American *Sueño*: Hispanic Immigrants' Cultural

Adaptation in American Small Cities

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Dedication

To Mom and Dad,

who selflessly love and relentlessly believe in me.

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It has been almost two years now, and the thesis has become a reality. It has been quite a process, and I could never have accomplished it if it wasn't for the help, wisdom, knowledge, guidance, and encouragement of so many people. This project has tremendously impacted my life, and has widened my perspective on this huge adventure that is leaving one's home and entering a new culture – a journey that I have experienced myself. I owe my deepest gratitude to my Lord Jesus Christ, who gave me this unique opportunity to learn and grow, and sustained me throughout this endeavor.

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Abstract

This study investigated certain aspects of the cross-cultural adaptation process of Spanish-speaking Hispanic immigrants residing in small cities in the United States. Using Young Yun Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory as a theoretical framework, the researcher investigated the journey those sojourners undergo and how their cultural identities are shaped throughout the process. The two questions that guided the research were: (1) What are the difficulties that Hispanics that migrate to small cities in the United States encounter? (2) What are the mechanisms (media usage, language acquisition, habits, life style etc.) utilized by them in order to adapt to the new environment? A mixed-methods approach was employed in order to utilize different types of data, a technique that is able to gather in-depth information of complex phenomena such as that under investigation in this study. In total, 62 individuals volunteered to be a part of this study, which was conducted at a Mid-Atlantic city in the state of Virginia. All of them filled out questionnaires with both Likert scale statements and short-answer responses, and 10 participants volunteered to take part in an interview. Results revealed that language is one of the major challenges sojourners have to deal with, and they attribute to their lack of fluency their difficulties in communicating with people in a host environment. Also, results showed that immigrants perceived as their responsibility to integrate themselves in the host community. Consequently, they seemed to use the media and interpersonal relationships as their windows into the new culture.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, acculturation, enculturation, Hispanic, Latino, immigration, Young Yun Kim, media usage

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Crossing borders and relocating to different countries have been common practices seen throughout history, and to this day, immigration continues concurrently to bring hope and raise challenges to both foreigners and people from host countries. In the United States, millions of immigrants have flooded the land over the decades in order to pursue a dream. Whether it was the dream of surviving or the dream of a better life, foreigners have been driven by the belief that they could "make it in America" (Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind, 1999). However, the immigration process entails a complex journey for those that undergo it. More than moving to a different geographic location, immigrants face the cultural challenge of immersing themselves into a new environment. The question this paper addresses is what happens in this process.

Before expanding on the cross-cultural adaptation process, it is worth noting that Hispanic immigrants (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, and others) have been among the largest groups that came to America in what Alba and Nee (2003) call "a new era of mass immigration" (p. ix) that began in the 1960s. In fact, Hispanics currently comprise, since the year 2000, the largest minority population in the United States (Donato, Tolbert, Nucci, Kawano, 2008, p. 75). It is common to see hubs of Latinos in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, New York City, and Miami, but Odem and Lacy (2009) noted that, "[m]any [Hispanic immigrants] have moved to small towns and rural areas to work in agriculture and food-processing" (p. xvii). The authors also pointed out the fact that Latinos have recently been relocating to the American Southeastern states (p. xvii), which are regarded to be the new frequent destinations for immigrants. Saenz (2004) noted that the dispersion of the Latino

population to those new destinations "suggests that all parts of the country will feel the impact of Latino growth" (p. 27).

 In light of this recent shift of Latino immigration into small cities in the United States, it is crucial to investigate the cross-cultural adaptation process in order to further the understanding of how Hispanic culture is being reinvented, as well as how the American landscape is being shaped by this new wave. Due to the complexity and ever-changing nature of this subject, it is important to address a few terms and concepts that are related to Hispanic immigration to the United States and the process of cross-cultural adaptation. The purpose of this study is not to determine how successful or unsuccessful Hispanic immigrants have been in adapting to the new environment but to analyze the process of adaptation. Having Young Yun Kim's (2001) five axioms of her cross-cultural adaptation theory as the groundwork for research, this study focused on identifying the different stages and elements that are part of Hispanic immigrants' journeys and determining how realistic Kim's axioms are in describing the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Furthermore, this study also shed light on the concept of intercultural identity, a notion also elaborated by Kim, and the experience of Hispanic immigrants in small cities in the United States.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Assimilation

 Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) discussed the problem that several conceptualizations, theories, and models within the intercultural communication field use the words "assimilation," "adjustment," and "adaptation" interchangeably (p. 6). However, the authors emphasized the need to distinguish each process from one another. "Assimilation" represents the amount of the host culture a sojourner absorbs. "Adjustment" refers to a foreigner's being well adapted to a new environment without experiencing culture shock anymore. Finally, "adaptation," according

to Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), can be seen at a micro and macro level. At the micro level,

adaptation is the alteration of behavior in instances of interaction; whereas, at the macro level,

"adaptation" is viewed as the overlapping of both assimilation and adjustment (p. 6).

Young Yun Kim (2001) explored the different approaches to cross-cultural adaptation in

her book *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural*

Adaptation (pp. 11-43). The first perspective the author presented consisted of micro and macro

levels of adaptation as mentioned above. Kim said that at the macro level, "emphasis has been

placed almost exclusively on structural issues involving immigrant groups; few researchers have

taken into account the experience of individuals" (p. 15). On the other hand, at the micro level,

researchers have focused on interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of sojourners (p. 15).

Kim (2001) also drew the distinction between those newcomers that live in a new culture

for more or less time. Therefore, there is the long-term and the short-term adaptation (p. 15). Yet,

another approach has been to view cross-cultural adaptation as a problem or as a growing

experience (p. 17). Interestingly though, Kim noted that "despite, or rather because of, the

difficulties crossing cultures entails, people do and must change some of their old ways so as to

carry out their daily activities and achieve improved quality of life in the new environment" (p.

21). The experience of entering a new culture presents communication researchers a rich field of

investigation, since the process is complex and entails a variety of communication phenomena.

Finally, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the study of cross-cultural

adaptation is also complex, which reflects on the "variety of existing conceptions" (Kim, 2001,

p. 11). As a result, concepts may be used interchangeably and not necessarily describe

phenomena accurately. The present paper proposed to identify the steps and stages Hispanic

immigrants undergo in order to adapt to small cities in the United States. Therefore, the term

"adaptation" is the phenomenon to be analyzed in this study. As mentioned above, "assimilation" may be a result of "adaptation;" therefore, the researcher may use this concept at times when discussing the data collected.

Hispanic/Latino

In the literature and in the media, the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" seem to be used interchangeably. For clarification, the nature of this paper thus calls for a brief explanation of this issue. Various scholars (Calderon, 1992; Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996; Shorris, 1992; Valdivia, 2010) have addressed this issue, pointing out to the importance of understanding the origin and the descriptive accuracy of these words. First, "Latin[o] is a US-created category" as well as the Hispanic category, which was created in the Nixon era (Valdivia, 2010, p. 6). Two major characteristics of groups that are labeled as "Latino" or "Hispanic" are the language they speak (Spanish and Portuguese), and the countries in which they are located in Latin America, which includes Mexico, Central and South America. Valdivia (2010) mentioned that the Nixon Administration adopted the term "Hispanic" to refer to both Spanish and Portuguese speakers of Latin American and Peninsular (from the Iberian Peninsula that consists of Spain and Portugal) descent. However, for the purpose of narrowing down the population under investigation, in this paper, "Hispanic" is strictly used to refer to Spanish-speakers from Latin American countries.

As previously mentioned, researchers have also addressed the fact that one cannot generalize the Hispanic population within one category. Jones-Correa and Leal (1996) said that "[it] is one thing…to use [this term] descriptively, to talk about a population with origins in a geographic area, and another to assume that this population shares certain characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs" (p. 215). Even though Latinos share some common cultural elements, Hondurans, are not the same as Argentineans; Peruvians are not the same as

Colombians, etc. Shorris (1992) went further to argue that "there are no Latinos, no Hispanics. There are only Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans … and so forth. Each is different and alike" (p. 24). Jose Calderon (1992) also points out that the term "Latino" is used as a way of uniting all these groups "whose identity is socially constructed by U.S. foreign policy" (p. 39). Evidently, when using the words "Latino" and "Hispanic," it is crucial to keep in mind that there is a multiplicity of cultures in this realm that cannot be overlooked. At the same time that there are commonalities, there are differences that can be detrimental in any analysis of populations of Hispanic origin.

In this present study, the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" will be used throughout in reference to Spanish-speaking individuals from countries that are located in Latin America. Additionally, for the sake of the study, the sample will be analyzed without using country of origin as a criterion; however, the researcher will briefly address the subject later on in the text.

Conclusion

The significant presence of Hispanics in the United States has created a prolific field of study for those interested in investigating the phenomenon of acculturation, biculturalism, and other communication and adaptation processes. As Smokowski and Bacallao (2011) pointed out, "Becoming bicultural, both for immigrant families and for the larger host society, is a difficult and sometimes painful process, requiring the integration of multiple, often conflicting messages concerning stability and change from different people and social systems" (p. 9). Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, and Szapocznik (2005) did a study among Latino youth in the Miami-Dade County area. This study had four hypotheses that aimed at investigating the acculturation process among young Hispanics through "a person-centered approach to studying acculturation" (p. 166). Using adult immigrants for this type of study could bring another

perspective on acculturation. In addition, Miami-Dade is a region where the Hispanic population is large, and the acculturation process may be less radical than for those immigrants that reside in small cities in America.

Another interesting study dealing with acculturation among Hispanic immigrants was conducted by Stilling (1997). The author compared levels of acculturation with the amount of exposure to English-language television. It is certain that media usage is key in tracing a foreigner's course of becoming integrated into the host culture. However, a study on Latinos' exposure and preference for Spanish-language television in the United States would probably generate interesting results and offer some insight about acculturation, or perhaps, the lack thereof.

It is more likely that going through such a process in the context of American small cities presents more challenges than in the larger cities, in which the Hispanic culture has had a while to develop and has, thus, become more prevalent. Donato, Tolbert, Nucci, and Kawano (2008) said that since 1990, studies have shown "the widespread growth of immigrant populations in American communities not known as common destinations in the past" (p. 75). The authors then conducted an analysis of the emergence of new nonmetropolitan immigrant hubs, which revealed that new immigrants have moved to the southern part of the United States as well as midwestern plains states (p. 95). In face of this new scene, investigating how Hispanic immigrants adapt to a host environment in smaller communities in the United States is important in order to aid the integration of both sojourners and natives.

Using Kim's (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptation, this present study intended to trace the path of Latino immigrants as they encounter and deal with challenges of living in American small cities. The researcher employed a mixed methods approach through both

questionnaires and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The following research questions have

guided the study:

RQ 1) What are the difficulties that Hispanics encounter who migrate to small cities in

the United States?

RQ 2) What are the mechanisms (media usage, language acquisition, habits, life style

etc.) utilized by them in order to adapt to the new environment?

Kim's (2001) work is addressed in the literature review as well as theoretical concepts

and studies done on cross-cultural adaptation with emphasis on the Hispanic population in the

United States. The chapter that follows explains the methodology and sample group. The final

chapter includes the analysis and interpretation of results, which confirms findings from previous

research and presents new possibilities of study in the field.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Living in large American cities has long provided residents with a daily intercultural experience. Miami, Los Angeles and New York City, for example, have welcomed foreigners for decades, and now, are hubs for different ethnicities such as Hispanic, Indian, Italian, German, and Vietnamese. Immigrants have come to the United States fleeing from political or religious oppressions or natural disasters or searching for social and economic betterment (Kim, 2001, p. 3). Kim observes that "the phenomenon of cross-cultural adaptation has been investigated extensively in the United States, a nation that throughout its history has dealt with a large and continuous flux of immigrants" (Kim, 2001, p.11). In face of the immigration phenomenon and the growing social interaction among cultures, scholars have widely researched and written on the subject of intercultural communication for the last 20 years (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida & Ogawa, 2005, p. 3).

The Hispanic population residing in smaller cities in the United States presents an interesting scenario through which to study the process of cultural adaptation. Out of the hundreds of ethnicities that share American soil, the Hispanic community has become the largest minority in the United States composing 15.8 percent of the total population as of June of 2010 (MercoPress). Obviously, the Hispanic culture is more prevalent in larger cities such as Houston and Los Angeles. In these metropolises, the significant amount of residents with a Hispanic background has developed in such a way that they have recreated their home cultures in these American cities. However, Latinos have also moved to smaller cities and towns all over the United States, where the Hispanic culture may be present but is not as prominent, which thus

presents a challenge for immigrants and their descendants to infiltrate and adapt in the new

environment.

Young Yun Kim's Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory

Cross-cultural adaptation theory is a framework that traces the process through which

individuals that cross cultural boundaries bridge the gap between their home culture and their

new culture. This theory served as the basis for this study: the researcher aimed at verifying how

Kim's five axioms of her theory and her concept of intercultural identity are present in the

experience of Spanish-speaking Hispanic immigrants in small cities in the United States.

In Young Yun Kim's (2001) book *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of

Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*, Kim introduced the topic by arguing that "the

drastic and disorienting [experiences] that strangers encounter in a new environment lead to new

learning and growth" (p. 45). Furthermore, encountering a new culture challenges and brings

sojourners to the realization that "taken-for-granted assumptions and life tools, such as [their]

language and social norms" (Kim, 2001, p. 46) no longer translate into the host environment. As

a result, Kim says that when an individual enters a new culture, a process of enculturation

commences (p. 50).

It is worth noting that enculturation does not simply entail the addition of different

customs to someone's culture. Kim (2001) claimed that as an individual learns about a new

culture, "*deculturation* (or unlearning) of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur,

in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old

ones" (p. 51). Kim's extensive research on this process has thus led her to formulate five axioms

that are general principles of cross-cultural adaptation. First, strangers will go through both

acculturation and deculturation, which will result in assimilation. The second axiom states that

the core of cross-cultural adaptation is the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, the process of

strangers making adjustments to fit the new environment. This principle leads to the third axiom

that says that this dynamic brings about intercultural transformation in the stranger. The fourth

axiom suggests that as an individual goes through intercultural transformation, the fluctuation of

stress-adaptation-growth dynamic declines, as the individual has acquired elements of the new

culture and needs to do fewer adjustments than in the beginning. Last, the fifth axiom states that

this transformation is displayed "in increased functional fitness, psychological health, and

intercultural identity" (Kim, 2001, pp. 68-9).

　　　　Still referring to how well individuals adapt to a new culture, Kim (2001) identified three

factors that formed what she calls adaptation potential: "the preparedness for change, the

proximity (or distance) of an ethnicity to (or from) that of the host environment, and the

personality attributes" (p. 165). In the case of Hispanic immigrants in the United States, those

that reside in larger American cities may not feel as much in need of exploring and learning

about the host culture as those that live in smaller cities with a less prominent Hispanic

population.

　　　　Among the various elements that Kim (2001) discussed in her book, intercultural identity

is a noteworthy concept in regard to the subject of this present study, which investigates the

process and aftermath of Hispanics' experience as they enter a new culture in American small

cities. Kim argued that as sojourners "undergo adaptive changes in host communication

competence" (p. 65), they acquire a multifaceted identity. As strangers get in touch with a

different culture, they gradually gain a renewed sense of self. Zaharna (1989) called this

progression as "self-shock," which is defined as "the intrusion of new and, sometimes,

conflicting self-identities that the individual encounters when he or she encounters a culturally

different Other" (p. 511). Therefore, cross-cultural adaptation transforms people and brings about a new identity, which Kim (2001) said is "broader than the original" (p. 67). Last, it is crucial to emphasize that Kim (2001) did not support the assumption that individuals with an intercultural identity choose one culture over the other. The author recognized the existence of "a difficult process filled with confusion and self-doubt," which leads to a gradually more intercultural identity (p. 67).

Another leading scholar in the field of intercultural communication, Gudykunst, along with Kim (2003), pointed out that cross-cultural adaptation heavily depends on the level of permanence in a new environment. They argued that in the case of immigrants, they tend to reinstate their life conditions and seek membership in the host society (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) went further to say that all strangers (term given to individuals entering a new culture) in a new environment need to go through a process of adaptation that will make it possible for them to function in the new society. Various studies also indicated that successful personal relations are vital as foreigners seek to infiltrate in a different culture (Boekestijn, 1988).

Kim (1995) also formulated another important principle dealing with cultural adaptation: host communication competence (p. 180). This term refers to how a stranger's communication competence facilitates his or her adaptation to a new culture. Kim (1995) argues that until strangers achieve an ample level of host communication competence, "they are handicapped in their ability to meet their physical, psychological, and social needs and goals" (p. 180). Intrinsically related to communication competence is what Kim (1995) calls host interpersonal communication, which basically refers to a stranger's process of retaining vital information and insight on the behavior and worldviews of the local people (p. 182).

Dávila (2008) conducted a study on the process of adult Hispanic females' learning English as a second language (ESL), which is an example of immigrants' awareness of their responsibility of infiltrating in a new environment. Dávila (2008) argued that learning English has "various social, economic, and political implications" (p. 357). The study consisted of case studies of four adult Latina immigrants residing in North Carolina and sought to answer the question of the impact of ESL coursework in Latinas' personal and professional lives (p. 360). Through a series of interviews, Dávila was able to identify the reasons behind the participants' willingness to learn the language. Basically, the interviewees revealed that they saw the need to adapt to the culture. Interestingly, they also revealed other factors that were hindering their cross-cultural adaptation process, such as change in profession, lower living standards, loss of community, and language barriers (p. 362).

Research has been done in the field in order to investigate how interpersonal communication skills influence cross-cultural adaptation. Ruben and Kealey (1979) attempted to draw the relationship "between interpersonal and social behaviors and patterns of success and failure and cross-cultural adaptation" (p. 15). Ruben and Kealey (1979) selected seven interpersonal and social communication skills to analyze: respect, interaction posture, orientation to knowledge, empathy, role behavior, interaction management, and ambiguity tolerance (p. 16). The study was conducted with sojourners living in Kenya. The two main questions guiding the study were: (1) "Do particular communication behaviors – observable within one's culture – predict successful or unsuccessful adaptation in another culture?" and (2) "How is adaptation most appropriately defined and measured?" (p. 38) The authors concluded that there are correlations between social skills and cross-cultural adaptation that can predict behavior, but

there are still more to be investigated in this subject due to other less significant correlations (p. 43).

As preciously noted in the introduction, it is important to point out that there is a fundamental difference that researchers emphasize between adaptation and acculturation, concepts that are often used to describe the immigrating experience. Kim (2003) defines adaptation as "the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with the environment" (p. 244). On the other hand, acculturation means "the acquisition of the host cultural practices in wide-ranging areas" (Kim, 2003, p. 244). Basically, Kim (2003) pointed out that acculturation includes a new learning process, in which the individual will adopt new customs and unlearn some of the old cultural elements (p. 244). Therefore, when studying the phenomenon of immigration, adaptation and acculturation are crucial processes to be analyzed.

Most studies on cross-cultural adaptation theory have been focused on either the problematic nature of the experience or on the learning and growing aspects of the experience (Kim, 2003). Oberg (1979), for example, offered an alternate perspective of the process. He described cultural adaptation as happening in four stages: "(1) first, the stranger experiences a 'honeymoon' stage in which he or she is fascinated by the new; (2) the second stage is characterized by hostility and stereotyped attitudes toward the new culture, and it is when the stranger starts to associate more often with other strangers; (3) during the third stage, the stranger is overcoming challenges by increasing his or her language knowledge and cultural competence; and (4) in the final stage, the individual's adjustment to the new culture is almost complete as he or she accepts and even enjoys the host environment" (pp. 44-5).

The adaptation to a new culture happens slowly and in stages (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Boekestijn (1988) also argued that individuals crossing cultural boundaries deal with conflict when struggling with the desire of maintaining old customs and adopting new ones. In essence, strangers successfully adapt to a new environment when "their personal communication systems sufficiently overlap with those of the natives" (Kim, 2005, p. 385).

A study about new media technologies (cell phones, computers, and the internet) done among Hispanics residing in the United States revealed this dynamic of elements of different cultures overlapping each other (Leonardi, 2003). This study relates to the fact of whether or not the Hispanic culture overlaps with the American mainstream culture in terms of their perspective on the new media, since the American mainstream is strongly inclined towards new technologies. The author investigated whether the Hispanics cultural background influences Latinos' opinions on the use of cell phones, computers, etc., and whether Latinos believe these resources provide good communication (p. 164). The findings showed that the participants overwhelmingly considered cell phones as essential tools for interpersonal communication in their everyday lives (p. 167); whereas, computers and the internet were regarded as poor tools of connecting with people (p. 172). As the author noticed in the discussion section of this article, the collectivist orientation of the Hispanic culture, which values "solidarity and integration with others" (p. 162), greatly affected the participants' perception about computers and the internet (p. 174). Consequently, the Hispanic culture will most likely not overlap with the American mainstream culture in this aspect, and this may be a hindrance for acculturation – especially for those foreign-born that hold strong to characteristics of their home culture.

Another important aspect of the crossing of cultural boundaries is what Boekestijn (1988) called "the cultural dilemma" (p. 83). This dilemma is the process of balancing out elements of

how the receiving party and the foreign party act when encountering each other. The author

argued that social acceptance is an indispensable part of successful migration. Boekestijn said

that, "Identification with the new country seems highly dependent on the development of

personal relations which provide migrants the feeling of being accepted" (p. 89). According to

Boekestijn, immigrants will have to deal with shunning of dissimilarity, competition, and

territoriality as well as cultural fatigue and susceptibility.

As recent research has shown, it is important to notice that certain concepts as

assimilation and acculturation have "come to be viewed by social scientists as a worn-out theory

which imposes ethnocentric and patronizing demands on the minority peoples struggling to

retain their cultural and ethnic integrity" (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 827). Alba and Nee (1997)

argued that assimilation entails ethnocentric and ideological biases and does not reflect current

multicultural realities (p. 863). Therefore, theories about cross-cultural experiences have been

challenged due to a more open-minded perspective about immigrants. However, the question is

whether this holds true in the small city context where ethnic minorities encounter a weaker

presence of their home cultures.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Hispanic Immigration in the United States

In research conducted among Hispanics and their cultural adaptation into American

mainstream culture, arguments have been formed as to whether recent immigrants have had a

harder time going through the process. However, studies indicate that cultural adaptation has

happened at the same rate as for earlier immigrants (Padilla, 2006). Scholars have analyzed the

case of Hispanic adaptation to American mainstream culture through various venues of society

such as mass media usage (television, magazines, newspapers, etc.), language competence,

interpersonal relationships, and education. In all of these communication outlets, the element of

identity is strongly present. As immigrants go through adaptation, their cultural identity is confronted by the one of the new environment and is most likely to undergo transformation.

As earlier discussed, Kim (2001) described cultural identity as the development of selfhood and the integration of a culture's worldview, beliefs, values, norms, and concerned communication practices (p. 49). In another article, Kim (2008) elaborated on this concept and used the term "intercultural identity" to refer to "the phenomenon of identity adaptation and transformation beyond the perimeters of the conventional, categorical conception of cultural identity" (p. 359). Therefore, identity is intrinsically related to cross-culture adaptation (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008, p. 146).

In a study conducted among Hispanics in the United States, Rinderle and Montoya (2008) attempted to draw a relationship between demographics and Latino cultural identity labels as perceived in five independent variable categories – physical appearance, familism/collectivism, ethnic pride, political beliefs, and discrimination (p. 144). The researchers formed focus groups among 105 Hispanic immigrants that resided in New Mexico. The methodology consisted of interviews and questionnaires. Out of the all the identity labels analyzed, political beliefs and ethnic pride were the most significant ones. The authors concluded that the results are supported by the literature, since other studies also indicated that these two identity categories are important to Hispanics (p. 158). This article provides an insightful analysis of the Hispanic identity and how it differs from the American mainstream social identity.

Adult immigrants are often the subject of analysis in studies done about cross-cultural adaptation, but children and the youth that cross cultural boundaries also face difficulties to adapt and reconcile both cultural identities. Williams, Alvarez, and Hauck (2002) did a study among Hispanic young people with the objective of examining cultural adaptation through the

testimonies given by Spanish-speaking Hispanic students enrolled in ESL classes at Center City

High School, which is located in a metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States (p.

565). The researchers conducted focus groups and interviews on the subject of identity and

acculturation through three themes: "gendered social control, English competency as a portal to

cultural capital, and appearance norms as normative markers" (p. 571). In conclusion, the results

showed that young Hispanics face identity conflicts and challenges in adapting to the new

culture. Another key conclusion of this study is that gender, ethnicity, and immigrant status

affect the cultural adaptation process (p. 578). In a final remark in this article, the authors noted

that transitioning from one culture to another is an imperative social process. "Transnational

transitions and bicultural identities becomes critical to understanding new relations of the 21st

century" (p. 580).

      Ariza (2010) attempted to trace and analyze the cross-cultural adaptation process and

identity formation among Puerto Rican youth that reside in Orlando, Florida. The methods

utilized to gather data were "participant observation, newspaper articles and reports, informal

conversation, interviews and focus groups" (p. 131). In the results section of this article, the

author mentioned that immigrants (Puerto Ricans in this case) moved to the United States in

search for better opportunities and a safer environment to raise their children, but they were not

interested in living in all-Puerto Rican neighborhoods (p. 140). This result indicated that

immigrants look forward to infiltrating the American society and adapting to the new culture.

However, the study reported that Puerto Ricans that had limited English skills gravitated towards

interacting with Spanish speakers such as Colombians and Mexicans (p. 141). Another

interesting finding in this study was that Puerto Rican youth showed a strong desire to preserve

their Puerto Rican identities by speaking Spanish at home or listening to Hispanic music (p.

144). Ariza explained that this process of cultural adaptation that is characterized by choice is called "selective assimilation," which is an important element of Latinos' experiences in the American society.

Valencia (1989) conducted an important study concerning how to be effective in the Hispanic market in the United States through acquiring a better understanding of the Latin cultural values. His research is relevant in the discussion of cross-cultural adaptation and identity because the first goal of this study was to determine how Hispanics differ from White non-Hispanics in their cultural value orientation (p. 23). In this study, the most significant finding was that there were value differences between Hispanics and Whites in the United States, which led the author to conclude that "Hispanics have been resilient to acculturation to mainstream American life and have preserved much of their culture, language and traditions in the United States" (p. 25). Valencia also argued that the Hispanic culture in America is reinforced by new immigrants (p. 26). In fact, according to Saenz (2004), the Latino population has not only significantly impacted the demography of the U.S. population but also other aspects of the American society as a whole (p. 1). Saenz mentioned the increasing popularity of Hispanic music and food as examples of this impact. In conclusion, as Valencia's (1989) study attested to, Hispanics living in the United States have maintained much of their cultural identity, but the case of Latinos in small American cities have yet to be studied more comprehensively in order to determine whether that situation has changed.

Mass Media and Hispanic Immigrants' Cross-Cultural Adaptation

In studying cross-cultural adaptation, the analysis of mass media is essential because the media are pervasive cultural agencies that formulate cultural perspectives for majority and minority ethnic groups in the United States (Ríos & Gaines, Jr., 1998). Ríos and Gaines, Jr.

(1998) argued that Hispanics immigrants may choose media that satisfy their cultural needs, thus preferring media that is in their language, for example (p. 746). Their study collected data from 223 adult Hispanics with 85.2 percent being Hispanic Americans, nine percent Mexican, and the rest being born elsewhere (pp. 748-49). The goal was to investigate whether the three ethnic subgroups (those with predominantly Hispanic heritage, those with biculturalism, and those with a small percentage of Latino heritage) that were identified in the article would emerge based on information gathered from their media usage (p. 746). The results demonstrated that cultural background, especially language skills, was a "reliable predictor of individuals' use of mass media for cultural maintenance" (p. 753). Therefore, the mass media seem to play a key role in the process of cultural adaptation, whether the media are used to aid in the acculturation process or preserve values, language, traditions, etc.

Soruco and Pinto (2010) explored "the degree language dependency, birth condition, and social adaptation affected attitudes and behaviors regarding use of English and Spanish language newspapers and television for South Florida Hispanics" (p. 77). In spite of the fact that Latinos are a minority in the country, they compose a large population in the region where this study was conducted, which may explain why they do not necessarily feel the pressure to conform to the American culture (p. 77). The findings of the study were not that revealing. They served more to confirm certain behaviors: Spanish speakers have a more favorable attitude towards newspapers that are in Spanish than English speakers do (p. 82). Also, foreign born Hispanics prefer newspapers in Spanish than those that are born in the United States (p. 82). These findings seem to mirror other studies that indicate that foreign-born Hispanics greatly tend to befriend other Hispanics (p. 83).

As seen in the previous study, mass media are deeply involved in society and are significant in shaping cultures. The usage of mass media shows evidence of how foreigners adapt to a new environment, but the way foreigners are depicted in the media, whether it is a positive or negative way, also has an impact on their cross-cultural adaptation experience.

A study conducted by Correa (2010) touched on the topic of how mass media shape the depiction of Hispanic women depending on the target audience. Two newspapers were analyzed in order to collect data: the English-language *The Miami Herald*, which has a wider audience, and the Spanish-language *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish version of the first publication that is targeted at Latinos, especially Cubans (p. 430). The goals of the study were to determine how these two newspapers depicted women and to establish the differences between the frames used to refer to women in both of the papers (p. 430).

The results indicated that *The Miami Herald* framed women more along the lines of their success in their careers. Some catchphrases identified in this newspaper were "professionally well-know" and "Latinas at the top of the executive world" (p. 433). On the contrary, *El Nuevo Herald* used "family-devoted and family-sacrifice" frames to depict women (p. 437). As the Hispanic culture strongly values the family, it makes sense for the Spanish-language newspaper to adjust their depiction of women according to the expectations of the audience. This study focused specifically on the framing of women, but this is only one example of how the media are shaped by their audience. In addition, studies such as this one point out that the media in the United States has been translated into Spanish in order to satisfy the needs of the large Hispanic population (Ríos & Gaines Jr., 1998, p. 746).

The way Latinos are portrayed in American television also serves as an indication of how the Hispanic culture has penetrated mainstream culture in the United States as well as it serves as

a tailoring tool of the foreign culture into the host environment. According to analytic research,

Hispanics compose only about three percent of the main characters on prime-time television

(Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p. 695). Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, and Kopacz (2008) did a study on

the perceptions of White viewers about Hispanic portrayals on television. The results

demonstrated that ethnic identification played a significant role when it came to how the

audience perceives Hispanics on television (p. 17). It is important to emphasize that in the cross-

cultural adaptation process, the way the host culture sees the foreign culture is detrimental to

how strangers will behave and be motivated to get involved in the local environment. Television

portrayal, thus, somewhat provides a framework through which the host society regards Hispanic

immigrants as well as other ethnicities.

  Another interesting aspect of media usage and the Hispanic population in America, which

also provides more background knowledge in the research on Latinos' cultural adaptation, is how

they select or avoid television programming (Abrams & Giles, 2009). Facing the reality that 65

percent of Hispanics prefer to watch Spanish-language programming (Coffey & Sanders, 2010),

Abrams and Giles (2009) attempted to determine what factors influenced their decision. They

surveyed Hispanic undergraduate students, asking them to evaluate statements and indicate how

much they agreed or disagreed with them (p. 248). Statements about liking watching certain

shows were along the lines of "to see people from my ethnic background in situations similar to

mine" (p. 248). On the other hand, sentences such as "because it perpetuates stereotypes of my

ethnic group" were part of the reasons why the participants did not enjoy watching certain

television shows (p. 249). The results of the study point out to the fact that "the level of ethnic

identity predicts both selection and avoidance of television" (p. 250). The presence of Spanish-

language media in the United States is significant due to the growth of the Hispanic population in

this country, thus, transforming the media into a vital element in the cross-cultural adaptation experience.

The Case of Hispanics' Cross-Cultural Adaptation in American Small Cities

The literature on cross-cultural adaptation is extensive and covers the case of immigration in various scenarios that involve a number of different ethnicities. There is a multiplicity of variables involved in the process of crossing cultural boundaries, such as who is moving to a new environment and what the motivation is for doing so (Kim, 2001, p. 5). The mixture of all these elements makes the investigation of this experience an ongoing procedure. Kim (2001) listed a series of broad questions that guide this study such as, "How do individuals adapt to a new and unfamiliar culture?" "Why are certain individuals more successful than others in moving along the adaptive trajectory?" And last, "How do individuals change as they undergo a prolonged cross-cultural adaptation process?" (p. 10).

Generally speaking, analyzing the journey an individual goes through when crossing cultural boundaries has been a significant subject for a while due to how many people from different nations have been penetrating into host environments. Three decades ago, scholars were already acknowledging the fact that cultural pluralism could no longer be ignored (Smith & Luce, 1979), interculturalism is a subject of vital importance in a globalized world and has consequently grown in the field of communication.

Padilla and Perez (2003) also argued that after years of research in intercultural communication, specifically in acculturation, the models have limited value because they are strongly based on: "(a) a static view of intergroup relations that does not address important concerns related to the motivation to acculturate; (b) a belief that acculturation is more or less a uniform process across all newcomer groups regardless of race, culture, or social status; and (c) a

methodology that is limited to its reliance on self-reported language use preferences,

entertainment practices, and friendship patterns" (p. 50). Padilla and Perez (2003) believe that,

because people are constantly changing, there is a need for a more flexible and complex model to

describe how individuals go about in bridging the gap from one culture to another.

Recent literature on the topic has also gone beyond the principle of cultural identity.

Scholars have elaborated the concept of an intercultural identity (Kim, 2008). Kim argued that

after an extended period of time living in a host environment, a stranger will undergo "a gradual

process of intercultural evolution" (p. 359). As a result, an intercultural personhood will emerge

– this new paradigm is characterized by individualization and universalization (p. 359).

New research has raised more questions about cross-cultural adaptation; however, the

new dynamics of immigration patterns affect how immigrants infiltrate host societies. Marrow

(2008), for example, investigated how Hispanics have been migrating to small cities in the

southern region of the United States and identified differences in how they interact with Black

Americans and White Americans. In a span of a year, the researcher conducted 129 semi-

structured interviews with Hispanic and African-American individuals residing in two counties

in North Carolina. Marrow (2008) concluded that she foresees a challenging scenario for black-

Hispanic socioeconomic conflict in rural areas that have become the new destinations (p. 238).

Also, Marrow (2008) said that African-Americans have started feeling their social standing

threatened by the arrival of immigrants (p. 238).

Little research has been conducted on how the process of cultural adaptation among

Hispanics happens in the small city context in the United States. As previously mentioned, the

Latino culture is predominantly present in large cities where acculturation can be avoided due to

the fact that the size of immigrant populations in those areas allows them to maintain their

customs and even speak their native language. However, in small cities, American culture is

firmly grounded, and there are not very many venues through which Hispanics can preserve their

own culture.

As a result, this is a field that has to be explored more deeply. It is predicted in this study

that Hispanics will face numerous challenges that they would not encounter in larger cities:

language barriers, new customs, different rules in interpersonal relationships, more apparent

discrimination and others. Through the lens of Kim's five axioms of cross-cultural adaptation,

this study investigated the process of crossing cultures in the lives of Hispanic immigrants in

small cities in the Unites States, and analyzed how their identities have incorporated different

elements as a result. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to trace how Hispanic sojourners are

adapting to living in several parts of the country that are not traditional destinations, and going

about to advance their American *sueño* (Spanish word for "dream").

The next chapter outlines in detail the methodology employed in this study.

<center>C h a p t e r 3</center>

<center>**Methodology**</center>

The main subjects of the preceding literature review, the process of cross-cultural adaptation and the shaping of one's cultural identity, is believed to be intrinsically involved in the lives of immigrants as they interact in a new environment. American history and society have been impacted by the millions of immigrants during the last decades of the twentieth century (Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind, 1999). The topic remains pertinent and "the magnitude and character of recent immigration to the United States … continue to surprise policymakers and many experts" (Hirschman & Massey, 2008, p. 1). Kim (2001) acknowledged that one of the main motives for immigration is the "hope of social and economic betterment" (p. 3). In the case of the United States, there is the notion that "almost any person can 'make it in America'" (Hirschman et al., 1999, p. 1). The fulfillment of the American dream has fueled immigration to this country, which consequently has produced a society characterized by a multiplicity of cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Among the several ethnicities residing in this country, the Latino population has become a phenomenon of extraordinary proportions: from 1990 to 2000, there was a 58 percent increase of Hispanics living in America (Suárez-Orosco & Páez, 2002). Smokowski and Bacallao (2011) emphasized that a large portion of the Latino population in the United States is still adapting to life in the new environment due to the fact that the majority of them are foreign-born and have come to since 1990. As a result, the investigation of how this ethnicity has adapted to living in a host country is a prolific field of study for those interested in interculturality.

This paper examined the process that Hispanic immigrants undergo when they move to American small towns in light of Young Yun Kim's five axioms of cross-cultural adaptation

theory. In addition, there are three main assumptions that are part of the theory and provide a good outline of its core concept. Kim (2001) established that: "(1) humans have an innate self-organizing drive and a capacity to adapt to environment challenges; (2) adaptation of an individual to a given cultural environment occurs in and through communication; (3) adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that brings a qualitative transformation of the individual" (pp. 35-7). Not only will strangers adapt to the host environment, but the environment will also eventually be shaped by them. As evident in contemporary research in communication studies as well as other fields such as sociology and psychology, the presence of the Hispanic population in the United States has brought changes to both cultures. This minority has been exerting influence in the political, economic, and social arenas in the United States (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011). Again, this topic cannot be overlooked as a crucial element to be factored in the social process of the American society.

In larger cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Houston, the Hispanic culture has become prominent due to the large number of Latinos in these areas. Consequently, the Hispanic culture has developed in those hubs, forming a subculture inside the American society. In those locations, Latinos may not feel a strong need for acculturating, since they can enjoy numerous elements of their home culture such as food, music, and even the media. On the other hand, Hispanic immigrants that move to small cities may face cultural challenges due to the weak or non-present Latino culture. It is important to point out that there has been a shift in the patterns of Hispanic immigration in the United States, with half of the Hispanic population living outside of the traditional gateways states (Johnson & Lichter, 2008). Latinos have been relocating into smaller metropolitan cities (Singer, 2004) and other small towns in the Midwest and South of the Unites States (Lichter & Johnson, 2006).

Research Questions

In face of the phenomenon of the Hispanic immigration in the United States, and the recent shift of this population from large American cities to smaller ones, this study has identified the elements that comprise the process through which Latin immigrants undergo in adapting to the host environment in small cities in the country, including some of the difficulties that they encounter. Another goal of this research was to identify acculturation strategies that Hispanic immigrants utilize in order to engage in host smaller communities and acquire an intercultural identity.

The guiding research questions for this study were the following:

RQ 1) What are the difficulties that Hispanics encounter who migrate to small cities in the United States?

RQ 2) What are the mechanisms (media usage, language acquisition, habits, life style etc.) utilized by them in order to adapt to the new environment?

It is important to notice that the researcher did not design hypotheses for testing. Instead, the investigator chose to use research questions because the main objective of the project was to discover elements about the topic that can contribute to the knowledge on the field. A mixed-methods approach was also selected, which allowed the researcher to combine information obtained from both structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Following is the rationale behind the employment of this methodology.

Overview of the Research Method

Felipe Korzenny, Betty Korzenny and Griffis Korzenny (1984) affirmed that "there are *no* [established] cross-cultural or intercultural communication research methods" (p. 92). The scholars went further to say that it is impossible to construct the ideal study in intercultural

communication and suggested that "communication questions have need of diverse tools for reaching their answers" (p.92). Furthermore, in studying human behavior, it is adequate to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to have a more inclusive perspective of a particular phenomenon, which would be limited with the use of either of those alone (Leedy & Ormrod, 2009, p. 97). In face of this predicament, a mixed methods approach was the best fit for the type of findings the investigator of this present study wanted to attain.

Mixed methods research consists of a research design that utilizes data collected from both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to analyze complimentarily phenomena for a single study or a series of studies (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Jick, 1979). In explaining mixed methods, scholars argued that only one kind of data collection cannot provide sufficient information that "capture the trends and details of a situation" (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006, p. 3). Campbell and Fiske (1959) argued that multiple methods should be applied in a study in order to validate the results and lessen the impact that the type of methodology utilized may have in the results drawn from data (p. 81). Bouchard (1976) also advocated for the employment of more than one methodology in a study in order to minimize weaknesses and "enhance[s] our belief that the results are valid and not a methodological artifact" (p. 268). Another term given to the employment of more than one methodology to data collection is triangulation. This term refers back to principles of geometry that apply multiple viewpoints in order to achieve greater accuracy. In the field of communication studies, researchers can also generate more accurate judgment if analyzing information collected from more than one kind of data (Jick, 1979, p. 602).

Employing both qualitative and quantitative data in this present study allowed the researcher to gather rich and descriptive information as well as a large amount of responses that

added to the numeric significance of the data. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007)

analyzed how several prominent scholars have defined mixed-methods, and they have identified

three main characteristics of this research design: it provides better understanding, a fuller

picture and deeper understanding, and an enhanced description and understanding of phenomena

(p. 122). There are various ways of applying mixed-methods to research. While some

investigators may use qualitative data as a source in order to generate other research tools such as

questionnaires, others may choose to do the opposite, so qualitative data can be used to validate

and/or expand on findings from the quantitative data. Both data can be collected simultaneously

and be evaluated together at the analysis stage – in this situation, quantitative and qualitative data

can shed light into the understanding of each other's results (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner,

2007, p. 115; Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 7).

The rationale for using both qualitative and quantitative designs is that neither method

alone can provide sufficient information. Therefore, the researcher of this present study believed

that drawing connections between common themes present in interviews and statistical

information from surveys can complement each other and add strength and value to the results. It

is important to point out that data collected with both methods cannot provide finite results

because this study's topic is essentially in flux and changing as people change and culturally

evolve. This chapter continues on to detail the research instruments, the participants, and the

process of data collection and analysis of the data.

Research Instruments

Questionnaires. The quantitative data for this study were collected through a two-page

questionnaire. In order to ensure that participants understood the purpose of the study and that

their participation was completely voluntary, the researcher included a paragraph at the top of the

questionnaire with instructions and contact information in case any respondent saw the need to

get in touch with the individuals responsible for the study. The rest of the questionnaire consisted

of three sections. The first part asked participants about demographic information: age, gender,

country of origin, age the respondent moved to the United States, whether the respondent had

resided in other places in the United States prior to the area in which the study was conducted,

and if so, the respondent was asked to specify the places. This section of the questionnaire was

crucial, since that kind of information had potential to affect the responses given in the rest of the

survey. Learning the country of origin was also important because every Latin American country

has its own unique culture (Jose Calderon, 1992). It is important to point out that even if this a

study has focused on the general Spanish-speaking Latin population, nationality can affect

results, which potentially can generate material for future research.

Next, there was a set of 17 statements to which participants had to respond using a 5-

point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The researcher created

all the statements which focused on proficiency in the English language (listening, speaking,

reading, and writing), social interaction and communication, and cultural aspects, such as the

degree to which the media played a role in the process of learning about the new culture. Two

examples of the items were: "I enjoy friendships with Americans that are not Hispanic/Latinos,"

and "I wish there were more elements of my culture in this city."

The third and final part of the questionnaire was a set of six short-answer questions that

gave respondents the opportunity to expand on the ideas that were part of the previous section.

The purpose of the open-ended questions was to detain a wider range of responses, without

giving participants options from which to choose or limiting their participation to a structured

scale. Two examples of the questions were: "Where do you interact mostly with Americans who

are not Hispanic/Latino?" and "How well do you think you have adapted to living in this city?"

This type of data is qualitative in nature and allowed the researcher to have an idea of

respondents' experience in the host environment. Being able to attain a large amount of short-

answer responses through the questionnaires gave the researcher more comprehensive material to

analyze.

At the end of the set of short-answer questions, there was a statement telling the

respondent that the researcher was going to invite him or her for an interview upon handing in

the questionnaire. That was the means through which individuals were recruited for interviews.

Once again, in order to ensure that the participants volunteered, the researcher gave a consent

form to those that agreed to be interviewed, so they could take some time, read over it, and make

an informed decision about whether to participate. More details about the process of recruiting

participants will be given further in the text.

Interviews. Interviews are an effective tool of gaining insight on people's experiences,

ideas, opinions and views. Miller and Crabtree (2004) described interviews as "a dance of

intimacy and distancing that creates a dramatic space where the interview partners disclose their

inner thoughts and feelings and the interviewer knowingly hears and facilitates the story and

recognizes, repairs, and clarifies any apparent communication missteps" (p. 196). This metaphor

of a dance captured the essence of interviews and demonstrates why this method of data

collection fits well in studies that propose to analyze complex phenomena such as human

behavior and social interactions.

In conjunction with the quantitative data, the researcher of this present study gathered

qualitative data through interviews with participants that had previously filled out a

questionnaire. It is important to emphasize that interviewees were recruited after each of them

had participated in the collection of quantitative data. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. If a person that had filled out a survey and had agreed to be interviewed, the interview would be conducted as soon as it had been scheduled and consent had been granted. The researcher designed the questionnaire prior to generating interview questions; because the latter were based on what kind of information the researcher had predicted in-depth responses could produce more material for the study. There were eight open-ended questions by which the researcher directed the interview. Two examples of the questions were: "Explain how comfortable you feel communicating with people in this area that are not Hispanic?" and "What are some of the things that you miss from your country?" Depending on the interviewee and his or her answer, the researcher was able to follow up on some responses, formulate new questions, and ask for clarification and/or elaboration.

The location and time for the interviews were established cooperatively between interviewees and the researcher. All the interviews were conducted individually, only the interviewee and interviewer were present, and at a place where the participant felt comfortable (their own homes and/or the church that they attend). In order for the investigator to have a way to refer back to the interviews, all of them were audio-recorded. For this reason, there was no way to keep anonymity of the participants, but the researcher guaranteed confidentiality, which was clearly stated in the consent form that had to be signed by both parties. Participants were assigned numbers by which they were identified in the results section of this study – the first interviewee, for example, will be referred to as Participant 1 (P1) and so forth, up to 10. Finally, each interview was transcribed by the researcher for further analysis.

Language. In order to accommodate all the participants and the diverse level of linguistic proficiency, the questionnaire (quantitative instrument) as well as the consent form for the

interview were translated into Spanish, and participants could choose to have the interview (qualitative instrument) done in Spanish as well. Maneesriwongul and Dixon (2004) emphasized the need for quality translation and validation of the translated research instruments in the acquisition of results in cross-cultural studies, so the outcome is "due to real differences or similarities between cultures in the phenomena being measured" (p.175) and not to errors of translation. Therefore, the researcher went through a structured process of translation that counted with the support of two bilingual research assistants. Due to the researcher's high proficiency in Spanish, she produced the first translation of both instruments. Subsequently, the research assistants individually reviewed the translations, and provided their feedback (corrections and suggestions). The next stage was to gather all the material and finalize the translations. The two research assistants then were asked to compare the Spanish versions with the English ones in order to ensure that both versions contained the same meaning – the translations were not literal; they were sensitive to language differences.

As previously mentioned, the interviews, whether they were conducted in English or Spanish, were transcribed by the researcher in order to make the identification of common themes a feasible procedure. Although it was time-consuming, the researcher chose to transcribe the interviews in their entireties, because, as Seidman (2006) explained, it is important to initiate the process of analysis of the material as a whole, and from there start to identify common themes, so no material gets lost (which is more likely to happen if parts of an interview is pre-selected prior to transcription) (p. 115). Another step taken to ensure accuracy in the transcriptions was having one of the translation research assistants review the interviews that were conducted in Spanish. The transcriptions of the interviews which were done in English were also reviewed by the researcher. The interviews in Spanish were not translated into English,

since the researcher possesses a high degree of proficiency in the both languages and is apt to conduct a thorough analysis of the material in either language.

Participants

There were several criteria potential participants had to meet in order to be eligible to be a part of this study. First, participants had to be born in a Latin American Spanish-speaking country, and be at least 18 years of age at the time of the study. Secondly, participants were supposed to have immigrated to the United States with at least 12 years of age. The rationale for this criterion is that the 12 first years of a child's life are formative years. School age immigrant children, from age 6 to 12, are reported to encounter conflict as their identities are formed with the influence of both parents and teachers. In a study done among foreign-born college students in the United States, Milstein and Lucić (2004) concluded that school-age immigrant children have their identity formed during that period. As they learn from their parents "the enculturative message of their homeland", and from their teachers, "the acculturative message of the receiving society" (p. 28), children up to the age of 12 acquire an identity formed by elements of both cultures. This process is not what this study aimed at analyzing. This study focused on immigrants that had already gone through those formative years, had had already formed their cultural identity, and were only then entering a host environment.

Last, participants could not be college students. This study was conducted in an area in which there are several colleges and a university. At the same time that international students undergo a cross-cultural experience, the circumstances in which they live are different from the ones from foreigners that came here without the primary purpose of pursuing an education. At a college campus, international students receive assistance from staff members, professors and even colleagues as they adapt to living in a new country. To a certain extent, there is an

excitement and prospective from the hosts to get to know foreign students and welcome them. Due to these conditions, foreign-born students from a Spanish-speaking Latin American country were not part of this study.

The researcher recruited participants in a mid-Atlantic small city, and its surrounding areas. The number of participants for the quantitative data was established proportionately according to the information found in the website of the U.S. Census Bureau (at the time this study was conducted, the latest census information had been released in 2000) of the number of people living in that area who reported to be Hispanic. The total population of the area was of around 70,000 people, with 1.3% (around 900) people of Latin origin. The researcher believed that sampling 100 people was a reasonable number in order to attain a better understanding of their experience as sojourners. Out of those 100 participants, the researcher recruited 10 to be interviewed for the qualitative data.

The primary strategy used to gather the sample was to recruit at Hispanic churches. The researcher met with the individuals responsible for the congregations, explained the purpose of the study, and asked permission to invite church attendees to take part of the study. Upon authorization, the researcher came at the end of church services to invite potential participants. Paper questionnaires were distributed to those that met the criteria and agreed to get involved. As respondents returned their questionnaires, the researcher explained that they could contribute more to the study in doing an interview. If they agreed to be interviewed, they received a consent form with all the information necessary to make an informed decision. They took the form home, so they had enough time to read, understand, and thus felt no pressure about agreeing to do the interview. The researcher would then contact them via phone and/or e-mail to follow up on their decision, and then set a time and location to conduct the interview. The potential interviewees'

contact information was also voluntarily provided to the researcher by the participants themselves.

Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to collect 100 questionnaires from members of the Hispanic churches. Therefore, another strategy the researcher had to resort to was network sampling, better known as snowballing. This method was appropriate because people that meet the criteria for the study are usually aware of other individuals that qualify, and thus can direct the researchers to other potential participants (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 64). The researcher also went to a few restaurants of Hispanic cuisine in the area in order to find participants, because those businesses typically employ people of Hispanic origin.

A total of 62 of participants voluntarily filled out the questionnaire; however, only 42 questionnaires were completed appropriately, and thus were suitable for analysis. The researcher was able to conduct 10 interviews from the sample that did the questionnaire – the researcher met the goal of interviews set forth for the qualitative data. In spite the fact that there were not 100 participants for the quantitative data, the number of individuals to take part in the study was sufficient for the researcher to arrive at important conclusions and observations about the cross-cultural adaptation of Hispanic immigrants in small cities in the United States. The process of recruiting participants occurred during the period of December of 2011 through February of 2012.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to engaging any person in this study, the researcher received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university where this study was completed. The IRB is responsible to hold researchers accountable for their projects as well as to ensure participants that there are minimum risks in participating in studies. For this present study, the investigator

presented to the IRB a detailed research proposal that explained how participants would be

recruited, how they would remain anonymous in the quantitative data, and those that chose to be

interviewed would have their information kept confidential. The IRB also ensured that risks with

this study were minimal. Voluntariness was a main ethical concern of the researcher, who

executed this study with respect to each participant, insuring that every one of them had all the

information necessary to make an informed choice.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data. Once all the questionnaires were collected, the data was entered into

the computer in order to be quantified. In order to generate percentages that would help with the

interpretation of the results, the data was uploaded to the software SPSS (*Statistical Package for

the Behavioral Sciences*). Then, the researcher compiled a table with the percentages to each

item of the scale. Other percentages of country of origin, age, and gender were also noted.

Qualitative Data. Qualitative data was collected in the questionnaires through short-

answer questions, and through the interviews. For the section of the six short-answers questions

on the questionnaires, the researcher read through the responses three times in order to absorb a

good amount of information. First, the researcher read through them in order to attain a general

idea of the responses. In the second read, she took notes and started making connections. In the

last read-through, the researcher highlighted common themes among the responses.

All of the interview transcriptions were printed. The researcher then read through them

three times. In the first time, the researcher wanted to attain a general and comprehensive

understanding of the responses. In the second time reading the material, the researcher took

notes, highlighted revealing quotes, and compared certain parts of participants' interviews to

each other. In the third stage of the analysis, the researcher identified common themes and created categories in order to group the answers.

   After both the quantitative and qualitative data was organized and analyzed separately, the researcher read through all of it in order to establish connections and identify common themes. As previously discussed, combining both kinds of data allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of cross-cultural adaptation of Spanish-speaking Hispanics in small cities in the United States. The researcher was able to gather numeric data that allowed for an understanding of the bigger picture of the phenomena, as well as gather in-depth information that allowed for an understanding of the reasons for their responses in the questionnaires. With the analysis of the data, the researcher was able then to move on to draw connections between that and Kim's five axioms of cross-cultural adaptation theory and the concept of intercultural identity.

   The next chapter presents the results of this study.

Chapter 4

Results

The research instruments yielded three types of data. This study contained a total of 62 participants. Out of these 62, two questionnaires had to be discarded because participants did not provide their age at arrival in the United States. Forty-two individuals correctly completed the quantitative part (Likert scale questionnaire). Three did not fully fill it out, and 15 filled it out incorrectly. The questionnaire also contained short-answer questions (qualitative data). Fifty participants fully responded to the short-answer questions, and so were used for analysis. The other 10 had to be thrown out because they were not fully completed. From the sample that responded the questionnaire, 10 individuals agreed to be interviewed. The results of this data will also be presented in this section of the paper. In this chapter, each type of data will be presented individually and in detail, as well as the demographics of the sample that was considered for each type of data.

Quantitative Data

As a brief review, this section consisted of 17 statements that were supposed to be evaluated according to a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Of the total sample of 60 participants, 42 people responded to this part of the questionnaire correctly, which was the actual data that was analyzed. Three questionnaires had to be discarded because the respondents did not complete one of the statements, while 15 participants answered incorrectly and were also eliminated.

The participants ranged in ages from 19-51, with 29 years old the age that comprised the largest number of respondents (N=6, 14.3%). Interestingly, the sample for this kind of data was divided evenly between female (21 participants) and male (21 participants). The majority of the

individuals (N=7, 16.7%) arrived in the United States at age 18. There was one participant that

immigrated at age 14, the youngest age reported, while the oldest age of immigration was 45.

The majority (N=18, 42.9%) of respondents were from Mexico. It is noteworthy to point out that

this number may be a reflection of the latest data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) as

of March of 2010. According to the Census, the largest ethnicity within the scope of Latin

immigration to the United States is Mexican with more than 32 million sojourners.

The second largest group of respondents was from Honduras (N=6, 14.3%). Both Puerto

Ricans and Colombians each made up 9.5% (N=4) of the total number of participants, followed

by Peruvians (N=3, 7.1%), Bolivians (N=2, 4.8%), and Guatemaltecas (N=2, 4.8%). El

Salvador, Argentina, and Venezuela each had only one representative. Of the total sample, 19

reported that the city in which the study was conducted was the first place they moved to since

their arrival in the country. The other 23 said that they lived in other locations across the nation –

examples of the places they had lived were California, Texas, Florida, etc.

Table 1 shows the results of the 17-statement Likert scale.

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Agree Somewhat (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I can generally understand everything I hear in English.	N=3, 7.1%	N=5, 11.9%	N=1, 2.4%	N=19, 45.2	N=14, 33.3%
I am fluent at speaking English.	N=4, 9.5%	N=5, 11.9%	N=5, 11.9%	N= 15, 35.7%	N=13, 31%
I can read English very well.	N=3, 7.1%	N= 5, 11.9%	N= 5, 11.9%	N= 15, 35.7%	N=14, 33.3%
I can write English very well.	N=6, 14.3%	N=6, 14.3%	N=10, 23.8%	N=11, 26.2%	N= 9, 21.4%
I enjoy friendships with Americans that are not Hispanic/Latino.	N=3, 7.1%	N=1, 2.4%	N=1, 2.4%	N=10, 23.8%	N=27, 64.3%

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Agree Somewhat (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I prefer making friends with people within my culture.	N=11, 26.2%	N=5, 11.9%	N=12, 28.6%	N=9, 21.4%	N=5, 11.9%
I feel comfortable with the culture in this city. I feel like I belong.	N=1, 2.4%	N=4, 9.5%	N=4, 9.5%	N=22, 52.4%	N=11, 26.2%
I often have a hard time understanding what Americans in this city mean when they speak.	N=6, 14.3%	N=12, 28.6%	N=11, 26.2%	N=9, 21.4%	N=4, 9.5%
It is difficult for me to be a part of groups that consist mostly of Americans in this city.	N=5, 11.9%	N=12, 28.6%	N=9, 21.4%	N=13, 31%	N=3, 7.1%
I believe there is discrimination against Hispanics in the city I reside.	N=10, 23.8%	N=9, 21.9%	N=9, 21.9%	N=11, 26.2%	N=3, 7.1%
I think it is important to have good friend-ships with Americans who are not Hispanic/ Latino.	N=3, 7.1%	N=1, 2.4%	N=2, 4.8%	N=13, 31%	N=23, 54.8%
I wish there were more elements of my culture in this city.	N=2, 4.8%	N=3, 7.1%	N=8, 19%	N=11, 26.2%	N=18, 42.9%
I prefer print media (newspaper, magazines, books) to be in Spanish rather than English.	N=4, 9.5%	N=6, 14.3%	N=12, 28.6%	N=9, 21.4%	N=11, 26.2%
I prefer audio-visual media (television, movies, music) to be in Spanish rather than English.	N=5, 11.9%	N=7, 16.7%	N=16, 38.1%	N=9, 21.4%	N=5, 11.9%
I have learned a lot about the U.S. through print media in English	N=5, 11.9%	N=3, 7.1%	N=6, 14.3%	N=13, 31%	N=15, 35.7%

(newspaper, magazines,
books).

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Agree Somewhat (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I have learned a lot about the U.S. through audio-visual media in English (television, movies, music).	N=3, 7.1%	N=2, 4.8%	N=4, 9.5%	N=14, 33.3%	N=19, 45.2%
I have learned a lot about the U.S. through interacting with Americans who are not Hispanic/ Latino.	N=1, 2.4%	N=7, 16.7%	N=5, 11.9%	N=13, 31%	N=16, 38.1%

Overall, the participants judged their skills of the English language fairly high, whether in listening, speaking, reading or writing. These four statements had the goal of identifying to what degree language was a difficulty for the participants. Next, the researcher prepared statements that focused at finding out whether interpersonal interaction with people of the host environment affected their adaptation and perhaps posed a challenge. The respondents seemed to be open to interactions, but some demonstrated to find it hard to engage with Americans in the area who do not share their same background.

The researcher strategically blended the different categories of statements so similar kinds of statements would not come consecutively. The purpose of the arrangement was to maximize the quality of responses – if similar statements are put together, it is more likely that participants enter the same response without giving it much thought. Therefore, in the midst of statements about social interaction, the researcher included statements about cultural identity and sense of belonging. To those, participants seemed to be comfortable with living in the city in which the study was conducted, but the majority showed interest in having more elements of their culture in the area.

The last category of statements focused on media usage. The participants seemed to be more neutral in regard to their preference of consuming media in either language (Spanish or English). However, the majority indicated that they had learned a lot about the host culture through both print and audio-visual media. These results will be analyzed in more depth and as they relate to the research questions of this study in the Discussion section. Next, the results of the short answer questions are reported.

Qualitative Data

Short-Answer Responses. Out of the 60 questionnaires that were collected, 50 questionnaires were completed properly, thus suitable for analysis. Ten questionnaires were discarded for this type of data because they were returned incomplete. For this portion of the data, the sample consisted of 30 males (60%) and 20 females (40%). The ages widely ranged from 19-48. The majority (N=6, 12%) was 29 years old. The rest of the demographic information (age of immigration, country of origin and places where the participants have resided prior to moving to the city in which the study was conducted) was similar to the sample previously described in the quantitative data, since both samples were mostly comprised of the same people. The researcher read through the answers and took notes and assembled the answers into categories in order to identify common responses and themes. Following are the results to each of the 6 questions.

1) *What are some of the difficulties you face when interacting with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino? Where do you interact mostly with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino?*

The most prevalent theme throughout the answers was the language barrier. Several participants said that they did not know the language when they arrived in this city, while others said that even knowing the language, they still had difficulties expressing themselves effectively.

The other theme that emerged was the differences in culture and habits between them and non-Hispanic Americans. An example given by the participants was that Americans seem to be more direct in the way they talk and interact, which is the opposite from Latin culture. Additionally, a few participants said that they do not feel welcome.

2) *Where do you interact mostly with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino? (Workplace, church, school, neighborhood, etc.)*

For this question, the majority of the respondents said that they mostly interacted with Americans that are not Latin in the workplace. The church and the neighborhood were other popular responses. It is noteworthy that a few of them answered that they interacted mostly with non-Hispanics when they were with their spouses and families, due to the fact that they were married to non-American persons.

3) *How well do you think you have adapted to living in this city?*

The participants can be divided in two major groups: the ones that feel they have had a good adaptation process, and thus feel comfortable in the host city, and the ones that feel like they have not adapted well. The individuals that claimed to be well adapted said that they consider the people from the community to be loving and friendly. They also mentioned being a part of groups such as church ministries have aided in the process of entering the new culture and adapting to the new lifestyle.

4) *What were some difficult things you experienced when you first moved to this city?*

Again, the most mentioned element was language barrier (not being able to understand the written or spoken word, and not being able to carry on a conversation). Common responses were also difficulties of finding transportation and jobs, and different foods and habits.

5) *Do you have favorite English language American television shows, magazines, books, movies, music, etc.? If yes, which ones?*

The vast majority said they enjoyed media in English, and even added that media have helped them learn more about the language and the new culture. The responses varied widely for this question. The examples they gave were categorized into television drama (i.e. *Grey's Anatomy*, *Modern Family*, *Criminal Minds*), educational television shows (PBS, Discovery Channel, National Geographic), television news, movies, and music (Christian and secular music were mentioned).

6) *What are some of the things that you did and/or do in order to adapt to living in this city?*

Two themes emerged from this question: adaptation came from studying and learning the language, and forming relationships with people in the community (whether they were locals or outsiders as well). Playing sports was another way a few participants said was a venue for them to get to know people, and get more settled and adapted in the new city.

Interviews. In order to acquire more in-depth information, qualitative data collected through interviews was the third type of data in this study. In review, the researcher randomly recruited 10 volunteers that had previously filled out the questionnaire to participate in the interview. Every volunteer that participated in the survey portion of the study was invited to do an interview. The researcher's goal was to be able to interview the first 10 individuals that agreed upon it. In total, five females and five males volunteered. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and then read through three times. From this material, the researcher was able to identify common themes.

1) *What are some of the difficulties you encounter in living in this city?*

Six participants mentioned the language was the biggest difficulty they encountered. They shared how fearful they were in being engaged in a conversation by an English-speaker, because they could not even say that they could not speak English. P4 said that he felt the difficulty of not knowing the language when he moved from Texas, an area in a large Hispanic population, to the city of mid-Atlantic region, "We were coming from Texas, and in Texas people speak more Spanish than [here]." P1 and P2 said that even after living in the United States for more than five years now, they still feel hesitant about entering an English conversation in fear that they will not be able to express themselves clearly. P1, for example, said that he had never had formal English classes. P1 learned everything he knows so far through interactions at the workplace, and said that, on a scale from one to ten, he believed his skills were at seven.

Another common theme was that transportation was difficult because they came from places in which they had easier access to public transportation. P5 explained that he had to make a few changes to his lifestyle in order to accommodate better to the dynamics of the new environment. P7 mentioned that she faced certain difficulties in regard to lifestyle changes, "About other difficulties … any that you encounter when you go to a new place, you're starting over."

2) *Explain how comfortable you feel communicating with people in this area (who are not Hispanic/Latino)?*

Again, the fear of not being able to communicate effectively in the foreign language was a prevalent theme. However, interviewees mentioned that as time went by, they started feeling more comfortable and confident in conversing with English-speakers. Also, P10 said that now, 10 years later, the host community in the city became more open to the Hispanic population,

which helped them feel more comfortable with living here overall. Additionally, participants said that they believe that because a lot of people that reside in the area are Christian, they are more inclined to reach out to others and welcome them, in spite of communication hindrances such as language and cultural differences.

3) *Describe the process of getting acquainted with your new life in this city?*

The responses for this questions revealed that most of the participants adopted an open-mind posture toward learning the ways of the host culture. Participants 4, 6, 7 and 10 stressed the point that it was their responsibility to get involved in the community and learn the culture in order to thrive and make their own contributions as well. Another point mentioned by three participants was that they tried to model after others, whether sojourners that had been in the new environment longer than them or host individuals. Participants also talked about the differences and similarities in weather and landscape from their hometowns and the new place. P4 said that his hometown is alike to where he lives now, and that helped him adapt faster and enjoy the new location more. On the contrary, P10 said that her hometown was much larger and had different climates than the host city. As a result, she said it was more difficult to get used to the new dynamics.

4) *What do you do that helps your adaptation to this new environment? What has helped you this far?*

Two major themes emerged from the responses: being a part of a Hispanic group and thus receiving support (both socially and economically), and reaching out to other people that were not Hispanic in order to befriend people from the host culture. P6 said that things that helped her get more acquainted with the new environment were to branch outside of her circle of friends, which, at first, was mostly made of Hispanic people, and to get together with people

from the host culture and do things that they enjoyed such as hanging out in coffee shops or

going to farmer's markets on a Saturday morning. P8 also said that by living in a neighborhood

with mostly non-Hispanic Americans helped her and her family to interact with host individuals

as well as learn more about the elements of the culture.

5) *What Spanish media do you consume? How satisfied are you with the media in English?*
Explain.

In this question, the researcher focused on understanding to what degree Hispanic

immigrants were attached to their own culture through the media, and the impact, if any, the

media of the host culture played in the process of adaptation. Here, media could be any venue:

books, magazines, newspapers, the web, television, movies, music, radio, etc. The common

themes that were identified were: preference for print media in Spanish (several of the

participants said that that helped them to keep up with what was happening in their home

countries), preference for visual media in English (the reasons varied from their perspective that

American television had more family oriented programming to their willingness to learn about

the language, social norms, and news about the United States).

Last, three of the males said that they did not mind media in English, but the only thing

that had to be in Spanish for them was soccer. They talked about how it made a difference to

listen to a match that was not broadcasted in Spanish. These interviewees explained how

passionate they were about the sport, and how the television broadcast had to match that same

enthusiasm. It was interesting to notice that their response was a strong reflection of how soccer

is so intrinsically intertwined in the Latin American social process and is a signature of the

culture and of the Latin identity. As Galeano (2003) argued, "Few things happen in Latin

America that do not have some direct or indirect relation with soccer" (p. 219).

6) *Do you think Hispanics tend to stay together, or have they been infiltrating more in the host environment here in this city?*

Two major themes also emerged in this question: there is a type of Hispanic sojourner who seeks other Hispanics, and another type that seeks friendships both within Hispanic groups and other groups (members of the host culture, sojourners from other countries etc.). All of the participants said that Hispanics seek to be with others that share their same background. Speaking the same language, similar foods and habits were the three reasons participants mentioned as to what contributes to this tendency. Second, participant 5 and 10 talked about Latin immigrants that not only enjoy friendships with Hispanics, but also have a natural ability to befriend non-Hispanic Americans. Other participants (1, 2, 4, and 10) emphasized the need for Hispanic immigrants to branch out and be a part of the host culture, in spite of a stronger inclination toward sticking together with people with similar cultural characteristics. P2 said, "We live here, this is their land. So, if we want that this land becomes our home too, we have to socialize [with Americans]."

Finally, P6 made a comment, which was not a major theme, but touched an interesting aspect about Hispanic immigrants' experiences. In talking about Hispanic Americans, those born in the United States from foreign-born parents, and their succeeding generations, she said, "The Hispanic people who are from, you know, here, they were raised here, they don't care about that [being friends with Hispanic people]. They are more Americanized." This comment somewhat captured a crucial element of the cross-cultural experience: cross-cultural adaptation occurs when a stranger enters a host environment, whereas those with a foreign ethnicity (first and succeeding generations) are already part of the culture they were born and raised in, even if their background says otherwise. Hence, the dilemma is what element is stronger in people's

perception of their culture: their background and ethnicity or the place where they were born and

raised?

7) *What are some of the things you miss from your home country?*

The majority of participants mentioned food and family. They said that even if you can

find ingredients to their countries' food in the area they live at, it does not taste the same.

Participant 9 mentioned that when she used to live in a larger city (Atlanta, Georgia), she was

able to find restaurants that prepared foods from her country. However, when she moved to a

smaller city, she could not find similar restaurants. Missing the family was the second common

response, which was expected since the Latin culture is very family oriented, and most of those

sojourners are in the United States by themselves or have only their immediate families.

Nonetheless, Participants 5, 8 and 10 said that even though they missed aspects of their

home countries, they enjoyed several elements of the host culture and felt at home, which helped

cope with being far from family and friends. Also, those participants who have lived in the host

environment for at least 10 years said that as time went by, they seemed to let go of certain

cultural habits and norms they had brought with them. In fact, Participants 8 and 10 shared about

their difficulty of feeling a sense of belonging to a specific culture. They said that at the same

time that they felt adapted in the host country, they know they are not from there, and when they

go back to their home countries for a visit, they feel like they do not fully belong either.

However, in spite of this confusion, they said that they enjoyed where they currently live and

who they have become.

8) *Is there anything you would like to add about your experience here in this city?*

The researcher asked this final question in order to allow participants to add anything

they thought necessary. Most of them said that they did not have anything to add. P8 did not add

anything new to what she had already said, but wanted to emphasize one point, "I think

anywhere you go, you need to push yourself to become a part of the culture, and be open to try

different things. Because if you're not doing that and you close yourself up – this is the way I do

it, and there is no other way to do it – you are not going to be able to adapt anywhere in whatever

you do."

Discussion

      With the information gathered from the three kinds of data described above, the

researcher was able to arrive at conclusions that can provide insight into the two guiding research

questions of this study. In order to assess the difficulties Hispanic immigrants encounter in

entering a host environment, in this case, American small cities, the researcher formulated

questions about their proficiency in the English language, their easiness and willingness to

interact with non-Hispanic Americans, and different cultural elements that are different from

their home culture and the receiving culture. For gathering data for the second question, the

researcher formulated questions focused on discovering what modifications of cultural habits and

lifestyle participants may have had done in order to adapt. Media usage was also included in this

category of questions, because the researcher wanted to find out the role of the media in the

process. The researcher supposed that by collecting information on these topics would provide

insight into the process of cross-cultural adaptation described by Kim (2001).

      Language Proficiency. In regard to language proficiency, the data collected from the

Likert scale and the short answers and interviews generated an interesting discrepancy. Most of

the participants ranked their skills of listening, speaking and reading fairly high, as opposed to

writing, which was ranked at a lower level. The figures matched the qualitative data, since

several participants talked about coming to the United States with hardly any English knowledge

or none at all, and learning it informally on a daily basis. This process thus may generate a

working knowledge of English, which does not usually translate itself into writing in the foreign

language. This connects to another point brought up by participants who claimed to be

competent in English, but still could not express themselves effectively at times, especially when

engaging in complex conversations. This lack of confidence thus generates a barrier in

communication between strangers and hosts, thus posing a challenge to the process of

adaptation.

Furthermore, it is important to point out that two of the interviewees, who had lived in

larger American cities with a prominent Hispanic population prior to moving to the city of the

study, said that they spoke mostly Spanish before, because they could find practically everything

they needed in Spanish. As a result, they had lived in the United States for a fairly long time

without knowing English, but when they moved to a smaller place, where the Hispanic presence

was not as strong, English language skills became important. This finding reflects on the various

social and economic implications that exist on Hispanic immigrants' English proficiency or the

lack thereof (Dávila, 2008).

In summary, the data suggested that there is a fundamental difference between knowing a

language and actually expressing oneself effectively in that language. In fact, Baker (2012)

claimed that it is challenging to learn a language without acknowledging the cultural context in

which it is used (p. 62). Therefore, one of the most crucial elements that shapes language and

gives it its value is culture. In a study conducted by Yin (2011), the researcher noted how

indispensable culture and language are to each other in the process of cross-cultural

communication. Yin (2011) analyzed international students' skills in the foreign language in the

college context, and argues that lack of competency in a language is due to a lack of profound

understanding of the respective culture (p. 110). Yin (2011) explained that "Language is a mirror of culture because language not only reflects the environment in which we live, but also reflects cultural values, human relationships and the way the society operates" (p. 111).

The data also demonstrated that several immigrants wanted to address the problem of language barrier through educating themselves in the new language and culture, which reflects the literature written on this topic. As previously mentioned in the literature review chapter of this paper, Dávila (2008) identified the reasons behind Latin female immigrants taking ESL classes. The findings also revealed that the participants were aware of their need to integrate in the host environment, and learning the language was crucial to understand the culture, and thus increased communication competency.

In addition to the present findings, it is important to point out that within the sample that filled out the questionnaires, 15 respondents did not fill out correctly the Likert scale portion of it. Instead of rating their responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) as indicated in the instruction given on the questionnaire, those participants wrote "yes" or "no" to each statement. Unfortunately, the researcher cannot know the exact reasons why they did that mistake, but it is important to try to assess this occurrence, which can yield more material for future research. The questionnaires that were filled out improperly were in Spanish, so language differences can be discarded as a reason.

The fact that 42 others were filled out properly, and only 3 participants failed to fill out only one answer each, suggests that the instructions were understandable. However, it can be argued that some of the participants skipped the instructions, and went straight to the statements, which shows that the instructions may not have been as clear and as prominent on the page as the researcher had thought. The mistakes also raise the question of level of education of participants.

Perhaps, even if all of them could read, some of them were not able to thoroughly comprehend the text. Even if the researcher asked about language proficiency, the data is entirely subjective and based on respondents' self-reporting. Therefore, being able to evaluate systematically one's level of education has potential of adding to the understanding of sojourners' experience of crossing cultures.

      Social Interaction. Another difficulty identified in the results was that of engaging in conversations and socially interacting with Americans who are not Hispanic or share a similar background. This challenge is partially a result of language differences, but it is also a consequence of the encounter of diverse cultures (social norms, values, habits etc.) On the Likert scale, participants were split down the middle in regard to their level of comfort in being part of groups that mostly consist of non-Hispanic Americans. This data is consistent to the information collected from the short answers and interview, which showed differing points of view. Some participants seemed to be open to meeting people from the host country, and actually revealed to feel comfortable and welcomed. It is important to point out that two of the interviewees mentioned that the strong presence of a Christian community in the city in which this study was conducted made for a more welcoming atmosphere. This remark is valid, and generates more questions about the extent to which other factors and characteristics about the people that reside in the city of the study impact immigrants' experiences and their perceptions of the environment as a whole.

      On the other side of the spectrum, there were participants that said to feel discriminated and looked down upon by the city community. In the Likert scale, there were respondents that did not agree on the statement about the presence of discrimination, but almost the same amount marked that they agreed there was discrimination. The qualitative data also reflected this divided

opinion, which may be the result of individual experiences and perceptions in conjunction with the context in which they live. Type of work, neighborhood, social affiliations, economic status, and even social status (legal or illegal immigrant) play a role in the dynamics of how Hispanic immigrants perceive themselves and view the community's view of them. One of the interviewees said that being an undocumented immigrant in the country inhibits one to function freely in society for the fear of being caught. Another participant said that to perceive a certain degree of stereotyping of Hispanics by the local community, but at the same time she felt welcomed in her neighborhood of mostly white Americans. Evidently, the analysis of only one scenario cannot be generalized as the depiction of everyone's experience. As previously mentioned, several elements influence an immigrant's journey into a new place. As Kim (2001) has noted as well, even one's predisposition to enter a new culture can be a determining factor in someone's process of adaptation.

Media Usage. Due to the assumption that immigrants can learn and engage a new culture through the media, the researcher also formulated questions that aimed at assessing the extent to which media (both audio-visual and print) impacted the process of cross-cultural adaptation. The focus was basically on finding out if the population had a bigger preference for media in English or Spanish. This section of the study is relevant to the topic, because media outlets in Spanish (i.g. Univision, Telemundo, *El Miami Herald*) have been developing and growing in the last few years as the demand has increased. As reported by Oxford Analytica (2006), as of 2006, there are 342 Spanish-language television stations operating in the United States.

In another article, Guskin and Mitchell (2011) presented the current state of Spanish-language media in the United States, including an impressive number of stations and publications in existence as well as the amount of the population that they reach. Some of the facts they

present include: there are a total of 832 newspapers in Spanish, Univision (Hispanic television

network) has become the fifth-largest network in terms of primetime audience, and has broken

several viewership records in 2011, and, as of fall 2009, there are 1,323 radio stations in Spanish.

Furthermore, Guskin and Mitchell (2011) reported that in spite of the fact that Latinos are "less

likely to have access to the internet, have a broadband connection or own a cell phone than

whites are," (para. 126) they still consider the digital media important and access is growing.

Finally, throughout the article, the authors emphasized the fact that there is a divide between

bilingual and English-dominant Latinos and Spanish-dominant Latinos in their preference for

Spanish or English-language media as well as their disposition to engage in digital media.

However, as statistically demonstrated, this divide has not generated an incline in the industry of

Spanish-language media so far. In reality, the opposite has occurred.

In context, it was important to gather information on participants' preferences on media

outlets as possible indicators of how that influences the process of adaptation. In regard to the

preference of language, several participants showed to be uncertain independently from the type

of media. Nevertheless, there were more people that indicated "strongly agree" in preferring

print media in Spanish rather than English as opposed to audio-visual media. This relates to what

interviewees said about enjoying to read things in Spanish in order to keep up with news in their

home countries, and stay connected with their native language written word. On the other hand,

several said that they have utilized the means of communication as a tool to learn English and

how things work in the United States (lifestyle, social norms, behavior, humor etc.). When asked

to give examples of the media they consume, most mentioned English-language sitcoms, home

improvement shows, and movies. This is also a reflection of the number of participants that

agreed on learning about the new country through the media.

In summary, the collected data suggested that the media serve as a window to the new environment. As respondents mentioned that they seek to emulate others in the new environment in order to learn how to behave, it seems like they also learn about it from the media. This can be a helpful mechanism of adaptation as far as getting information about news and other non-fictional content; however, it is important to analyze the extent of accuracy to which the media depict the reality of American society and culture. How the media portray and frame things according to the message being produced has been a popular topic. Correa's study (2010), which is described in the literature review above, focused on how Latin women were framed differently by two newspapers according to their target audience. On the same basis, it is coherent to say that media portrayals of American society is framed according to the target audience, and does not necessarily picture reality as Hispanic sojourners may encounter. Thus, this is another facet worth exploring on the topic of media usage and its effect on cross-cultural adaptation.

Kim's Axioms and Intercultural Identity. The data collected not only expand the understanding of the difficulties that Hispanic immigrants encounter and the mechanisms of adaptation they utilize in residing in American small cities, but also reflect Kim's (2001) five axioms of the theory of cross-cultural adaptation. As highlighted in the literature review, this section of Kim's theory served as the basis for this study, since it delineates the stages through which sojourners go through from entering a host culture through acquiring an intercultural identity.

The first axiom says that strangers will go through both acculturation and deculturation. From the information collected, there is not a specific way participants said they were adopting certain behaviors or habits from the new culture, and leaving behind some of their own, but they did indicate that a shift has occurred in their experience. Participants said, for example, that they

did some adjustments to some of their habits such as striving to be punctual, which is an

important element of the host culture. Another participant even said that Latinos should learn

from Americans and vice versa, because both cultures can contribute to each other. Furthermore,

data also revealed that participants were aware of the need of keeping an open mind toward

learning the ways of the host environment. This mindset demonstrates that when crossing

cultures, the process of adjusting one's culture to the new one is almost inevitable.

       The second axiom says that the core of the process of adjustment is the stress-adaptation-

growth dynamic. As a brief review, Kim (2008) explained that this stress occurs when there is a

"conflict … between the need for acculturation and the resistance to deculturation, that is, the

'push' of the new culture and the 'pull' of the old (p. 363). This principle was pin pointed when

participants talked about what they missed from their home countries. Several of the

interviewees said that, at the beginning, it was hard for them to adapt to the new place. They

missed their family, food, culture, and that they even felt lonely at times. However, they said that

with time, they got used to their new life. Time has been a key element to the adjustment, but

they said that they still miss certain things from their home cultures, because those cannot be

accurately replicated here such as some foods and national festivals.

       The factor of time being one of the key elements of adjustments leads to the third and

fourth axioms that focus on the actual intercultural transformation in the sojourner and the

declination of the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. Most of the interviewees referred to the

extended period of time living in the host environment as a contributing factor to them feeling

adjusted, which thus suggests that they may have had gone through intercultural transformation.

Thus, as time went by, getting more used to the new place contributed to the decrease of the

stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, since, by this stage, they were probably undergoing growth

and change. It is interesting to point out that intercultural transformation can occur in different levels and time frames. Perhaps, one cannot even notice the change until he or she is back to his or her own home country, and confronted by the original culture – the moment that someone that has experienced cross-cultural adaptation most likely feels the greatest need to reconcile both worlds.

Last, the fifth axiom states that intercultural transformation is a result of "increased functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity" (p. 68-9). This research, especially the data collected with interviews, confirmed this principle. The interviewees that demonstrated to be mostly adapted shared their satisfaction about living in the new environment. They said the city is a great place to live, and that they enjoy the lifestyle, which they described as peaceful. It is important to point out the fact that two participants talked about the identity conflict with which they struggle. They believe they are so well adapted to where they live now, that when they go back to their home countries for a visit, they do not feel like they belong there anymore. Because they are also strangers in the new environment, they try to resolve this conflict by embodying a third culture, which is the process of negotiation between both cultures, which results in an intercultural identity. These findings can be related to the fact that most participants indicated in the Likert scale that they wished there were more elements of their culture in the city of the study. Due to the weak presence of the Hispanic culture, it seems like participants were more concerned about being a part of the local culture, which is the opposite of what happens in larger American cities that are Latino hubs. Therefore, it is possible to say that Hispanics tend to develop more of an intercultural identity when they reside in American small cities, in which their culture is not as prevalent yet.

Finally, the analysis of the transformation of one's identity cannot be limited to a specific set of guidelines, because there are several internal and external forces that facilitate or constrain the process (Kim, 1996, p. 365). A multi-faceted approach should take into consideration factors such as societal conditions of the host environment and prejudice and discrimination against members of a particular ethnicity. Kim (1996) argued that, "People in this situation [entering a hostile environment] are likely to avoid opportunities for positive intercultural communication experiences" (p. 365). Mendoza, Halualani and Drzewiecka (2002) also defended the need for analyzing cultural identity at various levels and circumstances. The authors said, "There remains a need to analyze both ends of identity construction, namely, its structural determinations, on the one hand, and its on-going, open-ended, unforeclosed, re-creation and re-construction, on the other" (p. 313). Undoubtedly, this constantly changing nature of identity formation is also present in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. As a result, this research is by no means conclusive, but it expands the insight and knowledge of the experience of crossing cultures through which Hispanic immigrants undergo in the United States. The following chapter presents limitations of this study, and addresses possible future research in the field.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study expanded the knowledge on the cross-cultural adaptation of Hispanic immigrants in the United States, there are some limitations that need to be addressed. Primarily, the data was partially dependent on participants self-reporting. In the Likert scale and short-answer sections, the accuracy of the information provided can be questioned, because respondents may not recall events and other past happenings in their entirety. Also, as previously mentioned, respondents self-evaluated their level of language proficiency, which may have yielded skewed results. For example, some participants who may have excellent language skills may have had been more conservative in evaluating themselves, while other participants with worse skills may have had rated themselves higher. Along the same lines, the researcher failed to take into consideration the level of education of participants. Education could have been a crucial element to analyze, and could have generated material for a future study. One's amount of education may influence his or her process of entering a new culture, as well as how he or she is perceived by the host environment.

With the amount of time and resources available to the researcher, the sample was appropriate, but a larger number would have produced more data, thus increasing the strength and value of the findings. Due to the fact that the researcher was in a small city looking for such a selected sample, it was a challenge to recruit participants. Also, there was no incentive to take part in the study other than contributing to research. Some individuals, even after receiving sufficient information about how the researcher would guarantee anonymity and confidentiality,

may have felt insecure in disclosing information about themselves due to their social status –

undocumented immigrants may not enjoy the same freedoms as others.

Another problem the researcher faced was that the city of the study was comprised of a

heavy population of college students, who did not meet the qualifications for the study.

Therefore, when recruiting at Hispanic churches, several people were not able to participate

because they were international students. For future studies, it would be interesting to compare

the cross-cultural experiences of a group of international students of Hispanic origin with a group

of Hispanic immigrants all residing in the same area. The differences and similarities between

these two groups can expand the understanding of how the context can influence one's

experience of crossing cultures.

Adequate Spanish translation also represents another limitation of this study. As

Berkanovic (1980) explained "there is discussion regarding the appropriateness of any single

Spanish language translation of materials intended for such culturally diverse groups as, for

example, Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans" (p. 1276). In this study, there were participants

from 10 different Spanish-speaking Latin American nations. In spite of the fact that the

researcher took the precautions to have a clear and correct Spanish version of all the data

collection instruments, it was not possible to make the most appropriate translation for each

particular country – especially when the researcher did not sample according to any specific

country. In addition, for further investigation, sampling according to country could potentially

reveal whether country of origin impacts one's journey of adaptation.

The research instruments also had some limitations. The participants were not asked on

the questionnaire to specify the reasons for their migration to the United States and for their

choice of residing in the city of the study. The researcher did not include that because it could be

a cause of embarrassment that could cause people to turn away from the study. But as participants remained anonymous in the surveys, they probably would not have found a problem in answering that.

The large number of questionnaires that were filled out incorrectly (Likert scale) also raises the question about the clarity of the instructions and their placement on the page. In spite of the researcher's effort to compress the maximum possible elements for analysis in the questionnaire, the instrument may have seemed too long for participants, who may have become discouraged to answer everything with attention and dedication. Perhaps, the researcher should have focused on fewer elements, thus being able to generate a more concise questionnaire, and still conduct a comprehensive study.

For further studies in the topic, it would be interesting to trace differences and similarities between women and men in order to assess whether gender affects the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Other elements that can also be taken into account in the future are marital status and whether the individual came alone or with family and/or friends. Evidently, there are several factors that can be considered in examining intercultural experience. Therefore, researchers need to strive to be specific in regard to what they are trying to study, while embracing the multi-faceted nature of the subject.

Another possibility of research in this topic would be to assess the perspective of the host population concerning the entry of Hispanics in their city. Kim (2001) also addressed this issue and formulated the concept of host receptivity. The author explains this principle as, "the degree to which a given environment is open to, welcomes, and accepts strangers into its social communication networks and offers them various forms of social support" (p.79). Bastian and Haslam (2008), for example, investigated host receptivity in light of the relationship between

essentialist beliefs and social identification and processes as they relate "to prejudice and intergroup perception" (p. 127). Their work revealed that preconceptions based on essentialist beliefs that hosts have toward immigrants affect the degree of prejudice strangers may encounter. Bastian and Haslam (2008) proposed that addressing those beliefs may assist on a better integration of strangers in a host setting.

A final consideration to the limitations of this study concerns how the theoretical framework on which this study was based needs to be constantly revisited due to changing cultural trends. Callahan (2011) argued that "this will require the uncomfortable practice of challenging accepted views of the intercultural process" (p. 329). Furthermore, it is imperative to note that models and theories about intercultural experience provide a comprehensive outline of what people may go though in such circumstances. However, it is not possible to delineate people's journeys solely based on theoretical frameworks, since everyone is different and tracks their own path in life.

It is necessary to emphasize that this study is the analysis of a particular case and population. Certainly, the small sample of this study cannot be generalized to the entire Latin population living in American small cities. The researcher recognizes that this is a modest attempt to trace the cross-cultural journey of Hispanic immigrants in this specific city from the viewpoint of the sojourners. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this study adds to the literature of intercultural communication, and opens more doors for continuing research in such a prolific field. The current state of immigration in the United States has generated debate and controversy in multiple sectors of American society. Immigration has played a central role in the formation of this country, and it is clear that it will continue to exercise a pivotal function in many years to come.

Conclusion

The study of human behavior is complex. In the case of cross-cultural adaptation, researchers have recognized that no two individuals adapt identically (Kim, 2001). However, certain patterns and stages can be identified in the process of crossing cultural boundaries. For many scholars, the ability to interact proficiently within the host culture and the culture-of-origin is the stage that optimal cultural adaptation takes place (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011). Therefore, it is possible to trace the cross-cultural adaptation process, and to do so with a specific group in a given social context.

As previously mentioned, the phenomenon of immigration is not new, but its prominence in the social history of the United States has not lessened along the years (Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind, 1999; Hirschman & Massey, 2008). In fact, research on communication and immigration has been prolific in the academic arena due to the several different settings and elements pertaining to this relationship. It is also important to notice that recent research has raised new questions about cross-cultural adaptation of Hispanic immigrants as they have been gravitating towards less traditional gateways (Marrow, 2008).

The purpose of this present study was to describe some of the key elements involved in the adaptation of Hispanic immigrants in small cities in America. The researcher analyzed the case of a small city in a mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The methodology consisted of a mixed-methods data collection process (questionnaires and interviews). This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. The findings showed that Latin immigrants encounter difficulties with communicating in English, commencing interpersonal relationships with people in the host environment, and overcoming cultural differences. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that Hispanic immigrants seem to be

concerned with integrating themselves in the host community as well as educating themselves about the culture and language. To accomplish that, media venues seemed to be a common tool.

Finally, this paper aggregated the analysis of the unprecedented phenomenon of Hispanic immigration to the United States. The Latino population has become the largest minority in this country and certainly occupies a position of impact in American society. As the title of this paper suggests, American *Sueño* (the Spanish word for dream), the American dream has crossed borders and has become the aspiration of millions of Latinos that have entered this country hopeful to constitute a better life. Each of them has a unique story, and carries their own culture into the place they strive to make their new home. Studying this process allows for a broadened perspective of the future of the United States as "a nation of immigrants" (Hirschman & Massey, 2008, p. 19), and it serves as a depiction of "the remarkable human spirit and [its] capacity for self-renewal beyond the constraints of a single culture" (Kim, 2001, p. 235). In spite of risks and challenges, the Latino culture in the United States has been reshaped as immigrants undergo the process of crossing cultural boundaries. As the literature indicates, Hispanics have reached a notable position in the United States, and surely have been leaving their mark on the pages of American history.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

This study aims at finding out about the cross-cultural adaptation process of Hispanic immigrants in small cities in the U. S. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You will remain completely anonymous by filling out this questionnaire. The researcher conducting this study is Tatiana Almeida. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at tmalmeida@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, email irb@liberty.edu. Thank you for taking the time. When you are done, please hand in your questionnaire to the researcher.

Age: _____   **I am a**:   Female   Male

Country of Origin: _____

I moved to the U.S.A. when I was _____ years old (list your age then)

I have lived in this city since I moved to the U.S.A.:   YES   NO

If you answered NO, list the cities you lived before you moved to this city:

_____

Please mark the number from the scale that best corresponds to your answer.
Response Options: 1= Strongly Disagree
     2=Disagree Somewhat
     3=Uncertain
     4=Agree somewhat
     5=Strongly Agree

1) I can generally understand everything I hear in English. _____

2) I am fluent at speaking English. _____

3) I can read English very well. _____

4) I can write in English very well. _____

5) I enjoy friendships with Americans that are not Hispanic/Latino. _____

6) I prefer making friends with people within my culture. _____

7) I feel comfortable with the culture in this city; I feel like I belong. _____

8) I often have a hard time understanding what Americans in this city mean when they talk. _____

9) It is difficult for me to be a part of groups that consist mostly of Americans in this city. _____

10) I believe there is discrimination against Hispanics in the city I reside. _____

11) I think it is important to have good relationships with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino. _____

12) I wish there were more elements of my culture in this city. _____

13) I prefer print media (newspaper, magazines, books) to be in Spanish rather than English._____

14) I prefer audio-visual media (television, movies, music) to be in Spanish rather than English. ___

15) I have learned a lot about the United States through print media in English (newspaper, magazines, books). _____

16) I have learned a lot about the United States through audio-visual media in English (television, movies, music). _____

17) I have learned a lot about the Unites States through interacting with Americans who are not Hispanics/Latino. _____

Please answer these questions to the best of your knowledge.

1)   What are some of the difficulties you face when interacting with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino?

_____

_____

2)   Where do you interact mostly with Americans who are not Hispanic/Latino? (Workplace, church, school, neighborhood, etc.)

_____

_____

3)   How well do you think you have adapted to living in this city?

_____

_____

4)   What were some difficult things you experienced when you first moved to this city?

_____

_____

5)   Do you have favorite English language American television shows, magazines, books, movies, music, etc.? If yes, which ones?

_____

_____

6)   What are some of the things you did and/or do in order to adapt to living in this American city?

_____

_____

A second part of this study is an interview. The researcher will invite you to participate and provide you with information on the interview topic after you turn in this questionnaire.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM
American Sueño: Hispanic Immigrants' Cultural
Adaptation in American Small Cities

Tatiana Almeida
Liberty University
Department of Communication Studies

You are invited to be in a research study of cross-cultural adaptation of Hispanics in small cities in the United States. You were selected as a possible participant because you answered the questionnaire that is also part of this study, and you were invited to participate in an interview. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be interviewed.
This study is being conducted by: Tatiana Almeida, Department of Communication Studies, Liberty University

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to identify some difficulties of adaptation Hispanic immigrants encounter in American small cities, and investigate strategies they use to overcome those difficulties and adapt to the new environment.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to be a part of an interview with the researcher and an assistant. The audio of the interview will be recorded. The interview can be done in English or Spanish. The interview will not go longer than one hour.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There are minimal risks of being in this study. The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefit of being a part of this study is of contributing to the better understanding of how Hispanic immigrants in the United States can get more easily adapted to life in a new environment, and perhaps have a better quality of life.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The audio files of the

interviews will be stored at the researcher's computer, protected by a password. These files will be erased after a year of the completion of the study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Tatiana Almeida. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at 434.509.8919 or email at tmalmeida@liberty.edu. For further questions, please contact Dr. William Mullen at 434.592.7603 or email at wmullen@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview questions

1) What are some of the difficulties you encounter in living in this city?

2) Explain how comfortable you feel communicating well with people in this area (who are not Hispanic/Latino)? Why?

3) Describe the process of getting acquainted with your new life in this city?

4) What do you do that helps your adaptation to this new environment? What has helped you this far?

5) What Spanish media do you consume? How satisfied are you with the media in English? Explain.

6) Do you think Hispanics tend to stay together, or have they been infiltrating more in the host environment here in this city? What have you done to get more engaged? Why?

7) What are some of the things you miss from your home country?

8) Is there anything you would like to add about your experience here in this city?