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Beneficial Worship Patterns Within Bilingual SpanishI-English Christian Churches In The United States

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BENEFICIAL WORSHIP PATTERNS WITHIN BILINGUAL SPANISH-ENGLISH
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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BACHELOR OF MUSIC, ARTS

in

Music Ministry, Spanish

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To my parents who faithfully encouraged me to finish this project
And to the inspiring people who continue to work toward fully integrated,
bilingual worship before Heaven

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This research was made possible by the example set by numerous congregations throughout the United States as they strive toward fully integrated bilingual worship. Their efforts have proven that this is a viable option worth attention and further study. To this end, I am grateful for their continuing passion in serving diverse communities of faith.

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ABSTRACT

Language diversity within the U.S. is on the rise; this generates a unique cultural shift. Change in language diversity impacts the overall nature of government, schools, and churches. In response, many Christian churches are developing alongside the surrounding culture, notably in the form of bilingual services. In order to remain relevant the church must address new evangelistic and congregational needs. Religion is naturally perceived through a personal cultural lens, but cultural identity at its core is integrated with language. With this in mind, churches desiring to successfully integrate multiple languages in a worship setting must prepare for a long-term commitment and dedicate themselves to overcoming inherent challenges in cultural differences. First, it is of utmost importance to foster an atmosphere of inclusion. Second, all demographics involved must have a sense of safe community based in patient development, as well as investment and leadership in the ministry. Lastly, the church environment must commit to actions of the heart and healing cultural rifts. Current practices exist which help cultivate lively, cohesive, multilingual churches. Despite setbacks, Spanish-speakers and English-speakers continue to worship alongside one another and reap the benefits. If these practices can be identified and articulated, they can more easily be duplicated to encourage other congregations to follow.

Key Words: bilingual worship, multicultural worship, Spanish ministry

PRELIMINARY TERMS

Before diving into this complex situation, it is imperative to define key terms. First, the dictionary definition of *Hispanic* refers to language, or rather ancestry from any country where Spanish is spoken whereas the dictionary cites *Latino* as referring to geography, or having ancestry from a Latin American country (this excludes Spain, but includes Brazil where Spanish is not primarily spoken). These terms are frequently interchanged due to an overlap in definitions, and even academia has not given a definitive differentiation between a Hispanic and a Latino/a. One challenge to creating a bilingual Spanish-English ministry is the use of fully inclusive terminology. To call a ministry “Hispanic” versus “Latino” could be misconstrued and perpetuates the ethnic ambiguity felt by many Spanish-speakers of foreign descent. Most commonly in industry and business the term “Hispanic” is used because it stresses the uniformity of language as the key marker of Hispanic/Latino identity rather than geography (DaVila, 16).

At the forefront of this research is a reminder: Hispanic is an ethnicity. The Hispanic does not denote a nationality, a race, or even a culture. “It is a multiplicity of nationalities, races, and cultures. It’s even a mix of languages to some degree, for some Hispanics speak only Spanish, some speak only English and some are bilingual” (Archer). For the purposes of this study all information is in regard to Hispanics, which is the broadest definition of those with origins from a Spanish-speaking nation (not including Brazil). An added complication to this definition is the existence of language blending. This is

not a matter of strictly Spanish versus English but rather a crossover between generations and language use.

In regard to language use, bilinguals using both Spanish and English have not been shown to maintain a distinct cultural identity. A separable Spanish persona does not exist apart from the traits of an English persona. The context of language and the link to cultural identity is widely variable. General cultural markers exist which unify English-speakers, but the term “English-speaking” does not designate a specific definition of culture. The same is true with Spanish-speakers who, while maintaining similarities, do not have a specific cultural definition. When referring to Hispanic culture as a whole, language is the sole commonality. Thus, the cultural definition of a bilingual English-Spanish speaker becomes even more complex. Social research has been unable to discern where the cultural attributes of one language begin and end, or rather blend into the next.

Another important distinction is the difference between *interpretation* and *translation*. *Interpretation* refers to solely spoken word such as a sermon or song. *Translation* refers to printed or written material such as a bulletin or hymnal. In a typical bilingual Hispanic service there are varying degrees of bilingualism. Some congregations prefer separation of languages in written versus spoken material. The preference of the congregation and pastoral staff, as well as the needs of the community will shape the decision regarding what to interpret or translate, and when.

The broadest term used in this study is “worship,” which for the purposes of this research project includes all aspects of religious gathering

with the purpose of revering and adoring the Christian God. Worship includes every aspect of a church service: listening, speaking, and doing. This may include a sermon, prayer, scripture reading, dance, song, or other forms of devotion or adoration. The belief that worship consists of music alone is erroneous. Some elements of worship are corporate and some are individualistic, which will be reflected later in the suggestions made from this investigation. Most importantly, worship style varies between individual congregations, with unique identity, components, and flavor.

Lastly, Anne Black in her book "Culturally Conscious Worship" gives a precise definition of *culture*:

Culture is the sum attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguish one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art from one generation to the next (Black, 8).

When understanding culture it is imperative to view the entire picture of the components of the culture.

INTRODUCTION

A cursory Google search of "bilingual churches in the US" reveals merely an iota of the ways demographics and cultures are transforming religion in the United States. Language diversity within the United States is flourishing and many churches are assembling a response to the subsequent cultural shifts. Changes in the structure of a nation are not merely lingual, but affect the overall culture of government, schools, and churches. Historically, the Christian church enters periods of either *forming* or *being*

formed by surrounding culture. In an effort to avoid being “lukewarm” the church should strive to set the temperature and nature of society. So as to remain relevant the church must find the balance between meeting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of communities while upholding biblical authenticity. Specifically in this case the church in the United States must measure the needs of bilinguals and respond accordingly to their influence. As a result of diverse language identity, there are new evangelistic and congregational needs to be addressed.

For the sake of focus this scholarship project will inform solely on Spanish-English bilingualism. Due to a rise in immigration, birth rate, religious fervor and other factors, Hispanic ministry grows steadily within the United States and has a trajectory of sizeable continued development. Based on mere numbers, the integration of bilingual or multilingual congregants is a paramount issue facing the future growth of the United States church. The church would be remiss in ignoring the large and growing demographic of *hispanohablantes*, or Spanish-speakers. This topic has far-reaching impact in the United States because Hispanics are not isolated to one region of the nation. While traditionally many Hispanics settled in states with geographic or climate conditions similar to their home countries, this is no longer the case as Hispanics are found across the nation and in every state (Grieco and Cassidy). Hispanics are increasingly becoming our neighbors and church worship should reflect the range of diversity in our communities.

There is great blessing in offering the Gospel in multiple languages, even though linguistic and cultural challenges are a reality. The issue of

blending Spanish and English in a religious setting is twofold: primarily there is a language barrier; in addition there is the obstacle of differing cultural practices. Integrating demographics is not a case of merely increasing or adding interpretation within a service. There are cultural identities and flavors that are expressed beyond the confines of translation. All aspects of a worship service must be tailored for the cultural differences of each represented demographic. As stated by Juan Francisco Martinez of Fuller Theological Seminary, "The Latino experience in the United States presents a series of social and cultural complexities that complicate any pastoral ministry effort" (Rodriguez, 146).

Fully integrated bilingual worship is also not a logical goal for all church congregations. The church inside must mirror the needs of the community outside by reflecting generational, socioeconomic, or cultural patterns. Although the fundamental integration of bilingual congregations is similar, there are distinct roles and methods in Spanish-English churches that differ from Korean-English, Swedish-English, or other blended congregations. Bilingual worship is not a one-size-fits-all model. An added challenge to this diversity within worship is the interrelationship between language, culture, and faith. Religion is naturally viewed through a scope of personal cultural and cultural identity at its core is integrated with language.

Much research has been conducted in the field of multilingual and bilingual education. However, there is a gap in applying data from schools to churches, especially within Hispanic congregations. This is a general gap rather than a complete lack because fully bilingual Spanish-English

congregations do exist in the United States. The goal of dual-language church worship is challenging, but clearly certainly not impossible. These congregations are generally fledgling in nature and encounter setbacks in the long pursuit of success for their communities of faith. The support system for these churches is not as broad as it could be, and an academic understanding of these unique congregations is lacking.

Rather than focus solely on the challenges, this study seeks to ascertain and celebrate the triumphs experienced by bilingual Spanish-English congregations. Current practices exist which help cultivate lively, cohesive, multilingual churches. Despite setbacks, Spanish-speakers and English-speakers continue to worship alongside one another and reap the spiritual and social benefits. If these practices can be identified and articulated, they can more easily be duplicated to encourage other congregations to follow.

THE FACTS (LOS HECHOS)

With nearly 37.5 million Spanish-speakers in the United States, Spanish is the second-most spoken language in the country, following English (United States Census Bureau). According to the same 2010 Census, the number of Spanish-speakers in this country has increased by 210 percent since 1980, which equates to an added 24.4 million Spanish-speakers in roughly 30 years (USCB). Based on the trajectory of this data, the United States Census Bureau supports that Spanish will remain the most commonly spoken language other than English over the next ten years. The projected growth predicts that by the year 2020 over 60 percent of the United States

population will speak a language other than English and 13 percent of this total will account for Spanish-speakers (USCB). Some conservative estimates project there will be over 41.5 million Spanish-speakers in the United States by the year 2020 (Ortman and Shin, 19) and from 2005 through 2050 Hispanics will account for the majority of the nation's population growth (Rodriguez, 40).

According to the Pew Research Center's 2013 National Survey of Latinos, six-in-ten adult Hispanics in the United States speak English or are bilingual. With rounded figures, there are three categories of Hispanics in the United States: 36 percent are bilingual, 25 percent mainly use English and 38 percent mainly use Spanish. Among those who speak English, 59 percent are bilingual (Pew Research Center). Hispanics who speak both Spanish and English are the fastest growing percentage of these categories. This language growth will have social and economic impact. In the business sector Hispanic marketing is now a multibillion-dollar industry, fueled by an increasing number of Spanish-speakers (DaVila, 23).

Data from the Pew Research Center includes information regarding immigration, which found that as of 2010 Mexican-born immigrants comprised about 29 percent of the nearly 40 million foreign-born residents in the United States making them the largest immigrant demographic in the country (Pew). In the last 20 years, immigration from Mexico alone has exceeded the percentage of immigrants from Europe and Canada, which previously had been the largest immigrant demographic (Pew). Whether or not these immigrants become naturalized citizens, they compose a new

linguistic and cultural context in the United States. And although immigration accounts for a large number of Hispanic in the United States, the number of native births is now outpacing immigration as the “key source of growth” (Rodriguez, 145). The demographic of both first- and second-generation Hispanics is growing.

Regarding the religious culture of this demographic, another study from the Pew Research Center found that 55 percent of Hispanics in the United States self-identify as Catholics, with about 22 percent claiming Protestantism (Pew). This is not surprising considering the long history of Catholicism in Latin America and Spain. In 2013, nearly half of Hispanics in the United States who were raised as Catholics had converted to Protestantism, demonstrating a wave of religious conversion (Pew). This study supports a steady shift in faith identity as fewer than half of Hispanics in the United States under age 30 were Catholic, compared to about two-thirds of those ages 50 and older (Pew). The overall increase of Hispanics in the United States combined with a religious shift within the ethnicity has led to a new religious and social culture in this demographic.

According to the Pew Research Center about eight-in-ten Hispanic churchgoers attend churches offering solely Spanish-language services. Seventy-five percent attend churches with Hispanic clergy, and about sixty percent report worshipping with a majority of other Hispanics (Pew). Among mainline Protestants the division of language is equal: roughly forty-nine percent say most or every service was in Spanish and roughly forty-nine percent say most or every service was in English (Pew). It should be noted

that language segregation exists in both English- and Spanish-dominant congregations in the United States.

The number of Spanish-speakers in the United States is steadily increasing, as is the number of those who are bilingual. The increase of Hispanics in the United States is in part due to foreign immigration and native birth rate. The religious culture of Hispanics is not identical to the preexisting religious culture in English-dominant congregations. The data supports that Spanish-English bilingualism is not a phase but rather is expected to continue at a high rate. The effects of this increase in bilingualism will be far-reaching to the culture of faith in the United States.

Table 1

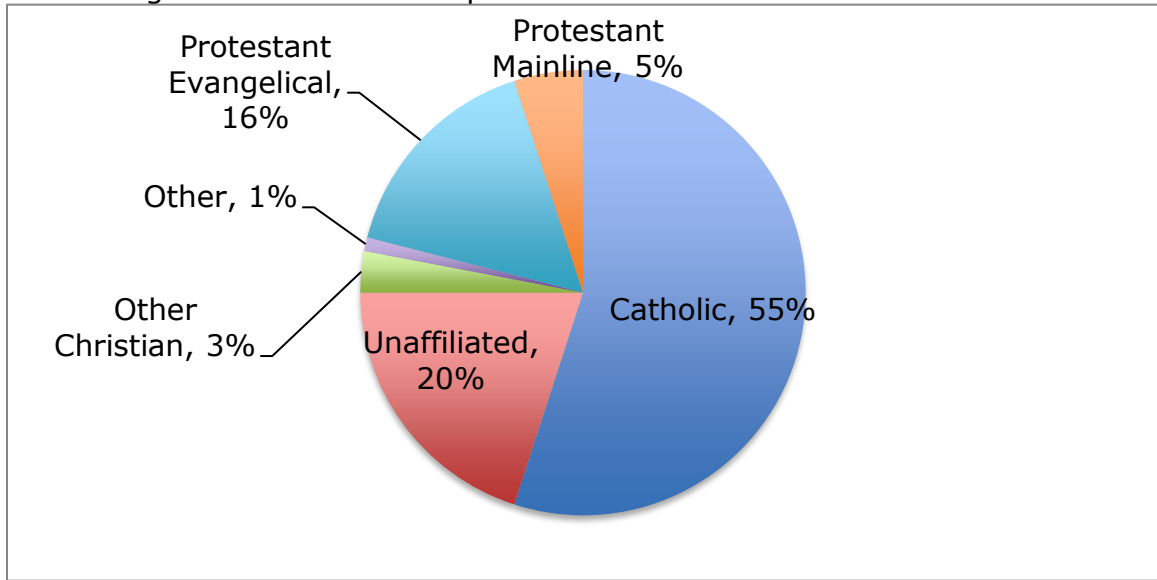
Projected Population Speaking a Language Other than English at Home by Projection Series: 2010, 2015, and 2020

	Number (in thousands)	Number (in thousands)	Number (in thousands)
Projection series and language spoken	2010	2015	2020
2008 National Projections			
Population aged 5 and over	286,998	299,378	311,886
Spoke only English at home	231,037	241,055	252,216
Spoke a language other than English at home	58,096	62,409	66,325
Spanish	36,221	39,072	41,525
French	1,921	1,896	1,872
Italian	629	548	482
Portuguese	748	805	857
German	1,017	958	904
Russian	887	961	1,013
Polish	544	480	426
Hindi	621	711	794
Chinese	2,629	2,873	3,131
Korean	1,024	949	966
Vietnamese	1,300	1,381	1,532
Tagalog	1,475	1,619	1,773
Arabic	923	1,065	1,170

Source: For 1980 through 2011, Pew Research Center tabulations of census data and American Community Survey data; 2010 to 2020 projections based on U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 population projections as shown in Jennifer Ortman and Hyon B. Shin, "Language Projections: 2010 to 2020."

Table 2

2013 Religious Affiliation of Hispanics



Source: Pew Research Center survey of Hispanic adults, May 24-July 28, 2013.
Figures above based on FORM12 and FORMNCO, N=4,080.

VAMOS A EMPEZAR (LET'S BEGIN)

A principal challenge of gathering academic data with churches is that congregations are composed of people, theological ideas, and spiritual experiences, which can be difficult if not impossible to quantify. With this type of research it is more beneficial to qualify stylistic patterns or express relational responses rather than provide numerical statistics. This research method will not produce hard data, but will relay a range of personal experiences while molding suggestions for future use.

Another challenge to this type of research is that not all approaches or models will work successfully for all congregations. "Christian worship is a principal action of the church across cultures" so it can be found anywhere in the world where Christianity is practiced (Hawn, 15). The act of worship itself is transcultural, but no two churches are identical even within the same denomination. There are distinct differences, which prevents formulaic recreation. The beauty of individual congregational "flavors" extends a challenge to research due to the vast diversity of denominational differences, worship style preferences, or language choice. Dual-language worship cannot be duplicated via formula because the diversity that God created among His propagates unique ways of worshipping Him. It is not possible to replicate an exact experience of Spanish-English worship between churches. However, there are common characteristics or elements found in a majority of bilingual churches that are transferrable. There are common patterns found within a majority of bilingual Spanish-English churches that help foster a vibrant, unified, multicultural atmosphere.

As a sign of encouragement from the outset, it is important to establish that multilingual worship exists currently and continues to grow across the nation. The purpose of this study is not to create from scratch that which does not presently exist. Blending languages also lends to a blending of cultures, but each bilingual church service will have a unique method of becoming bilingual. Often there is a discrepancy in the amount of each represented language utilized in a service. Some churches offer variations of language throughout the Scripture reading, musical worship, prayer, or preaching. Naming and evaluating the practices currently used in bilingual worship, education, and outreach are vital in assuring that future churches may implement them for positive, steady growth. Worship services that fail to have meaning lose their attraction, which highlights the necessity of crafting relevant worship and spiritually nurturing a church no matter the language of choice.

This research includes personal interviews with two leaders in the field of bilingual worship and multicultural faith. First, Michael A. Mata has over twenty years of service as a pastor at both Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene and Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene in California, two multiethnic churches with large Hispanic ministries. In addition, he has served as an adjunct professor at various Christian universities and seminaries but currently serves as professor of Global Studies, Sociology, and TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) at Azusa Pacific University in California. As both pastor and professor Michael A. Mata has contributed in both academic and spiritual terms to this research.

Second, Mark Ledford currently serves as Senior Pastor of Westerville Church of the Nazarene in Westerville, OH. This church was one of the first Nazarene churches to incorporate what had formerly been separate language services. Pastor Ledford discussed in depth the principle calling to bilingual ministry, the early challenges, and the triumphs as his congregation continues to celebrate multiculturalism. Both academic and theological aspects of bilingual worship have been synthesized for this research project.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

In anything that is done within the church, action must have a biblical foundation. The importance of bringing together multiple languages goes beyond social necessity. Collective worship is both culturally conscious and scripturally sound. There is an element of unity in mixing languages that highlights the universality of God as people worship the same Savior.

Revelation 7:9-10 reads:

I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (NIV).

Revelation is the biblical book of eschatology, or study of the end times. The image described above is so unearthly, so heavenly divine that understandably this event must occur after Jesus' return. The unnumbered, diverse multitude mentioned has assembled before the throne of the Lamb

with the purpose of praising him. They are clothed in white, traditionally a symbol of heavenly or righteous garb. They are also waving palm branches just as the crowd greeted Jesus in kingly fashion as he entered Jerusalem before his crucifixion. This “Lamb” with a capital *L* represents the Lamb who was slain: Jesus Christ. If Christians believe every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord when we all reach heaven, then steps should be taken to begin this eternal plan now. Our worship times throughout the week set into motion the worship of eternity.

According to Galatians 3:28, we are all one in Christ Jesus because “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female” (NIV). The sentiment is repeated in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14:

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Through Christ and the Holy Spirit we are united in faith and no factor, including language or culture, can separate us. The second passage goes further to express how diversity is essential to Christian community because as diverse parts of the body we become whole by working together as one. In the simplest terms: we need one another. The church can become more humble and practice hospitality by learning from differences in culture. “Our way” of working or worshipping is neither the “only” way nor the “right” way. Establishing the typical dual-language service model as both socially

relevant and scripturally accurate, further development should be strongly encouraged. The church needs to “familiarize itself with the unique socioeconomic context in which more than 50 million Latinos live” (Rodriguez, 40).

In order to facilitate church growth that is most effective and long-term, a biblical foundation and an atmosphere of prayer are essential. Future duplication necessitates recognition of preexisting working elements. The greatest hope is that future church leaders may have a solid foundation for their own ministries.

DEGREE OF BILINGUALISM

Another point worth mentioning is the varying degree of bilingualism found in United States congregations. There are many churches that have embraced the multiculturalism of their communities and host Hispanic congregations separately under the same roof. This type of congregation may advertise as “bilingual” but in reality perpetuates two distinct and separate congregations without combining culture or language. The next step on the multiculturalism spectrum is comprised of fully English churches that invite Spanish-speakers to English services that are interpreted via headsets or written translation. This style of linguistic incorporation is faulty because it is not representative of culture to a great degree.

Other congregations may take the next step in multiculturalism by inviting Hispanic worshippers to a church with a rotation of service styles. This church style may incorporate Spanish translation on a specific Sunday each month but not every week. This format also perpetuates minimal

inclusion of language with a small culture element. In terms of this research a fully “bilingual” service is entirely blended through both written and oral means by translating all sermon, scripture, testimony, bulletin, and music, etc. In discussing beneficial worship practices in bilingual Hispanic congregations, the term “bilingual” refers to full English and full Spanish as an inclusion of both language and culture.

It is important to note that compared to earlier immigrant populations, Hispanics are keeping their ancestral language longer. In the United States English is the language of school and media, whereas Spanish is a factor of heritage used for communication within the family. For this reason, many Hispanics treat bilingualism as essential for assimilation. The crossover and blending of languages can pose an issue to some congregations as some may speak and understand only English, some only Spanish, and some will have varying fluency in either language. Fully integrated bilingual worship is not practical in every church community due to the language composition and needs of the surrounding community. Stylistically, multiple languages and multiple cultures in a worship setting promote a *spectrum* of worship.

Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa and social leader, aptly addressed the issue of language in the head versus language in the heart when he said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart” (CNN). For many Spanish-speakers English is the primary language of academic and business life outside of the home. As a second language English is used for communication of the head rather than the heart. Spanish

then is the language of the heart and is used for communication among family as an emotional connection of culture. What then does this communicate concerning worship services held only in English or only in Spanish? Perhaps (even unintentionally) we profess to bilinguals that their faith may be solely a religion of the head or solely a religion of the heart. Surely faith includes both theological ideas of the head as well as relational elements of the heart. Bilingual worship is an important investment for Spanish-English bilinguals because it validates both the language of the heart and the language of the head.

HOW TO BEGIN (CÓMO EMPEZAR)

Congregations may buy into the misconception that they can wait to plan for Hispanic ministry after more Hispanics join the church. This notion is entirely erroneous—it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to attract more Hispanic members if they are being treated as an inconsequential minority. The church must plan as if the cultural or linguistic diversity were evenly spread, because forward thinking helps take us where we aim to go. As Andy Kim discusses in his InterVarsity podcast, “One day when they come, wouldn’t it be awesome to say, ‘We have been waiting and preparing for you. We are so glad you came’.” (Kim).

This does not mean that all church functions need to be conducted in Spanish, nor does every committee meeting need to include Spanish. However, it does mean that if a dual-language church is the ultimate goal then every ministry within the church must plan and think toward the church in fully bilingual operation. It is not productive to wait until the day comes to

lay the groundwork (Archer). Spanish-speakers should not be made to feel like an afterthought or secondary group in the workings of the church. They must be welcomed in any number, even in small demand. If the church is truly committed to growing a bilingual ministry, then all ministries from the outset must be mindful of future vision. In order to smoothly transition to fully integrated bilingualism the church should research cultural differences and be sensitive to specific needs.

Spanish-English ministry is absolutely a blessing, but it is not for every congregation. In the words of Mike Ramirez, associate pastor of the Hispanic ministry at Cornerstone Church in San Diego, California, "Starting a Spanish ministry is a calling of God" (Martinez). Considering a dual-language ministry in any church is a big step that will affect every aspect of the church's outreach, finances, building usage, programming, etc. There is a large difference between being a bilingual *ministry* and a bilingual *church*.

"Basically it comes down to integration" says Tim Archer, current pastor of bilingual ministry at the University Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas (Archer). A bilingual *ministry* is simply one component of all the other workings of the church, while still treated as a piece of the whole. A bilingual *church* incorporates language and culture into everything that is done within the church; every aspect involves the minority members and is tailored to spiritually feed both (or all) demographics. Achieving a blended congregation requires an atmosphere of prayer and discernment from leaders within the church.

Of utmost importance, the senior pastor must be fully immersed into the calling of launching a Spanish-English ministry. If the calling lacks the full support and leadership of the senior pastor, then the ministry will be greatly hindered. Senior pastors may balk at the idea of beginning a dual-language ministry because they do not speak the language, or do not know much about the target culture (Ridgaway). To ease this struggle, take heart that this type of ministry can, and should, involve collaboration. Mastering any language comes with time and practice, and Hispanics are well known for being gracious with those attempting to learn Spanish. Additionally, the best way to become familiar with a culture is to engage with its members. If the goal of Spanish-English churches is to include the community, then connecting with neighbors is a primary step.

Desire for a dual-language church often stems from the vicinity of the church grounds; the ministry should reflect the community surrounding the church. Encourage church members to get to know their neighbors. Make a priority of expanding into the community with the goal of understanding needs on a personal level. Knowing the identity and needs of the community will help shape the specifics of the ministry. For example, are the majority of neighbors from one specific country? Is the neighborhood mainly comprised of immigrants? These founding questions will help determine whether English as Second Language (ESL) classes, Graduation Equivalency Diploma (GED) courses, or citizenship materials will be of most help in welcoming Hispanics (Archer). The cultural identity of the community will shape the specific “flavor” of the church.

The next step is to commit. Establishing a dual-lingual congregation takes sacrifice and time. The efforts necessary to include everyone may not always be convenient or comfortable. It takes time and effort to change people's minds and help them see the value in something that is not necessarily their chosen path. Supporting the congregation with education and communication is vital so that the church is unified in her dedication to successful, long-term, bilingual integration.

The senior pastor must have specific vision for the growth and outreach of this ministry, and this model must be communicated and frequently re-visited with the congregation. Founding a bilingual church is a long process, during which there will be times of both discouragement and triumph. Progress may develop slowly so it is important to encourage the congregation and continually remind them of the heavenly goal.

PLANNING, PLANNING, PLANNING

In the beginning stages it may take more time to plan worship services with all demographics in mind because this calling is not necessarily second nature for all congregations. While planning for Hispanics, there are three primary distinctions to consider for successful cultural blending. First, country of origin greatly determines cultural background and therefore "flavor." Although Hispanics share a common language, there are unique factors in vocabulary, foods, music, history, and other cultural aspects (González, 2). Not all Hispanics are alike and their unique cultures create a distinctive culture of worship within the Spanish language (Mata). After becoming acquainted with the neighborhood, consider the primary country (or

countries) of origin and the historic interactions with the United States. For example, Cuba has a history of conflict and unrest with the United States; Puerto Rico experienced an acquisition mentality; Argentina has a European foundation and in many ways is similar to the United States; and Mexico has very strong national identity and a continually changing identity with the United States. Each Latin American nation has its own story relative to the United States, which should be assessed when developing ministries to serve this demographic.

Second, Hispanics are often divided along generational lines. These divisions have different tastes or even uses of language based on their origin, familial context, and desire to assimilate with English-speakers. Left without consideration, language can be a dividing factor in a developing bilingual congregation. Generally speaking, the older generation of early Hispanic immigrants clings to Spanish and traditional culture while the first generation and beyond choose to adopt more of the flavor of the United States. The church can be an inclusive place where heritage roots are blended with the new, thus minimizing division (González, 3).

As Hispanic culture within the US has developed, many younger Spanish-speakers have been led to learn English in order to move into new areas of work or to increase opportunities for advancement. However, adapting to the necessities of United States culture has not stripped them of their original language and heritage. There is an increased preference for English, but with a growing need for bilingualism within the home and community as well as the work force. This need translates into how Hispanic

culture blends into and sometimes abuts to the United States lifestyle. Within churches this growth can be seen in services as bilingual and culturally unique people groups begin to form their own cultic patterns that have cultural integrity as well as personal meaning. There are significant differences between native-born and foreign-born Hispanics in terms of median age, language use, education, income level, and level of assimilation and acculturation (Rodriguez, 41). People come to worship because they are comfortable and receive grace and meaning from the service. Integration does not mean assimilation. A multicultural environment is based on geographic proximity and is justice-oriented.

The third important planning tool for Hispanic ministry is to be culturally conscious of prior denominational choices. Hispanics are divided along denominational loyalties in a way that is extremely different from the United States denominational affiliation. With a long history of Catholic colonization and Protestant missionary work, many Hispanics have an unmatched attitude toward church culture (González, 3). Although Latin America is traditionally Catholic not all Hispanics view Catholicism in a positive light. The same is true with Protestantism as it historically was a break with tradition. National origin, generation, denomination, and even citizenship are factors that impact worship in a particular yet inestimable way.

HOW TO SUSTAIN (CÓMO MANTENER)

Hispanic culture is broad, complex, and unique. In order to effectively integrate, it is of utmost importance to investigate the underlying worship

patterns of Hispanic congregations. Churches must internalize and blend more than language, but also cultural identity. We must be prepared for a new style with continued development. Some trial and error may be necessary in altering worship style, but ultimately the goal is to find balance in what makes cultures thrive together. The fundamental issue is not about basic worship style (i.e. traditional, contemporary, blended, charismatic, etc.) The new question has "shifted to the broader dialogue between tradition and context, an eternal gospel in a multicultural world" (Burreson, 9).

Some of the founding traits that characterize a Hispanic community are tradition, religious commitment, gender organization, and a sense of humor, but the one that looms above the rest is *la familia*, or the family (Estrada-Carrasquillo, 202). Within the tight-knit family, there is a sense of collectivism and values are instilled from a young age. Fundamentally Hispanic culture is sociocentric because "the identity of the individual is shaped by his or her interactions within the community" (Estrada-Carrasquillo, 202). The depth of this cultural identity must be reflected in service planning. In churches looking to exemplify the community found within the Trinity, the formation of Hispanic culture can be a stepping-stone to forming a bonded community of faith.

Another positive idea is to "utilize culture as a connecting tool" (Rojas). Hispanic culture is integrated with storytelling and much deep-set tradition or history. This can be used as an advantage. While not conventionally a ministry tool, view the congregation from a branding and marketing perspective. Some creative elements of a service, or a specific

sermon style will be better received within Hispanic culture. Although impossible to encapsulate the entire Hispanic population, it is a common factor for Hispanic life to be very colorful and vibrant. This cultural trait could have influence throughout the service model, even being reflected in the details of church decoration.

In order to sustain a dual-language ministry model there must be some form of feedback. Encourage the invested attenders of both languages to share their thoughts on what works and what does not. Some feedback may solely reflect personal opinions or discomforts, but input and responses can be powerful tools in shaping a spiritually encouraging ministry. Overall, care must be taken to prevent the caricaturizing of culture. While incorporating new cultural elements is exciting, dramatization and exaggeration lead to marginalization.

Throughout the process, continual communication is key. "Worship is clearly a communication event, and in multicultural congregations, miscommunication and associated problems can arise when communicating cross-culturally" (Black, 6). Communication looks different in English than it might in Spanish due to the levels of expressionism between the languages. English is a Germanic language whereas Spanish is a Romance language so while cognates do exist between the two languages, the origins are different. Grammatically and lexically there are words, phrases, and most notably entire cultural sentiments that cannot be translated. For example, in English the word "love" connotes a sense of affection toward people or things such as "I love my mother," "I love my dog," "I love this song," "I love to eat pizza."

Of course it is understood that one would love their mother more than a slice of pizza but there is not a differentiation in English. In Spanish, however, there are multiple words to express love in varying degrees of intensity. In Spanish “querer” connotes the endeared love of parents, friends, or other family members whereas “amar” is the much stronger romantic love of husband and wife or a lover. There is also “gustar” to mean liking or loving inanimate objects or a romantic crush, in addition to “encantar” to mean a more intense like or love of things. Potentially this can be a frustration in delivering the same message in two languages with varied construction. However, the gift of sharing a message that can reach hearts in two languages is a blessing.

The Journal of Language, Identity, and Education published an article less than a decade ago regarding English-speaking students taking Spanish classes in a school district of primarily Hispanics. After comparing classrooms of students learning Spanish as a second language alongside first-language Spanish-speakers, the author stressed the importance of shared cultural space. The study stressed the complexity of language as a reinforcement of ethnic division as well as the importance of ethnicity as a factor in forming relationships and affirming relationships given major demographic shifts (Paris). The underlying findings of this study revealed the how “interethnic linguistic and cultural sharing holds important keys for bringing youth together to respect each others’ contributions to multiethnic youth space and to our multiethnic society” (Paris, 154).

During the middle stage of progress the main goal is to move from cultural uniformity to multicultural partnership. An increasing number of churches are set into a tapestry of a multiethnic society and linguistic and cultural sharing can be a key tool in evangelism and church education. This phase requires openness as varied cultures grow together through spiritual connection. At the forefront of the process is deep respect for both cultures and their respective worship styles. Welcome the diversity.

UNA FIESTA (A PARTY)

Although Hispanic culture and worship style vary greatly, there are similarities that differentiate Hispanic worship as a "fiesta." Just like the Spanish language, Hispanic worship has a great deal of rhythm, as handclapping and body movement are extremely common. In many Spanish-only services it would not be uncommon to find a dance team as well as a music team for worship. Hispanic worship is also narrative and very emotional on a shared level; it is typical for Hispanic worshippers to be vocally interactive as doctrine will touch hearts and not just heads. Frequently, Hispanic worship is participatory, as members of the congregation will spontaneously share testimonies or request prayers. As mentioned earlier, Hispanic culture traditionally includes storytelling, which may become an element of the service.

Most importantly, Hispanic worship is a celebration of the deeds of God and the mighty presence of a King. Whereas many English-only services have a more somber or measured approach to the presence of the Almighty, Hispanic culture dictates a celebration to the highest, most vibrant degree

(Teja). In terms of comparison, a traditional English service may face challenges when seeking to incorporate a Hispanic cultural style. Awareness of these ethnic differences is helpful, but embracing them is even more beneficial for creating a sense of inclusion. Integrating language and culture fluently requires “recognizing and welcoming the cultural differences between the two groups, introducing multilingual worship services, and inviting all the members to take leadership roles in the church” (Brands).

HOW TO THRIVE (CÓMO PROSPERAR)

Dual-language ministry deserves much celebration. Early assimilation policies in the United States forced immigrants to give up their native languages and cultural practices in favor of the “melting pot” of America. Now, however, many cultural and linguistic minorities are seeking to reclaim or maintain their ethnic histories, languages, and cultural practices. The “melting pot” has now become a “salad bowl” where diversity is welcomed and uniqueness is clearly visible (Black, 3). While it is true that homogenous groups grow faster, the resulting growth is generally broad but not deep. The church can choose not to uphold the mentality of cultural assimilation, which is a roadblock. Or, the church can choose to uphold the biblical principle of sharing the Gospel with all peoples, regardless of language or culture.

Despite challenges, the church can support and encourage internal diversity because the Body of Christ is a family unit. “True worship should enable worshipers to become transformed from being separate cliques to being the body of Christ” (Hawn, 7). Some “bilingual” churches offer a sermon and a worship portion that are interpreted between English and

Spanish. This poses two primary issues: first, in finding a pastor or worship leader who can adequately interpret and second, in meeting the faith needs of a congregation with varying language understanding. There are those who speak only Spanish, those who fluently speak both languages, and those who speak only English; in the last group there are also those who understand simple Spanish and those who do not understand any. It can be complicated to preach to these varying people groups with linguistic accuracy, not to mention the added weight of communication on a culturally accurate level.

Jose R. Irizarry, professor of intercultural religious studies at Villanova University in Pennsylvania beautifully states that the challenge for religious communities is:

...How ready and willing they are to concede to the values and experiences of cultural groups that are different in order to learn from them. Such learning would not be simply an ethnographic pleasantry, but a genuine acceptance of other cultures' contribution to the transformation of religious tradition as a whole (Irizarry, 124).

Worship is about cultural openness and cultural partnership. This means that eternity-minded worship seeks to honor the cultural heritage of our neighbors. It also means that no clear majority dominates and the members reflect the surrounding neighborhood and work together in a shared Christian community (Hawn, 9). This type of congregation models Ephesians 2:19-20 which states:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (NIV).

In order to thrive, the dual-language ministry must be shared in the hands of both Spanish- and English-speakers. Congregants should be encouraged to take ownership of the ministries and programs that they attend. Supporting a bilingual ministry works smoothly when both cultures are represented equally as decisions are made. Even with the best intentions, a Hispanic ministry will not continue to grow if the leadership does not have a cultural background and understanding of the people they seek to serve. The co-leadership of those with Hispanic heritage and English-speakers is the optimal model to demonstrate to the congregation how bilingual, multicultural cooperation benefits all involved.

There is no simple recipe to establish a thriving Spanish-English church. However, these shared factors are useful tools for those interested in growing such a ministry. From an academic perspective and from a social and religious position bilingual worship is possible, rewarding, and beautiful.

ASK THE EXPERTS

There are many influential pastors, educators, and leaders in the field of bilingual Hispanic worship. Michael A. Mata is one such contributor to this worthy work. Mata has invested his life in serving multiethnic communities and growing urban communities. He holds degrees in biblical literature, religion, and urban planning and has worked in various pastoral roles for nearly 20 years. His experience in community transformation, youth leadership development, urban pastoral leadership, intercultural outreach,

and specifically multiethnic ministry are impressive to say the least. As an academic interview source, he was a wealth of knowledge regarding the inner workings of bilingual church programs and the realities of multiethnic communities. During our interview he emphasized that Hispanics are the number one growing demographic in the majority of communities in the United States. Hispanics have the capability to shape not just the future of our nation, but also the culture of our churches. The conversation centered around two questions, "Why should the church respond to Hispanics? And how is the church responding to Hispanics?"

In response to the first question of *why*, Mata lamented that it is often easier to get into heaven than to get into church. As people of faith he exhorted the church to be more welcoming and receptive as a visible extension of God's open arms. In order to have a strengthened community of believers now, we must know our neighbors and worship with them. Through the lens of eternity we can appreciate a unique aspect of God's creation in diverse cultures and languages. According to Mata, "we lose an aspect of God's persona when we shut out differences." It is of utmost importance for the church to respond to Hispanics in a way that demonstrates Christian character. This process of acceptance and integration would be easier if churches were more ideologically and politically minded toward immigrants, as well as inclusive to culture.

Mata's response to the second question of *how* was that "churches should integrate, not assimilate to culture." In essence, inclusion of culture is not an excuse to water down the gospel. Certainly there are different

approaches to outreach based on the target culture. There are unique challenges faced culturally by an outreach program to a Korean, or African American, or Hispanic community. The fundamentals of the gospel should be present in any language, any worship style, or any culture. Often churches seem timid in accepting cultural differences; perhaps in part due to the perceived challenges and the supposedly limited number of success stories.

When asked about the most helpful practices in bilingual communities and congregations, Mata gave a brief list. First: time and patience. For his congregation the integration process lasted between three and five years for the bilingual Spanish program to work smoothly. When moving from a single-language service to a completely bilingual service, there are steps along the way instead of an immediate leap. There will be challenges in achieving adequate translation and interpretation between languages. The process requires dedicated volunteers and capable laymen of the church. Second, in order to have a successful bilingual church community there must be leadership with the special capacity and passion to train. According to Mata, the bottom line is that the church must want this change; otherwise the vision gets lost among challenges. He continually emphasized how communication between English-speakers and Spanish-speakers was just as vital as communication between pastoral leaders and congregants. Third, Mata was honest regarding the losses a church may face amidst the change. There may be people who do not see bilingual worship as a congregational benefit and they may leave to find a congregation elsewhere that meets personal needs. While this may seem disappointing, it re-emphasizes the

importance of church unity in moving to a bilingual format. In order for Spanish-English worship to succeed, it must be the full, committed vision of the church. Church leaders can help smooth this transition by emphasizing the appreciation of others in the eyes of God and remind the congregation of the end benefits and blessings.

Fully integrated multi-ethnic communities do not often coexist successfully in the general world. Traditionally, arriving immigrant groups sought to live among people of their own heritage, language, and traditions. The pockets of separate cultures still exist today in areas of large metropolises such as New York City. Our comfort zone includes what is familiar and most likely homogenous. More effort and perhaps more time are required to address cultural differences. Altering our routines can be undesirable and the process of entwining unique cultures can be exhausting. However, this style of integration and celebration is a special calling and kingdom goal for believers. The church does not follow the patterns or rulebook of the general world for we have a higher calling.

One significant challenge mentioned by Mata is the various subcultures among Spanish speakers. Argentinians are extremely different from Ecuadorians even though they both derive from South American, Spanish-speaking nations. El Salvadorians and Guatemalans also have unique differences, despite their neighboring countries. And even within the same country of Mexico there are distinct subcultures among regions. Although jokingly, Mata made an important point when he said, "not everyone does tacos." Part of our fallen world is that culture often trumps faith. We relate to

our religion through a lens of our culture and history, and much of our culture can be understood through our language. Mixing languages does not mean a mere combination of words: it means a combination of cultures. For this reason, bilingual ministry takes an extra dose of patience and cultural awareness. The pastoral leadership of a bilingual congregation should be even more intentional in investing in and learning the history of a diverse congregation. In fact, one exceptional way to “love our neighbors as ourselves” (Mark 12:31) is to study and embrace culture because the variety of culture reflects the infinite creation of our God.

Another insightful interview took place with Pastor Mark Ledford, Senior Pastor of Westerville Church of the Nazarene in Ohio. Pastor Ledford is a graduate of Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio as well as Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio and has been on staff at Westerville Church of the Nazarene since 1986. He recounted when he first felt God calling him to grow a bilingual Hispanic ministry. He recognized a demographic within his community and felt led to answer the question, “Who is reaching them for Christ?” Since then, Ledford has spent seven years transitioning his church to be fully bilingual for all 4 to 5 services each weekend. He considers the program a success considering the many open doors for relationship building, the collaboration of multiple pastors in ministry, and the growing number of consistently attending Spanish-speakers. He highlighted the importance of this ministry method as seen through church-wide dedication to intercultural evangelism.

On a weekly basis at Westerville Church of the Nazarene, there is no typical service. Ledford described weekly worship as “colorful” and a “celebration” that integrates both language and culture. Although it has taken time to develop full bilingualism, all printed materials are in both Spanish and English and all spoken or sung words are presented in both Spanish and English. All sermons, bulletins, music, videos, testimonies are bilingual, which may cause a delay as information is repeated, but ensures that all language speakers may understand each aspect of the worship service. While initially there were Spanish-speakers in the church, Pastor Ledford notes that he was not fluent in Spanish at the beginning of this endeavor. The church has increased the number of Hispanics on staff so that representation of leadership roles is more equal, and the Senior Pastor has worked to include more illustrations and translated phrases to be geared toward Hispanics. Ledford also noted that the service frequently alternates between which language appears first, so as to give an equal representation of the two.

On any Sunday morning there are two different interpreters who assist with the sermon, either a Hispanic pastor that is interpreted into English or an English-speaking pastor that is interpreted into Spanish. One challenge to these gifted interpreters is that Spanish is not always a literal language and it is difficult to express metaphors or cultural idioms in either language. Another challenge is the wear down of the brain’s ability to interpret for long durations. There is no specific time limit for interpreters to work, however, the duration of the interpreter’s work generally depends on how focused they

feel to continue. This may last between 20 and 30 minutes before an interpreter needs a break. Overall the congregation deserves to have the information relayed accurately and this is not always possible if the context is complex or due to human error (Schoenberg, 2). In order to alleviate the stress of accurately expressing specific or complex terms, it is wise for a pastor to provide sermon notes to the interpreters in advance.

Ledford specifically commended the worship and arts team for their work in bilingualism. He expressed how music is easier to translate because it has less rigid concepts and is more about sentiment and lyrical flow. One of the most beautiful experiences with bilingual worship through song is the indescribable feeling of worshipping alongside someone in a different language. Although the congregation of Westerville Nazarene does not sing in the same language, their hearts and hands are simultaneously raised to a God who created all and understands all. Some churches choose to use traditional hymns that have been translated over time because they are readily accessible and generally familiar. Still, there are a growing number of worship leaders who use contemporary rock-based music and stay modern by translating the lyrics themselves.

Ledford spoke openly about both the drawbacks and the triumphs of beginning bilingual Hispanic worship. First, he noticed a change in the hearts among his congregation as people became less focused on themselves. For a solely English-speaker there may be moments of “downtime” during translation or a cultural gap that cannot be bridged; thus, while bilingual worship may not perfectly meet our personal needs, it may be better overall

for the Body of Christ. Cultural integration is about looking outward and not inward. This may not be comfortable but the subsequent spiritual growth is encouraging. Throughout the transitioning process there may be frustrations when personal sacrifices do not immediately pay off. As mentioned before by Michael A. Mata, the entire church must be on board for the long-term goal. There will be personal and corporate issues to work through along the way.

When asked about the future of bilingual ministry, Pastor Ledford wholeheartedly supported this change in more United States churches. In his words, "Sunday morning is the most segregated time of the week [...] every part of life is integrated, why should the church?" As the world changes and homogenous groups grow faster, the church has the priority to overstep the surrounding culture in order to follow God's calling. Cultural segregation, although more comfortable, is not necessarily better for the future spiritual growth of the church. Ledford optimistically believes that the United States will see more bilingual congregations and multilingual services as the nation continues to change.

CONCLUSION

The history of Hispanics in the United States proves the large influence of language on culture and of culture on the development of style and content within worship. Hispanics are not an isolated ethnic group but rather a growing and thriving population within our borders and among United States communities. Language is one of the principal contributing factors to the way we understand culture, and our cultural background influences our response to the world around us. Our cultural background also guides and

greatly shapes our understanding of faith. With this in mind, it is clear that establishing a worship outlet for Spanish-speakers as well as bilingual Hispanics is not merely an issue of comfort, but an issue of effective evangelism and the future of the church.

The success or failure of a dual-language ministry relies fundamentally on the understanding, respect, and valuing of cultural differences. Without sharing language, skin tone, or nationality, Christian doctrine teaches the power of communication through a universal language—Christ’s love (Ridgaway). Through bilingual religious education the church enforces “the universality of a shared faith and mission while sustaining the value of diversity in matters of doctrines, theological approaches, worship expressions, and traditions within that faith” (Irizarry, 126). Churches are also enriched as they celebrate diverse communities without forcing assimilation to one model of faith. Above all, bilingual worship harkens to the words found in Revelation 7 about the great multitude gathered to worship the Lamb. Dual-language worship helps us “evoke a sense of mystery and awe for the divine” (Irizarry, 127). When we worship in different languages we anticipate a time when “all people, all tribes, all tongues will worship” and we affirm “a prophetic stance that we long for that day and here on earth we are pursuing that” (Kim). Together, in Spanish and in English, we long for the Kingdom that is to come.

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