All of these experiences are subsumed under the concept of acculturative stress.

Elements of Acculturative Stress

Several common elements and effects of acculturative stress are identified in the literature (Krause & Goldenhar, 1992; Smart & Smart, 1995). These stresses are assessed through the use of depression inventories, life-satisfaction questionnaires, hospital and community service records, and diagnostic interviews (Gomez, Zurcher, Farris, & Becker, 1985; Salgado de Snyder, 1987; Schneider, Laury, & Hughes, 1980). The various stressors measured include stress associated with the loss of the familiar lifestyle, a strain

on physical health, decision-making and occupational functioning, discrimination, role entrapment and status leveling, and difficulty associated with lack of familiarity with the dominant language. All of these stressors are interrelated to some degree. The reader should keep in mind that while they are discussed separately, they interact with each other to create acculturative stress.

Leaving the Country of Origin

Immigration from another country almost always carries with it an element of trauma. Leaving friends and family to journey into an unknown country can cause psychological and emotional stress (Avila & Avila, 1988; Burnham et al., 1987; Smart & Smart, 1995). This can negatively affect immigrants' physical and mental health. Often, Latin Americans immigrate to the U.S. with hopes of achieving a better life for themselves and their posterity. Unfortunately, some never achieve these dreams. Some of the barriers include difficulty finding and maintaining employment that allows them to meet minimum financial needs, difficulty acquiring the English language, and discrimination within employment and social circles. Black, Paz, and DeBlasie (1991) asserted, "The Mexican-American experience has been disappointing. The Great American Dream of a better life has been realized by relatively few" (p. 224). Upon immigrating to the United States, most Latin American immigrants begin to cope with the loss of their familiar life style, including the support network consisting of friends and close family, identifying and being familiar with the dominant culture and customs, and speaking the dominant language. Some immigrants are able to maintain close contact with their native countries.

In fact, many travel back and forth between the U.S. and their permanent Latin American homes. Numerous others, however, leave their homes, friends, and relatives permanently. These immigrants leave behind an extremely important source of social and emotional support and often feel isolated in their new country (Cervantes et al., 1989).

The fact that so many immigrants leave their families behind creates a unique situation that can negatively impact their acquiring English as a second language. Many Latin American cultures consider the family and close friends to be important sources of support (Cervantes et al., 1989). As immigrants leave this source of support, they often become isolated from their friends and families. Immigrants may become even more isolated because they do not speak English, and often have fewer opportunities to interact with members of the dominant culture (Salgado de Snyder, 1987).

Salgado de Snyder (1987) examined the effects of acculturation on Mexican American immigrants and their use of English. She found that immigrants who migrate after the age of 14 often feel pressure to succeed in their new country. Additionally, lack of communication and other skills and having left behind their support systems constitutes a high-risk situation for the development of negative psychological stress. Immigrants' unfamiliarity with English can lead to isolation from mainstream culture. These stressors can impact immigrants' abilities to learn English by isolating them from important exposure to mainstream culture and the English language (Espin, 1987).

Occupational and Residential Difficulties

Upon arriving in the United States, many Latin American immigrants face difficulty

finding employment and residence. This often contributes to acculturative stress (Comas-Diaz, 1990). Psychological needs are often neglected or ignored when pressing demands such as money and shelter are a primary concern.

The many elements that create acculturative stress, particularly discrimination and the acquisition and use of English, may affect an immigrant's ability to obtain employment. The labor market in the United States is becoming increasingly competitive. As technology continues to grow, there is less of a need for unskilled labor. Jobs requiring highly skilled people are becoming more common. Additionally, as the population continues to grow, so does the number of people seeking jobs. Latin American immigrants who experience acculturative stress are at a disadvantage when competing with a nonstressed colleague for job entry and maintenance. The stresses associated with acculturation may interfere with an immigrant's ability to perform well. As technology continues to drive the labor market, Latin Americans, who typically have less education because of a lack of opportunity and exposure, will necessarily be at a disadvantage (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Additionally, Latin American immigrants almost universally send a portion of their earnings to their families in their home countries. This creates a paradox, in that immigrants endure psychological and cultural losses in order to help those at home. Thus, they experience many elements of acculturative stress, but they know they are making a tremendous difference in the lives of their loved ones at home (Romanucci-Ross & DeVoss, 1995).

Discrimination and Prejudice

Latin American immigrants may face discrimination and prejudice, defined as “. . . effects of selective, differential treatment based on one’s ethnic group membership” (Cardo, 1994, p. 50). This can alienate them from the White culture. Immigrants may be isolated from members of the dominant culture in nearly every area of life. They may not receive the opportunities in education, employment, and civic and social situations that members of the dominant culture often enjoy (Black et al., 1991). Latin American immigrants seem to encounter these experiences almost across the board, in numerous situations involving employment, residence, legal matters, and other daily activities (Smart & Smart, 1994). For example, Smart and Smart (1995) have suggested that members in the dominant White culture had a tendency to perceive Latin Americans as being suited for agricultural labor, unskilled construction, or janitorial and maintenance work. Members of the dominant culture often questioned attempts to place Latin Americans in jobs that were not in line with the traditional stereotypes. Indeed, reluctance, detailed questioning, and even anger were shown when attempts were made to place Latin American immigrants in a broader range of positions than those that were the usual practice. This serves only to heighten stress and may affect social, family, and financial areas (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Role entrapment and status leveling occur when members of the majority culture ascribe similar characteristics to people of similar group membership. Thus, all Latin Americans are perceived as being more similar to each other than they are to the majority culture. Hence, they may be categorized according to widely held, but demeaning stereotypes.

Romanucci-Ross and DeVoss (1995) have asserted that Latin American immigrants are often subject to "instrumental exploitation" for economic purposes. This phenomenon occurs when immigrants are hired as low-paid workers to work in extremely undesirable, but needed jobs. Additionally, immigrants may also be subject to psychological abuse, such as being stereotyped as "lazy," "inherently inferior," or "a drain on society," and therefore less deserving of sharing in the dominant society's ways of life. These authors suggested that psychological and economic exploitation are opposite sides of the same coin. "The psychological exploitation and disparagement is used to rationalize the dominant culture's economic treatment of these groups" (Romanucci-Ross & DeVoss, p. 327).

Language Acquisition

Finally, immigrants often face stress associated with learning the dominant language. Many Latin American immigrants learn only minimal English (i.e., approximately second- or third-grade level). Often, Spanish is spoken in the home as a primary language, which may serve to deter Latin Americans from learning English. This appears to be due, at least in part, to practice time. Because conversational English is often not used in the home, immigrants may not derive the benefits from learning, practicing, and speaking English casually (Smart & Smart, 1994).

Language acquisition and use can influence how Latin Americans are perceived by members of the dominant culture. Taylor and Lambert (1996) examined how minorities accommodate to and are accommodated by the majority culture. They identified a clash

between two ideologies, which centers on retention of culture, and language acquisition and use. The first ideology, assimilation, represents the view that immigrants should adopt the mainstream culture (including the dominant language) at the expense of their native cultures. Those who advocate the second ideology, multiculturalism, believe that minority group members should be encouraged to retain their native cultures and languages as much as possible. In their study, they examined the perceptions of the dominant culture in Northern America, as well as those of various immigrant populations, including Latin Americans. Latin Americans scored significantly higher than other minority groups in their desires to retain their native cultures. This pattern was consistent in both recently arrived immigrants, and those who had maintained long-term residence (10 or more years). While a consensus emerged among the groups that it is acceptable to maintain the native culture in the home, members of the dominant culture differed from immigrant groups in their beliefs about the public domain. They indicated that they believe that at least in public, immigrants should adopt the ways of life of the mainstream culture. This is primarily because they believe that accommodating every minority culture in America places an unfair burden on those who must accommodate.

Taylor and Lambert (1996) also examined group perceptions of when and where to use English. Members of the dominant culture rated English as the language that should be used in the public domain. Immigrant groups rated use of both English and Spanish to be equally acceptable in the public domain. Interestingly, mainstream Americans indicated less tolerance for native languages to be spoken in the home than for maintenance of native cultures in the home. The authors suggested that for mainstream

Americans, language has a special significance, which may be due at least in part to the perception that popularity of Spanish is threatening to many long-term Anglos. The authors indicated that long-term Anglos are threatened by the popularity of Spanish because it is unfamiliar, and represents a change from the traditional English-only way of life (Taylor & Lambert, 1996).

The unfavorable perception that many mainstream Americans have of Latin American immigrants may be amplified by studies examining differences in intelligence. Latin American immigrants whose native language is Spanish score approximately 12-15% lower on standard tests of intelligence than those observed for Anglos (Matsumoto, 1994). The debate that has arisen around this observation has been named the "nature versus nurture" debate. Those who advocate the nature ideology argue that differences in IQ scores among different ethnic groups are due to inherited differences that are inborn. For example, Arthur Jensen (1981), a leading proponent of the nature position, believes that 80% of a person's intelligence is inherited. He further argues that biological differences explain the difference in scores on intelligence tests. He argues that programs for underprivileged ethnic minorities are not effective, because they cannot impact their inborn intellectual deficiencies.

Those advocating the nurture position believe culture and environment can fully account for the differences in IQ scores between mainstream Americans and ethnic minorities. One of the most obvious and influential factors on IQ scores is language (Matsumoto, 1994). Often a Spanish version of an IQ test is not available. Consequently, tests are administered to native Spanish-speakers in English. This presents obvious

problems in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of the test. When Spanish instruments are available, they are often translated from English into Spanish. Because of the differences in culture, some English words and concepts may not translate into identical Spanish words and concepts. Thus, even when IQ tests are administered in an immigrant's native language, the test items can discriminate between immigrants and those of the mainstream American culture (Matsumoto, 1994).

Effects of Acculturative Stress

Psychological Stress and Physical Illness

It has been well documented that psychological stress affects mental health and mental well-being. As stress in the environment increases, especially if it is relatively continuous, a body's defense mechanisms may slowly deteriorate. Additionally, stressors can exacerbate previously existing medical conditions (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Berry, 1979; Scott & Scott, 1989; Thoits, 1982; Vargas-Willis & Cervantes, 1987). One of the common denominators in many cases where physical health has been at risk involves disrupted social ties. Acculturation almost invariably carries with it the connotation of disrupted social ties. It may be reasonable to expect greater physical health risks because of the psychosocial stress imposed by acculturation.

Medical Problems

Concomitantly, Latin American immigrants often have difficulty obtaining medical services. Lack of familiarity with the English language can make negotiating a complex

bureaucratic medical system difficult at best. Additionally, many undocumented Latin Americans (so-called "illegal aliens") may be reluctant to seek such services because they fear the consequences of being caught without papers. These consequences may often include deportation to their countries of origin.

Given the difficulty some immigrants encounter when seeking medical services, it is reasonable to expect that this may deter them from seeking psychological services. Additionally, many Latin American cultures view seeking help outside the family and close friends as taboo. Latin Americans are encouraged to rely on their families in times of hardship. Seeking help from other sources may be seen as airing one's dirty laundry in public (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Decision Making

As acculturative stress increases, decision making can be negatively impacted (Smart & Smart, 1995). A person who is under a great deal of stress may narrow the options he/she perceives as viable. Sometimes, otherwise workable options are excluded from consideration. Such cases arise in clinical work with clients who have suicidal ideation. For them, suicide is perceived as the only solution to a problem.

Cervantes et al. (1989) examined levels of stress on immigrants and found that Latin Americans were at risk of having symptoms of depression, somatization, generalized distress, and anxiety. These symptoms may be associated with the perception of narrowing of viable options, which may then lead to increased suicide attempts and completions (DSM-IV, 1994).

Need for Intervention

Research has examined numerous aspects of the Latin American immigrant's experience. These studies range from examining influences on Latin Americans' use of mental health services to acculturative stress to predictors of drug use (Black et al., 1991; Comas-Diaz, 1990; Goldberg & Botvin, 1993; Smart & Smart, 1994, 1995). Literature specifically addressing the mental health needs of the Hispanic population is plentiful, but seems to focus on strategies for incorporating Latin American cultural values into the delivery of services (Black et al., 1991; Comas-Diaz, 1990; Taylor, 1990). For example, Schneider et al. (1980) examined factors that influence Latin American students to utilize mental health services, as well as their perceptions of mental health providers. Latin American students reported they were more likely to talk to a mental health professional than were Anglo students. The results of this study contradicted multitudes of previous research that had indicated that, as a group, Latin American immigrants are significantly less likely to seek psychological services (Black et al., 1991; Comas -Diaz, 1990). One interpretation of this is that Latin American students may experience more difficulties, and may thus be more willing to seek psychological help. A second interpretation holds that Latin Americans may be beginning to believe they can control their own destinies, and that their present difficulties are not due to inherent weaknesses. Thus, they are more likely to demand services and to expect favorable outcomes.

Salgado de Snyder, Diaz-Perez, Acevedo, and Natera (1996) examined the psychological implications and outcomes of immigration in Mexican American women.

The authors used a convenience sample of 24 women living in Mexico focused on the issues Latin American women typically present when seeking psychological help. These issues include gender roles, acculturation, acquisition of English, grief, and loss. Because so many Latin American immigrants do not speak English when they first arrive, this language barrier could interfere with the client-therapist relationship. Therapists who do not speak Spanish and clients who do not speak English must rely on translators, which can place obvious strains on the therapeutic relationship. A Latin American client may feel more comfortable with a therapist who speaks Spanish, and may be more likely to bond with that therapist (Espin, 1987).

In 1994, Cardo identified various and important factors that psychologists should take into account when working with members of a minority population. In general, ethnic awareness (the awareness and importance of ethnicity as a factor in the formation and development of identity) and perception of discrimination were among the most crucial factors when counseling minorities on personal matters.

The elements and effects of acculturative stress combine with psychological and emotional stressors to create a need for mental health services (Black et al., 1991). A good deal of literature has focused on the psychological needs of Latin Americans. The needs identified include a variety of social and psychological services. Access to sources of support, including formal support sources such as psychologists, and more informal support networks have been advocated by recent research (Cardo, 1994; Mayers & Souflee, 1990). Unfortunately, and for a variety of reasons, the majority of Latin Americans often do not utilize these services (Curtis, 1990; O'Sullivan & Lasso, 1992).

Many reasons exist for this.

O'Sullivan and Lasso (1992) speculated on possible causes of the typical underutilization of mental health services by Latin American populations. They suggest that current services offered to this population are incompatible with Latin Americans' cultures. Additionally, these authors experimented to determine whether Latin Americans would remain in treatment longer if they were served by a Latin American staff and/or at a Latin American mental health center. Their results indicated that those who received in "culturally-compatible" services had lower dropout rates and received more individual therapy than did those who received "culturally-incompatible" services (O'Sullivan & Lasso, 1992).

Researchers have speculated other possible causes for Latin American's underutilization of mental health services. The two most common are cost, and the Latin American culture's tendency to negatively view taking one's problems outside of close friends and family circles (Comas-Diaz, 1990). Mental health services may be too costly for recent immigrants, who are more likely to be concerned with immediate and pressing needs such as food and shelter. Additionally, the Latin American culture tends to view negatively taking one's problems outside of close friends and family circles. Often, Latin Americans tend to perceive life as being inherently difficult. Asking for help from other than friends and family can be seen as a weakness. The tendency for Latin Americans to bear their burdens alone in the face of obstacles and hardship is an expression of dignity and strength (Comas-Diaz, 1990; Smart & Smart, 1995). Thus, while effective, formal support (i.e., mental health services) may not always be feasible.

Community social support centers may be a solution that can bridge the gap between support services and culture. These centers could offer various services within the context of the Latin American culture, including facilitation of the process of acculturation by helping Latin Americans become more familiar with the local community, facilitating Latinos' acquisition of the proper legal documentation, assisting them in accessing employment, housing, drivers' licenses, and so forth. Because the centers would be familiar with the Latin American culture, immigrants might be more likely to utilize the services offered. Once established, Latin Americans may feel comfortable utilizing and receiving help from these centers (O'Sullivan & Lasso, 1992). A community center can serve as a social environment, where recent immigrants may gather to interact socially and provide support for one another. They may develop new friendships and new ties that would be in line with the Latin American cultural values of seeking help from close friends and families.

To date, little research has been conducted on social support centers which examine their influence on Latin American immigrants. Much research has been done utilizing refugee populations (Cervantes et al., 1989; Chung & Kagawa-Singer, 1993; Clinton-Davis & Fassil, 1992); however, as a group, refugees tend to be fundamentally different from immigrant populations. For example, as a group, refugees tend to be better educated, affluent, and often seeking political asylum, whereas immigrants tend to be less well educated, more impoverished, and seeking better-paying jobs (Matsumoto, 1994). Because these two populations often differ on so many characteristics, results from studies on refugee populations are not applicable to immigrant populations.

The need for research on community support centers and Latin American immigrants is urgent. As this population continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important to gain an understanding of how to service this population most effectively. What little research has been done suggests that community social support centers may provide at least part of the answer (O'Sullivan & Lasso, 1992). Finally, as English acquisition and discrimination have been implicated in recent research as important aspects of acculturative stress, it would be beneficial to explore how community social support centers can impact these domains.

Conclusion

The literature examined in this review has identified key difficulties associated with Latin Americans' immigration to the United States, and their subsequent acculturation. These difficulties are numerous and taxing on an immigrant's mental and physical health, occupational functioning, and overall resiliency. The needs of the Latin American immigrant population vary, but are focused around areas of support. Sources of formal support, such as mental health services that are able to accommodate clients who do not speak English, are not always available. If available, they may be beyond the financial reach of many immigrants. Community social support centers may be able to combat this problem by offering low-cost or free support services to this population.

Very little research has been conducted regarding the effects of community social support on acquiring English as a second language and on perceived discrimination. A study examining the possible contributions of a community support center in easing

immigrants' acculturative stress by assisting them in acquiring and using English may provide important information about servicing this population. Additionally, immigrants who have access to a community support center may perceive less discrimination, which may ease the effects of acculturative stress. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the literature in two areas: the effect of a Hispanic community support center on the acquisition and use of English, and on the Latin Americans' perceptions of discrimination.

METHOD

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of a community support center on Latin American immigrants' perceived levels of use of the English language and discrimination. This thesis addresses the following questions: Is the use of a community support center associated with Latin Americans' perceived level of English use? Is the use of the community support center associated with Latin Americans' perceptions of discrimination?

Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design and constituted clustered-sampling survey research. The independent variable in this study was use of the Hispanic Community Center. The dependent variables included acquisition and use of English as a second language, and perception of discrimination.

Participants

Participants included 214 Latin American men and women from northern rural Utah, with origins primarily from Mexico. They were solicited from a Catholic church and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, employees of Hispanic businesses, patrons of the Hispanic Community Center, and users of a public library.

Instrumentation

The data for this study were obtained from a needs assessment survey developed and conducted by the Hispanic Community Center of Cache Valley in Logan, Utah (Appendices A and B). The needs assessment, written in Spanish, was designed by the Hispanic Community Center for several reasons. Members on the board for the Center wanted to obtain basic demographic information of a sample of the Latin Americans who routinely utilize the Center, as well as on those who are not aware of the Center. Additionally, feedback was sought as to how the Hispanic Center was meeting perceived needs of the patrons, and what services were still needed. Finally, the assessment was designed to provide information on Latin Americans' acquisition of English and perceptions of discrimination, as well as adjustment to the community. As the instrument was designed specifically to target a sample of the Latin American population in Cache Valley, no reliability or validity data are available.

The needs assessment survey contains a total of 35 items, 22 of which are open-ended questions and 13 close-ended. Some of the open-ended questions ask subjects to mark an option and respond individually with other information. The close-ended questions are either dichotomous, or do not allow for individual responses. The survey is approximately four pages in length and can be completed in 10-15 minutes. No names are requested, as the survey was designed specifically to ensure anonymity.

Procedure

Two-hundred fourteen surveys were administered to Latin Americans of varying backgrounds. Volunteer administrators from a local university, all fluent in Spanish, were made familiar with the needs assessment and the purpose of the study. These volunteers then went to a Catholic church, three meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and local businesses (e.g., a Latino grocery store) to hand out surveys. All Latin American immigrants who entered the Hispanic Community Center were asked to complete a survey. Because it was anticipated that some participants would not be fluent in reading and writing Spanish, volunteer administrators were on hand to assist such participants. All participants completed the survey on the spot, and none requested or accepted help in reading and writing Spanish. Approximately 100 cases of data were missing. These surveys were collected at the Catholic church but were lost.

All items were tabulated by frequency. Responses to the open-ended questions were recorded and categorized, and frequencies for the categories were generated.

Data were analyzed with various descriptive techniques. The demographic information and items 6, 8, 17, and 20 (see Table 1) were examined to determine the effect of utilizing the community support center on perceived discrimination and language acquisition. Each response was then recorded.

Additionally, in order to explore the role of the Center in the acquisition of English as a second language, a chi-squared analysis was conducted on items 17 and 20. The data were sorted according to responses on item 17 as follows: Use of the Hispanic

Table 1

Items Used in Analysis

Item	Question	Response	Code
6	Do you understand and speak English?	Yes/no/little	1/2/3
8	What are some of the problems you have experienced?	Discrimination/blank	2/1
17	Do you know something about the Hispanic Center?	Yes/no	2/1
20	What services have you used?	Legal/driving/blank	3/2/1
**	Use of Center	Yes/no	2/1

Community Center constituted the independent variable. The dependent variable was use of English. Additionally, chi-squared analyses were conducted on items 17, 20, and 8.

Response options to item 8 include a discrimination option. Discrimination served as the dependent variable. Again, the independent variable was use of the Hispanic Community Center. Responses to item 11 were coded and tabulated to provide an estimate of the most common situations in which immigrants have experienced discrimination.

Discrimination was considered high if a respondent indicated she/he had experienced discrimination in more than half of the eight situations listed. This is consistent with other instruments that measure discrimination (Cardo, 1994). The number of situations indicated by respondents ranged from none to eight.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The results of this research yield valuable information regarding the perceptions of Latin American immigrants. Additionally, this instrument has helped to describe the basic demographics of the Latin American population in Cache Valley, Utah.

As the focus of this study has been on the use of a community support center and Latin Americans' perceptions of discrimination and use of English as a second language, many survey variables will not be examined. Numerous variables identified in the survey, such as perceived difficulties of living in Cache Valley (other than discrimination), encounters with the police, issues and concerns about participants' children, and other such experiences, will not be examined for the purpose of this thesis. These variables will be identified and discussed in another paper that will be prepared for the use of the Hispanic Community Center.

Demographic Information

The average age of the respondents was 31.2 years, which is higher than the estimated 25 years for Hispanics indicated by the national average. Interestingly, the average age of the participants more closely resembled that of the general U.S. population, estimated at 31.4 (Bureau of Census, 1990). One explanation of this discrepancy could be that younger Latin Americans may prefer to remain in states that are closer to their countries of origin and have not immigrated to Cache Valley.

Fifty-two percent of the respondents were male ($n = 111$), and 47% were female ($n = 100$). One percent of the participants did not indicate gender. There was a slight difference in age between males and females. The average age for males was 32, and the average age of females was 30.3. Fifty-seven percent ($n = 122$) indicated they are married, 30% ($n = 64$) were single, 3% ($n = 6$) were divorced and 1.4% ($n = 3$) were widowed. Nine percent ($n = 19$) of the respondents did not indicate marital status. Unfortunately, more detailed information on the demographics of the general Latin American immigrant population as well as Anglo residents living in Cache Valley is not available as Cache Valley's county recorder is still in the process of gathering these data.

As has been well established, the blanket term "Hispanic" or even "Latin American" may at times be misleading in that the terms can be used to represent numerous different countries, each with vastly different customs and cultures. For this reason, the needs assessment probed respondents' countries of origin in an effort to better and more accurately describe the population in Cache Valley. Respondents' countries of origin varied widely, and were represented by 11 different countries. By far, the majority of the respondents ($n = 138$, 64%) indicated origins from Mexico. Eight percent ($n = 18$) indicated Guatemala as their country of origin. El Salvador was indicated by 8% ($n = 17$) of the respondents. Chile was endorsed by 5% ($n = 11$). The other countries included Peru, Colombia, Honduras, Argentina, Venezuela, and Ecuador for a total of 19% ($n = 20$).

The average number of years Latin American immigrants have lived in Cache Valley was 9.26. Additionally, most ($n = 170$) indicated they liked living in Cache Valley very much. This may be an interesting finding, in that some literature has suggested that many Latin Americans often live and work in the United States for part of the year only to return to their countries of origin for the rest of the year (Comas-Diaz, 1990). It may be that those who are living in Cache Valley have adopted patterns unlike those of the seasonal immigrant worker, and have chosen to relocate permanently. It is possible these immigrants perceive some of the benefits of living in Cache Valley and remain for that purpose. It is also possible that these respondents do return to their countries of origin frequently and maintain close familial and cultural ties, but still perceive themselves as living in Cache Valley. The needs assessment did not specifically request information about seasonal migration patterns.

First Research Question

The first research question addresses whether use of a community social support center is associated with an increase or a decrease in Latin Americans' perceived level of English use. A chi-squared test of association was performed using respondents' answers to item 6, "Do you understand and speak English?" and item a newly recoded variable (Use of Center) based on item 20, "What services have you used?". Respondents who indicated using one or more services were coded as having used the Center. Those who did not indicate using any services were coded as not having used the Center. Nearly half of the respondents ($n = 105$) indicated they speak English. Thirty-seven percent ($n = 80$)

indicated they speak no English. Almost 43% ($n = 92$) of the respondents indicated they know of the Center, and 22% of the respondents ($n = 48$) reported having used the Center. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents ($n = 122$) indicated not knowing of the Center, and 77.6% ($n = 166$) indicated not having used the Center. Approximately 15% ($n = 32$) of the respondents did not indicate whether they knew of the Center. Table 2 indicates the frequencies of the respondents' reported use of the Hispanic Community Center by their perceived level of English use. The chi-squared test performed on these data was statistically significant and supported the existence of an association between perceived use of English and use of the Center, $\chi^2(3, N = 214) = 10.58, p < .05$. It appears utilizers of the Center who perceive themselves as speaking fluent English are more likely to use the Center than those who perceive themselves as not being fluent in English. Thus, use of the Center is associated with an increase in the respondents' reported level of English use.

Of those using the Center, 77% spoke English, as compared to 58% of those not using the Center. While statistically significant, the interpretation of these findings is somewhat difficult to confirm because the Center does not currently offer programs that

Table 2

Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Hispanic Center by Perceived English Ability

<u>Center use</u>	<u>Speak English</u>	<u>Speak a little English</u>	<u>Do not speak English</u>
Use the center	25 (52%)	12 (25%)	11 (23%)
Don't use center	80 (48%)	16 (10%)	69 (42%)

facilitate the acquisition of English. At one time, the Center did offer English classes, but these classes received only minimal support in the way of participation. The Center subsequently stopped providing this service. This would seem to make unlikely the possibility of the Center facilitating English acquisition; however, there may be other factors associated with use of the Center which could explain this finding. Smart and Smart (1995) have suggested that Latin American immigrants who are more fluent in English are also more acculturated than those who are not as fluent. It is possible that using the Center facilitates the process of acculturation by encouraging a sense of belonging and group membership. Participants who use the center may then be more likely to utilize other sources of support and be involved in other activities. This could subsequently increase their exposure to and use of English.

Additionally, it is possible that some of the services offered by the Center contribute to the process of acculturation, and the acquisition of English. To help elaborate on the above finding, a chi-squared analysis was also performed between items 20 and 6 to determine whether an association exists between perceived English use and the types of services used by the respondents, $\chi^2(15, N = 214) = 22.14, p > .05$.

Table 3 presents the frequencies of Center users' endorsed type of service utilization by their perception of use of English. Findings indicate no statistically significant association between perceived English fluency and the types of services used by respondents. Participants who perceived themselves as fluent in English appear to be just as likely to use the same services as those who perceive themselves not to be fluent in English.

Table 3

Frequency of Respondents's Use of Service Type by Perceived English Ability

<u>Services</u>	<u>Speak English</u>	<u>Speak a little English</u>	<u>Do not speak English</u>
Legal aid	15 (31%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)
Driving and transportation	8 (17%)	6 (13%)	8 (17%)
Employment	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Counseling/medical	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)

These data are somewhat difficult to interpret, for two primary reasons. First, the small N sizes almost certainly contribute to the nonsignificant findings. Second, many participants did not indicate the services they used. It may be that significant differences in service utilization between English speakers and non-English speakers exist, but are masked by nonresponses. While not statistically significant, there does appear to be a trend in respondents using legal aid and speaking English. Because a causal relationship is uncertain with these data, it is unclear exactly how use of the Center influences perceived use of English. It is possible that those who utilize the Center are more likely to also utilize other community agencies. If this is true, then increased English use is not a direct benefit of the Center, but rather, may be facilitated by the process of acculturation, which is promoted by using the Center.

Second Research Question

The second research question addressed whether an association exists between the

use of the Center and Latin Americans' perceptions of discrimination. A chi-squared test of association was performed on the newly coded variable based on a single response option within item 8, "What are some problems you've experienced in Cache Valley?" and the recoded variable use of the Center. Response alternatives to item 8 include a "discrimination" option, which was coded and tabulated by frequency for the analysis.

The frequencies of the respondents who indicated discrimination by their reported use of the Center are presented in Table 4. Over half of the respondents indicated experiencing discrimination ($n = 122$). The results of this analysis were not statistically significant and did not support the existence of an association between the use of the Center and perception of discrimination, $\chi^2(1, N = 214) = .64, p > .05$. The data appear to indicate no differences between perception of discrimination between Latin American immigrants who utilize the Center and those who do not. One explanation for this is the nature of the question(s). The survey-format represents a marked difference in cultural norms for disclosing information. Since participants were members of the Latin American culture, which is a very interpersonally oriented and interactive culture, they may not have been accustomed to divulging information in this way. This could have inhibited their responding to these items.

Table 4

Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Hispanic Center by Perceived Discrimination

Center use	Perceived discrimination	Did not perceive discrimination
Use Center	30 (63%)	18 (37%)
Do not use Center	93 (56%)	73 (44%)

Additionally, the small sample size probably contributed to the nonsignificant findings. It is also possible that discrimination is related to background and origin, which, obviously, is not impacted by using the Center.

It is interesting to note that while not statistically significant, there does appear to be a trend in the opposite direction of the hypothesis (i.e., more of those who use the Center perceive discrimination than those who do not use the Center). One explanation involves the services offered by the Center. The Center offers services to combat discrimination, including legally fighting suspected racially-based accusations, speeding tickets, and other legal problems. Additionally, the Center works to educate local law enforcement about the prevalence of discrimination. This is in an effort to increase awareness and prevention. Thus, it may be that more Center users perceived discrimination because they rely on the Center to help them fight it.

The discrimination item asks whether the respondent has experienced discrimination in each of six situations (residence, shopping, employment, religion, social, and legal). The average number of discrimination events endorsed by respondents was 1.27. Nearly half of the respondents ($n = 92$) indicated no discrimination events. Thirty-six percent of the respondents endorsed items indicating perceived discrimination in the legal system, either from police or the court system. Thirty-one percent of the respondents indicated perceived discrimination in residence, either in seeking or maintaining residence. Twenty-five percent of the respondents endorsed items indicating discrimination in employment. Finally, 18% of the respondents endorsed items indicating discrimination in shopping. It is interesting to note that while most respondents indicated

fairly widespread perceptions of discrimination, 80% of the total sample also indicated liking Cache Valley very much. Perhaps these respondents perceive the benefits of living in Cache Valley (low crime, small cities, natural beauty, community-oriented population) outweigh such unpleasant aspects as discrimination.

To help explain the above finding, a chi-squared analysis was also performed on items 20 and 8 to determine whether an association exists between perceived discrimination and the types of services used. Table 5 presents the frequencies of the Center users' perceptions of discrimination by the types of services used. The results of this test were not statistically significant, and do not support the existence of an association between perceived discrimination and type of service utilization, $\chi^2(5, N = 214) = 4.81, p > .05$. Those who perceived discrimination were just as likely to utilize the same services as those who did not perceive discrimination. These data are somewhat incomplete, as many participants ($n = 73$) did not respond to item 20. Again, the checklist nature of the question(s) may have been a contributing factor to the nonresponses. Additionally, it is also possible that respondents who had used services left this item blank, not distinguishing the service by a category (e.g., legal service). It is also difficult to know whether responses left blank in item 8 were indicating not perceiving discrimination, or whether the respondent simply skipped the item, choosing not to answer.

Additionally, to more fully explain the association between perception of discrimination and use of the Center, a t test was conducted on the variables "Use of Center" and the number of discrimination events endorsed by each participant. Although

Table 5

Frequency of Respondents' Reported Use of Service Type by Perceived Discrimination

<u>Services</u>	<u>Perceived discrimination</u>	<u>Did not perceive discrimination</u>
Legal aid	12 (30%)	11 (28%)
Driving and transportation	16 (33%)	6 (27%)
Employment	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
<u>Counseling/medical</u>	<u>1 (3%)</u>	<u>1 (3%)</u>

the chi-squared analyses indicated no differences between groups in the perception of discrimination, there may have been a difference in the severity of discrimination reported by participants. The mean for Center users was 1.3 while the mean for nonusers was 1.16. The results of this t test were not statistically significant, and did not support an association between use of the Center and number of discrimination events endorsed, $t(213) = 4.03, p > .05$. These results appear to resemble the general trend of the overall discrimination results.

Additional Information

The majority of the respondents (48%) who indicated awareness of the center endorsed using the legal aid ($n = 23$). Forty-six percent ($n = 22$) of those aware of the Center endorsed having taken the driver's education course offered by the Center. Most other respondents ($n = 44$), however, indicated not having used any services.

While it appears many Latin American immigrants who are aware of the Center

also utilize its services, the data also seem to indicate there is a substantial portion of this sample is aware of the Center, but do not utilize its services. This is an interesting finding and may be practically important. There are several reasons these respondents may not be utilizing the Center. The most likely explanation is that these respondents may be simply using the services offered by other service agencies . It is also possible they are not familiar with the types of services the Center has to offer. Finally, it is possible they have chosen not to utilize the Center for other reasons. For example, much of the population in Cache Valley identifies with and participates in a religious affiliation known as Mormonism. It is possible those respondents who are aware of the Center and choose not to utilize it are affiliated with another religion and perceive the Center as being a "Mormon-operated" or "Mormon-only" Center. While this is only speculation, as religious affiliation was not addressed in the survey, the director of the Hispanic Community Center, as well as the board of directors, has noted this is a possibility (Leo Bravo, personal communication, April, 12, 1998).

CONCLUSION

Demographic Data

The demographic data provided by this study are valuable in describing the Latin-American population in rural Northern Utah. In general, demographics (average age, male to female ratio) were somewhat discrepant from that indicated by the national census. It is possible that the Latin American immigrant population of Cache Valley differs from that of the rest of the nation and is not an accurate representation of the Latin American immigrant population throughout the country. As such, the remainder of these findings may not be indicative of the Latin American population at large.

Level of English Use

The chi-squared tests of association indicated use of the Hispanic Community Center is associated with a higher level of Latin Americans' perceived English use. The data appear to indicate that the Latin American immigrants who used the Community Center tended to perceive themselves as better English-speakers than those who did not use the Center. It is possible that participants who utilize the Center may be more acculturated, and so, more likely to access other services and participate in other activities where they are exposed to more English. Smart and Smart (1995) argued that more acculturated immigrants have better English skills. The process of this acculturation could be facilitated by use of the Center.

The specific mechanisms in the Center that may be promoting acculturation are difficult to determine. A second chi-squared analysis was conducted in an attempt to identify whether the types of services used were associated with English use; however, this analysis failed to support the existence of such an association. The nonsignificant findings could be due, at least in part, to the small N sizes obtained in the sample.

Perception of Discrimination

The third chi-squared analysis did not indicate an association between use of the Hispanic Community Center and Latin Americans' perception of discrimination. Latin Americans who used the community support center tended to perceive discrimination at the same level as those who did not use the Center. The most likely explanation for this is that discrimination is based on background and origin, which is not impacted by using the Center.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that must be addressed. First, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the sample to the population. Approximately one third of the original data for this study were lost and were unable to be replaced. These data were in the possession of the Hispanic Community Center and were lost during an office move. Attempts were made to re-collect the data from the same Latin American groups, but nearly all participants (n = 228) declined to complete the survey a second

time. This created the small sample sizes, which probably contributed to nonsignificant statistical findings.

A power analysis was conducted to determine whether the trends in the data would be statistically significant if the N sizes were increased and to reduce the chance of committing a Type I error. The results of the power analysis indicated the minimum required sample size with $\alpha = .05$ and a critical effect size of .10 is 1333 (Kraemer and Thiemann, 1987). Thus, the trends shown in the data may prove to be statistically significant if the sample size were increased.

Additionally, this research may not apply to Latin American immigrants living outside of rural Northern Utah. This study was designed specifically to yield information for the rural Utah population, and as such, may not be applicable to other, particularly urban populations. It is possible significant differences exist between this population and other populations. As already noted, age differences exist between the sample used (32) and the national sample (25). Differences in housing, income, crime rate, and the number of people who live here could all be contributing factors of whether a participant utilizes the Hispanic Community Center. For example, as Cache Valley is dominated by the presence of Utah State University, the influx of college students needing housing and jobs may make finding these more difficult than would be in a larger city.

Additionally, occupants of rural Utah are predominantly of the Mormon faith. This variable was not specifically addressed in this survey, and it may be that the majority of the respondents were Mormon. This could have significant implications, because the Mormon church has numerous social service organizations and agencies offered by people

who speak Spanish that may have been utilized by participants who do not utilize the Center. The L.D.S. church also provides financial assistance to the Center to help provide services to the Latin American population. Conversely, it is also possible that many of the respondents belong to different religions and utilize the services offered by those religions (e.g., the Catholic church). Since many of the Center's founders are Mormon, it is possible that nonutilizers perceive the Center as a "Mormon-only" or a "Mormon-operated" center, which may inhibit their use (Leo Bravo, personal communication, April 12, 1998).

The needs assessment, the instrument used to assess use of English and perception of discrimination, is itself somewhat problematic. It is generally subjective in nature and without behavioral validation. Thus, this measure may have some of the problems associated with any measure that relies mostly on self-report, namely, that participants respond in a manner which is inconsistent with their actual behavior. Additionally, the specific items used to gather information on English use and perception of discrimination did not offer definitions of these terms and, as such, may be subject to different interpretations by different participants. Finally, these items were not sensitive to different levels of discrimination and English use. For example, the item measuring English use was not scaled to provide respondents with options for endorsing different levels of English proficiency. Thus, a respondent who speaks only minimal English and a respondent who speaks English fluently may both have endorsed the "Speak English" response. This limits the study in that the data may be somewhat incomplete in providing a full picture of a participant's level of English use.

Finally, the paper-and-pencil self-report method of data collection may be problematic within this population. The Latin American culture is very interactive, and typically does not disclose personal information via survey. A more appropriate method of data collection may be more qualitative in nature and include personal interviews. There is literature which suggests this may be the case (Curtis, 1990; Negy & Woods, 1992).

Implications

The results of this research indicate Latin American immigrants who utilize the community social support center have perceptions that differ from those of non center users. Patrons of the Center tended to perceive themselves as better English-speakers than nonpatrons. At one point the Center offered English classes, but these were canceled due to lack of participation and utilization by the patrons. Currently, the Center promotes community involvement through sponsoring community activities (e.g., dances, Cinco de Mayo celebrations), offers classes to obtain driver's licences, assists patrons in obtaining legal documentation, and assists patrons in fighting discrimination-related legal cases.

Since patrons of the Center are offered services in their native language, it is probably unlikely that increased use or fluency of English is a direct benefit of using the Center. However, it is possible that using the Center promotes acculturation, which may result in increased community activity where exposure to English is more likely. Given the fact that use of English can reduce the amount of acculturative stress, it may be worthwhile for other community support centers to consider a more aggressive line on

promoting the acquisition of English and facilitating acculturation. It is interesting to speculate on the effects of introducing English classes, which could have the benefit of increasing acculturation to an even greater extent than presently exists. Additionally, if the patrons of this community support center are indeed more fluent in English, then the Center might consider offering advanced English classes to promote English fluency.

As indicated by literature, the process of acculturation can be particularly difficult for Latin American immigrants (Cervantes et al., 1989). Acquisition of English may be one factor that lessens an immigrant's acculturative stress (Smart & Smart, 1995). If this is the case, and if Latin American immigrants can acquire English more easily or more quickly via the use of a community support center, then this population would be well-served by the development and promotion of community support centers.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should focus on generalizing this study to Latin American immigrant populations in other rural locations. As there is relatively little empirical research into rural Latin American populations, it may be advisable to determine the extent to which the rural and urban populations are alike and different from each other, possibly allowing government, state, and local agencies to better serve the needs of these groups by accommodating their services to similarities and differences between the two populations. Because literature seems to indicate the widespread phenomenon of acculturative stress and its impact on the lives of Latin American immigrants, future research should continue to determine how to best serve this population to help counterbalance the effects of this

stress. A more thorough investigation into the advantages of using a community support center may provide valuable information and a more complete picture of whether and how utilizing a community support center can offer Latin American immigrants some of the benefits of mental health services. Such a study should include larger sample sizes, which would allow for more accurate statistical analyses. Finally, future studies may consider utilizing a more qualitative method of data collection, involving interviews and one-on-one settings, which may more closely resemble the interactional nature of the Latin American culture.

REFERENCES

- Amaro, H. (1990). Acculturation and marijuana and cocaine use: Findings from the HANES 82-84. American Journal of Public Health, 80(12), 54.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Avila, D. L., & Avila, A. L. (1988). Mexican-Americans. In N. A. Vacc, J. Wittmer, & S. DeVaney (Eds.), Experiencing and counseling multicultural and diverse populations (pp.424-486). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Balcazar, H., Petersen, G., & Cobas, J. A. (1996). Acculturation and health-related risk behaviors among Mexican American pregnant youth. American Journal of Health Behavior, 20(6), 425-433.
- Berry, J. W. (1979). Social and cultural change. In: H.C. Triandis & R. Brislin (Eds.), Handbook of cross-cultural psychology (pp. 32-45). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A.M. Padilla (Ed.), Acculturation: theory, model, and some new findings (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Black, C., Paz, H., & DeBlassie, R. (1991). Counseling the Hispanic male adolescent. Adolescence, 26(101), 223-232.
- Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce (1990). Persons of Spanish origin by state:1990. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- Burnham, M. A., Hough, R. L., Karno, M., Escobar, J. I., & Telles, C. A. (1987).
Acculturation and lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders among Mexican
Americans in Los Angeles. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, *28*, 89-102.
- Cardo, L. M. (1994). Development of an instrument measuring valence of ethnicity and
perception of discrimination. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and
Development, *22*, 49-59.
- Cervantes, R. C., Salgado de Snyder, V. N., & Padilla, A. M. (1989). Posttraumatic
stress in immigrants from Central American and Mexico. Hospital and Community
Psychiatry, *40*(6), 615-619.
- Chung, R. C., & Kagawa-Singer, M. (1993). Predictors of psychological distress among
Southeast Asian refugees. Social Science and Medicine, *36*(5), 631-639.
- Clinton-Davis, L., & Fassil, Y. (1992). Health and social problems of refugees. Social
Science and Medicine, *35*(4), 507-513.
- Comas-Diaz, L. (1990). Hispanic Latino communities: Psychological implications.
Journal of Training and Practice in Professional Psychology, *4*, 14-35.
- Cummins, J. (1984). Bilingualism and special education. Clevedon, England:
Multilingual Matters.
- Curtis, P. A. (1990). The consequences of acculturation to service delivery and research
with Hispanic families. Child and Adolescent Social Work, *7*(2), 147-159.
- Epstein, J. A., Botvin, G. J., Dusenbury, L., Diaz, T., & Kerner, J. (1996). Validation of
an acculturation measure for Hispanic adolescents. Psychological Reports, *79*,
1075-1079.

- Espin, O. M. (1987). Psychological impact of migration of Latinas: Implications for psychotherapeutic practice. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11, 489-504.
- Goldberg, C. J., Botvin, G. J. (1993). Assertiveness of Hispanic adolescents: Relationship to alcohol use and abuse. Psychological Reports, 73, 227-238.
- Golding, J. M., & Burnham, M. A. (1990). Stress and social support as predictors of depressive symptoms in Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 9(2), 268-286.
- Gomez, E., Zurcher, L. A., Farris, B. E., & Becker, R. E. (1985). A study of psychosocial casework with Chicanos. Social Work, 30(6), 477-482.
- Hispanics: Challenges and opportunities (1994). Minneapolis, MN: Ford Foundation.
- Jensen, A. (1981). Straight talk about mental tests. London: Methuen.
- Korzenny, F., & Schiff, E. (1987). Hispanic perceptions of communication discrimination. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 9(1), 33-48.
- Kraemer, H. C., & Thiemann, S. (1987). How many subjects? London: Sage.
- Krause, N., & Goldenhar, L. M. (1992). Acculturation and psychological distress in three groups of elderly Hispanics. Journal of Gerontology, 47(6), S279-S288.
- Langdon, H. W. (1996). English language learning by immigrant Spanish speakers: A United States perspective. Topics in Language Disorders, 16(4), 38-53.
- Langdon, H. W., & Merino, B. (1992). Defining bilingual education in the United States. In H. W. Langdon & L. Cheng (Eds.), Hispanic children and adults with communication disorders: Assessment and intervention (pp. 168-197). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.

- LeVine, E. S., & Padilla, A. M. (1980). Crossing cultures in therapy: Pluralistic counseling for the Hispanic. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Matsumoto, D. (1994). People: Psychology from a cultural perspective. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Mayers, R. S., & Souflee, F. (1990). Utilizing social support systems in the delivery of social services to the Mexican-American elderly. Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 15(1), 31-50.
- Mena, F., Padilla, A., & Maldonado, M. (1987). Acculturative stress and specific coping strategies among immigrant and later generation college students. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 9, 207-225.
- Negy, C., & Woods, D. J. (1992). The importance of acculturation in understanding research with Hispanic-Americans. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 14(2), 224-247.
- O'Sullivan, M. J., & Lasso, B. (1992). Community mental health services for Hispanics: A test of the culture compatibility hypothesis. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 14(4), 455-468.
- Romanucci-Ross, L., & DeVoss, G. A. (1995). Migration: Generational discontinuities and the making of Latino identities. In C. Suarez-Orozco & M. Suarez-Orozco (Eds.), Ethnic identity: Creation, conflict, and accommodation (pp. 321-347). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Salgado de Snyder, V. N., Diaz-Perez de Jesus, M., Acevedo, A., & Natera, L. X. (1996). Dios y el norte: The perceptions of wives of documented and undocumented

- Mexican immigrants to the United States. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 18(3), 283-296.
- Salgado de Snyder, V. N. (1987). Factors associated with acculturative stress and depressive symptomatology among married Mexican immigrant women. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11(4), 475-488.
- Schneider, L. J., Laury, P. D., & Hughes, H. H. (1980). Ethnic group perceptions of mental health service providers. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 27(6), 589-596.
- Scott, W., & Scott, R. (1989). Adaptation of immigrants: Individual differences and determinants. Oxford, England: Pergamon.
- Smart, J. F., & Smart, D. W. (1994). The rehabilitation of Hispanics experiencing acculturative stress: Implications for practice. Journal of Rehabilitation, 18, 8-12.
- Smart, J. F., & Smart, D. W. (1995). Acculturative stress: The experience of the Hispanic immigrant. The Counseling Psychologist, 23(1), 25-42.
- Sue, D. W. (1981). Counseling the culturally different. New York: Wiley.
- Sodowsky, G. R., Lai, E. W. M., & Plake, B. S. (1991). Moderating effects of sociocultural variables on acculturation attitudes of Hispanics and Asian Americans. Journal of Counseling and Development, 70, 194-204.
- Taylor, D. M. (1990). The social psychology of racial and cultural diversity: Issues of assimilation and multiculturalism. In A. G. Reynolds (Ed.), Bilingualism, multiculturalism, and second-language learning (pp. 1-19). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Taylor, D. M., & Lambert, W. E. (1996). The meaning of multiculturalism in a culturally diverse urban American area. Journal of Social Psychology, 136(6), 727-740.
- Thoits, P. A. (1982). Conceptual, methodological, and theoretical problems in studying social support as a buffer against life stress. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 23, 145-159.
- Tran, T. V. (1994). Bilingualism and subjective well-being in a sample of elderly Hispanics. Journal of Social Service Research, 20, 1-19.
- Vargas-Willis, G., & Cervantes, R. C. (1987). Consideration of psychosocial stress in the treatment of the Latina immigrant. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 9(3), 315-329.
- Zea, M. C., Jarama, S. L., & Bianchi, F. T. (1995). Social support and psychosocial competence: Explaining the adaptation to college of ethnically diverse students. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23(4), 509-531.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Survey of the Hispanic Population of Cache Valley--Spanish

Encuesta para la Población Hispana de Cache Valley

Edad _____

Sexo _____

Estado civil _____

Nacionalidad _____

Saber leer y escribir _____

Ultimo año de Estudio _____

1. ¿Cuántos años tiene Ud. viviendo en los Estados Unidos?

2. ¿Con quién vive Ud. en los Estados Unidos?

Que relativos _____ (Padres, tios, primos, . . .)

Que non-relativos _____ (Amigos)

3. ¿Cuántos años tiene Ud. de vivir en Logan?

4. ¿Tienen papeles de inmigración o naturalización?
5. ¿Cómo se siente viviendo aquí en Cache Valley?
- Me gusta mucho _____
- Me gusta un poco _____
- No me gusta _____
- No me gusta mucho _____
6. ¿Entiende y habla el idioma inglés?
- SI _____
- NO _____
7. ¿Sus niños están aprendiendo inglés en la escuela?
- SI _____
- NO _____
8. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los problemas que ha encontrado en Cache Valley?
- Discriminación _____ Robo _____ Desempleo _____ Pobreza _____
- Problemas Médicos _____ Problemas ajustando a la cultura de América _____
- Otras:

9. Cuando ha tenido problemas, ¿quién le ha ayudado a resolverlos? Alguna organización?

Centro Hispanico de Cache Valley _____ Su iglesia _____ La policia _____

Otras: (Mencione nombres)

10. ¿Cuáles son los desafios o retos más grandes que ha tenido que enfrentar en Cache Valley?

11. Ha sentido (o siente) discriminación en las siguientes situaciones:

	SI	NO
Cuando buscó vivienda	_____	_____
En el lugar donde vive	_____	_____
Cuando va de compras	_____	_____
En su trabajo	_____	_____
En su vida religiosa	_____	_____
En su vida social	_____	_____
Con los oficiales de policía	_____	_____
El Corte, o con los Jueces	_____	_____

12. ¿En cuál de los lugares mencionados anteriormente se ha sentido bien?
13. ¿En cuál de los lugares mencionados anteriormente se ha sentido mal, incómodo(a), o ha tenido algún tipo de problemas?
14. ¿Ha sido usted alguna vez víctima de algún delito desde que ha estado viviendo en Logan?
SI____
NO____
15. ¿ De qué tipo de delito fue usted víctima?
Robo _____ Agresión _____ Destrucción de su propiedad _____
Otras:

16. ¿Lo reportó a la policía?
SI _____
NO _____
17. ¿Sabe algo sobre el Centro Hispánico de Cache Valley?
SI _____
NO _____
18. ¿Le gustaría saber más sobre el Centro Hispánico?
SI _____
NO _____
19. ¿Conoce alguno de los servicios ofrecidos por el Centro Hispánico?
20. ¿Cuáles servicios ha utilizado?

21. ¿Qué tipo de servicios sugeriría usted que ofreciera el Centro Hispánico?

Información de ciudadanía _____ Ayuda para encontrar vivienda _____

Clases para acostumbrar Ud. viviendo en Logan _____

Información de empleo _____

Otras sugerencias:

22. ¿Si hubiera una clase para facilitarle vivir en los Estados Unidos, Ud. la tomaría?

SI _____

NO _____

23. ¿Que tipo de preocupaciones tiene Ud. mas seguido?

Hacer que sus hijos obedezcan _____

Se enoja Ud. tanto que no puede controlarse _____

La educación de sus niños _____

Otras:

24. ¿Ud. nunca ha conocido o hablado con las profesoras de sus niños?

SI _____

NO _____

25. ¿Se preocupa Ud. acerca de sus niños

Tomando drogas _____

Van con malas amistades o pandillas _____

No van a la escuela _____

Otras:

26. ¿Si sus niños se preocupan por algo, Ud. los dejara hablar con un consejero profesional?

SI _____

NO _____

27. ¿Si hubiera un consejero disponible vendria Ud. a hablar con el o ella cuando Ud. tiene apuros?

SI _____

NO _____

28. ¿Se sentiria Ud. mas comfortable si hablara con un consejero, o obispo, o padre, o curandero? En su casa _____ Centro de Comunidad Mexicana _____ Por teléfono _____ En clinica profesional _____ En su iglesia _____

Otras lugares:

29. ¿Si hubiera una linea telefonica abierta durante 24 horas hablaria Ud. con alguna persona acerca de sus preocupaciones, llamaria Ud.?

SI _____

NO _____

Appendix B

Survey of the Hispanic Population of Cache Valley--English

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Citizenship: _____

Nationality: _____

Can read and write: _____

Last year of school attended: _____

1. How many years have you lived in the United States?
2. With whom do you live in the United States?
With relatives _____ (parents, aunts, cousins...)
With non-relatives _____ (friends)
3. How many years have you lived in Logan?
4. Do you have immigration or naturalization papers?

5. How do you like living in Cache Valley?

- I like it a lot _____
- I like it a little _____
- I don't like it _____
- I don't like it very much _____

6. Do you understand and speak English?

- Yes _____
- No _____

7. Are your children learning English in school?

- Yes _____
- No _____

8. What are some of the problems you have experienced in Cache Valley?

discrimination _____ theft _____ unemployment _____ poverty _____
medical problems _____ problems adjusting to the American culture _____

Others:

9. When you've experienced problems, who has helped you resolve them? Some organization?

Hispanic Center of Cache Valley _____ your church _____ the police _____

Others: (provide names)

10. What are some of the biggest challenges that you've had to confront in Cache Valley?

11. Have you felt (or feel) discriminated against in the following situations:

	Yes	No
When I look for an apartment/home	_____	_____
Where I live now	_____	_____
When I go shopping	_____	_____
Where I work	_____	_____
In your religious life	_____	_____
In your social life	_____	_____
With the police officials	_____	_____
The court, or with the judges	_____	_____

12. In what situations mentioned above, have you felt good?
13. In what situations mentioned above, have you felt badly, uncomfortable, or have had some type of problem?
14. Have you at one time or another, been a victim of some crime since you've been living in Logan?
Yes _____
No _____
15. What type of a crime were you a victim of?
theft _____ aggression _____ destruction of your property _____
Others:
16. Did you report it to the police?
Yes _____
No _____

17. Do you know something about the Hispanic Center of Cache Valley?

Yes _____

No _____

18. Would you like to know more about the Hispanic Center?

Yes _____

No _____

19. Do you know about some of the services offered by the Hispanic Center?

20. What services have you used?

21. What type of services would you suggest be offered by the Hispanic Center?

Information on citizenship _____ Assistance in finding an apartment _____

Classes on how to become accustomed to living in Logan _____ Information about
employment _____

Other suggestions:

22. If there were a class to make it easy on how to live in the United State, would you take it?

Yes _____

No _____

23. What concerns do you most often have?

To make your children obey you? _____

You get so angry that you can't control yourself? _____

The education of your children? _____

Others:

24. Have you ever met or spoken with your children's teachers?

Yes _____

No _____

25. Do you worry about your children

Taking drugs? _____

They associate with wrong friends or gangs _____

They don't attend school _____

Others:

26. If your children were worried about something, would you allow them to talk with a professional counselor?

Yes _____

No _____

27. If there were a counselor available, would you talk with him/her when you had concerns?

Yes _____

No _____

28. Would you feel more comfortable to speak with a counselor, bishop, father or medicine man/healer?

Yes _____

No _____

29. If there were a telephone line open 24 hours a day, would you talk with someone about your concerns, would you call?

Yes _____

No _____