University of St. Thomas, Minnesota
UST Research Online

Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership | School of Education

2011

High School English Language Learners of Latin American Descent Living in Rural Midwestern Communities

Teresa Lynn Morgan

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_lead_docdiss

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Morgan, Teresa Lynn, "High School English Language Learners of Latin American Descent Living in Rural Midwestern Communities" (2011). *Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership*. 18.
http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_lead_docdiss/18

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at UST Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership by an authorized administrator of UST Research Online. For more information, please contact libroadmin@stthomas.edu.

HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF LATIN AMERICAN DESCENT LIVING IN RURAL MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES: A STUDY OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

by

Teri Morgan

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

2011

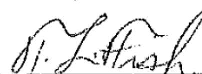
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS MINNESOTA

English Language Learners of Latin American Descent Living in Rural Midwestern Communities: A Study of Cultural Adaptation

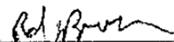
We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation committee

Dr. Sarah Noonan, Ed.D., Committee Chair



Dr. Tom Fish, Ed.D., Committee Member



Dr. Robert Brown, Ed.D. Committee Member

August 16, 2011

Final Approval Date

Abstract

A phenomenological study was conducted to examine the experiences of adolescent English Language Learners (ELL) of Latin American descent living in rural Midwestern communities. Participants experienced psychological and social responses related to the major life change of immigrating to a new country and adapting to an alien culture. Challenges experienced by adolescent immigrants involved a chronological and simultaneous process of adaptation, as evidenced by the following stages: (1) apprehension about coming to a new country and fitting in with friends when they started school; (2) adjustment to the new culture and alien environment; (3) cultural bereavement and ambiguous loss. Learning English served as a means of communicating and a key factor in helping the participants adapt to a new culture. Recommendations to address the issues regarding academic and social challenges faced by immigrant students of Latino origin with limited English proficiency included providing a support person such as a home liaison or advocate for the student to increase communication between the school and family, initiating a mentor-tutor program in the school and community, and providing professional development for teachers working with ELL and immigrant students. Recommendations include further research on factors contributing to the academic success of students adjusting to major life changes may help address concerns relating to low academic achievement and high dropout rates among Latino students.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend gratitude to everyone who has helped me through the process of completing a doctoral program. I honestly could not have done it without the assistance of friends, professors, colleagues, and family members who have encouraged me to continue toward the sometimes daunting task of obtaining a doctoral degree.

My deepest appreciation must be expressed to my husband, who, when our son Steele was just six months old, encouraged me to pursue my goal and begin the doctoral program. Throughout the entire time, he listened to my frustrations and provided a shoulder to lean and cry on. He helped me stay positive, even when I wanted to quit. I would also like to thank my mother-in-law who watched our son when I was attending class, reading an assignment, or working on a paper… no questions asked. After her battle with cancer did not allow her to do so and after her passing a year ago, I still knew that she was my biggest support.

I would also like to thank other members of my family and friends who supported me through the dissertation process and helped me find contacts for interviews. Without their assistance, finishing my dissertation would not be possible. Throughout the health and emotional challenges of my current pregnancy, they were willing to go "above and beyond" to help make the process easier and, frankly, make it possible.

I am extremely grateful to my advisor, Dr. Sarah Noonan, for her encouragement and patience. She was always willing to help and keep me going in the right direction. When I was overwhelmed and frustrated, she gave me suggestions and feedback I needed to encourage me to continue. I thank her and my dissertation committee, Dr. Fish and Dr. Brown, for taking time during the summer months to read my proposal and dissertation. I appreciate their willingness to support me. I will never forget their contributions to my success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 8

Challenges Facing Latino Youth 11

Purpose of the Study 13

Statement of the Problem 14

Significance of the Study 14

Overview of Dissertation 15

Definition of Terms 16

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 18

Hispanic Population in the United States 19

Issues of Cultural Adaptation and Acculturation 21

Theories of Acculturation 21

Acculturative Stress 25

Acculturation and Adolescent Immigrants 27

Theories of Ambiguous Loss 29

Roles of School or Educational Settings in Acculturation 30

Educational Services for English Language Learners 31

Summary of Program Models 32

ESL 33

Bilingual 35

Evaluation of Program Models 36

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 40

Phenomenological Research 41

The Research Sample 42

Participant Profiles 42

Data Collection Process 47

Interviews 47

Interview Procedure 47

Data Analysis 48

Reliability and Validity 49

Researcher Bias 50

Limitations 51

Ethical Concerns 51

CHAPTER FOUR: ADOLESCENT JOURNEYS TO THE UNITED STATES 53

Responses to Major Life Changes 54

Apprehension 55

Adjustment 60

Cultural Bereavement and Ambiguous Loss 67

English Language Learning 73

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 85

Summary of Findings 85

Implications 87

Recommendations 88

Apprehension 88

Adjustment 91

Cultural Bereavement 92

English Language Learning 96

Recommendations for Further Research 98

Conclusion 100

REFERENCES 101

APPENDICES 111

Appendix A: IRB Application 111

Appendix B: Consent Form in English 119

Appendix C: Consent Form in Spanish 120

Appendix D: Guide Interview Questions 121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Background Information 43

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During college, I lived with a family and studied at a school in Mexico where no one spoke English. My experience living in Mexico provided some of my insight into the lives of English as a Second Language (ESL) and ethnically diverse students. At age 20, I had never flown in an airplane nor left the state of South Dakota. Nevertheless, I decided to study in a school in Mexico during the summer after my sophomore year. I had only studied one year of Spanish and knew very little about Mexican culture. To say the least, the experience of living in a foreign country changed my entire perspective on life. I started to better understand the struggles of immigrants living in a culture different from their own. I looked at the world differently and wanted to know more about the people in it as well as their stories. Although I know first-hand how it feels to be immersed in a new and alien culture, my experience lasted only a few months.

The experience of Spanish-speaking students differs considerably. Some students may arrive in a small town in the Midwestern United States with very little cultural diversity and limited or non-existent knowledge of English. Their families sometimes classify as legal citizens, but not always. Many briefly reside in our town of about 15,000 to work temporarily. Others migrate here and plan to stay and make a living. Unlike me, they do not have a choice to return to the familiarity of their home and must adjust to a new culture.

Although I did not major in Spanish and, in fact, taught English after graduation, I kept close to my heart my fondness for the cultures and language of Spanish-speaking people. When the opportunity to teach Spanish arose, I felt compelled to accept a new position at a high school in South Dakota. Since few people at that time, ten years ago, spoke Spanish, I served as a

resource for students, staff, and members of the community. My position as head of the World Language Department and as one of only two Spanish-speaking staff members allowed me to work with many students who do not speak English.

As a Spanish teacher in a Midwestern high school of 900 students, I assist students who do not speak English well and translate for their parents when needed. Since my school does not offer an English as a Second Language (ESL) program or a formal support system for migrant and second language students, I assist with introducing students to the school environment and communicating with their parents and teachers. Prior to deciding to pursue this study, I often questioned whether the students received enough support to help them stay in school and achieve their full potential.

Although the percentage of students in our school district of Hispanic origin fluctuates from year to year, it remains fairly low. According to the 2007 school district report card, 70 students of Hispanic origin attended school in the district and 13 students were classified English language learner (ELL) students, or students eligible for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Even though some students, born in the United States, speak English at school and Spanish at home, they do not qualify as ELL students. They often struggle in school because of the challenge of living within two cultures. Teachers frequently do not realize the challenges faced by students of Latino origin who live in the small rural communities.

Since my school offered no formal ESL program, I was asked to work with several Mexican students when they enrolled in school with little or no knowledge of English. Starting about five or six years ago, counselors enrolled the migrant students in my Spanish II, III, and IV classes. I served as advocate and translator for the students and used class time to help them learn English. Spanish and English speaking students benefited from the exchange. Students

from Mexico helped English-speaking students with their conversational Spanish skills, while Spanish-speaking students learned English and the culture of their new school from English-speaking students in my classes. Of course, I questioned administrators regarding why the school district had no program or ESL classes to help immigrant students. I received few answers, so I continued to try to help the students as much as I could.

Two years ago, one of the first Mexican students I taught for two years arrived in my room the semester before her graduation. She wanted to interview me in English. The assignment required her to choose someone she admired and learned from during her school years. I understood her English perfectly and enjoyed talking with her. I could not believe she was the same girl who had arrived in my class with her two Spanish-only speaking cousins. She commented that I had helped all three of them tremendously. Honestly, I never dreamed they learned as much from me as I had from them.

Three years after my first group of students arrived from Mexico, our local meat processing plant closed, causing many of the families to move to another city to find work. However, ELL students who have become capable English speakers still attend our school. While not all of them take upper-level Spanish, I still saw them around school. I often wondered how their experience in a school with little diversity and limited support impacted their success as students. I also wished to understand the hardships they must feel about living far from relatives and speaking one language at home and another at school. When they suddenly leave school, have they dropped out or just moved on to the next town where their parents found work? Do they continue their education? Does the success of these students matter to us as educators or citizens?

One of my main reasons for enrolling in the doctoral program involved my desire to help students of Latino descent adapt to school and experience academic and social success. I wondered how first and second generation students of Mexican origin living in a small Midwestern community like mine experience a new and alien culture. I also questioned whether we could expect students to succeed with so little knowledge about the nature of their experience and the support needed to succeed. These questions and concerns helped me to select a dissertation topic and explore the lived experiences of English Language Learners of Latin American descent living in rural Midwestern communities. In my review of background information regarding Latino immigrant youth, I found many challenges exist in helping them find success in the United States education system.

Challenges Facing Latino Youth

Latino youth represent one in five new students in schools (Obama, 2010). As part of the 48.8 million people of Hispanic origin who make up 16 percent of country's population (US Census, 2006), nearly 12 million undocumented young Hispanic people now live in United States (Massey & Sanchez, 2010). As immigrant populations in the United States continue to grow, more attention has focused on the impact on immigration on all aspects of our society, including immigrant youth. Immigrant youth journeyed to the United States not by choice, but by chance, as children of adult immigrants. The education of immigrant Latino youth represents a significant national concern as the nation's fastest growing ethnic group with the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups and the least likely to complete college (Obama, 2010).

Studies show several different reasons for the high dropout rates and challenges faced by Latino youth, such as lack of English language abilities to complete courses, particularly at the high school level, and a greater need for the teenage students to work more hours to support the

family financially (Driscoll, 1999; Fry, 2003). Due to the higher poverty rate of Latino families, many of the students quit school to support their family, or never attend due to the poverty (Driscoll, 1999; Fry, 2003; Padron,Waxman & Rivera, 2003; Reyes & Jason, 1993). In addition many Latino immigrant students, especially males, come to the United States to work and never attend school because they are expected to support themselves. Since they do not attend school, they are considered dropouts.

Cultural values and practices also affect the rate of dropout and the challenges faced by Latino immigrant students (Fry, 2003; Reyes & Jason, 1993). In the Latino culture, individuals, especially males, are considered adults at an earlier age and often live independently at a younger age than non-Hispanic White young people. Many must work to support themselves and sometimes, their families. The pregnancy rate for Latina teenagers is also higher compared to the rate of teenage pregnancies in Non-Hispanic White teenage girls (Fry, 2003). In 2002, according to a Pew report, over 20 percent of teenage girls of Latin American descent who have dropped out of school reported having a child within the previous year (Fry, 2003).

The age of arrival in the United States serves as an indicator of the academic success of immigrant students because their school age affects the ability to learn English well. English language ability represents an “important indicator for the likelihood of dropping out of high school among Latinos” (Fry, 2003, p. 8). Students enrolling in elementary school seem to learn English faster, and therefore have less trouble learning in the content areas than older students. Learning English along with the content proves to be a difficult task for high school students. In a comparison of 16 and 17 year old Hispanic youth who dropped out of school with those who remain, the drop-outs are more likely than the current students to not know English well (Fry, 2003). School in the United States and English language ability are closely related. Student

proficiency in English turns out to be the most important factor in predicting success in school (Driscoll, 1999; Garcia-Vazquez, Vazquez, Lopez & Ward, 1999; Watt & Roessingh, 1994).

Summary

National concerns and my personal experience working with ELL students raised my awareness regarding the needs of Latino youth. Since many of the studies I reviewed previously involved immigrant students in communities with higher percentages of diversity (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999; Alvarez, 2003; Burke, 1995; Driscoll, 1999; Espinoza-Harold, 2003: House, 2005; Lau, McCabe, Yeh, Garland, Wood & Hough, 2005; Reyes & Jason, 1993; Scribner, 1995), I wondered how young people might find greater success in rural schools where they may experience isolation and a lack of educational resources. I decided to investigate the unique challenges experienced by students in rural Midwestern communities, listening to stories of their personal struggle and success. Their stories may create an awareness of struggles encountered by immigrant students in low diversity communities. This awareness may help combat the lack of academic success currently experienced by Latino youth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to understand the perspectives and experiences of ELL students in adapting to an alien culture in a community with limited ethnic diversity. Since most studies have been conducted in areas with *higher percentages of ethnically diverse student populations*, a gap exists in literature describing the experience of adolescents living in rural towns in the Midwest (Iber, 1992). I attempted to reduce this gap and contribute to the knowledge of the social and educational experiences of student immigrants in rural Midwestern states with the additional research offered in this study.

Statement of the Problem

I adopted the following question to frame my study: How do ELL students of Hispanic origin living in a rural Midwestern culture experience a new and potentially alien culture? I also adopted two secondary questions to examine the experiences of Latino immigrant students living in low diversity communities related to their school experience:

1. How do differences in language, socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic identity, and culture impact ELL students' ability to adapt and experience success in school?

2. What types of social and academic support, arrangements, and/or opportunities support their academic success in school?

Significance of the Study

Because of the dramatic increase in the number of immigrants from Hispanic countries, it is becoming more important to recognize the challenges and issues immigrants face as they integrate and adapt to life in the United States, build an identity, and become contributing members of society. Many of the immigrants are parents of children in our schools who will shape the future of our country. Understanding student views and experiences may allow educators and support professionals more insight regarding how to help student immigrants adapt to living in a new culture. In turn, helping students manage the stress of dissonant acculturation may affect their performance and success in school and society.

Determining the best type of program for teaching ELL students is not the issue, as it depends on a number of factors, such as students' levels of education, their age of arrival in the United States, and their proficiency in their native language (Borden, 1998). To determine the design of the most effective program to serve ESL students, variables such as the student population served, the district resources, and individual student characteristics must also be

considered (McKeon, 1987). This study shows how students experience ELL programs and what factors seem important to them. Because each school faces unique challenges and priorities in attempting to meet the needs of ELL students, more studies about the nature of the student experience in adapting to cultural change in low-diversity environments may prove beneficial. While many educators maintain the best way to improve the education of immigrant students is to provide them with better teachers and classroom instruction (Padron et al., 2003, p. 31), knowledge regarding the experience of programs and practices from the student perspective may prove valuable.

My study contributes to the knowledge regarding what type of positive teacher and administrator support may help immigrant students to overcome challenges they face in cultural adaptation and academic achievement. Learning from the experiences of participants in this study allows educators and others working with adolescents to better understand the situations of immigrant students and potentially reduce negative attitudes caused by limited knowledge or ethnocentric attitudes. Because schools serve as a model for the society, all students should receive multicultural education, where teachers model respect for all students (McBrien, 2005). In the next section, I describe the content of the dissertation chapters and conclude with a section devoted to terms adopted for my study.

Overview of Dissertation

In Chapter One, I provide the background information of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the problem and the study's purpose. I briefly describe challenges experienced by Latino youth and establish the need for the study as a way of understanding the challenges experienced by immigrant youth and close with a section describing terms adopted in this study.

In Chapter Two, I present a review of literature pertinent to the experience of English language learning student experiences in United States schools. The review focuses on literature related factors influencing the academic achievement of students of Hispanic origin, cultural adaptation, and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. A description of the theoretical framework used for the study to analyze immigrants' experiences provides the context for conducting the study and analyzing the results.

In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology used for gathering and analyzing the research data. In Chapter Four, I report the data, discuss the findings of the study, and apply theory to the findings. Finally, in Chapter Five, I include the summary, conclusions, and implications for practice and further research in the areas of cultural adaptation in immigrant populations, especially those immigrant students living in communities with a low percentage of ethnic diversity.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the experience of ELL high school students of Latin American origin in the rural Midwest. My in-depth study of students of first generation immigrants identifies the challenges and obstacles faced by Spanish speaking teenagers who attend schools with a low percentage of ethnically diverse populations. I also describe how various social and academic frameworks and opportunities may increase the students' academic successes and help them develop strategies to adapt to a new and alien culture.

Definition of Terms

Hispanic: people who self-identify as persons of Hispanic origin based on their birthplace or descent; generally includes people from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America (US Census Bureau, 2004).

Latino: refers to people who self-identity as citizens or descendents claiming affiliation from any Latin American country.

Mexican American: refers to persons who self-identify as being from Mexico or of Mexican descent.

English Language Learners (ELL): persons identified as having limited English Proficiency (LEP); often may be enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Ethnic identity: "encompass[es] three aspects of [the] group identity process: ethnic heritage, racial phenotype, and cultural background. Although these three aspects of group identity can be distinguished conceptually and have different implications for the individual, they often overlap as individuals strive to construct a coherent sense of self as group members" (Alipuria as cited in Phinney, 2006, p. 118).

Low-diversity communities: Communities with less than five percent of the population classified as "non-Caucasian" according to the last government census.

Native Spanish speakers: Individuals who speak Spanish as their primary language in their home. The largest percentage of communication among family members is in Spanish.

Throughout my study, I use the terms Hispanic, Latino and sometimes a person's country of origin, such as a Mexican, to refer to the fast-growing population of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The focus of this review was to locate and summarize studies related to my question: "How do English Language Learners of Hispanic origin living in a rural Midwestern culture experience a new and potentially alien culture?" To gain insight into the challenges faced by Latino immigrant high school students as they adapt to the school culture, I reviewed studies providing general background information, including the number of immigrant students attending school in the United States as well as the educational challenges faced by Latino and immigrant students within the last several decades. I also reviewed services and typical programs for English Language Learners (ELL) provided to students in social and academic settings.

Additionally, to add to the conceptual framework for the study, I reviewed theory related to processes of cultural adaptation and acculturation as experienced by adolescent immigrants and refugees. The literature on cultural adaptation and acculturation primarily focused on the process of cultural adaptation of immigrants in *urban communities* (Driscoll, 1999; Giang & Wittig, 2006; Scribner, 1995). I found few published studies on cultural adaptation in rural and monocultural communities (Iber, 1992; Wolf, 2007).

Since the adolescent experience differs from the adult experience of adapting to cultures, I ultimately searched for studies that included high school students. However, I found very few published articles related to the experience of adolescent students in low-diversity schools, revealing a gap in the literature and supporting the need for this study. A report of my findings follows, beginning with general background information regarding Hispanic populations in the United States and then a review of theories related to cultural adaptation and acculturation. I

then review specific studies related to adolescent immigrant youth and the programs designed to serve them.

Hispanic Populations in the United States

People of Hispanic origin are the largest and fastest growing immigrant population in the United States. In the 1990's the Latino population increased by 58% and as of 2010, people from Latin American countries comprised 16% of legal US residents (Massey & Sanchez, 2010; Sullivan, Schwartz, Prado, Huang, Pantin & Szapocznik, 2007;). The population is young, as nearly 40% are under age 20 (Schwartz, Zamboanga & Jarvis, 2007). The majority were either born outside the United States or born to first-generation immigrants. Since 2000, one of every two people added to the United States population has been of Hispanic descent. Consequently, more Spanish-speaking immigrants are entering our schools. Although studies differ in the exact number for projections, all studies indicate the number of students of Hispanic/Latino descent will continue to increase dramatically (Espinoza-Herold, 2003).

Given the current trend of United States immigrant population growth, research studies have focused on the Hispanic student population growth and underachievement. Historically, people of Hispanic origin have had both the lowest level of education and highest dropout rate of any student group (Padron et al., 2003). Low achievement of diverse ethnic populations is considered both "an educational [issue] and [a] combination of social, economic and environmental issues" (House, 1995, p. 10). Hispanic high school students encounter language and communication issues, since many speak little or no English (Burke, 1995). They also face issues such as poverty and poor healthcare, contributing to low achievement and high dropout rates from school. Researchers agree the reasons for the "high dropout rate of Hispanics versus other minority groups are complex" (Scribner, 1995, p. 207).

Of the many factors researchers have considered, some studies have pointed to English proficiency as the "greatest predictor of success" for students (Driscoll, 1999, p. 859); and, in schools where bilingual and ESL programs are available, students have more opportunities and support. However, a large number of Spanish speakers choose to settle in traditionally English speaking Midwestern communities. In fact, although a quarter of the students enrolled in Midwestern schools in 2003 were classified as "racial or ethnic minorities", schools in general were not prepared for linguistic and cultural diversity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Many do not have the funds, resources and staffing to meet the needs of the ELL and immigrant students. Therefore, ethnically diverse students are increasingly at-risk for academic failure (Alvarez, 2003).

In the context of recent No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the rapidly increasing population of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and concerns, such as high dropout rate and the widening academic achievement gap, have been brought to the forefront of educational issues. Studies on the negative experience of the Latino high school population sparked reforms in the educational system to help increase high-stakes testing scores and public approval (Goto-Butler, Orr, Bousquet Gutierrez & Hakuta, 2000). In addition to studying specific programs addressing low achievement for ethnically diverse students in urban areas, more researchers have sought to identify the strength of the relationship between academic success and ethnicity-linked resilience factors (Alvarez, 2003). They have, for instance, analyzed how the academic performance of immigrant students correlates with acculturation and ethnic identity to determine factors leading to success in school (Iber, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2007).

Issues of Cultural Adaptation and Acculturation

Although recent studies address a number of variables in ethnically diverse students' success, a growing body of research examines the connection between the ability of adolescents to adapt to a new culture, broadly referred to as acculturation, and positive adolescent outcomes (Alvarez, 2003; Iber, 1992; Reyes & Jason, 1992; Sullivan et al., 2007). The study of cross-cultural psychology and cultural identity has been ongoing for several decades. Recently, scholars have been very interested in acculturation in adolescents (Schwartz et al., 2007). Because the children in immigrant families are the fastest growing segment of the population under 18, more psychological studies have focused on acculturative stress and the process of first and second generation immigrant students adapting to a new culture in and outside the educational setting (Iber, 1992; Lau et al., 2005).

Theories of Acculturation

Although anthropologists first defined "acculturation" as two cultures coming into continuous contact with one another, the concept has broadly been defined by psychologists as the "process of change experienced by individuals that results from the direct contact with another culture," or the process of adaptation (McBrien, 2005; Suarez-Morales, Dillon, & Szapocznik et al., 2007). Initially, acculturation was seen as a "unidimensional process" in which immigrants abandoned the customs, values, and beliefs of their country of origin and adopted those of the new culture (Rudmin, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2007). However, increasing migration rates and other factors such as globalization and increasing technologies have made acculturation an increasingly important and ever-changing field of study (Rudmin, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2007). Although different theories exist regarding psychological and sociological

acculturation, researchers stress acculturation involves a complex, ongoing, and multi-dimensional process (Unger, Ritt-Olson, Wagner, Soto & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2007).

Theories of cultural adaptation have evolved into the "bidimensional conceptualization" of the process of acculturation (Suarez-Morales et al., 2007; Sullivan et al., 2007). Contemporary scholars in cultural psychology have adopted the bidimensional model of acculturation in which "orientations toward the heritage and the U.S. values and practices are considered" (Schwartz et al., 2007, p. 364). Bidimensional theory assumes that the individual maintains some aspects of his/her culture of origin as s/he acquires aspects of the dominant culture (Suarez-Morales et al., 2007). In contrast to cultural psychology, the focus on cross-cultural psychology has been shifted to determine the influence cultural factors have on human behavior or what happens to individuals when they attempt to live in a new cultural context (Berry, 1997). Changes may occur in the individual's sense of identity, value, and beliefs (McBrien, 2005). Cross-cultural psychology appears to relate more to the sojourner's experience in a foreign country rather than the cultural adaptation and stress of first and second-generation immigrants taking up permanent residence in an alien country.

The complex literature on acculturation has been the subject of numerous conceptual frameworks, which have attempted to systemize the process of acculturation and to illustrate the main factors of an individual's adaptation. Much of the cross-cultural psychology literature also refers to the bidimensional framework developed by Berry. Berry (1997) derived four acculturation orientations: integrated, separated, assimilated, and marginalized, which describe the degree to which an individual retains practices from the culture of origin and adopts practices of the new culture. Integration, sometimes called biculturalism, refers to combining aspects of the new culture with the native culture (Unger et al., 2007). Separation is retaining native

cultural orientation, while rejecting the new culture (Unger et al., 2007). Assimilation occurs when one "takes on majority culture and rejects the minority culture" (McBrien, 2005, p. 331). Becoming alienated from both cultures is described as marginalization (Berry, 1997; Lau et al., 2005).

Although credit for the widely-respected "four-fold theory of acculturation" is often given to Berry and his associates, other researchers have also derived similar categories based on the bidimensional approach to acculturation (Rudmin, 2003). In a historical critical review of acculturation theories, Rudmin chronologically lists 68 four-fold acculturation typologies in a taxonomic chart. Many scholars use the term "assimilation" to describe giving up the "schemas" of the culture of origin and adopting those of the new (Rudmin, 2003, p. 11). Previously researchers described adopting the majority culture as a "melting pot" (Rudmin, 2003). The term "unilingualism" is used in studies to focus on language acquisition level as an indicator of acculturation (Rudmin, 2003). Another term used for separation includes "rejection" (Rudmin, 2003). Integration may be called "biculturalism" or "adaptive" or "coordinate bilingualism." Marginalization is also described as "isolation" or "deculturation" in some studies (Rudmin, 2003).

Similar acculturation orientations have been examined in a number of studies with different immigrant groups (Sullivan et al., 2000), showing a relationship between acculturation orientation and "a number of personality and psychosocial factors" (p. 407). Adolescent research studies have indicated adolescents who achieve an "integrated" acculturation status, associated with the positive adaptation, show higher academic achievement and self-esteem (Berry, 1997; Sullivan et al., 2007). The integrated strategy or biculturalism is considered the

most adaptive in other studies focused on the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity (Berry, 1997; Unger et al., 2007).

Other researchers such as Rudmin (2003), though, assert that there is considerable disagreement about which types of acculturation correlate with positive social and psychological conditions and which with negative. In a historical review of acculturation psychology, Rudmin (2003) criticizes the four-fold theory and similar typologies. These theories are increasingly under criticism by scholars for various reasons. The faults, such as excessive focus on ethnically diverse groups and poor validity, appear dramatic and obvious, but are hardly ever noticed (Rudmin, 2003). In Rudmin's (2003) summary of acculturation theories, other research studies are criticized for reasons such as inconsistency in evaluative methods and lack of standardization of vocabulary in acculturative theory in general. Scholars have disagreed about the best method to measure acculturation, or even describe the process, since it becomes difficult to compare competing theories with non-standard terms (Rudmin, 2003; Unger et al., 2007). Ultimately Rudmin (2003) recommends researchers should participate in qualitative research to understand the motivations and situations of all ethnic groups.

Since the study of immigration and adaptation is complex and has been examined by many researchers in many different disciplines, certain terms and concepts often overlap, but may also appear contradictory. In general, scholars use the term "adaptation" to describe the changes that take place in individuals in response to environmental demands. These may take place immediately or occur over a longer period. These adaptations can take many forms, depending on a number of intercultural variables, such as acculturation attitude, cultural identities, language proficiency, family and peer relationship values, and perceived discrimination (Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebking, 2006). Recent literature also makes a

distinction between factors affecting psychological adaptation (referring to emotional well-being) and sociocultural adaptation (Sam, Vedder, Ward & Horenczyk, 2006).

Torres and Rollock (2004) also claimed previous efforts had "clear limitations in explaining the complex nature of cultural adaptation" (p. 155). Cultural adaptation must also account for personal attributes influencing adjustment; this includes what happens when individuals come into contact with a new culture and how they use their personal attributes to adapt. In their study of distress in the Hispanic adults, Torres and Rollock focused on competence-based principles, such as general coping and intercultural competence, to understand the level of an individual's acculturation. Intercultural competence refers to "group-specific abilities originating within the traditional culture determined necessary for mastery or success in the new environment" (p. 157). Where traditional models of acculturation emphasized qualities like language use and time in the United States, Torres and Rollock focused on the intercultural competence and coping strategies as "alternatives to understanding an immigrant's behavioral, cognitive, emotional and attitudinal adaptation" (p. 154). They found intercultural competency best predicted the degree of distress in acculturation, often referred to as acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress.

Although the field of acculturation has been addressed by different disciplines with little agreement on how to measure it, acculturation plays an important part in how well an immigrant adapts (Phinney et al., 2006). Throughout the process of acculturation, immigrants may experience increased "acculturative stress", defined as distress an experienced during the process of adapting to a new culture (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Associated with depression in adolescents and adults, acculturative stress is influenced by a number of contextual variables, such as demographic characteristics, the type of familial and social support available, as well as

immigration and acculturation experiences (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Acculturative stress has "a pervasive, lifelong influence on the psychological adjustment, decision making, occupational functioning and physical health of Hispanics" (p. 157).

Several different instruments have been used to measure acculturative stress in adult immigrants. One of the first, the Societal, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scales (SAFE), was originally used to assess stress in both immigrants and non-immigrants (Suarez-Morales et al., 2007). The individuals with the lowest level of acculturation or cross-cultural competence reported the highest level of acculturative stress, whereas those with the highest level of acculturation reported the lowest level of stress. The SAFE inventory has been adapted and shortened to use for children 8 to 12 years of age. The adult version of SAFE had face and predictive validity as well as adequate test-retest reliability. However, the adolescent version has not been validated. Instruments used as adult measurements are not appropriate because youth acculturation differs considerably (Suarez-Morales, 2007).

To highlight the psychological effects and emphasize the intensity of the cultural adaptation, Sandhu, Portes and McPhree (1996) refer to the psychological phenomenon of acculturative stress as "pain." After finding that scales assessing cultural adaptation and the psychological pain associated with acculturation were limited conceptually, Sandhu et al. (1996) developed the Cultural Adaptation Pain Scale (CAPS) to "assess the degree of subjective pain, social distance, and discouragement that may be related to cultural adaptation" (p. 16). The CAPS was designed to assess an individual's level of adaptation and identify factors that may contribute to isolation, passivity, increased stress, depression, anxiety and other psychological problems associated with acculturation (p. 17).

Because acculturation is a complex construct, other scales have been created and tested in research studies (Unger et al., 2007). Especially among adolescents, the measure of acculturation is complex because an:

> ...adolescent's limited cognitive and reading ability limits the complexity of the survey questions that can be asked. Therefore, it is instructive to evaluate whether the acculturation measures commonly used with adolescents correlate well with one another, and whether their patterns of intercorrelations are consistent with the prediction of the theoretical framework on which they were developed. (Unger et al., 2007, p. 256)

Researchers recommend that additional efforts are needed to develop a tool to accurately measure the complex construct of acculturation in youth (Unger et al., 2007). To capture the numerous dimensions of the acculturation process, they also suggest that qualitative research or cognitive interviews may be helpful to help adolescents understand questions on the various acculturation scales.

Acculturation and adolescent immigrants.

Adolescents in particular may experience types of acculturative stress unique to children of immigrants. The experience of immigrant adolescents is an especially complex process because it "occurs simultaneously with the exploration and development of ethnic self-identity, a developmental task in adolescence" (Unger et al., 2007, p. 556). Adolescent immigrants are not only forming an identity as a member of their ethnic group, but also transitioning from childhood to adulthood and forming an identity as an individual (Alva & de Los Reyes, 1999).

Dissonant acculturation occurs when parents and children become acculturated at different rates. In studies examining this phenomenon, sometimes called the "acculturation-gap distress hypothesis" (Lau et al., 2005, p. 367), differential rates of acculturation were found. Children of immigrants tend to acquire English proficiency, develop new values, and form cross-cultural relationships faster than their parents (Berry et al., 2006; Lau et al., 2005). A parent may

feel a loss of control and experience identity problems as the student takes on the adult role of translating for doctor visits or paying bills, for instance. Mismatches in rates of acculturation can cause conflicts among family members, most notably a weakening in parental authority (Massey & Sanchez, 2010). Students may feel a loss of security. Studies such as those conducted by Lau et al. (2005) have claimed intergenerational rifts serve as risk factors for contributing to youth maladjustment. Students feel like they do not belong anywhere as they become alienated from their parents but are not truly accepted by their peers (McBrien, 2005).

Another study, however, did not confirm evidence for the acculturation gap distress hypothesis. Phinney and Vetter (2006) indicate that adolescent immigrants show adaptation levels equal to or better than their non-immigrant peers. Since there is little agreement on how to measure the construct of acculturation, it is difficult to compare findings across studies. Some claim that immigrant youth are just as well adjusted if not more so than their national peers (Phinney & Vetter, 2006). Although earlier studies have considered immigration and cultural adaptation experiences as problematic and negative, another study showed that immigrant children "show satisfactory levels of both psychological and socio-cultural adaptation" (Sam et al., 2006, p. 125). This pattern of adaptation, in recent literature, has become known as the "immigrant paradox" (Sam et al., 2006).

The immigrant paradox involves the counterintuitive finding that immigrants have better adaptation outcomes that their national peers despite poorer socioeconomic conditions (Sam et al., 2006). Another aspect addressed in the paradox is that first generation immigrants have higher levels of adaptation than second generation (Sam et al., 2006). In a study comparing immigrant youth with their national peers, Sam et al. (2006) found that immigrant youth reported slightly fewer psychological problems, fewer behavior problems and better adaptation in school,

and no significant difference in the areas of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Immigrant youth appeared to be better adapted socioculturally and not different from their national peers in psychological development.

Making comparisons between immigrant youth and national youth is difficult because they differ in many ways, even within each group. Although other studies have shown that immigrant youth generally adapt well, a number of socio-demographic factors such as age and gender also have been examined. Younger adolescents seem to adapt better than older ones, mainly because older ones face challenges of the transition to adulthood. In summary, the integrative profile in which students accept the new culture as well as retain aspects of their culture origin seemed to be the most adaptive profile for acculturating individuals (Sam et al., 2006, p. 141). This study also supported the view that how immigrant youth acculturate is related to how well they adapt (Sam et al., 2006).

Theory of Ambiguous Loss

The theory of ambiguous loss is relevant to the immigrant situation because individuals, often children, experience a loss that is not clear or final. Ambiguous loss occurs in confusing situations when the clarity needed for boundary maintenance or closure appears unattainable (Boss, 2003). For instance, in a family separated by migration, a parent may be psychologically present but not physically present. The timeline for the separation may not be known and may depend on several circumstances. In the case of immigration, family members might become separated and a loss of both cultural traditions and familiar context may exist. Ambiguous loss becomes a problem structurally when it leads to structural ambiguity such as when a parent is absent and his or her role must be ignored until he or she is physically present in the family (Boss, 2003).

Ambiguous loss may also cause a problem psychologically when there is not a clear-cut loss or timeline. Immigrant students may need to live in a temporary situation as their parents find work or contemplate returning to the country of origin or a place where other family members are present. They perhaps have traveled to the United States separately from other loved ones and may or may not be here legally. Sometimes they may be running from immigration officials or moving from one place to another; they live with few answers. This confusion, according to Boss (2003), blocks coping and stress management and freezes the grief process. Children of immigrants may experience "feelings of hopelessness that lead to depression and passivity and feelings of ambivalence that can lead to guilt, anxiety and immobilization" (p. 553).

Role of Schools or Educational Setting in Acculturation

For immigrant adolescents, schools or other education settings are the "major arenas for inter-group contact and acculturation" (Sam et al., 2006, p. 122). School adjustment, considered a primary task, serves an important part of the cultural transition process. School provides an opportunity for students to develop cross-cultural relationships and possibly, in most of the United States, to learn English. Although much research has focused on the school performance of ethnic, national, and cultural minorities, relatively little empirical evidence is available on immigrant student school adaptation (Sam et al., 2006). In connection with school and adolescents, many acculturation scales for students have been primarily language-based, measuring language usage as a proxy for acculturation because language fluency affects a person's ability to communicate with people of both cultures (Unger et al., 2007).

Previous studies have indicated that language usage explains a "significant proportion of the variance in many other acculturation measures," and have, therefore, used it as a measure of

acculturation (Unger et al., 2007). Recent studies, however, assert language usage is not the only important component of acculturation. To capture the multidimensionality and complexity of the acculturation process, researchers have created long, detailed measures such as the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II (ARSMA-II) that includes respondent preferences for holidays, friends, food, and media, in addition to language use (Unger et al., 2007). A shorter version of ARSMA-II has been validated for use with adolescents.

Any of the various survey measures of acculturation will only be an approximation of an individual's level of acculturation. Berry (1997) indicates numerous issues of acculturation research are not reflected in many of the scales. The scales carry the assumption that individuals have the liberty to choose how they acculturate, which is not always the case, especially for adolescents. Along with the influence from friends and family, adolescent experiences in school greatly influences their process of adaptation and acculturation. Students in many schools, for example, must use English in the classroom instead of Spanish, the language spoken in their home. Students bring a valid culture and language to school, which may be accepted and/or embraced, or may be rejected by a school's "assimilationist orientation" (Espinoza-Herold, 2003, p. 118).

Educational Services for English Language Learners

Undoubtedly, many language and communication issues can be addressed in the educational setting, but services provided to ELL students differ greatly based on the resources available and the attitude toward immigrant students, and, therefore, school districts address language and communication issues in several unique ways. One individual factor measured in the classroom involves the level of English proficiency of the students. According to many experts, English proficiency is "an important… predictor of success" (Driscoll, 1999, p. 861).

Students from families of Hispanic descent who speak Spanish as their first language are far less likely to finish school than those who speak English in the home (Driscoll, 1999). English language learners are more likely to finish high school if they speak English very well (Black, 2005). Spanish-speaking students who do not speak English well or not at all are more likely to drop out of school. However, learning to speak English well takes time and resources. Therefore, the question regarding the best way to teach English to English language learners remains.

Summary of Program Models

Since the 1974 Lau vs. Nichols court case decision initiated the beginning of ESL programs, several approaches have emerged to address limited or non-English proficient students. To meet the unique needs of students of English as a second language, school districts across the United States have implemented a variety of programs. These programs differ greatly depending on characteristics and number of the ESL students enrolled. School district resources also influence the type of program provided by the district. Qualified teachers, classroom space, and funding for classroom materials must all be considered. These types of programs can be broadly classified as ESL programs or Bilingual programs. In ESL programs, a teacher who does not need to be proficient in the home language of the students teaches students. Bilingual programs provide the opportunity for students and the teacher to use more than one language (McKeon, 1987). Different types of programs exist in each category and the effectiveness of various programs remains controversial. Some experts claim reasons for the superiority of one particular model, while others believe the best way for immigrant students to develop proficiency is English immersion, or the “sink or swim” policy (Renner, 1993).

ESL programs.

In districts where the population is diverse and represents many different languages, ESL programs rather than bilingual programs are common (Renner, 1993). The ESL programs can accommodate students from different language backgrounds in one class and teachers do not need to be proficient in the home language of the students. Many Spanish-speaking students at the high school level have participated in these sheltered or stand-alone ESL classrooms with intense English instruction until they have adequate language skills to survive the mainstream classroom (Curtin, 2005). The Sheltered English programs operate solely for students who are taken out of the regular classroom for special instruction in and about English (McKeon, 1987). These intensive programs, according Burke (1995) may be very helpful in the language learning process. However, Burke claims too often sheltered programs "socially, academically and psychologically 'lock in' learners thus producing a restrictive environment" (p. 192). Burke believes special treatment for language and communication needs should augment, not replace, the regular classroom learning environment.

Other programs serving students for a large portion of the instructional day, called content-based programs, provide a parallel track to the mainstream curricular course offerings, consisting of one or two subjects (McKeon, 1987). Recent studies in the area of ESL pedagogy have demonstrated the benefits of content-based ESL instruction, resulting in improved proficiency in English language skills and easing student transition into the academic mainstream classroom (Claire, 1995). In these courses, materials are drawn from the mainstream academic disciplines and are designed to both increase language proficiency and to facilitate academic performance. Kaspar (1995) reported that students enrolled in content-based programs score

significantly higher on institutional measures of reading proficiency and also have higher pass rates than students enrolled in non-content based ESL programs.

The length of time students continue in ESL intensive classrooms remains a "source of debate and contention legislatively and philosophically in many states" (Kaspar, 1995, p. 22). In Texas, for example, legislators mandate that students take standardized tests in the third year after their arrival in the United States. They may assume second language acquisition requires only three years because they obviously expect students to perform at a comparable level of competency as native English speaking students. Second-language acquisition theorists would argue academic competency skills generally take from five to eight years (Curtin, 2005). While many students quickly acquire "Basic Communication Skills" (BICS), they still need continuous English language support to achieve the "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" (CALPS) necessary to read textbooks and pass state standardized tests (Black, 2005, p. 39).

Some of the models of stand-alone ESL programs may also serve as support for students entering the mainstream classroom. Examples of this design usually operate for a smaller portion of the school day. They include pullout programs in which students are pulled out of the regular classroom for special instruction in ESL or programs in which students receive ESL instruction for a single class period. English language learning students can frequently succeed in mathematics and science without much formal adjustment according to Valentin (1993), because these subjects tend to use international language. However, subjects such as social studies and English will cause problems for English language learners. In some pullout programs, students meet with a trained ESL instructor for these subjects. The instructor may also provide support for the other subjects. Although it is easy for counselors to place students

only in subjects they understand, they must acquire credits in other subjects to meet state standards and, in some states, pass standardized tests.

Bilingual programs.

Although students in ESL with qualified and well-trained teachers learn English, the ESL teachers are not, and cannot be expected to be content specialists. It seems essential to remember the school's obligation to ESL students is not only to teach them English, but also "to provide them with the same overall quality of education" as all students (Valentin, 1993, p. 36). Since the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, in which schools have been obligated to teach students in their native language, bilingual programs have remained controversial. Numerous court cases and negotiated agreements have reinforced the legal obligation to provide ESL students with quality instruction. Teachers in bilingual programs are fluent in English as well as the student's home language and use both languages. Some models have been implemented in districts with a large number of students from the same language background. The programs differ in the amount and duration based on how much English is used in instruction as well as the length of time students participate in each program (Valentin, 1993).

Several studies show students in school programs that are additive, allowing students to use their native language while learning English, have higher achievement rates than those students who attended subtractive or English-only schools (Black, 2005). Waters (2000) examined the English reading performances of students who were immersed in English classes versus those who were in ESL or bilingual programs as measured by the SAT–9. The study found students who were immersed in English education classes scored higher than those in ESL programs (Waters, 2000). However, students who had successfully exited bilingual programs scored above average and demonstrated academic success exceeding or stayed even with the

scores achieved by their native English-speaking peers (Waters, 2000). Ninety-four percent of the students in the study spoke Spanish as their native language.

Bilingual programs may be considered more effective by some because both English language learners and native English speakers benefit from learning a second language. A *Bilingual Research Journal* article outlined a study of ten random schools in California (Goto-Butler, Orr, Bousquet Guitierrez, & Hakuta, 2000). Again, SAT-9 data was used for the comparison. In all cases, the average performance of all the schools implementing bilingual instruction met or exceeded the performance of all students at comparison schools in both reading and mathematics. In addition, all of the schools providing bilingual instruction reported school-wide performance as strong or stronger than the schools providing only English immersion. Many professors and second-language theorists emphasize advantages of the two-way bilingual programs and, in turn, bilingualism, in the United States. Bilingual or dual-language programs have "tremendous potential for increasing both the academic achievement and second language acquisition of both mainstream and language minority students" (Fitzgerald, Garcia & Jimenez, 2000, p. 523).

Evaluation of Program Models

Despite the research focusing on the advantages of two-way bilingual education for all students, strong opposition to bilingual programs exists. Opponents claim the SAT-9 does not serve as an effective tool for evaluating English language learning. Others who support the programs realize training and hiring bilingual instructors requires significant funding. Many political, social, and economic issues prevent the development of bilingual programs in schools. In fact, in 1990 former bilingual education activist Rosalie Pedalino Porter published *Forked Tongue*, a "biting attack" on bilingual education. She believed bilingual programs are not as

effective as immersion programs. She stated that bilingual programs fail and "do not result... in better learning of English or other subjects" (Goode, 1996, p. 17). Other sources remain skeptical of bilingual education because, after 25 years of education, the high-school dropout rate is still at 50 percent. Opponents of bilingual education legislation believe programs that "leave students illiterate in two-languages" should not receive funding (School's Out, 1992, p. 19).

Educators propose that bilingual program evaluation as well as instructional and policy decisions "should be based on theory rather than political interpretations of evaluation data" (Fitzgerald et al., 2000, p. 521). Bilingual education may be difficult to evaluate. Some argue the issue has become so politicized that it seems "almost impossible to separate education benefit from political exigency" (Valentin, 1993, p. 37). Although the advantages of bilingualism have been documented in research for decades, schools around the world "function to transfer students from one language to another" rather than to promote multilingualism (Waters, 2001, p. 299).

Evaluation of ESL programs, like bilingual programs, has also been a topic of heated debate in education. In his synthesis and meta-analysis of effective high school ESL programs, Roessingh (2004) examined 12 major studies of effective ESL programs in the United States and Canada in the last 14 years. His study addressed the "growing sense that ESL students are not being well served by the delivery of supports meant to facilitate their development of language acquisition and enable them to participate with their classmates in the mainstream" (p. 611). Roessingh found educational outcomes measured by dropout, failure, and low achievement and low scores on standardized tests suggest that ESL learners do not benefit from the ESL programs. After several years of research on building an ESL program focused primarily on results, his team concluded the link between the documented outcomes and what is considered effective is missing. Roessingh argued the overemphasis on qualitative research weakened the

development of adequate theory of effective school programs; quantitative and qualitative research is needed to understand the complexity of what makes for effective programs for ESL learners.

Although no clear consensus exists regarding the best way to teach students English, ESL literature appeared consistent in stating language acquisition depends on a number of factors in addition to the type of program in which the student is enrolled (Borden, 1998; Roessingh, 2004). For immigrants, the age of the child on arrival in the United States, level of previous school activities, and level of native language proficiency must be considered. Educators should encourage students to learn English while also preserving their language and culture. However, they also must realize that some Hispanic students who speak Spanish in their home environment feel pressure from family and peers not to learn English. Certainly, individual desire, intelligence, and motivation to learn English also affect the rate of acquisition.

Despite the many variables in determining the best program for increasing academic achievement, researchers are consistent in identifying a number of attributes that are characteristic of effective programs for English language learners. Successful programs promote academic achievement by encouraging the development of academic skills while learning English (Rennie, 1993). Effective programs also have high expectations for English as a second language students and supportive administrators and teachers. Staff development and training is provided for not only ESL teachers, but also mainstream teachers and staff. A bilingual approach to language acquisition appears to encourage an additive assimilation strategy, which supplements, but does not replace, students' first language and culture (McBrien, 2005, p. 355). The best program is one that is tailored to meet the "linguistic, academic and affective needs of students" (Rennie, 1993, p. 8).

Summary

The literature reviewed included information on the increasing population of Hispanic people in the United States and the growing number of immigrant students of Latino descent in schools. The theories of cultural adaptation and ambiguous loss were introduced to illuminate the factors relating to student success in adapting to a new culture. The status of the educational programs provided to immigrant students and the achievement data for immigrant students from Latin American countries were reviewed. The area and types of support available for English Language Learners varied greatly according to the resources and beliefs about the theories of language acquisition.

Although the education of immigrant students is receiving more attention, a gap exists in the literature relating to the experience of immigrant students living in low-diversity communities. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology of the study and provide details about the participants, data collection, and analysis used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

I used qualitative research to explore the lives of ELL high school students of Latin American origin. Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding to explore a human condition (Creswell, 2007). Although qualitative researchers do not have one fixed definition for qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2007) emphasized a process of research that begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens and the "study of research problems inquiring into the meaning that individual or groups ascribe to social or human problems" (p. 37). It is a descriptive approach in which the researcher examines a phenomenon from the perspective of the people involved and the meaning they assign to their experiences.

Ultimately, I chose qualitative research for this study because it focuses on understanding the nature of an experience and allowed "the phenomenon of interest to unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001, p. 39) in a real world setting. Qualitative research best assists in gaining an understanding of a situation that would otherwise be confusing by focusing on and explaining a concept (Golafshani, 2003). Phenomenology, an approach within qualitative research traditions (Creswell, 2007), guided my investigation of the immigrant experience. I used methods such as interviews and analysis of information collected to conduct the study. In the next section I describe this approach and later add details regarding how the investigation proceeded.

Phenomenological Research

To capture the lived experiences of ELL students from Central and South America, I adopted phenomenology. Although several meanings of phenomenological research exist, scholars agree the aim of phenomenological research is to determine the meaning of an experience from the perspective of an individual or a group (Creswell, 2007). Because there are multiple ways of interpreting experiences, researchers adopting phenomenology emphasize

individual experience and the construction of reality through social interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Descriptive phenomenology involves the attempt to describe the lived experiences of individuals without making previous assumptions of the reality of those experiences. From individual descriptions, "general or universal meanings" are derived… [and] "the essences and structures of the experience" can be described (Moustaskas, 1994, p. 13).

Phenomenology attempts to gain entry into the "conceptual world" of the participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2004, p. 23) through in-depth interviews. By adopting strategies in phenomenology called intuiting and bracketing, I avoided making assumptions and stayed open to participant perspectives. I investigated the experiences of ELL students by focusing on the meaning they assigned to their experiences. The final step was to accurately describe the essences common to immigrant students living in Midwestern communities as they described and gave meaning to their experience.

The Research Sample

Before beginning the data collection process, I received permission from the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). I then recruited high school students over 18 years of age who had previously attended high school as an English Language Learner with limited English language proficiency. I wished to locate participants who did not speak English fluently when they immigrated to the United States from various Latin American countries.

Finding and securing participants for the study proved extremely difficult. I initially secured the cooperation of three participants who were my former students. Because school districts would not release the names of students due to data privacy concerns, I personally contacted some ESL teachers who asked their former students to contact me. A number of times

appointments were made and the potential participant failed to meet me for an interview. Although I assured participants of their confidentiality and voluntary participation, many participants declined an interview or agreed and then did not keep an appointment for various reasons, including their potential status as undocumented students.

I conducted the first three interviews with my former students and then contacted people known to me who worked with Latino populations to find additional participants. I sent the Informed Consent form (see Appendix B) to contacts to inform them of my study and then asked them to share the information with the potential participants. I expanded my contacts and included University of St. Thomas doctoral students who worked with Spanish-speaking populations in the area and some teachers of immigrant students. After I secured more interviews, I used the snowballing technique to find more participants, seeking nominations for additional participants from people interviewed.

Once I learned the name and contact information for the potential participants, I either sent the consent form to potential participants via electronic mail or read part of the consent form over the phone. Additionally I provided a copy of the consent form prior to the interview so participants could read and sign the form before the interview started. Although I brought the Spanish and English version of the consent form (see Appendix B), all participants indicated they could read English well and did not need the Spanish language version.

Participant Profiles

I interviewed twelve participants who came to the United States from Latin American countries. Ten of the participants attended high school in the United States and I included one participant who attended college. I also interviewed a parent of three children who attended school in the United States as ELL students to gain additional perspective. All participants were

18 years or older and their primary language was Spanish. Most students were fluent in English at the time of the interview, although they were considered individuals with limited English proficiency at some time in their school career. All but one of the participants spoke almost entirely in English during the interview.

Five of the twelve participants I interviewed were male. The following table provides information about their gender, country of origin, and age of arrival in the United States. I used pseudonyms to disguise the identity of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Background Information

Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Age of arrival in the United States
Eric	Male	Mexico	8 years
Georgina	Female	Mexico	13 years
Carla	Female	Peru	16 years
Marissa	Female	Mexico	12 years
Ana	Female	Columbia	32 years
Angela	Female	Mexico	17 years
Josue	Male	Mexico	1 year
Claudia	Female	Mexico	2 years
Manuel	Male	Peru	25 years
Angelica B	Female	Mexico	1st time: 48 days 2nd time: 15 years
Joaquin	Male	Southern Mexico	8 years
Eduardo	Male	Venezuela	15 years

I provide a brief profile of the participants below prior to describing methods of data collection and analysis.

Eric arrived in the United States from Mexico when he was 8 years old. His family first lived in Colorado before moving to a Midwestern small town in South Dakota when he was 15. His younger sister, Cynthia is two years younger; the next youngest sibling, Valeria, was born in the United States. Eric's mother and father do not speak English and work at a hog confinement operation. At the time of the interview, he was 19 years old and remained here on an expired visa. He did not have a job and could not find work because of his citizenship. He was one of my former students.

Georgina, also from Mexico, was also one of my former students and arrived in Texas as a teenager. After living in Texas for a year, the family moved to Sioux City, Iowa and then Sioux Falls, South Dakota two years later. Her father and brother were back in Mexico at the time of the interview. She arrived in the school where I teach for her senior year. She lived with her boyfriend as her mother lived in Sioux Falls with her younger sister. Her older brother lived back in Mexico.

Carla came to the United States with her family from Peru. They lived in California before settling in South Dakota. She recently graduated from Huron High School and planned to go to college. Her older sister could not attend high school in the United States because she was too old so she did not know English. Her brother was one year younger than she was and on track to graduate. Carla's parents both worked and did not know English.

Marissa arrived in Sioux Falls from Mexico as a middle school student. She, her mom, and two brothers came to join her dad, who had been working in the United States for a year. At

the time of the interview, she was 19 years old and enrolled in classes at the community college. Her parents both worked and were legal citizens. Her brothers were still in high school.

Ana arrived in the United States at the age of 32, six years prior to the interview. She and her husband brought their two small children to the United States so their son could obtain the medical treatment needed to help him with his disability. At the time of the interview, her children were 14, 12, and 6 years old. She had been a social worker in Colombia, but at the time of the interview worked at a factory job along with her husband. They may return to Colombia when their son turns 18 and is no longer eligible for medical assistance here.

Angela was also one of my former students who just moved back to the Midwest after living in California for two years after graduation. She arrived in the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico when she was 17 and was the middle child in her family. Her family came to the United States to join her brother who had been working here for two years. Her younger brother, Hector, also one of my former students, recently graduated. Angelica was married three years prior to the interview, had one child, and was expecting her second child.

Josue arrived in the United States when he was about one year old. He attended school nearby, but he never enrolled in my class. At the time of the interview, he was on track to graduate in a month. As the oldest of four children, Josue was the only one who had not been born in the United States. His father had been deported to Mexico a year earlier and had taken his younger brother with him because the boy had been expelled from school. He worked a lot to help his mom support the family. His plans for after graduation were to work at the same factory and continue to help his mom save money to go back to Mexico.

Claudia's mom brought her to the United States from Mexico when she was two years old to join her dad who had a job here. She recently received her permanent citizenship status and

works as an interpreter in Sioux Falls. She grew up in Iowa and married a man from Mexico. Their little boy was 18 months old. She attended a technical institute at the time of the interview.

Angelica came to the United States for the second time when she was 15 years old. Her parents had brought her the first time to California when she was 48 days old. Her three younger brothers were born in California. Their dad decided to return to Mexico when she was seven years old. She attended college in South Dakota but lived in Iowa and worked as a medical interpreter.

Angelica's fiancé, Joaquin, came to the United States from Mexico when he was eight years old. He graduated from college and worked as a police officer in Iowa. His two older brothers and two younger sisters also lived in the area. Although his siblings know English, his father does not. His mother passed away two years prior to the interview, but had worked at the same factory as his father and Angelica's parents.

Manuel arrived in the United States a year after he graduated from high school in Peru. He attended a year of college in Brazil, but then decided to come to the United States to join his mother who had remarried and lived in Iowa. He attended college in Iowa. His younger half brother and sister were born in the United States and speak English as their first language. After graduating, Manual planned to return to Brazil.

Eduardo arrived in the United States from Venezuela when he was 15. He lived with his uncle and attended high school for three years. After graduation, he lived in Florida and attended college for a few years before deciding to return to Venezuela to work for this parents' company. His father, who stayed in Venezuela, is remarried and Eduardo's half siblings have not been to the United States.

Data Collection Process

Interviews

I contacted all participants on the phone to arrange the interview time and place, usually a mutually agreed upon restaurant or coffee shop. I conducted all interviews but two in personal meetings. Two interviews were conducted over the phone. Sometimes, I used email to confirm or remind participants about the interviews.

Initial interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were recorded. I used both semi-structured and open-ended guide questions (see Appendix D). Mainly, the participants were asked to tell their stories of coming to the United States and starting school with limited English proficiency. I developed follow up questions to clarify information and sometimes asked additional questions after transcription of the first interview using a phone interview or email correspondence. All participants received copies of the transcribed interviews for their review.

Interview procedure

Normally the interview began with a few minutes of basic conversation about the participant's background and included small talk regarding current schedules and activities. I asked participants about their age, country of origin, and how old they were when they arrived in the United States. Initial interview questions focused on the individual's lived experience as an immigrant in a rural town. I began by asking the participant about his or her story of arriving in the United States and/or entering school. Although I had a list of guiding questions to begin the interview (see Appendix D), the actual interview was less formal. An open-ended format was used, allowing the participants to share their stories. Proposed questions were open-ended, as Bogdan and Biklen advise, to focus on process and meaning (2003). The first objective of the

long interview, as described by McCracken, is to “tell their story on their own terms” (1988, p. 34).

After completing the semi-structured interview questions, the participants were asked to describe “anything else that would help others understand what is was like to arrive in the United States without knowing English and starting class in a school where they needed to use their second language.” Although each initial interview lasted 60-90 minutes, the follow-up interviews were of various lengths, depending on the method and questions posed.

Twelve interviews were conducted before achieving data saturation. After the six interviews, preliminary themes were identified and continued until no new themes emerged. The preliminary analysis gained more support and themes were refined with additional insights gained from the last six participants.

Data Analysis

I personally transcribed each interview within a week of meeting with the participants to ensure participants comments and field notes were recorded. The transcripts were reviewed several times to capture the exact language of the participant, as many participants still had strong accents. After transcribing the interviews, I sent a copy of the transcript to each participant for his or her review. The process ensured the participant words were correctly interpreted, particularly the translation from Spanish and English. I then erased each interview from the tape recorder and kept transcripts of the interview on a password-protected personal computer. I printed a hard copy of the data and kept it in my home office, used only by me.

After six interviews, I began to analyze the data following analysis techniques recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). First, I reviewed the field notes from the interview adding observer comments to speculate on, and transcripts, recording any commonalities or

themes. After writing comments and memos to myself on the transcripts, I circled key words and phrases used by participants. Later, I used software and coding categories to aid in the organization of the data.

I used HyperResearch, qualitative research software, to analyze the data and identify recurring themes. The software assisted in the development and application of a coding strategy. I isolated reoccurring coded themes and identified several major themes. After coding the themes, I reread the transcripts to be sure that no common themes had been missed and developed a framework for interpreting my data.

Ultimately, four themes emerged from the data, including (1) participant apprehension about arriving in the United States and/or starting school, (2) issues surrounding adapting to the culture and an alien environment, (3) cultural bereavement and ambiguous loss, and (4) the process of English language learning. To analyze the data involving apprehension, adjustment, and learning English, I adopted cultural adaptation and acculturation theory. I adopted ambiguous loss theory to analyze the data relating to cultural bereavement. I describe these theories in Chapter Four.

Researcher Bias and Quality

As a Caucasian woman, I have not had the experience of entering a public school in the United States surrounded by students that do not speak my native language. I have not experienced being part of an entirely different culture. However, I have traveled to other countries for a short period of time as a student living in an alien culture. As an exchange student, though, I had extra support provided by a teacher who knew the Spanish and English language well. The participant students may not have had a resource person.

In addition, although I cannot entirely relate to the experience of second language students or the experience of immigrating to the United States, I have worked with a few ELL students over the last few years. As suggested by phenomenologist Moustakas, I did my best to abstain from suppositions and focus on the topic "freshly and naively" (p. 47). However, I have developed relationships with ELL students and have served as a resource for them. These prior relationships influenced how I viewed their experience in a small town in the Midwest.

Because qualitative research cannot be generalized, arguments regarding reliability and validity pertain to "the trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in qualitative paradigm" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604). I used the "bracketing" technique described by Creswell (1998) in which investigators "set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective of the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 58) to focus on the meaning of the students' lived experiences.

To bracket my experience of working with ESL immigrant students previously, I consistently asked the participants many of the same questions, and also encouraged them to add anything else to understand the experience of an immigrant student. I wrote memos to myself throughout the transcription process and reread transcripts after an initial analysis of the data to ensure I had reported events and focused on the facts and the experience participants shared with me.

Limitations

A limitation of my study included the decision to select only individuals 18 years of age or older. Some experiences were excluded because of the age requirement. The participants drew on their memories to share their perceptual experience of being an English language learner in a rural school. Although several students arrived in the United States within the last five

years, some arrived as small children and did not recall some experiences as vividly. All students shared their perception of their experience, however, their description of long-ago experiences lacked some detail due to the loss of memory or perhaps an altered memory limiting access to their experience.

Ethical Concerns

To protect the volunteer participants and maintain confidentiality, no participants were identified. I used pseudonyms for the participants and the persons mentioned during their interviews. Before the interview, participants signed a consent form granting permission to use their stories in this study. The assurance of confidentiality and permission agreement was written in English, but I also presented the copy in Spanish. After the transcription, the documents were provided to the participants for them to review at a follow-up interview and/or via email. Participants were encouraged to make comments and check to see if their stories were correct. All transcripts remained in a securely locked file cabinet in my home office. The documents by the date promised on the IRB form.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained the reasons I chose qualitative research methods and the phenomenological approach. I also describe recruitment procedures and the research sample, offering a brief profile of participants. I also included a description of the data collection and analysis process. I adopted several theories to analyze the data, including cultural adaptation theory (Berry, 1997) and the theory of ambiguous loss (Massey & Sanchez, 2010). Lastly, I addressed the issues of reliability and validity of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. In Chapter Four, I share the results of the analysis, framing the experience of

immigrants as a journey with four major challenges commonly faced by adolescents in adjusting to a new school and community.

CHAPTER FOUR: ADOLESCENT IMMIGRANT JOURNEYS TO AMERICA

The experiences and stories of Latin American adolescent immigrants adapting to an alien Midwestern culture may be largely unseen and unheard by those who serve them, including teachers and other social service professionals. The purpose of my study was to not only investigate the perspectives and experiences of English Language Learners (ELL), but also to give voice to their stories.

I adopted the metaphor of a journey because it represents a sense of movement and struggle to arrive at a new destination. As the participants journeyed to the United States, they found when their physical journey ended, a different kind of journey commenced, one that presented more of an internal struggle of adjustment to a new life. The journey served as an apt metaphor for the difficult road ahead and the challenges presented at each turn.

The journey, represented as a struggle and process, involved not only moving to a new and potentially alien environment but also adapting to new cultural and social circumstances; this process is commonly referred to as acculturation or cultural adaptation (Alvarez, 2003; Iber, 1992; Reyes & Jason, 1992). The adaptations may take place immediately or over an extended period of time. The changes, unique to individual experience, can take many forms, depending on a number of variables such as acculturation attitude, cultural identities, language proficiency, family and peer relationship values and perceived discrimination (Phinney et al., 2006). The results of my qualitative study show the complexity of the process.

Although the circumstances surrounding each student's journey were very different, similar themes tied them together. Participants appeared to experience the major life change of immigrating to a new country according to a *chronological and simultaneous process* with predictable challenges. This process and the feelings associated with it included: (1)

experiencing and overcoming a feeling of apprehension regarding social belonging and a generalized fear of the unknown; (2) forming a new bicultural identity consisting of preserving elements of a native culture and also incorporating aspects of the new culture; and (3) managing periods of grief or loss as students struggled to successfully adapt and integrate into a new culture and gain social acceptance.

For most of the students, the key to overcoming fear and adapting to the changes brought about by immigration appeared to be their ability to learn or increase their proficiency in English. As they learned a new language as means of communicating and also adapting to new circumstances, they began to make more friends and become more integrated into the culture. In the next section I describe the psychological and social reactions related to making the journey to the United States.

Responses to Major Life Changes

Student immigrants who come to the United States experience many changes, beginning from the moment they learn that they will be leaving their country of origin for a new life in an entirely different culture. Similar to other individuals who experience a major life change, they have unique psychological and social responses to the life change of moving to a new country. Participants in this study felt apprehensive about coming to the United States and struggled with the process of adjusting to a new and alien culture. In their journey, some students experienced a period of cultural bereavement, a process in which they let go of the aspects of their previous culture and began integrating into the new culture. Others, however, felt caught between two cultures and were forced to learn to live with ambiguity.

Apprehension

Some aspects appear to influence the initial life changes experienced by the English Language Learner (ELL). For six of the twelve students, the journey of adaptation began with apprehension. This apprehension involves fearful anticipation of the unknown, fear of not being accepted by classmates and others their age, and also anxiety about looking foolish because they did not know what to expect in social situations, such as attending school or interacting with others within the community. Sometimes overwhelmed by a major change in their lives, they also experienced worry regarding what might happen once they lost the support of family members and friends.

Although some participants do not remember in detail the actual physical journey to the United States, four of the students remember feeling apprehensive or fearful before the journey or the actual day they left their country of origin. Eric, who arrived in third grade, remembered the day he rode on a bus with his mom and sister to meet his father in the United States. “We were all dressed up and everybody was crying,” he said. He said the bus ride “wasn’t too bad.” He added, “But when you get off the bus and all these people are talking differently and you can’t understand it, you just want to go back.”

Angela described learning about her father’s decision to move the family to the United States to be with her oldest brother who was already here working in Idaho. “It was very hard,” she said, “because you have your life there and friends and places to go.” The long bus ride from Guadalajara to El Paso to Idaho also proved difficult and scary. She was only allowed a backpack to bring her belongings. Her mom, she said, felt excited to come to the United States because she hadn’t seen her brother in three years. However, when they arrived, Angela remembered feeling disappointed because they moved to a dairy farm where the closest neighbor

was about 15 minutes away. Right away, she missed the closeness of the neighborhood in Mexico. “When we moved to Idaho, we had my family and me and that’s it.” They also came in December near Christmas time, so she said it was difficult to adjust to the piercing cold winter. Nine months later, they moved to South Dakota.

Carla, also a teenager when her family came from Peru, remembered crying “all day” on the day she arrived in the Unites States. On the plane, she just wanted to get out and pleaded with her parents to let her go back home. “I was like ‘please…’ when we were on the plane.” she said. She, too, was scared she would not make friends at school like the ones she left behind in Peru. She described being upset and mad. “I was totally crying. I just wanted to go back.” When the family left California to travel by car to the Midwest, she said, “I was still crying and wanted to go back.”

Manuel, who had lived in Brazil for a while after leaving Peru shortly after he graduated, said when he arrived in the United States alone by airplane, he felt fearful that he would not be able to understand anyone. He first arrived in Miami. He said that he although many people spoke Spanish in Miami, the Spanish was different than he was used to and hard to understand due to the mixture of cultures. When he continued his journey to Iowa to where his mother lived, he said, “It was like Hell,” because no one spoke Spanish. Fortunately, his mother was bilingual and able to help him adjust to the culture and language.

Later, the generalized fear of the unknown led to anxiety regarding gaining acceptance and experiencing success in school. Six students, Eric, Marissa, Claudia, Angela, Angelica, and Carla were especially apprehensive about starting school, mainly because they did not know English. They all described the thought of going to school as “scary” or difficult. Eric, Carla, Angelica, and Claudia remember crying either the days leading up to their first day of school or

on their first day of school. They sometimes cried secretly, though, as they wanted to appear strong for younger siblings or to avoid worrying their parents.

Eric, who moved to a community in the Midwest with other people from his country of origin, Mexico, was very apprehensive about starting school. He did not know English, and, at eight years old, had little idea of what schools in the United States were like. He remembers crying when he arrived in the United States, but he cried a lot about starting school and leaving home. “It was hard… It was scary.” Eric didn’t really share his feeling of apprehension with anyone. He remembered crying but also feeling that he had to be strong. He was in the third grade and his sister was in kindergarten. The day he started school, he said, “I cried because… Well, when you are little it is hard. But, like I can’t cry now. I just remember being scared.”

Although Eric was scared to go to school, he did know other people in the community who were from his home country, which made him feel less apprehensive about meeting people and fitting in around the neighborhood. Others, like Marissa and Claudia, arrived in the Midwest and didn’t know anyone in the community. They were apprehensive about not only starting school, but living in a entirely new culture without any friends. Neither wanted to go to school the first day, or many days after.

Marissa arrived in South Dakota when she was a teenager, with her mother and two brothers, to join her dad. She didn’t want to come because she had friends and family in her hometown in Mexico and went to school in the city where her aunt lived. She hadn’t seen her dad for many months, and felt uncomfortable about going to live with him after his absence in her life. However, her mom eventually decided to bring them to the United States to join her father, who had been working here, to “keep the family together.”

Although Marissa said that she didn't really feel scared before arriving in the United States, she "wasn't prepared either." She didn't like not knowing anyone. Although she understood the reason why they came here, she was upset because she had her "friends and everything" in Mexico. "It was very upsetting for me because first, I did not want to come here." For Marissa, the thought of making new friends when school started was overwhelming because she did not know English well. However, she did add that her dad was "pretty smart" because he decided to bring them here in the summer so they could somehow "blend in" to the new community. However, she didn't think they would. She was mad, and continued to stay mad even months into the school year.

Angelica, who lived in California the first seven years of her life and then returned to Mexico until her father decided to bring the family to Nebraska when she was fifteen, remembered crying a lot when her father told her they would be returning to the United States. She explained, "It scared me… the new environment and the new people, especially because I didn't know the language. It was…. It was really weird and… and I was really afraid." She said that when her father told her that they would be returning to the United States she cried and begged him to stay in Mexico another year so she could finish middle school. "I told him 'just let me get done and you can come back for me in one year'." However, he told her that she could finish in the United States.

Three of the student participants, Claudia, Josue, and Georgina, do not remember clearly their arrival in the United States so they did not remember feeling apprehensive about moving. Although Claudia does not remember coming to the United States at two years old, she distinctly remembers when it was time for her to start school. She said she was scared of not being able to communicate and understand what was going on. Her mom didn't know that most children in

the United States started to go to school at age five, so Claudia started when she was six. She didn't want to go, even after her mom's coaching her that she needed to go to school "to learn English," so she could help her mom learn English.

When talking about starting school and moving to the Midwest, the students were apprehensive and described feelings similar to acculturative stress. Acculturative stress is part of the process of cultural adaptation. It originates in the process of adapting to a new culture and refers to the pyschocultural stress experienced by immigrants due to the differences between the individual's culture of origin and the culture of the new society (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Some symptoms related to the changes involved with cultural adaptation include anxiety, isolation, confusion, and depression (Berry, 1997). For participants such as Angelica, the anticipation of interacting with others in the new culture caused anxiety. Some, like Eric and Carla, cried and wished to isolate themselves rather than interacting with others. Marissa became angry and isolated herself from her parents. Claudia was confused at first regarding why she needed to go to school and why everyone at school was speaking English.

Immigrant students experienced a major life change as they left behind their native country and journeyed to the United States. Although each of their experiences was unique, many felt apprehensive and experienced acculturative stress. Several factors affect the relationship between stress and acculturating. Many of these variables, such as demographic characteristics and the type of family and social support, influence the ability and experience of the student adjustment to the a new culture (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Some researchers assert that acculturative stress has a "pervasive, life influence on psychological adjustment, decision making, occupational functioning and physical health of Hispanics" (Torres & Rollock, 2004, p.

157). The acculturative stress and apprehension experienced by students, then, influenced the next part of their journey, adjustment to a new culture.

Adjustment

As the students entered school, they experienced more change and started to adjust. Many more tears were shed. For each student, the numbers of tears and the experience of adjustment were again unique. As participants began to interact with the new culture, they had several different experiences that influenced their process of adaptation and the degree to which they adjusted to being part of the new culture.

While some described feeling alienated from others at school for a significant period of time, others focused on making friends with other Spanish-speaking students at school and in the neighborhood more quickly. Each student seemed to adjust to the changes and new environments at a different rate, again depending on a number of variables such as demographics and familial and social support.

Ana, a 38-year old mother of three, described the difference in her three children's process of adapting to life in the United States. Ana and her husband brought their family to the United States from Columbia six years ago so her son, Juan, who has a genetic muscular disorder, could receive medical help that is not possible for them to obtain in Columbia. At age six, he started the process of having six surgeries in six months. During that time, the family lived in the Ronald McDonald house in Sioux Falls.

Juan's older sister, who is 14 years old, has always been very social, according to Ana. Her mom said that she didn't have problems adjusting and today, almost seven years after their arrival here, has many friends and is active in marching band. She and a friend were with Ana at the interview. She loves school and speaks English with almost no accent. The little sister,

Paula, born in the Unites States, is in pre-school. Although she does have some challenges that are genetic, the muscular disorder only affects her hands. She does have severe psoriasis and just three fingers on each hand, but she is a happy, well-adjusted girl who speaks English and Spanish well. She enjoys preschool and, during the interview, drew pictures of her friends and her pre-school teacher.

For Juan, adjusting to life in the United States, especially the Midwest, has been very difficult. Ana said that he talks about going back to Columbia often and wants to live close to his cousins. At school, she said, "Students were teasing him and calling him Robocop or 'robot' because of his legs… Many times here…. So I come (sic) to school and talk with the teacher and counselor… so I can come to school and talk to the kids about my boy," said Ana. It is difficult for her, with her limited English skills, but she said she must do it for her son. She added that she talks to the teachers about him. "I always say he is 'double trouble.' My kid doesn't speak very good English and he is disabled. So, I appreciate it. I appreciate the (teachers') help."

Ana mentioned that she often thinks about and shares with her son what life would be like if they hadn't come to the United States. She commented, "I don't know what would happen to my kid in Columbia. He couldn't walk or I don't know. I talk to him about it." She said sometimes it is hard with his condition, but she tells him, "You *walk*. In Columbia you would be in a wheelchair, maybe you depend to me (sic). Depend to (sic) me and your father." Although he has had a hard time adjusting, the United States has given him many opportunities and freedom he would not have had in Columbia.

Another participant, Eric, also talked about going back to Mexico to his old life, or at least back to Colorado where many of his cousins still live. He admitted it took him a long time

to adjust to life here, especially at school where he knew very few people. He said he did not speak at school for a long time. “I couldn’t talk to anybody except one or two students cuz most spoke English and I didn’t know what they were saying. I didn’t say anything. I didn’t speak at all,” he said. “I felt kind of weird because I didn’t know what was going on.”

Soon, Eric started getting to know people because they lived in a trailer park “really far” from school. “There were a bunch of Hispanics that lived there,” he said, so some of the kids could help him. However, when he was 15, the family moved from Colorado to South Dakota, where only a few people speak Spanish. His dad changed jobs, and at first his cousins came to get them settled, but then they moved back. Eric said it was harder adapting to life in South Dakota, even though he knew English. As a teenager, he had to start making friends in an entirely new culture. He preferred living in Colorado because, he explained, “there are more of my people there… more Latinos.”

Like Eric, Carla experienced challenges adjusting to life in the United States, especially the Midwest. Carla also spent the first part of her life in the United States in an area with a higher percentage of Spanish-speaking people before coming to settle in the Midwest. She said that both moves were very hard to make, but her arrival in the Midwestern “small town” where few people spoke English caused severe culture shock. She arrived two weeks before school started. She reported, “It was so different. I lived in a big city in Peru and here… it is not. My mom told us the first night that we would go see the town and it took five minutes. I felt so bad because I was hoping for something better.” She talked a lot about really starting to miss Peru when she arrived in Huron, away from friends from Spanish-speaking countries and some family members who stayed in California.

When Carla got to school, she found she was the only English as a Second Language student at the high school level.

> So, they put me [with] a teacher… It was really weird. She was really mean, I am sorry but it is true, [Carla said, laughing nervously]. Yeah, she didn't understand why I didn't understand her…. so she would just stare at me and I didn't know what she was saying. So, I was like so embarrassed and I wouldn't go to school for like a week. I would be crying, crying, and I wouldn't want to go. I was like "No, please"… But I was crying, just crying because it was so hard to be with her.

About two months after Carla started school, another student from Mexico, Carlos, started school. "He didn't know English… He helped me a lot." Carla practiced English with Carlos and soon, more Spanish-speaking students from various countries moved into the area to work in the factory where Carla's parents worked. However, she still had trouble adapting and longed to return to Peru. She said that when some of the English-speaking students would talk to her, she didn't understand. "I would just smile to them and be like 'whatever' and would just turn around. I didn't even know what happened and didn't even want to know to try. I just wanted to go back to Peru." She added, "Yeah, and that was like my first two years here and not even just my first year."

Adjusting to a new culture also proved challenging to Marissa. Marissa arrived in South Dakota directly from Mexico. She had many of the same struggles the other participants had making friends and therefore, many of the same thoughts about returning to her home country, Mexico. However, she not only had trouble adapting to school life, but also adapting to having her father in her life. Like many immigrant men from Mexico, he had come to the United States to work before the rest of the family arrived. So, Marissa was also adjusting to a new family structure. She said, "I came in the summer. I was trying to adapt. With the family thing and everything because my dad and I weren't bonded. I never really grew up with my dad. So, it

was really hard." Marissa's parents were very strict, she said. Even before school started, her dad would wake up Marissa and her two younger brothers around 5:00 a.m. so they could practice writing and reading English.

At first her parents, especially her dad, were also very strict about letting Marissa meet people and spend time with friends outside of school, even though she met a few Spanish-speaking girls at middle school. For this reason for the first two years, she said, "the only friend I had was Gingly." They would not let her go out and were very protective of her. She got to know a lot of people but could only hang out with Gingly, a classmate who also came to the United States from Mexico. She said her dad had to know "everything about her (Gingly)." She said that living here was very different because "our culture is very innocent." Today, she commented that she understands why her parents were so protective of her, even though at the time she was mad. "I didn't go out. Like I wouldn't get to go. Like in a way I am fortunate. It is not because my parents…they want to be bad. Because they think that is what is best for you. They had to keep you inside."

Marissa said she believed that being able to go back to Mexico every year to see her family helped her adjust to living here. In her hometown in Mexico, she was very sociable and outgoing, but she said when she came here she was not. "I felt very out of place," she said, adding that she couldn't talk to many people because of her limited English proficiency. She was easily persuaded into doing things she didn't want to do because she didn't understand what others were saying. In her school, there were also students from other cultures that spoke a variety of languages. "I got in trouble a couple of times because of other people," she described. "I tried to communicate with the little English I knew," she said.

One participant, Josue, explained that he had learned English fairly well before he started school, so the language was not such a barrier. The hardest part, he said, was "always watching your back." His parents' message to him, he felt, was, "Don't talk to cops. Don't make too much (sic) friends. Don't tell them who you are…What your secrets are…" He said that he was taught that every person was an enemy and he feared getting close to them since his family was in the United States illegally. The family moved "about 20 times" before settling in South Dakota for the last eight years. His separation from friends and mainstream society occurred by choice. He mentioned that this separation continues today. Since his father was deported to Mexico about one year ago, he said he fears even more allowing himself to trust anyone.

Because she was very shy, Angelica said it was "really hard" for her to make friends at the middle school age. She said her four younger brothers fit right in at school, but it took her a long time to make friends. She was not confident in her ability to speak English, so she made friends with the other students who spoke Spanish. She said it took her a long time to make friends with those who were not Spanish speaking, whereas her younger brothers had an easier time.

Six of the participants told me that their lack of English proficiency was the hardest part of adjusting and meeting other people. Even in places where other students spoke Spanish, students felt that the opportunities to make friends proved limited. As students learned English, life became easier and, eventually they were able to select their friends instead of just going with the crowd. The students each described the adjustment or cultural adaptation as a process, just as making friends is a process.

As they experienced the changes with regard to the process of adjusting to a new environment, participants experienced different degrees of acculturation. The most widely-

known theory of acculturation, Berry's four-fold theory, includes four different degrees of acculturation which would affect the students' adjustment: integrated, separated, assimilated and marginalized. Integration, sometimes called biculturalism, refers to combining aspects of the new culture with the native culture (Unger et al., 2007). Assimilation occurs when one "takes on the majority culture and rejects the minority culture " (McBrien, 2005, p. 331). Separation is retaining native cultural orientation while rejecting the new culture (Unger et al., 2007). Becoming alienated from both cultures is described as marginalization (Berry, 1997; Lau et al., 2005).

While students such as Marissa and Carla experienced a period similar to the separation described by Berry, they eventually appeared and felt more integrated into the culture. Juan, Ana's son, continued in the period of separation, while his older sister, she said, integrated well into the culture. Marissa seemed to have gone through a stage of assimilation, possibly rebelling more against her parents than actually her native culture. When students such as Angela and Angelica described a period of marginalization, or feeling left out, they often mentioned that their lack of English proficiency held them back from making friends and interacting with others their age at school.

Since cultural adaptation is a complex, ongoing and multidimensional process (Unger et al., 2007), the students often experienced different degrees, ranging from separation to integration. Some of them were able to become more integrated into the new culture and began to grieve the loss of the culture they left behind. Others did not accept or accepted more slowly the practices of the new culture or felt that they should not accept them, because their parents did not want them to abandon their cultural values. The process of accepting change and letting go of cultural practice is referred to as cultural bereavement (Boss, 2003).

Cultural Bereavement and Ambiguous Loss

As adolescents began to adjust to the changes in their new life in the United States and continued in the process of adapting to a new culture, they often became more integrated into the new culture. While younger family members often developed a new bicultural identity, other family members may not have adjusted or reacted to change in the same manner. In many families the parents become, as described by the acculturation distress hypothesis, acculturated at different rates. Especially in areas with few Spanish-speaking families, the parents' lack of English skills isolate them and prevent them from making friends and adjusting to life in the United States. Whereas, the students at school interact, make friends, and sometimes become caught between two cultures.

Although many adolescents develop language and social skills needed to adapt to life in the United States, often their parents do not do so at the same rate. The students may feel caught between the culture of origin and the new culture they experience with their friends at school. Students may experience a period of cultural bereavement, or a type of grief relating to the loss of their social structure and culture (Boss, 2003). However, other family members such as their parents may not have accepted the changes nor experienced the process of grieving the previous culture. This may intensify the cultural dissonance in the family.

Other immigrants may have been separated from parents during the period of immigration. The previous family structure may be lost as students translate for parents and complete adult or parental tasks such as paying bills or reading legal documents. Often, roles are switched. As the structure of the family changes, a loss occurs (Massey & Sanchez, 2010). Many times, as immigrant children learn English and master the American culture faster than their parents, a weakening of parental authority also occurs (Massey & Sanchez, 2010, p. 6).

Carla described in detail the loss she felt and the struggles her family had as everyone adjusted to a new life in the Midwest. In Peru, her father owned a gas station so her mother didn't have to work. His schedule was flexible and they also had a servant lady that lived in their home. Today, both parents work long hours to support the family. In Peru, they had many friends and relatives with whom they often got together for meals and other get-togethers. She said, "My parents don't really hang out much with other people; they don't really have friends." She said she felt caught in the middle because some traditions that are common here are not common in Peru. For instance, when her friends wanted her to go to a slumber party, her parents refused because it is not normal in Peru. She was angry at the time. "My parents are living like it is Peru, like it is hard for us, because it is so different." She said "you wanna live like it is here but you don't wanna show disrespect. It is weird, so hard."

Leaving the old traditions and life behind does not come easily. Carla said she often feels in conflict abandoning thoughts about returning to Peru and making the most of life in the United States. However, she has realized that her parents had the best interest of their children in mind when they decided to leave their home country. "They had to leave everything, " she said. When she considered dropping out of school, she finally realized what she would be doing to her parents. "I thought 'no, I can't do that to my parents.' Because they are doing everything for us… Because they came here for us, so I cannot drop out of school… That is not fair. So I just stay here."

Carla's family did go back to Peru last year to visit, which she said was very helpful in helping her let go of the idea of returning there to live. Her dad, she said, "was so happy." Although she and her sister enjoyed time with family and friends in Peru, her brother couldn't wait to get back to the United States. She, too, was glad to return and see her friends and

boyfriend, who is from Puerto Rico. She said she realized that many of her Spanish-speaking friends here cannot go back to their country and feels very fortunate that she can. Her mom has reminded her, “You are lucky because you came and you can go back. You should think about them (your friends).”

Like Carla, Marissa has returned her country of origin, Mexico. The first few years she was here, she and her dad fought a lot because they were not used to being together. “Every day when he came home and it would be a fight. Every single day for like three months I would come home and fight with him and then I would cry every single night. It is just the process that people go through. Like, every family that comes to the United States, they are not just dealing with learning the language or assimilating to the culture. They are learning to live together, how to restart.”

Although she has lived here for several years, she says it is still “very hard, especially here.” She said that she does not want to stay in the United States or raise her family here. She stated that she believes life and people in the United States are different than life in Mexico. “I know, a lot of people, especially in the northern part of the United States… I don’t know it is ignorance or just hard-hearted people, but there are many people that just don’t understand humanity. It is kind of sad. Like some people are like, ‘I just don’t understand why they (Spanish-speaking people) just don’t learn English.’ It is sad.” She said that a lot of times people here don’t understand the struggles of immigrant people. For instance, she explained, “Many people want to learn English but to put in the time is kind of hard, especially when you have a family and you have a job and are trying to educate them the best way possible.” She said many immigrants have “really hard jobs… It is not like they don’t want to learn English; they just do not have time to do it. Some people do not understand that. ”

Marissa said she plans to return to live in Mexico someday where people “are more grounded.” She said that going back to Mexico every year has helped her stay grounded. “But a lot of people lose their … their roots,” she said. She added, “Right now I am going through… a kind of…to find out what I want to be, what I am.” She said she is finding herself now. “My wish is that I marry someone from another country so I don’t have to be here. I can live somewhere maybe Spain or Mexico. Mexico, hopefully I don’t want to raise my family here. I am looking for people who are grounded.”

Unlike Marissa, Angela, Angelica, and Joaquin said they adapted to life in the United States and do not wish to go back to Mexico as it is now. Angela and Angelica mentioned that they may go back to their country of origin to visit, but they would not want to live there. The violence and crime, they explained, have changed their country. They told stories of what has happened to friends, relatives, and even their parents when they returned to Mexico. Angelica commented that she only longs for the Mexico she knew, not how it is today. Joaquin’s father returns to Mexico every year, but he said that he prefers the United States. His fiancée, Angelica, also talked about how violence and crime have changed Mexico. She returns “every couple years” but does not want to return to live permanently.

Josue also shared stories and said that violence and crime have changed Mexico so much that he does not wish to return to Mexico, even though his mom does. Although Josue has not been able to return, he said that his father and brother living there now describe to him a crime-filled environment. He mentioned that he would like his mother to be able to go back someday when they have the money. “American is like an infection to my mother,” he said. She has aged because of hard work and the stress of being away from her family. As he explained how she longs for Mexico, tears welled up in his eyes.

Claudia mentioned that she and her fiancé, who is also from Mexico, are currently trying to bring her fiancée's parents to the United States to live to be close to family. They recently had a little son who is 18 months old. She talked of visiting now that she has earned a permanent residence status, but since her son was born it is more important be safe and bring the grandparents here. She said that, sadly, Mexico is a very dangerous place to travel. She and her fiancé want his parents to meet their son and be safe in the United States.

According to Eric, his family probably "wishes to go back, because that is our home country, but right now, he is just making money." They planned on coming to the United States for less than a year, but then his dad "started liking the money" and his family had to adjust to life here and give up the hopes of returning to their family. The family continues to adapt and live in ambiguity. Although they long to return to the Mexico, Eric believes they probably will not.

As soon as Manuel finishes his degree, he plans not to return to Peru, where his father lives, but Brazil, where he attended undergraduate school for a short time. He said, "I just feel like I need to go back." His mother and half siblings as well as his grandparents will remain in the Midwest.

Of all the participants, Eduardo was the only individual who was able to return to his country of origin, Venezuela. He works for his parents' company and returns to the United States to visit his friends and relatives here. For the other participants, though, living in the United States may or may not be their choice. They may have had the opportunity to grieve the loss of living in a familiar culture, or they may not have completed the process of cultural bereavement and be living in ambiguity.

Like the process of acculturation, cultural bereavement is unique for each student immigrant. Symptoms of cultural bereavement include depression, isolation, and guilt over abandoning one's homeland (Boss, 2003). These feelings of guilt maybe intensified by the cultural dissonance created when parents and students acculturate at different rates. Carla, for example, feels caught between her life in the United States and the life her parents live, which is similar to their life in Peru. Although Carla had the opportunity to return to Peru, many of the other participants do not have an opportunity to return to their home country.

Those who have not been able to return may not have experienced closure, and therefore, have experienced a different process of loss and grief. Those from Mexico may long for their old life, but face the reality that the country has changed. Many planned on staying just a few years or "until they had made enough money" but soon realized that going back was not a possibility. Others live in ambiguity, not knowing if the opportunity will arise or if the journey back is possible, especially after family dynamics have changed. For student immigrants like Josue, whose family is now separated by the deportation to Mexico of his father and brother, the future is unknown.

The ambiguity, referred to by researchers as ambiguous loss, occurs in immigrant families when their family members are separated during or because of immigration, when cultural, traditional, or the familiar context are lost or drastically changed, or when there is confusion or sense of being both inside and outside of the dominant culture (Boss, 2003). The loss is called ambiguous because no timeline or assurance exists regarding if and when situations may change. The immigrant adolescents often have to accept living in ambiguity, far from the family and friends and sometimes, the place they still call "home." Their journey continues.

Summary

As the students experienced major changes in their life when they began the journey to the United States, they often felt apprehensive, mostly due to a fear of the unknown and fear of not fitting in with friends and classmates. After overcoming feelings of apprehension, they began adjusting to life in a new culture. Each student adjusted differently and experienced different degrees of acculturation, depending on a variety of factors such as familial and social support and demographic factors. Although some students became integrated more easily and had the opportunity to grieve the loss of cultural practices and beliefs, others may not have had the opportunity to do so. In the next section, I address one of the aspects the participants described as part of the process of adapting to a new culture, learning English.

English Language Learning

While each participant experienced the process of change differently as they adapted to the new culture, they all mentioned the important role learning English had in their journey. For most, acquiring English was a key to overcoming the fear of interacting and fitting in with others. Learning English provided a means of communicating and also adapting to new circumstances. All 12 participants mentioned learning English as one of the most important factors in getting used to life in the United States. Each learned English at a different rate, depending on factors such as (1) the type of assistance they received at school and (2) the opportunities they had to practice English. Although all ten participants who attended some school in their country of origin said that they had English lessons, all mentioned that they had very little if any practice with conversation and speaking skills. This circumstance caused them to lack confidence in their interactions with students and teachers in their new school.

Since resources and types of programs in each school district vary greatly, the support each student received in school was unique. Only one of the student participants reported being enrolled in a bilingual program, where she received instruction in English and Spanish. All other students described the English as a Second Language program as a class or classes that were separate from their regular content classes. These programs are commonly referred to as "pullout" programs since students are pulled out of regular classes to learn English. They may or may not also receive extra support in other classes. Sometimes teachers in the ESL classroom would assist students with their work in other content areas such as science or social studies. The length of time students received the services varied depending on a number of factors such as their prior knowledge in English and the availability of the resources at all levels in the school district they attended.

Of the student participants who had some form of ESL support in their schools, the only student to experience a bilingual education was Georgina, who came to the United States when she was eleven. She started learning English at a bilingual school in Texas before she moved to the Midwest. She actually said that her mom's purpose for bringing her and her sister to the United States was to get a better education. She said "over there (Mexico) you pay one thousand dollars for books if you wanna learn English" and here students can learn in school for free. When she lived in Texas, she remembers going on a bus with her younger sister to a school to learn English. "We had to go to a school so we could learn English and then… when like… when we were twelve or so, you take a bus to the regular school." However, many of her classes in Texas were still in Spanish. She said she liked learning at the bilingual school because many students were learning English.

After a year, Georgina's family moved to the Midwest. She still attended ESL classes. Her first school, Sioux City, did have a pullout ESL program where students learned English and also received support in other classes. When she arrived she said she "didn't know anything" and classes were very hard for her. To learn English, she said they mostly "played games like cards and puzzles." She said it "took her a while… like a year" before she felt comfortable speaking English at school in a all classes. Two years later, her family moved to Sioux Falls and she did not take ESL classes at the high school. She said she had trouble in a lot of her classes "with big words" and reading and understanding science books, for instance. She said her advice to students who come to the United States from a Spanish speaking country is, "Not to get nervous at first. Just to learn English, because it is really hard if you don't."

The other student participants who had ESL support all attended ESL classes that were a pullout style instead of bilingual programs; so, none were taught any content subjects in their native language. Each program seemed to be different in the quality and quantity of the resources. Eric attended ESL classes in Colorado for six years before the family moved to South Dakota. He said that in class, "I remember playing a lot of games on the computer to help learn all kind of words. We learned vocabulary." Kids around the room worked at their own pace to practice English.

Eric's sister was learning English at the same time so they practiced together at times. "We just like, if we learned something or how to say something, we would be just like, saying it to each other. We would make my mom and dad mad because they didn't know English. Stuff like that." He added that if they had something they didn't want to tell their parents, they would say it in English, too. By the time they moved to South Dakota, they knew English "pretty well,"

but Eric said his parents did not know English. His dad knew a little and his mom knew "none at all."

Generally, as ESL students learn English, they serve as resources for other ESL students in schools. At the school in South Dakota, Eric often served as a translator for students who moved into the district who did not know English, since the school had no formal ESL program. He described helping a few other students and how one of his friends, Saul, felt about going to a school with no ESL classes. "He said it was really hard. Well, I mean he had us [he and his sister] to talk to but if he didn't… if he didn't have anyone, that would suck." Eric said Saul would ask him in Spanish "how do you ask to go to the bathroom?" and then they would practice. He chuckled as he described Saul's practice. "He would practice over and over. He practices for like a minute and then goes and asks the teacher." Eric said his advice to the teachers and administrator at his school would be "Get an ESL program. It is important." Saul eventually dropped out of school.

The other student participants, like Eric, had an opportunity to have some type of ESL support. Angela attended a pullout ESL class during the nine months her family lived in Idaho. She mentioned that it helped her a lot. However, while she was there, the teacher was "diagnostiated (sic) with cancer" and she had to start with someone new. The teacher not only taught her English but also helped her with other classes. Later, when she moved to South Dakota, the school had no ESL program. At 17 she said learning not only English, but other subjects, proved very challenging. She commented,

> I was like "I am here" and I was listening but I didn't really know what was going on because I did not understand anything. It was even harder because of that and we didn't like… there wasn't a special teacher to help you learn… your classes… I mean not just to help with English but to help you learn in your classes and there wasn't nobody… so it was even harder.

Soon, a lady from the community who knew English and had children in the school district helped her a lot, just knowing what she was supposed to do each class.

Claudia went to a pullout ESL class as soon as she started school since she knew no English. She remembered ESL being a special class that she went to during the school day. "It was very hard for (sic) English. I think that if my parents spoke English better, they could have helped me more. And it was really hard. I think I had ESL until the fourth grade." She said she struggled with some of the vocabulary, especially as she continued to harder classes, since English was her second language. But, with the encouragement of teachers and counselors, she went on to take Advanced Placement Spanish and other advanced classes.

As ESL students' English skills improve and they learn conversational English, they next face increasingly difficulty in content area subjects and their ability to learn academic English. The eleven participants agreed the conversational English and English in the classroom are different. Although, when she went to middle school she did not have a special ESL class, Claudia also remembered school subjects being especially difficult because she did not know academic English well. She said she still felt uncomfortable at times reading aloud. "I hated it because I didn't know how to say them or how to read them, especially like in Science and Social Studies." Unlike the other student participants, Claudia didn't have a strong accent when she spoke during the interview. She later went on to graduate from high school and started working as an interpreter in schools and hospitals.

Learning English was a little harder for Marissa, since she came to the United States when she was in middle school and more academic English is needed for the content area subjects. However, her father knew some English and made Marissa and her brothers practice the summer before school started, and continue practice in the morning before school. Although

she did not like the early morning English and penmanship practice, she said that it helped her with learning English faster.

Of all the student participants, Carla was one of the oldest when she began learning English. As a high school student, Carla faced the challenge of learning upper-level content and English at the same time. When she first arrived in the Midwest and the lady helping her did not know Spanish, she wanted to drop out of school. But, the school soon changed the teacher, and other students from Spanish-speaking countries arrived in the community. "Then Marcos, he was my friend, he came here from Mexico. He helped me a lot. He was one I could practice English with."

Later during her second year, Carla's school implemented an ESL program. "It was just Marcos and me so we had to walk to the middle school, and so at the middle school, my brother and others would have classes with us. So we don't have class with just Marcos and me and we could practice." Her other classes, she said, "were all regular classes" with students at her grade level. "Like Biology and Math... it was hard. But in English we had to read in front of the class and I usually had to do it. So, I would do it but I was so embarrassed," she said. "So I would be like crying all day long. And being like, 'Mom, please don't do that to me…'." Marissa said that soon, as the local packing plant opened, many more Spanish-speaking students moved into the community and they eventually implemented an ESL program at the high school. Students went to the class one period a day to learn English vocabulary and get help with the content area subjects.

Along with getting help learning English from other students, Carla in particular said her teachers were instrumental in helping her stay in school. Although Carla got help from her Spanish-speaking friends practicing English, she said, "I think I am the only one who came here

and who didn't speak English." She still struggled with her content area classes. She credited her teacher, Mrs. Bauer, for not letting her give up. "She was like here for a year, last year when I was a junior. And, I love her. Like, she was like… she helped me a lot. I stayed in school and everything because of her. She didn't just teach me English, she taught me a lot of things… like, how to be better." She said that Mrs. Bauer told her to take the most challenging class, not to shy away from classes just because she didn't know English. Her teachers helped her and she got through it.

After Mrs. Bauer left, Carla said she remembered the importance of doing her best so she could go on to college. She said she practiced English as much as possible with her friends, who are "all Spanish-speaking" from several different countries. Her boyfriend, from Puerto Rico, also made her practice English since he speaks both English and Spanish fluently. With the help of Mrs. Bauer and her Spanish-speaking friends, Carla went on to do well in school. She and her friend Marcos stuck together and they both graduated from high school.

Angelica and Joaquin both had pullout ESL classes at their schools, which helped them learn English. They also agreed that the challenging part, especially in high school, was the difficulty of the content area subjects. Angelica attended ESL classes "until she passed a test" during her second year in the United States school. She said the classes were "very helpful." Although she said the teachers were helpful, she said the most helpful part of ESL classes was the other students who would help with homework in other subjects. Joaquin also felt the classes were helpful. He attended from the time he arrived when he was eight until they "kicked him out" of ESL classes when he was in 9th grade. He said the extra support helped in all classes and the ability to ask the teachers questions about other classes proved to be a great advantage.

Although they struggled to learn English, all student participants who attended high school in the United States went on to graduate. Marissa, Carla, Claudia, Eric, Josue, Angelica, Angela, and Georgina, who were the oldest children in their families, said they had the harder journey through school than their younger siblings did. All mentioned helping their younger siblings with homework and with learning English. Claudia stated that her younger brother and sister "caught on" to English a lot faster because they had her. "We talked to each other in English. When I grew up nobody talked in English. So it was hard for me and a bit hard for my sister and then it got easier for my brother."

Like Claudia, Angela mentioned that her younger brother learned English very quickly since he was in elementary school when they arrived. "It was hard to learn English but for my brother it was easy to learn. Because he was only 10 and he catched up (sic) in like a year. For me it was harder… it took a lot longer than a year."

Angelica and Joaquin, who also have younger siblings, agreed learning English and doing homework at home was much easier for their brothers and sisters. All of Angelica's brothers learned English "a lot faster" than she did. Although Joaquin and his two older brothers all had ESL classes, his two younger sisters did not need them. They were born in the United States and had been exposed to English prior to attending school.

Once the students learned English, most of them often taught their parents English and helped them with tasks requiring knowledge of English, such as paying bills. Ana, whose three children now speak English fluently, said she is still trying to learn English. At her work, she has had challenges because fellow employees who do not speak Spanish have complained that they do not understand her English. Both Ana and her husband have tried to learn English through classes at Lutheran Social Services and other community education centers, but she said

it is difficult to find time to take classes and study. Her children have helped her with English, but she also likes to speak Spanish at home so the children maintain parts of the roots of the culture. “We speak Spanish all the time at home. When we watch TV, we put shows in Spanish. I told my husband we need to learn, but he likes to watch shows in Spanish.” Her son, though, speaks more Spanish at home. “He wants to come (sic) back, come back to Colombia.”

As participants learned English in school, their level of acculturation increased and they were able to make friends and build relationships outside of their Spanish-speaking community. Eric, Marissa, Georgia, Carla, and Claudia all mentioned it was much easier for them to fit in and feel a sense of belonging as they learned more English. Seven participants claimed it was easier for their younger siblings to adapt to life and school in the United States because their siblings acquired English sooner and, in some cases, faster than they did.

Manuel, who grew up in Peru, talked about his family as a mixture of cultures. He said that his younger siblings who were born here speak English, he and his mother speak Spanish and English and his grandparents speak only Spanish. “It is an interesting conversation at the dinner table when we are all talking,” he said. He said the ESL courses at a community college that he took before he entered the university here were helpful, but the most helpful was practicing English with his siblings and his mother, who is bilingual. He said he was practicing his Portuguese also so he will be able to speak when he returns to Brazil after he finishes graduate school at Iowa State. He was the only trilingual participant in the study.

Of the types of programs discussed in the review of literature available to the English Language Learners in the United States schools, the most common available to the students in this study were pullout English language classes. Only one student, Georgina, experienced a bilingual program in Texas. However, she lived there only a year before moving to Iowa, where

pullout classes were available. Six students attended pullout English classes for a period of time. They all felt the classes were helpful and expressed that one of the most helpful parts included the interaction with other ELLs. The two students who did not have ESL class, Angela and Eduardo, said that although no formal courses existed at their school, their teachers were willing to give them extra help and assistance with learning English. Since Josue was only one year old at the time of his arrival he believed he "knew enough English" by the time he got to school age to do fine in school and teach his parents English. He said his life would be much easier for his family if his parents knew English. He would not have to translate for them and perhaps his mother would feel more comfortable living in the United States. Although some students described the role a teacher or counselor played in helping them in school, they did not identify other formal or social opportunities helping them experience academic success.

For student participants, learning English not only helped them do better in school, but also was a large factor in helping them adapt to life in the United States. Along with the acculturation theories such as Berry's (1997) focusing on psychological and social development, other acculturation scales focus on level of language proficiency as an indicator of acculturation (Unger et al., 2007). For immigrant adolescents, schools are the "major arenas for inter-group contact and acculturation" (Sam et al., 2006, p. 122). Schools provide the greatest opportunity for students to learn English and practice interacting with others in English.

In connection with school and adolescents, many acculturation scales for students have been primarily language-based, measuring language usage as a "proxy for acculturation" because language fluency affects a person's ability to communicate with people of both cultures (Unger et al., 2007). Previous studies have indicated that language usage explains a significant portion of the variance in many other acculturation measures, and have, therefore used it as a measure of

acculturation (Unger et al., 2007). Other recent studies, however, assert that language is not the only important measure of acculturation, but does play a role in the how well an individual adapts and experiences academic success (Driscoll, 1999). All participants in this study mentioned learning English as a key to assist them in dealing with the major change of moving to the United States. Other factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, and culture did not appear to have as large an impact.

Summary

In Chapter Four, I discussed the themes related to the psychological and social issues of adapting to a major life change such as immigrating to a new country: apprehension, adaptation, and cultural bereavement. I also discussed the theme of English language learning as a catalyst for dealing with the process of adapting to a new culture. Participants experienced psychological and social changes as immigrants in a new culture. Several were apprehensive about the changes involved with coming to the United States and leaving their friends and family. They also feared starting school and fitting in with friends at school, especially if they did not know English well.

After overcoming feelings of apprehension and a generalized fear of the unknown, student participants were faced with adapting to a new and alien culture. They began forming a new bicultural identity consisting of preserving elements of their native culture as well as incorporating aspects of the new culture. As they developed a new identity and struggled to adapt and integrate into the new culture, student participants also managed grief or loss related to leaving their country of origin and familiar culture. In the process of adaptation, they learned a new language both as a means of communicating and as a catalyst to assist them in adapting to new circumstances. Of the factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural identity that impact the student’s ability to adapt and experience success in school, students felt that learning English

played the largest role in helping them integrate into a new culture and feel a sense of belonging as well as helping them do well in school.

As I shared the unique stories and experience of ELL students living in communities in the rural Midwest, I applied the theories of cultural adaptation or acculturation (Berry, 1997) and ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2003) to analyze the “stages” in the journey encountered by immigrant youth of Hispanic origin as they experienced a major life change. Although each student’s journey was unique, the themes provided a common thread that wove together their stories. In the final chapter, I summarize the findings and provide recommendations for working with immigrant students with limited English proficiency living in low-diversity communities.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspective and experiences of English Language Learners (ELL) of Latin American descent living in rural Midwestern communities. I hoped to learn how ELL students of Latin American descent experience a new and potentially alien culture, especially in regard to their experiences in school. When 12 immigrant children left their native country and arrived in the United States with little or no knowledge of English, they experienced considerable loss and challenge in a new environment.

Participants adapted to a new culture according to a chronological and simultaneous process, meeting and managing four challenges. The process began with students experiencing and overcoming feelings of apprehension regarding social belonging and a generalized fear of the unknown. Six of the twelve participants vividly described feeling scared and apprehensive about moving to a new culture and starting school. To adjust to their lives in the United States, participants faced the challenge of overcoming their apprehension and forming a new identity. Finding and claiming a new identity became part of their adaptation process, causing them pain and struggle.

The second theme, adjustment, involved participants forming a bicultural identity, allowing them to preserve elements of their native culture and incorporate aspects of their new culture. Some participants experienced different aspects of Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation, involving different degrees of acculturation: integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation. Each participant's experience included unique steps in forming a new identity and adapting to a new culture. As the participants adapted to their new culture and learned the language, they also faced a challenge of managing grief and loss. This

involved accepting changes occurring as a result of their immigrant experience and letting go of aspects of their previous life in their native culture. Sometimes a change in the family context occurred as children and parents acculturated at different rates. This loss, sometimes referred to as ambiguous loss (Boss, 2003), continued beyond their cultural adjustment because no timeline or assurance exists regarding *if and when the situation may change or return to the previous state*. Immigrant adolescents have to accept living in ambiguity, a never-ending part of their journey.

Factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, culture and language influenced adaptation to a new culture; however, the ability to learn English played the largest role. All participants mentioned the importance of learning English as the catalyst for helping them adjust to their new surroundings, make friends, and adapt to new circumstances. Participants learned English at different rates, depending on the type of assistance received in academic settings and the opportunities to practice English. Students described attending pullout ESL classes as the most common type of support in the school setting. As the participants learned English, they reported feeling more comfortable adapting to life in the United States. Learning English served as a kind of crossing point; achieving some initial mastery of English paved the way for the rest of their journey.

Implications

As the immigrant population in the United States continues to grow, more attention has focused on the impact of immigration on all aspects of our society. The education of Latino youth serves as a growing national concern. Immigrant children, an often ignored segment of the immigrant population, came to the United States not by choice, but by chance, as children of emigrating parents. President Barack Obama in his October 2010 address, delivered prior to

signing the Executive Order on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, stated the importance of addressing the "challenges of monumental proportions" faced by the Latino youth today (p. 1).

Although studies and statistics regarding the immigrant experience inspire a call to action to address the challenges faced by immigrant students with limited English ability, the individuals behind the studies are more than statistics. Students with unique needs, personalities, and situations strive to achieve academically, gain acceptance, and learn and grow as individuals. Depending on the teachers, administrators and support personnel in the school, this may or may not be easy or even possible. In the next section, I provide recommendations related to each stage of the journey to a new home.

Recommendations

Immigrant students, like many adolescents experiencing major change, encounter unique psychological and social challenges in responding to change. In this study, some students received support from family and friends, or sometimes teachers or counselors who helped them stay in school and adapt to life in an entirely new culture. However, none of the students experienced an organized or formal program designed to assist them. Although in larger school districts more resources may be available, such as counselors or support personnel designated specifically for working with immigrant students and English language learners, this support may not be available in rural districts in the Midwest. Ways to support students during the previously described stages in the student journey follow.

Apprehension

Immigrant students arriving in the United States experience apprehension and anxiety about starting a life in a new culture and fitting in, especially in the school setting. They, like other students moving into a new district, have a general fear of the unknown and fitting in with friends and classmates. To help alleviate some of the fears, immigrant students will likely benefit from the assistance of a support person such as a school-home liaison. This person would serve as a contact person before the student entered school to answer questions and work with school counselors to ensure teachers know the unique circumstances of individual students.

In one of the larger school districts in South Dakota, immigrant home-school liaisons assist students in preparing for school, serving as an advocate and also providing ideas to student mentors placed in classes to support immigrant students. Two of the contact people who helped me find student participants for this study actually serve as immigrant and refugee home-school liaisons. They enjoy great relationships with their former students and families. One participant, Marissa, described the positive support and help with school transition she received from both the home-school liaison and a counselor at school.

Rural schools may not have the financial resources to hire support personnel to work specifically with immigrant and at-risk students. Besides Marissa, none of the students identified a support person (other than a teacher) or described any particular academic or social resources provided to help alleviate their initial fears of starting school. Fortunately, the participants did not “fall through the cracks” as many at-risk students often do. However, they described the challenge of staying in school during difficult times, especially because their parents did not understand English, and, perhaps more importantly, the United States educational system.

To combat some of the challenges faced by immigrant ELL students, I recommend the appointment of a support person, such as a counselor or teacher, to serve as an advocate for students. This advocate would follow a student from the time he or she enters school to graduation, keeping track of academic progress, and, perhaps most importantly, developing relationships with the students, parents, or guardians on behalf of the school district. Research supports the importance of engaging families for student achievement (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2009). This on-going, less intimidating relationship would encourage parental involvement and may prove helpful with regard to retention and student achievement rates.

Due to the high dropout rates of immigrant and ethnically diverse youth, educators have become more interested in the relationship between academic performance and family background (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Reyes & Jason, 1993). Garrett and Holcomb (2005) stress that regardless of student ability and socioeconomic status, it “has been well established that family involvement in education increases student achievement” (p. 55). If all students, not just immigrant students, had an advocate designated to communicate with and answer questions for the family, parents would likely feel more comfortable to ask questions.

As designated advocates for each student, the counselor or teacher would not only track student progress and offer support and counseling, but also help parents understand the school system and educational requirements. Some immigrant parents lack an understanding of the United States educational system because education was not free in their country, and as a result they do not place a high value on education (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Reyes & Jason, 1993). Josue and Eric, two participants, often struggled with their decision to finish school. Their parents did not graduate from high school but were supportive of their education. This is not the case for all at-risk students. For parents of immigrants who did not graduate, the school

environment is unfamiliar and intimidating. An advocate would assist in eliminating this barrier and serve as a resource for both students and parents. With the consistency of the having the same advocate for several years, the student would be less likely to “disappear” unexpectedly like the students from Mexico I previously described in the introduction to this study.

Ideally an advocate would contact the family prior to the student entering school to answer questions and alleviate fears by directly involving the family in the education of their child. For example, in the Sioux Falls School District, home school liaisons visit the family in their home and meet all family members, forming a strong relationship with the entire family prior to the school year. Kugler and Price (2009) stressed the importance of home visits as a way for the family to feel welcome and a chance to gain important information regarding their child’s education (p. 3). In addition to involving the family and informing them, the visits provide an opportunity for an advocate to partner with the parents in the child’s education. This relationship would likely help with the challenges related to the next step in the student’s journey: adjustment to a new environment.

Adjustment

After students enter school and overcome some feelings of apprehension, they face another challenge of adjusting to an entirely new culture. They must adapt to their surroundings and experience a challenge common to all adolescents: the need to belong. The language barrier creates an extra challenge for immigrant students. To allow students to begin overcoming this barrier and adjust to a new social setting, student mentor programs, pairing English language learners with English-speaking classmates, should be adopted.

A tutoring or mentoring program should be established during or after school hours to help students build relationships. Peer tutoring and mentoring would be most effective if overseen by an educator. One program, called “Compadres”, serves as an example. The program focuses on how the Spanish-speaking students can share their language, knowledge, and culture with the English-speaking students (Herrera, 1996). Mentor programs should not only focus on academics, but also encourage participation in activities, such as celebrating cultural holidays. This might include the Day of the Dead and Cinco de Mayo. The opportunity to share cultural traditions allows students a chance to build pride in their culture and ethnic identity and increase self-esteem (Herrera, 1996). Spanish-speaking students may also assist Spanish language students as well as practicing English with their English-speaking peers.

Along with the activities such as tutor-mentor in school, a similar program could extend to the community. Such a program would provide opportunities for students and their families to get involved and develop a sense of belonging in the community. In rural communities, where access to cultural experiences and knowledge about other cultures is sometimes limited, the students and their parents may find this an invaluable resource. The program should also include activities such as service learning or involvement in existing community programs. Volunteers from the community would build relationships with students and their families and become effective “cultural brokers”, working with the families and encouraging a greater awareness of the benefits of a multicultural community and the importance of building a respect for diversity (Kugler & Price, 2009).

One example of a mentor program in the community is “Faces around Us”. Faces around Us was initiated by a community based non-profit group in North Carolina to serve the acculturation needs of immigrant and refugee youth (Rotich, 2011). The program included a

mentoring and tutoring program incorporating community volunteers, enrichment, and recreational activities in the community, service learning projects, acculturation trainings, and "engagement of parents in the academics and health of their children" (Rotich, 2011). University students served as trained volunteer mentors. However, even in a less formal, rural setting, community volunteers and ESL students and families may benefit from such a program. Through mentor programs, youth and their families would not only build relationships and share their knowledge, but also practice the conversational English skills vital to the process of adapting to a new culture The mentors in the Faces around Us program reported the experience "gave them another perspective on life" (p. 6) and also taught them to appreciate what they have.

Cultural Bereavement

In addition to the development of relationships with students through mentor programs, schools must foster positive relationships between teachers or other leaders in the school and the ELL students. Many students arriving in school bring challenges beyond learning academic content. Immigrant students who have experienced a major life change may be experiencing symptoms related to cultural bereavement or an ambiguous loss (Boss, 2003), making adjustment in school even more difficult. Although a home-school liaison or advocate for students would help in the detection of signs and symptoms of cultural bereavement and common responses to major life change, teachers in daily contact with students need to be involved.

Teachers working with immigrant students serve as a primary source of information on the emotional well being of a student. Teachers can use this awareness of the unique challenges faced by immigrant children to recognize the signs of withdrawal or depression occurring. Teachers should receive professional development in understanding and detecting problems related to student adjustment to a new culture. Coursework should include detecting signs and

symptoms of cultural bereavement, such as withdrawal and depression, as well as a review of the referral process so teachers and counselors may make appropriate and efficient referrals to mental health professionals.

A teacher who understands the signs of acculturative stress and challenges associated with adjustment may be more likely to notice behavioral changes or signs of depression or anxiety. If needed, the teacher might refer a troubled student to a counselor or support person specifically trained to address these concerns or involve social service professionals. Counselors may choose to contact parents to suggest mental health services beneficial to students.

Although many students experiencing a major life change may have mental health needs, the access to these services in rural areas may be limited. Furthermore, the attitude toward mental health in the cultures of recent immigrants "differs significantly" from the mainstream approach in the United States (Kugler & Price, 2009, p. 2). Some immigrants attach a stigma to mental health issues, seeing it only as mental illness. Therefore, mental health services may not be desired by the family. Nurturing teachers have the potential to serve an important role in helping adolescent immigrant students adjust to school.

To help combat the adaptation issues of immigrant students, then, the first line of defense appears to be the creation of a positive and welcoming school climate, fostering student self-esteem. Students must be comfortable and feel safe in school. To create this climate and meet the needs of immigrant students, schools must first understand the struggles faced by immigrant students and their families (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005). School principals should create an "instructional learning environment where stress levels and anxiety levels are minimized and student motivation and self-esteem levels are maximized" for immigrants students (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005, p. 52).

Creating an environment to promote self-esteem in school appears frequently in professional development workshops and literature. Some models in particular have been designed to improve the self-esteem of the language learner and may be used in schools to support ELLs and other students. A study by Cardelle-Elawar (1996) explores the Identify, Define, Explore, and Assess (IDEA) model to focus on improving ESL students' self-esteem. Using a step-by-step decision-making process to guides teachers, the model helps teachers design activities to support student success.

The first step of the IDEA model involves teacher recognition of how self-esteem may affect student learning. Secondly, teachers compare and contrast home environments affecting the self-esteem of their students. In the third step, teachers explore strategies to build students' self-esteem (Boskelly, 2009). They monitor these strategies and assess their progress in the fourth step. Teachers set high expectations, and work to create a supportive and accepting classroom atmosphere that "give[s] students a sense of purpose" (Boskelly, 2009, p.22). According to Cardelle-Elawar (1996), regular education teachers using the IDEA method recognized improvement in behavior and achievement of linguistically diverse students.

Other methods for raising self-esteem specifically for ESL students focus on the importance of the teacher in developing an environment of mutual trust and respect for diversity, maintaining high expectations, and having faith that the students themselves can learn (Franquiz & Salazar, 2004). High expectations can lead to academic success when teachers involve students in meaningful learning activities and value all their cultures and languages. Although many teachers have completed professional development regarding raising the self-esteem of their students, more education regarding how to create a multicultural environment with a respect for diversity and appreciation of differences may be needed. Education majors, required to take

a human relations course at the university level, learn strategies for creating a multicultural environment in the classroom. These techniques can be shared with all teachers in the district to upgrade faculty and staff knowledge and skills related to diversity. Although the financial and staff resources for teacher training in cultural competence may be limited in rural areas, school leaders may find someone within the school with current knowledge and experience working with ELLs or immigrant students.

Teachers and counselors involved with professional development related to immigrant students may serve as advocates for immigrant youth at school. For students experiencing ambiguous loss or going through a period of cultural bereavement, though, additional adult role models may be needed outside the school day. In addition to the mentor programs mentioned earlier, school counselors may suggest community programs, such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, to help students overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness and develop relationships with positive adult role models.

English Language Learning and Programs

Factors, such as supporting positive self-esteem and holding high expectations, help students adjust to their new surroundings and also acquire knowledge of English (Kashen, 1982). Krashen believed language acquisition occurs more quickly and proficiently when students feel comfortable in school and confident of their abilities (1982). Although several language acquisition theories exist, teachers offering positive support ranks highly among the factors favoring students learning English (Black, 2005; House, 2005).

Along with creating a positive learning environment, teachers may also help students by using techniques proven successful in assisting with second language acquisition. Professional development opportunities regarding strategies to help ESL students acquire English language

skills should be regularly provided. In comparison with the teachers in urban schools, teachers in rural schools may be less likely to have training working with ELL students due to their geographic isolation.

Especially at the high school level, concise tips for content area teachers may be beneficial, even when provided in the form of pamphlet or handout. Some strategies easily implemented in the classroom include 1) pairing English learners with English speaking buddies for school tours or paired learning; 2) providing ELLs with additional visual aids that enhance verbal explanations; 3) teaching key words and phrases to students prior to the lesson; 4) correcting language errors in a helpful, non-threatening manner; and 5) using the ELL as a resource for teaching other students words in the English language learner's native language or background information about the student's culture (Black, 2005).

Middle and high school teachers working with ESL students should use cooperative learning and become aware of idiom use or teach the meaning of idioms. They should periodically check for understanding and speak slowly along with using clear transitions between classroom activities (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2004). Becoming aware of the diverse learning styles of their students, teachers may use individualized instruction to meet the needs of students (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2004). For help with individualizing instruction, a background in instructional technology would be beneficial, allowing students to work at their own pace on the computer using software and programs designed to help learn English.

Several reports and studies regarding effective strategies or programs to address the underachievement of ethnically diverse youth have surfaced with increases in immigrant population and the growing need for school accountability mandated by the No Child Left

Behind (NCLB) legislation. To meet the needs of limited English proficient students, school districts have developed models such as the "Newcomer" program, specifically designed to help immigrant students transition and succeed in school (Friedlander, 1991). These programs operate under the assumption that ELL students need a period of adjustment "not only to the education system but to the social environment of the country" while learning English (Friedlander, 1991, p. 2). The primary focus of the Newcomer program is to help students acquire English and the basic academic skills needed to succeed in the content area classroom. These programs effectively support students in the transition process as well as help them develop English language proficiency.

Teachers in organized programs such as the Newcomer programs assist students and help students acquire English language skills in a sheltered setting. To assist students in learning English, then, rural school leaders should adopt the strategies and assist teachers and other staff work more successfully with ELLs. A warm school environment should be present in all schools regardless of the level of resources and expertise.

According to Black (2005), "English language learners seem to fare better when school leaders and teachers are welcoming and willing to help" (p. 40). This welcoming attitude not only benefits the English language learners, but also their English-speaking classmates by creating an inclusive, multicultural education and environment. This environment "insures that all students, including ELLs receive quality education" and promotes an intercultural community that students will maintain in the future (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005, p 59).

Summary

Since the participants in this study all lived in rural communities, they had limited resources to help them with the major change of adapting to a new culture. However, all student participants who had some ESL classes agreed their classes were very helpful in not only learning English, but also in making friends and learning how to face adaptation challenges. Although the type of classes and the educational support differed greatly from school to school, students felt that they learned a lot from both the teachers and the other Spanish-speaking students in the school. Fortunately, students not attending ESL classes received some informal support provided by teachers or friends. Almost all students stated their parents encouraged them to stay in school and learn English. Students needed support for their journey and adults and peers within their new environment played an important role in their success. Along with the recommendations I have previously described, more awareness of the need to assist students who may fall behind or drop out of school is also needed. In the next section, I include recommendations for further research.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although previous research includes several theories of acculturation and attempts to define different rates of acculturation, the most widely known four-fold theory focused on *different rates of acculturation* (Berry, 1997). It may be helpful for those who work with ELL students to look at the *entire process of acculturation and the specific challenges immigrant students face as they adapt to life in the United States*. Those who work with ELL students may understand the situations and circumstances behind the behaviors of each student and help them successfully adapt to their new life. Adapting the metaphor of a journey, students and teachers

would be better served to understand this as a process with certain checkpoints and milestones, including managing two cultures, dealing with loss and mastering the English language.

Many of the acculturation theories also focus on the social aspect of adjustment with regard to how well a student “fits in” to the culture and how they build relationships with others and become part of the new culture. More emphasis in the future should focus on both the sociocultural aspects of adaptation and the psychological adjustment and hazards experienced when students adapt to the new culture. This process affects their psychological adjustment and formation of a bicultural identity. In the future the psychological and sociocultural adaptation should be examined as separate aspects in the research to better understand the adaptation process.

Additional research is also needed to understand the challenges faced by the adolescent immigrant students, particularly those who live in rural Midwestern communities where support for English Language Learners may be limited or unavailable. My study included 12 first generation immigrants from Latin American countries. However, additional research should focus on a greater number of students, including first and second-generation immigrants. A larger study would provide a broader perspective on the difficulties students face adapting to a new culture as well as a new school environment.

All of the student participants went on to graduate from high school. Further research should also include students classified as “dropouts” who did not experience academic success. A study involving the parents of immigrants who have experienced cultural dissonance would also provide more insight regarding the challenges faced in immigrant families. Parental perspectives on the struggles their children experienced and ways of managing their cultural bereavement and ambiguous loss may provide more information on the immigrant experience.

I also recommend more studies of educational support personnel who have worked with ESL students in communities where few or no ESL classes are available. Their perspective may provide additional insight into the academic success of students. They may offer an "outside" perspective of the difficulties students experienced adapting to life in a new culture.

Conclusion

All students deserve the right to experience success in school and reach their full potential. As a large part of the future of our country, Latino youth should have the same opportunities and dream the same dreams as their peers. Since schools serve as a model for society, they need to foster an environment of respect for all. Using a multicultural approach and respect for diversity in today's schools builds a stronger America.

As we learn to understand each other, we learn to become a team, working for the common goal of respect for all humankind. I hope this study and others like it will bring greater understanding, and contribute to the goals of embracing diversity and appreciating differences.

References

Alva, S. A., & de Los Reyes, R. (1999). Psychosocial stress, internalized symptoms, and the academic achievement of Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 14*(3), 343-358.

Alvarez, M. J. (2003). *Hispanic pre-adolescents' academic resilience: Examining gender Hispanicism, and school belonging, as predictors of academic achievement, and relating level of linguistic validation of school belonging.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California).

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5-68.

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Immigrant youth in transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Black, S. (2005, Spring). Learning English well. *Educational Digest, 71*(1) 36-38.

Bogdan, R. C & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.* New York: Pearson Education.

Borden, J. F. (1998). The pitfalls and possibilities for organizing quality ESL programs. *Middle School Journal, 29*(3), 25-33.

Boskelly, L. (2009). *How ESL teachers can raise the self-esteem of their students*. Retrieved March 16, 2009, from http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/674045/how_esl_teachers_can_raise_the_selfesteem.html?cat=4.

Boss, P. (2003). Ambiguous loss research: Theory and practice: Reflections after 9/11. *Journal of Marriage and Family.* 66(3). 551-566.

Burke, D. (1995). Hispanic youth and the secondary school culture. *High School Journal, 78*(4), 185-194.

Cardelle-Elawar, M. (1996). A self-regulating approach to improve minority students; self-esteem in a multicultural environment. *Bilingual Review, 21*(1), 18-23.

Clair, N. (1995). Mainstream classroom teachers and ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 189-196.

Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Curtin, E. (2005). Teaching practices for ESL students. *Multicultural Education, 12*(3), 22--40.

Driscoll, A. K. (1999). Risk of Hispanic dropout among immigrant and native Hispanic youth. *International Migration Review, 33*(4), 857-879.

Espinoza-Herold, M. (2003). *Issues in Latino education: Race, school culture and academic success*. Boston 0-205-35131-X: Allyn and Bacon.

Fitzgerald, J., Garcia, G. E., Jimenez, R. T., & Barrera, R. (2000). How will Bilingual/ESL programs in literacy change in the next millennium? *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*(4), 520-523.

Franquiz, M. & Carmen Salazar, M. (2004). The transformative potential of humanizing pedagogy: Addressing the needs of Chicano/Mexicano students: *The High School Journal, 8*7(4). 36-53.

Friedlander, M. (1991). The Newcomer program: Helping immigrant students succeed in U.S. schools. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Fry, R. (2003). Hispanic youth dropping out of U.S. schools: Measuring the challenge. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved June 28, 2011, from http://www.pewhispanic.org.

Garcia-Vazquez, E., Vazquez, L. A., Lopez, I., C., & Ward, W. (1999). Language proficiency and academic success: Relationships between proficiency in two languages and achievement among Mexican American students. *Bilingual Research Journal, 21*(4), 395-408.

Garrett, J., & Holcomb, S. (2005). Meeting the needs of immigrant students with limited English ability. *International Education, 35*(1). 49-52.

Giang, M. T., & Wittig, M. A. (2006). Implications of adolescents' acculturation strategies for personal and collective self-esteem. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 12*(4), 725-739.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understand reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8 (4), 597-607.*

Goode, S. (1996). Immersion teaching means learning in any language. *Insight on the News, 12*(14), 17-18.

Goto-Butler, Y., Orr, J. E., Bousquet Gutierrez, M., & & Hakuta, K. (2000). Inadequate conclusions from an inadequate assessment: What can SAT-9 scores tell us about the impact of proposition 227 in California? *Bilingual Research Journal, 24*(1), 141-154.

Herrera, R. (1996). Un proyecto especial para estudiantes muy especiales. *Hispania, (79)*4, 855-857.

House, N. G. (2005). Reclaiming children left behind: Addressing the causes and cures for low minority achievement. *School Administrator, 62*(1), 10-15.

Iber, G. L. (1992). *Academic performance, acculturation, and ethnic identity traits of first and second generation Mexican American high school students in a rural Iowa town.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Iowa, Iowa.

Illinois Department of Human Services. (2004). Confronting the Latino dropout crisis. Retrieved from: http://www.aplus-media.com/aplus-media/GRADS_teacher.pdf.

Kasper, L. F. (1995). The impact of content-based instructional programs on the academic progress of ESL students. *English for Specific Purposes, 16*(4), 309-320.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pegamon Press.

Kugler, E.G., & Price, O.A. (2009). *Helping immigrant and refugee students succeed: It is not just what happens in the classroom*. Washington, DC: The Center for Health and Health Care in School.

Lau, A. S., McCabe, K. M., Yeh, M., Garland, A. F., Wood, P. A., & Hough, R. L. (2005). The acculturation gap-distress hypothesis among high-risk Mexican American families. *Journal of Family Psychology, 19*(3), 367-375.

Massey, S. & Sanchez, M. (2010). *Brokering boundaries: Creating immigrant identity in anti-immigrant times.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 329-364.

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview.* New Park, CA: Sage.

McKeon, D. (1987). *Different types of ESL programs*. Washington DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *Status and trends in the education of Hispanics.* (NCES Publication No. 2003-08) Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Padron, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., & Rivera, H. H. (2003). Educating Hispanic students: Obstacles and avenues to improved academic achievement. *ERS Spectrum, 21*(2), 27-29.

Phinney, J. S. (2006). Ethnic identity exploration. In J.J. Arnett & J.S. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in American: Coming of age in the 21st century.* Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Phinney, J. S., Berry, J. W., Vedder, P., & Liebkind, K. (2006). The acculturation experience: Attitudes, identities and behaviors of immigrant youth. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts* (pp. 71-116). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Phinney, J. S., & Vedder, P. (2006). Family relationship of adolescents and parents: Intergenerational discrepancies and adaptation. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts* (pp. 167-186). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rennie, J. (1993). *ESL and bilingual program models* (No. RR93002010). Washington DC: ERIC Clearinghouse of Language and Linguistics.

Reyes, O., & Jason, L. A. (1993). Pilot study examining factors associated with academic success for Hispanic high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 22*(1), 57-71.

Roessingh, H. (2004). Effective high school ESL programs: A synthesis and meta-analysis. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 60*(5), 611-636.

Rotich, J. (2011). Mentoring as a springboard to acculturation of immigrants into American school. *Journal of Case Studies in Education, 1.* Retrieved from www.aabri.com/manuscripts/10456.pdf.

Rudmin, F. W. (2003). Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. *Review of General Psychology, 7*(1), 3-37.

Sam, D. L., Vedder, P., Ward, C., & Horenczyk, G. (2006). Psychological and sociocultural adaptation of immigrant youth. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts* (pp. 117--142). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sandhu, D. S., Portes, P. R., & McPhee, S. A. (1996). Assessing cultural adaptation: Psychometric properties of the cultural adaptation pain scale. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 24*(1), 15-25.

School's out (Bilingual education legislation) [Editorial]. (October 5, 1992). *National Review 44*(19), 19-21.

Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., & Jarvis, L. H. (2007). Ethnic identity and acculturation in Hispanic early adolescents: Mediated relationships to academic grades, prosocial behaviors, and externalizing symptoms. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*(4), 364-373.

Scribner, A. P. (1995). Advocating for Hispanic high school students: Research-based educational practices. *High School Journal, 78*(4), 206-214.

Suarez-Morales, L., Dillon, F. R., & Szapocznik, J. (2007). Validation of the acculturative stress inventory for children. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*(3), 216-224.

Sullivan, S., Schwartz, S. J., Prado, G., Huang, S., Pantin, H., & Szapocznik, J. (2007). A bidimensional model of examining differences in family functioning and behavior problems in Hispanic immigrant adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 27*(4), 405. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from www.jea.sagepub.com

Torres, L., & Rollock, D. (2004). Acculturative distress among Hispanics: The role of acculturation, coping, and intercultural competence. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*, 155-167.

Unger, J. B., Ritt-Olson, A., Wagner, K., Soto, D., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2007). A comparison of acculturation measures among Hispanic/Latino adolescents. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 36*(4), 555-565.

US Census Bureau. (2010). *The Hispanic Population: 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf

Vedder, P., van de Vijver, F., & Liebkind, K. (2006). Predicting immigrant youths' adaptation across countries and ethnocultural groups. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and*

adaptation across national contexts (pp. 143-166). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Valentin, T. (1993). Getting ready for the ESL onslaught: Steps the principal should take. *NASSP Bulletin, 76*(549), 30-38.

Waters, G. A. (2001). ESL policy and practice: A linguistic human rights perspective. *Clearing House, 74*(6), 296-300.

Watt, D. L. E., & Roessingh, H. (1994). Some you win, most you lose: Tracking ESL student drop out in high school (1988-1993). *English Quarterly, 26*(3), 5-7.

Weiss, S. (2004). Hispanic achievement. *The Progress of Education Reform, 6*(3), 1-6.

Wolf, L. (2007). *A mixed method study of rural Iowa Latino high school students to determine barriers to access.* Retrieved from Proquest Dissertation and Theses. ATT 3274892.

Appendix A

APPLICATION
FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

***TYPE OF REVIEW REQUESTED** (REFER TO APPENDIX FOR DEFINITIONS):*

[x] ***EXPEDITED REVIEW*** *(SUBMIT 4 COPIES)*
IF EXPEDITED, INDICATE RESEARCH CATEGORY [___]
COMPLETE ITEMS 1-13 AND SIGNATURE PAGE

[ ] ***FULL BOARD REVIEW*** *(SUBMIT 12 COPIES)*
COMPLETE ALL ITEMS AND SIGNATURE PAGE

UST INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Submit application with abstract, consent form, and other required documentation, to:
IRB Office, Mail: #5037, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105

Will this research last more than 1 year [ ] Yes [X] No

1. **Project Title:** High School English Language Learners of Latin American Descent Living in Rural Midwestern Communities: A Study of Cultural Adaptation

2. Project Period (from data collection to project completion): August 2008 through May 2009.

3. Name of **Principal Investigator: Teri Morgan**

   University Department: Leadership, Policy and Administration______________
   Primary Mailing Address: 115 E. 1st Ave Mitchell, SD 57301_________________
   Telephone: 605-933-0852 ___________________________________
   E-mail: tlmorgan@stthomas.edu___________________________

4. **Mark the category:**

5. **If student research, identify advisor:**

[ ] Faculty or Staff Research Name: Dr. Sarah Noonan

[ ] Undergraduate Student Research Department: Leadership, Policy and Administration

[X] Graduate Student Research Mailing Address: 1000 LaSalle Ave.

Minneapolis, MN 55403

[ ] Classroom Protocol Telephone: (651) 962-4897

[ ] Other (specify): E-mail: sjnoonan@stthomas.edu

6. **Is this research subject to any other type of review:** [X] Yes[ ] No

   If YES, specify: [ ] Thesis committee [ ] Grant agency [ ] Project site [ ] Other IRB

   [X] Dissertation committee

7. **Anticipated Subject Population** (Number, gender distribution, age range, etc.)

   a. **Number** of Males**: 2-3**________

   Females**: 2-3**________

   Total Human Subjects: 5-7

   b. **Age Range**: Youngest subject [18] Oldest subject [20]

   c. **Location** of Subjects: (Check all that apply)

   [ ] University of St. Thomas campus

   [ ] Elementary/Secondary school

   [ ] Hospital

   [ ] Clinic

   [ ] Long Term Care Facility

   [ ] Prison/Halfway house

   [ ] Other Special Institution (Specify)**:**

   [x] None of the above (Describe location of subjects): meetings will take place in community meeting areas such as public parks.

   NOTE: If subjects are recruited or research is conducted through **an agency or institution other than UST, submit written documentation of approval and/or cooperation.**

   d. **Special Characteristics:**

   [x] Normal Adult Volunteers **[ ] P**atient Controls

[ ] **S**tudents
[ ] **I**npatients
[ ] **O**utpatients

e. **Special Populations:**

NOTE: *These groups require special consideration by federal regulatory agencies and by the IRB.* ***In the lay summary, provide rationale for focusing on special populations.***

If women and minorities are to be excluded from the study, a clear rationale for their exclusion should be provided in the abstract / lay summary.

[ ] **M**inors (under age 18) - volunteers
[ ] **M**inors -- patients
[ ] **U**ST Employees
[ ] **P**regnant women
[ ] **E**lderly/aged persons
[ ] **H**IV/AIDS patients
[ ] **E**conomically disadvantaged
[ ] **E**ducationally disadvantaged
[ ] **P**risoners
[ ] **C**ognitively impaired persons

[x] Minority group(s) and non-English speakers (specify and provide rationale in abstract)

[ ] **O**ther Special Characteristics and Special Populations (specify ________________ and provide rationale in abstract)

8. **Abstract/Lay Summary** (*Use language that can be understood by a person unfamiliar with the area of research.)*

- **Purpose: The purpose of my research study is to investigate the experience of ELL high school students of Latin American descent living in the rural Midwest. How do these students experience a new and potentially alien culture? How do differences in language, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic identity impact ELL students' ability to adapt to a new and potentially alien culture? What types of social and academic support, arrangements, and/or opportunities support their academic success in school?**
- **Methods: I will be using qualitative research to understand the lived experiences of ELL students. All participation will be voluntary. My phenomenological study will include approximately two one-hour taped interviews. Follow-up will be completed by phone or email.**
- **Students with limited English proficiency and ethnically diverse populations will be interviewed to provide a perspective of their experiences adapting to a new culture. These students may or may not have had English as a Second Language classes.**
- **English Language Learners and students of Latin American descent have been targeted to focus on the cultural adaptation of Spanish-speaking students. Some**

students may feel comfortable speaking or using Spanish words, so I will include them in the transcription and translate the interview accordingly since I know Spanish.

9. **Recruitment of Subjects** (Attach copies of advertisements, recruitment letters, etc.)

   a. **Participants will be located using a contact in a non-profit agency in South Dakota. An email letter will be sent to the CEO describing the purpose and background of the study. In the letter, I will request that potential participants contact the agency if they are willing to participate in the study. From there, the snowball technique will be used. Also, if more participants are needed, I would contact school districts for names of people who may know former students of Latin American origin.**

   b. If subjects are chosen from records, indicate who gave approval to use the records. **Participants will not be chosen from records.**

   If records are private medical or student records, provide the protocol for securing consent of the subjects of the records and approval from the custodian of the records.

   c. Will the subjects receive inducements before, or rewards after the study?
   [ ] **Yes** [x] **No**
   If yes, explain. Include this information in your consent form.

   d. What is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and any cooperating agency or organization? **The CEO of Volunteers of America is also a student in the University of St. Thomas doctoral program in Educational Leadership.**

   e. What is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the potential participant?
None.

10. **Confidentiality of Data**

   a. **To maintain confidentially of all data, the taped interview will be kept in my possession for two years following the date of the initial interview. The tapes will then be destroyed. I will transcribe all interviews. Participants will sign an informed consent form, which will be kept with transcripts of the interview. A Spanish language version of the form will also be available to assure that**

participants fully understand their role. I will use pseudonym for the participants and all involved to maintain privacy of the individual. All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

b. Will data identifying the subjects be available to anyone other than the principal investigator, e.g. school officials, etc.?
[X] **Yes** (explain who and why below and in the consent form) [ ] **No**
The chair of this dissertation study committee, Dr. Sarah Noonan will have access to the original transcripts.

c. Will the data be recorded in any permanent record, such as a medical chart or student file?
[ ] **Yes** (explain below and in the consent form) [x] **No**

11. **Risks to Participants**

Does the research involve (Mark an "X" before each appropriate description):

[ ] **u**se of private records (medical or educational)
[ ] **p**ossible invasion of privacy of subject or family
[ ] **m**anipulation of psychological or social variables such as sensory deprivation, social isolation, psychological stresses;
[ ] **a**ny probing for personal or sensitive information in surveys or interviews;
[ ] **u**se of deception as part of experimental protocol;
[ ] **o**ther risks

Describe the precautions taken to minimize risks. If the research involves use of deception as part of the experimental protocol, that protocol must include a "debriefing procedure" which will be followed upon completion of the study or subjects' withdrawal from the study. Provide this protocol for IRB review.

I will ensure privacy by changing the names of all participants and avoid using specific addresses and place names. All participants will have the opportunity to review the excerpts of the interview and data to be included in the dissertation. The original taped interviews will be destroyed two years from the date of the interview.

12. **Benefits to Participation**

List any anticipated direct benefits to participation in this research project. If none, state that fact here and in the consent form.
Participants will not have any direct benefits for participating in this research project.

13. **Informed Consent Process**

Simply giving a consent form to a subject does not constitute informed consent.

a. Prepare **and attach** a Consent Form for IRB Review.
You may download the Consent Form Template from the IRB web site at <http://www.stthomas.edu/irb>. NOTE: It is important that you adapt this template to the needs and context of your research.

b. **I will explain to participants that I am investigating the experience of English language learners in high school and will appreciate their help. I will be doing interviews and using excerpts from the interview in my dissertation. Their participation is voluntary and they may withdraw from the interview process at any time**. I will **make sure no identifying characteristics are described in my discussion of the participants or in their stories.**

c. What questions will be asked to assess the Subject's understanding?
Could you briefly describe your understanding of the informed consent agreement? Do you understand that you may withdraw at any time from the interview process? Do you have any questions?

d. At what point in the research process will consent be obtained? Be specific.

I will obtain permission from the participant at the beginning of the interview session. The confidentiality agreement will be mentioned at the time we agree on an interview date and location.

e. Will the investigator(s) personally secure informed consent for all subjects?

[x] **Yes** [ ] **No -** Identify below the individuals who will obtain consent:

14. **Determination of Full Board Review Category** (Mark all that apply):

[ ] Research involving more than minimal risk to the subject requires Full IRB review using risk/benefit analysis.

[ ] Research using children or vulnerable populations requires full IRB review. Children are defined in federal regulations as "persons who have not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research, under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted." 45 CFR 46.402(a).

15. **Special Concerns for Research in School Settings**

    a. *If subjects are school children, and class time is used to collect data, describe in detail the activity planned for non-participants.*

    b. *Who will supervise non-participants? Include this information in the consent form.*

SIGNATURE PAGE

Note: Inked signatures are required on the original application, to be submitted with the appropriate number of copies.

This research, once approved, is subject to continuing review and approval by the IRB. The principal investigator will maintain records of this research according to IRB guidelines. If these conditions are not met, approval of this research could be suspended.

The signatures below certify that:

The signatory agrees that he or she is aware of the human subjects policies of the University of St. Thomas and will safeguard the rights, dignity, and privacy of all human subjects.

The information provided in this application form is correct.

- The principal investigator will seek and obtain prior written approval from the IRB for any substantive modification in the proposal, including but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators/agencies as well as changes in procedures.
- Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the IRB and to the subjects.
- The research will not be initiated and subject cannot be recruited until final written approval is granted.

Signature of Principal Investigator ____________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Research Advisor _______________________________ Date _____________

Student Research*:* As Research Advisor to the student investigator, I assume responsibility for insuring that the student complies with University and Federal regulations regarding the use of human subjects in research.

Signature of Department Chair ________ __________________ Date ___________

Faculty/Staff Research: As Department Chair, or Designee, I acknowledge that this research is in keeping with the standards set by our department and assure that the principal investigator has met all departmental requirements for review and approval of this research.

Appendix B

Consent Form
University of St. Thomas

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. Your time is very much appreciated. Participation in the interview process and follow-up is entirely voluntary.

The purpose of the study being conducted is to learn about the cultural adaptation experience of high school English language learners in rural communities. While there are no direct benefits to the participants, it is intended that the study will help teachers and administrator further understand the experience of students with limited English proficiency.

Participation consists of two interviews, lasting approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio taped. There may be additional follow-up/clarification through email or phone. Privacy will be ensured through confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation to protect the identity of all participants in the study and others involved. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Data gathered through the interview process will be used by Teri Morgan, a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in a dissertation. Her advisor, Dr. Sarah Noonan, will also have access to the information. The dissertation will be available at the UST library for students to view.

If you have any questions other than the ones answered today, please contact Teri Morgan at 605 996-5883.

I have read the above agreement and agree to participate in the research study conducted by Teri Morgan.

_____________________________ _______________
Signature of Interviewee Date

_____________________________ _______________
Signature of Interviewer Date

Appendix C

La Forma del consentimiento Entrevista
La Universidad de St. Thomas

Gracias por su consentimiento para tomar parte en este estudio de investigación. La participación en el proceso de entrevista y seguimiento es enteramente voluntaria.

El propósito del estudio es de aprender acerca de la experiencia cultural de la adaptación de los estudiantes de inglés como segundo idioma en comunidades de diversidad. Mientras no hay beneficios a los participantes, el estudio ayudará a maestro y la administración comprender aún más la experiencia de estudiantes con la pericia inglesa limitada.

La participación consiste en dos entrevistas, durando aproximadamente una hora. Esta entrevista será grabada. Su participación es completamente voluntaria y puede dejar de participar en este estudio cuando desee sin ningún tipo de consecuencia. La información recolectada a través de este estudio permanecerá completamente confidencial. Se le asignará un seudónimo para asegurar que su participación sea anónima.

Los datos reunieron por el proceso de entrevista será utilizado por Teri Morgan, un estudiantea doctoral en la Universidad de St. Thomas en Minneapolis, Minnesota, en una disertación.

He leído el encima del acuerdo y concuerdo en tomar parte en el estudio de investigación realizado por Teri Morgan.

______________________________ _______________
Firma Fecha

______________________________ _______________
Firma Fecha

Appendix D

Semi-structured guide interview questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
    a. Where are you from and how long have you lived here?
    b. Do your relatives live in the area? Where do they live and for how long?
2. Tell me about your experience moving to this area.
    a. What do you like about living in the area?
    b. What would you like to change about the area in which you live?
    c. How do your parents feel about living here?
3. Describe your experience in school.
    a. How did you feel about going to school every day?
    b. How did your teachers help you learn English?
    c. How did the other students treat you?
    d. How did the principal and other staff members treat you?
    e. What problems, if any, did you have in school?
4. How did you feel about your academic progress is school (your grades and what you learned)?
    a. How did you parents feel? Were they satisfied?
    b. What, if anything, would have made your grades better?
5. What are some ways that teachers helped you learn?
    a. What are the administrators at your school like?
    b. How did your classmates help you learn?

6. What did you normally do after school? On weekends?
    a. What did your friends do after school and on weekends?
    b. What did you sibling and other family members do?
7. Describe a time when you really felt good about your experience at school.
8. What would you change about your experience at school?
9. How would you describe your level of fluency in English?
    a. How do you parents feel about speaking English?
    b. How would you describe the rest of your family's ability to speak English?
10. How did your life change after you moved to this area? What are some ways that are the same?
11. How do you feel about your experience adjusting to life here? How about adjusting to school?
12. If you were to offer advice to a student from Mexico or another Latin American moving to this area, what would you say?
13. What advice would you offer to teachers or administrators (principal, for example) at your school that would help students who do not speak English well?
14. What are your plans now? Will you stay in the area? Why or why not?
15. What else, if anything, would you like to add about your experience moving here?