The Role of Latinidad in the Worship and Formation of Identity of a U.S. Hispanic, Pentecostal Church

Kristina Arellano
Bethel University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ethno_master

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ethno_master/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Music and Worship at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.
THE ROLE OF LATINIDAD IN THE WORSHIP AND FORMATION OF IDENTITY
OF A U.S. HISPANIC, PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

A MASTER’S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE CENTER FOR GRADUATE AND CONTINUING STUDIES
BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY
KRISTINA ARELLANO

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ETHNOMUSICOCOLOGY

JANUARY 29, 2007

Copyright 2007 by Kristina M. Arellano
BETHEL UNIVERSITY

The Role of Latinidad in the Worship and Formation of Identity of a U.S. Hispanic Pentecostal Church

Kristina Marie Arellano

January 2007

Approved: ______________________________________, Thesis Advisor
_____________________________________________________________________

ACCEPTED

Program Director

Dean of Graduate Studies

CONTENTS
Chapter

1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL .................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem ........................................... 1
   Purpose of the Study ................................................. 3
   Significance of the Study ........................................... 4
   Research Questions ................................................... 5
   Delimitations .......................................................... 5
   Limitations ............................................................. 6
   Theory ................................................................. 6
   Researcher’s Role ....................................................... 8

2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................. 10
   Part One: Protestant Worship Ethnographies ...................... 11
   Part Two: A Rationale for Ethnographic Research ................ 14
      Research on Multicultural Worship .............................. 14
      New Hispanic Worship Resources .............................. 17
      Hispanic-Worship Scholarly Research ....................... 19
   Part Three: Establishing a Methodology ......................... 24
      Three Case-Study Models ........................................ 24
      Latinidad and Pan-Ethnicity .................................... 26
   Conclusion ............................................................ 28
3. PROCEDURES ................................................................. 29
    Research Design .................................................. 29
    Research Site Selection ......................................... 30
    Fieldwork ............................................................ 30
    Data Collection .................................................... 32
    Interviews .......................................................... 32
    Data Analysis Procedures ...................................... 35
    Ethical Considerations .......................................... 36

4. IGLESIA EBENEZER ....................................................... 38
    The Church .......................................................... 38
    The Services ....................................................... 43
    Conclusion .......................................................... 46

5. CASE STUDIES ............................................................. 47
    Part One ............................................................ 48
        Vignettes ......................................................... 48
        Music ............................................................ 58
        Culture .......................................................... 69
    Part Two ............................................................ 87
        Case Study Summaries ........................................ 87
        Collective Identity of the Musicians ....................... 92
        Conclusion ....................................................... 96
6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION .............................................. 98

   Important Research Results ............................................. 98

   Research Questions ...................................................... 99

   Research Answers ....................................................... 100

   Research Question 1.1 .................................................... 100

   Research Question 1.2 .................................................... 116

   Conclusions for Question 1 .............................................. 117

   Research Question 2.1 .................................................... 118

   Research Question 2.2 .................................................... 121

   Conclusions for Question 2 .............................................. 122

   Final Conclusions ......................................................... 122

   Recommendations for Future Study ................................. 123

Appendixes

   Research Consent Form (English) ...................................... 125

   Research Consent Form (Spanish) ..................................... 126

   Information Letter (English) ............................................. 127

   Information Letter (Spanish) ........................................... 128

   Pastor’s Interview Guide ................................................ 129

   Musicians’ Interview Guide ............................................. 132

   Glossary ........................................................................... 136

   Works Cited ....................................................................... 138
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the participants at Iglesia Ebenezer for allowing me to conduct research at their church. I would especially like to thank “Pastor Joe” and the musicians for the extra time they put into answering my questions and responding to my research conclusions.

Thank you to John Benham and Music in World Cultures for following your vision to create this program. Your hard work has impacted people across numerous denominations, colleges, universities, countries, and cultures. This master’s program permanently changed my life.

Le agradezco mucho a mi maestro Nachito Herrera. Your stories inspired me to keep on task when I felt overwhelmed. I don’t know how many times I thought about what you told me in piano lessons: “I know it’s hard, but you gotta do it.” Ultimately you showed me that success was not about luck, but hard work and consistency.

Thank you to Joanne Kersten who spent many hours mentoring me and encouraging me to pursue my vision for worship and ethnomusicology. I think of you as my mother.

Thank you to my mother-in-law who helped translate documents from English to Spanish. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement. I love you.

Thank you to my own mom for all your encouragement and prayers. Your advice for organizing all my ideas helped me get through a major road block in writing my research proposal.

Thank you to my friends Sam and Kathy Mercado for all the hours we spent talking and debating about Latin American culture and worship. Your opinions were invaluable for developing my research proposal. You guys rock!

Thank you to Stephen Benham for all your guidance and the hours you spent editing my research. You stretched me in ways no other professor has, and I feel my character is much better for the process.

Most of all, I would like to thank my loving husband who helped me and encouraged me to pursue my dream. Thank you for the numerous hours you spent editing my papers, transcribing interviews, and translating the Spanish. Your input was invaluable for this research. Finally, thank you for teaching me about your Hispanic culture and opening my eyes to a whole new world. I can truly say I have an exciting life.
ABSTRACT

This case study examines how culture influenced the worship of one U.S. Hispanic church made up of thirteen different nationalities. I examined how Latinidad, a unified Latino identity, assisted in the construction of Iglesia Ebenezer’s collective identity enabling them to worship together despite their diversity. I observed several worship services and interviewed eleven participants during my fieldwork: three pastors, two youth leaders, and six worship-team musicians. I compared and contrasted case studies of the musicians to construct a collective identity of this small group. A final analysis compared my fieldwork observations and the perspectives of all eleven individuals to establish a collective identity of the entire church. I found that Latinidad influenced the church in two important ways. It allowed individuals to interact with one another without stumbling over cultural differences, and it provided a culturally relevant context through which the congregation expressed their faith.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a case study of Iglesia Ebenezer,\textsuperscript{1} a Hispanic Pentecostal\textsuperscript{2} church located in the St. Paul-Minneapolis metro areas of Minnesota. I conducted my case study between November 2006 and January 2007. I observed the Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship services and conducted ten interviews with the worship-team musicians and church leaders. My goal was to explore how \textit{Latinidad} assisted in the construction of the church’s collective identity, and how this collective identity influenced the worship.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Hispanic population in the United States is very diverse, and this diversity is reflected in the Hispanic churches. Two aspects contributing to this diversity are differences in nationality and ethnicity, and differences in degrees of acculturation to the American culture. This section examines these differences and discusses how they influence the Hispanic church.

While non-Hispanics commonly view Hispanic church congregations as comprising a single ethnicity, in reality many are multicultural congregations representing a diversity of Latin American countries and cultures including the United States. In his discussion of Hispanic identity in the United States, theologian David Maldonado, Jr. stated, “There are as

\begin{small}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{1} All names have been changed.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{2} See chapter four for a description of Pentecostalism.}
\end{small}
many national origins as there are Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, including Puerto Rico and the United States. Each provides a unique base of ethnic identity and cultural tradition” (Maldonado 1997, 101). The 2000 U.S. Census recorded 35,305,818 Hispanics, an increase of 57.9 percent from the 1990 Census, which recorded 22,354,059 Hispanics. Of the total Hispanic population, 20,640,711 are Mexican, 3,406,178 are Puerto Rican, 1,241,685 are Cuban, and 10,017,244 are from other Latin American countries.

The terms Hispanic and Latino(a)\(^3\) are generic labels describing millions of people. Each person has unique life experiences. The term Hispanic was created to refer to all peoples of Latin American ancestry now living in the United States. Individual preference regarding which term to use varies greatly. The terms Hispanic and Latino will be used interchangeably throughout this study, a practice common in the literature.

In addition to navigating differences in nationality, Hispanic churches must also consider differences in degrees of acculturation. Acculturation is the process by which cultures change as a result of direct contact or indirect influence from another culture (Hicks and Gwynne 1996, 26). Some Hispanics maintain a strong nationalistic culture in their homes, but identify with a generic pan-Latino identity\(^4\) outside the home. Others try to completely assimilate into the U.S. culture, rejecting all Hispanic-related traditions. Still others maintain a strong nationalistic culture, and reject American culture. As a result, acculturation influences where and how Hispanics worship. Theologian Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa stated, “A core spiritual issue facing each and every Hispanic, whether he or she be

\(^3\) Latino with an “o” at the end refers to the male gender, and Latina with an “a” at the end refers to the female gender. Latino in the singular or plural forms can also be used in a generic sense to refer to both males and females when discussing groups with mixed gender.

\(^4\) A pan-ethnic Latin American identity not associated with any particular country. It is shaped by the peoples’ collective cultures and experiences.
of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, or of other Latin American extraction, is how to relate to
the dominant culture and to one’s culture of origin. Many issues in the spirituality of
Hispanic Americans, as such, relate to this core issue” (1997, 155).

Tension in the church can result when people have different perspectives about the
degree to which culture should influence the church. Some individuals treat the church as a
cultural preserve where they can transmit cultural values to younger generations. They may
feel threatened if other members try to incorporate too much of the American culture. Others
feel that to reach the second and third generation immigrants and youth, the church must
adapt to the dominant culture in which they were raised.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

These issues of nationality and acculturation present a complex landscape for
organizing and conducting worship that is culturally relevant. This topic of diversity in the
Hispanic church was inspired by a conversation I had with some Hispanic musicians a few
years ago. I asked them why their church did not use more Latin American styles in their
worship to which they responded: How do you decide what music to use when there are so
many different Latin American nationalities represented in one congregation? Their question
lingered in my mind as I began to conduct initial research for this project.

As I searched for information about worship in the U.S. Hispanic church, I came
across an article by Vasquez (1999). He examined how Latinidad (a term interchangeable
with pan-Latino identity), helped unite a multinational Hispanic church. People set aside their
ancestral identities for a pan-Latino identity shaped by the peoples’ collective cultures and
experiences, and Pentecostal religious beliefs. A useful definition by Rosenfeld described
pan-ethnic identity as “the extent to which people identify themselves as ‘Hispanic’...as opposed to, or secondary to, the national identities” (2001, 162).

I propose that a similar situation occurred at Iglesia Ebenezer: \textit{Latinidad} contributed to the construction of Iglesia Ebenezer’s collective identity, thus unifying a congregation representing several different countries and degrees of acculturation. Although Vasquez examined how both Pentecostalism and \textit{Latinidad} assisted in the construction of a collective identity, this thesis focused solely on the concept of \textit{Latinidad}. This thesis also added to Vasquez’s study by examining how \textit{Latinidad} influenced worship. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to explore how \textit{Latinidad} assisted in the construction of a collective identity that enabled one U.S. Hispanic, Pentecostal congregation to successfully worship together despite differences in national heritage and degrees of acculturation.

\textbf{SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY}

This thesis addressed three deficiencies in scholarly literature:

1. There is a need for more scholarly study and literature in general on the U.S. Hispanic Pentecostal church. This especially includes a huge gap in literature about the church music and worship.

2. Interest in diversity and multiculturalism has exploded in both public and private sectors including the church. While the list of how-to resources on diverse, multicultural, and contemporary versus traditional worship is increasing, the number of scholarly resources is very limited. This research added to the literature by examining how one Hispanic church addressed diversity in their church within the context of worship.

3. The huge population growth of Hispanics has drawn the attention of people from all sectors of society. As a result, there are a growing number of studies addressing the role of \textit{Latinidad} and the pan-Latino identity. This research contributed to this field of study by addressing the role of \textit{Latinidad} within a multinational, Pentecostal community.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I investigated the following questions about the role of Latinidad in identity construction and worship conduct:

1. What role does Latinidad play in the formation of the church’s collective identity, thus unifying a congregation representing several different countries and degrees of acculturation?

   1.1 How does the church describe its collective identity?

   1.2 Within the context of the church setting, do individuals identify more with their national heritage, pan-Latino identity, or American identity?

2. How does the church’s collective identity and concept of Latinidad influence the worship?

   2.1 How does the church decide what music to use when there are so many different ethnicities represented in one congregation?

   2.2 How and to what degree does the church’s concept of themselves as a Hispanic church influence how worship is conducted?

DELIMITATIONS

1. I limited interviews to the church leaders including the musicians because leaders usually have the most control over decision-making processes. For this reason I assumed that choices on how to conduct the worship reflected the leaders’ ideas about worship.

2. The goal of this study was to explore how the leaders of Iglesia Ebenezer constructed their own collective identity and concept of Latinidad. Therefore, my goal was not to prove or disprove a specific viewpoint within the Latino pan-ethnicity debate, but to be aware of the issues when they were discussed.

3. While religious beliefs, including Pentecostalism, were a major issue influencing the worship, this thesis was primarily concerned with how issues of ethnic identity influenced the worship. Therefore, information concerning religious identity was noted, but the research was steered towards the study of the church’s ethnic identity.
LIMITATIONS

Some of the major limitations in this research include the following:

1. The experiences and reflections shared by the leadership at Iglesia Ebenezer are reflective of their particular experience and do not necessarily represent the experiences of other churches including other Pentecostal churches within or outside of their denomination.

2. People, church congregations, and cultures are constantly in flux. This research represents only a short period in the history of the church. Therefore, its conclusions are not intended as a final report on how Iglesia Ebenezer will navigate issues of worship and culture in the future.

3. Time limits and expectations of a master’s level thesis also limited the number of participants that were interviewed. Therefore, I recognize that the church’s “collective identity” described in the research is not reflective of everyone attending the church.

THEORY

A Model for the Study of Latinidad Identity

The information in this section is based on Benham’s structural model of identity (2004). He stated, “Identity and Identity Construction are interrelated and interdependent concepts, i.e., identity as a concept is integral to, and cannot be separated from, the process of identity construction” (2004, 52). This case study examined how one particular aspect of identity, Latinidad, was used in the process of collective identity construction. Benham described Baumeister’s five dimensions of identity: assigned and psychological traits, single transformative events, hierarchy of criteria, acts of personal choice, and required choice. While all these dimensions can be applied in some way to Latinidad, this study examined the acts of choice individuals and the collective church made in how they defined and applied Latinidad to their particular church. A question that aided this study was: How did the church define itself in relation to other groups or society? Or, what decisions did they make to differentiate or align themselves with others? Collective identity is a cultural phenomenon
resulting from the interaction between individuals in a group. It “can serve either to change or preserve a culture or way of life. It is socially constructed rather than naturally generated” (Benham 2004, 62).

**Latinidad and Pan-Ethnicity**

While the goal of this thesis was not to establish how U.S. Hispanic identity is created, a brief introduction will provide an important backdrop for understanding how Latinidad and pan-ethnicity functioned in the Hispanic church setting. For more information see the literature review in chapter two.

In this thesis I approached my research from the standpoint that Latino pan-ethnicity is contextual—the reason for its existence (or non-existence) changes depending on the social context. Pan-ethnicity may be (1) natural, (2) situational, or (3) experiential. These identities may also overlap. Natural identity results when people from different geographical or cultural backgrounds possess similarities to one another. They may recognize these similarities as a means of establishing a common history or paradigm for communication. Sharing Spanish as a common language is a natural identity. Situational identity unites people under a common identity to achieve a goal. In Padilla’s 1985 study in Chicago, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans lived separate daily lives but united as Latinos to achieve political goals. Finally, experiential identity develops out of shared experiences. Ricourt and Danta’s 2003 study in Queens, New York, involved Latinas who daily interacted with one another resulting in an experiential pan-ethnicity.
RESEARCHER’S ROLE

My research at Iglesia Ebenezer was partly influenced by three important personal experiences: my ability to speak Spanish, my experience attending and working in previous Anglo-American and Hispanic Pentecostal churches, and my marriage into a Hispanic family. I have been a member of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination, since 1995. I also completed my undergraduate work at an Assemblies of God university. However, my understanding and interpretation of my experiences in this particular denomination have been tempered by the first seventeen years of my life in which my family attended several different churches. When people ask about my religious background, I tell them I was baptized Catholic, “saved” in the Church of God, attended an Assemblies of God church for a short period, grew up and re-baptized Baptist, attended a Reformed church for three years, and finally chose to return to the Assemblies of God at seventeen years old.

My first major experiences with Hispanic worship and hymnody occurred in 1995, the fall of my freshman year at college. I began attending an inner-city, Assemblies of God, Hispanic church of about eighty attendees located in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I was asked to play violin and occasionally keyboard for the worship. The following fall I did not have enough money to go back to school since I spent the summer in El Salvador. However, my Hispanic husband (then boyfriend) went off to the same college for his first semester. He began attending a different inner-city, Assemblies of God, Hispanic church of about forty attendees in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When I came back to college in the spring of 1997, I chose to attend his church and was recruited to play piano. From January of 1999 until the

---

5 Evangelicals traditionally believe that all people are sentenced to eternity in hell because of moral failure. However, one can be “saved” or rescued from the punishment of hell if he or she repents of moral failure and recognizes that Jesus served out humankind’s sentence through His crucifixion.

6 I define hymnody as songs used in congregational singing.
winter of 2001, I volunteered as the director of the music department. Although I stepped down as director in 2001, I participated as keyboardist until I left in February of 2003. In addition to these two churches, I have visited several others from 1995 to 2006.

When preparing new music, I had to learn most of it aurally from a CD or tape recording or from one of our musicians. With the exception of Spanish hymnals, the first chord charts and notated music I found were written by Marcos Witt, a son of missionaries to Mexico, who became a pioneer in the composition of original contemporary Hispanic hymnody. I witnessed first-hand how Marcos Witt ignited the development of this contemporary-style genre, and how the genre changed and developed over the seven-and-a-half years in which I was extremely involved with Hispanic churches. I also saw how Marcos Witt’s example inspired many Latinos to compose their own original church music instead of translating music from English to Spanish.

Since most of my initial experiences with Latin American and Pentecostal churches have been as a participant and not a researcher, I already understand and use much of the specialized language and culture. This partial emic understanding will require extra care on my part to have participants explain their use of terminology, and not assume I understand meanings.

---

7 For a description of this music, see “New Hispanic Worship Resources” in chapter two.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Compiling information on U.S. Hispanic, Protestant worship was difficult because very little ethnographic research had been conducted on the actual worship experience. The majority of research analyzed published hymnals and gave biographical information on the composers, translators, and publishing companies. I did not find any case studies specifically examining how a multinational Latin American environment influenced the worship. As a result of the limited information, I approached the topic of *Latinidad* and diversity in the Hispanic church from a broader perspective. My review is divided into three parts.

Part One examines music and worship ethnographies of non-Hispanic, Protestant church communities. These ethnographies helped me clarify what issues might influence a church’s identity, and how their identity might influence the worship, and what types of conclusions might be drawn. In addition these ethnographies set precedence for conducting my own ethnographic research.

Part Two establishes a rationale for conducting ethnographic research at Iglesia Ebenezer. This rationale is that to develop relevant worship, one must first understand the cultural context of the worship. Part Two begins by examining resources that provide both anthropological and biblical guidelines for conducting multicultural worship. The authors applied lessons learned from ethnographic research to develop successful multicultural worship. Secondly, Part Two examines new Hispanic worship resources which were
developed in response to the need for culturally relevant worship. Finally, Part Two examines current Hispanic worship research and addresses the lack of sufficient ethnographic studies.

Part Three establishes a methodology for my research by applying three ethnographic case studies. The first two studies by Vasquez (1999) examined the role *Latinidad* played in the identity formation of two Hispanic, Pentecostal churches. While they were briefly mentioned in chapter one, Part Three gives more details. The third study by Alviso (2001/2002) demonstrated how ethnicity may be expressed in a worship service. Part Three concludes by discussing what is driving the development of *Latinidad*.

PART ONE: PROTESTANT WORSHIP ETHNOGRAPHIES

The following four ethnographies examined choices individual church communities made about how they conducted worship. The ethnographers discussed how identity influenced these choices. In the first two ethnographies, churches made adjustments to their worship to improve community relations or attract visitors. The last two ethnographies demonstrated musical choices based on differentiation: defining music not only by the presence of certain characteristics, but also by the lack of certain characteristics.

In his dissertation, *Music Education as Identity Construction: An Investigation of the Church Music Schools of the All-Ukranian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christian-Baptist*, Benham (2004) examined “the role of music and music education in the process of identity construction” (Benham 2004, xi) in three Ukranian Baptist Church music schools. During his field work, Benham observed the church and school activities and interviewed church and school leaders, teachers, and parents. Benham found that each church music school used music education to transmit and contribute to the development of cultural and
religious ideologies, but the specific cultural elements varied at each site. The schools also improved the churches’ relationships with the community by presenting outstanding, culturally relevant programs. Their desire to improve church and community relationships supported the concept that music education may function as cultural reconstruction. Under the Communist Era, the Baptist Church was viewed as a cult. The church music schools were vehicles to transform their community identity and remove negative publicity.

Due to the limited influx of Korean immigrants, many English-speaking Korean ministries are trying to grow by becoming multicultural. In “We’re Not a Korean American Church Any More”: Dilemmas in Constructing a Multi-Racial Church Identity, Dhingra (2004) explored many of the difficulties involved in this transition by conducting case studies of three English-speaking Korean churches. Dhingra discovered that maintaining the Korean culture in the church was extremely important to many of the people because church was one of the very few organizations where they could meet with other Koreans. To satisfy the people’s desire for a cultural outlet without intimidating non-Koreans, the churches strategically provided culturally relevant backstage activities non-culture specific front-stage activities. For example, pastors stopped identifying Korean-specific issues from the pulpit (front-stage), but allowed people to discuss Korean issues in small-group activities (back-stage).

The next two ethnographies demonstrate examples of differentiation. In her ethnography “Let the Church Sing!”: Music and Worship in a Black Mississippi Community, Smith (2004) explored how music expressed the worldview of a Black Baptist church community in the deep South of Mississippi. Smith discovered that the church’s dichotomous worldview (black versus white, sinner versus saint, etc.) was present in their musical choices.
The older adult choir preferred spirituals, hymns, and anthems. In contrast the gospel choir, made up of youth and young adults, sang mostly “rock spirituals” and “rock gospel” (Smith 2004, 35). The older adults had a difficult time accepting the music of the gospel choir because of its secular, Delta Blues culture influences. The church musicians focused on the differences between their Gospel music and that of jazz and Delta Blues because they did not want their music being associated with “devil’s music” (Smith 2004, 37).

In his article, “Nou Kwe man Sentespri” (We Believe in the Holy Spirit): Music, Ecstasy, and Identity in Haitian Pentecostal Worship, Butler (2002) compared the worship of two types of Pentecostal Haitian services: that of the prayer and fasting services in independent heavenly army churches and that of Sunday-morning services in organizational churches. Butler found that:

Haitian Pentecostal music serves a threefold task: it allows Pentecostals to assert distinct religious identities in relation to denominational Protestants, Catholics and those who practice Afro-Haitian folk religion; it distinguishes independent and organizational Pentecostal churches; and it expresses a Haitian cultural identity through the use of musical style, instrumentation, and language (French and Haitian Creole) (Butler 2002, 87-88).

While heavenly army churches generally used traditional Haitian instruments, organizational churches often differentiated themselves by using “modern” instruments such as drum kits, electric keyboards, and guitars. Many organizational churches believed traditional Haitian instruments and heavenly army worship were too closely tied to Voodoo practices.

---

8 Independent heavenly army churches were nondenominational churches. In parts of their musical worship, individuals engaged in spiritual battles against demonic forces. These battles were characterized by sounds and dramatic actions which resembled military fighting.

9 Organizational churches belonged to well-established church denominations such as the Assembly of God.
PART TWO: A RATIONALE FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Research on Multicultural Worship

Interest in multiculturalism and diversity has exploded in the United States. Immigrants were previously encouraged to assimilate and give up their native language. Now immigrants are encouraged to maintain awareness of their heritage and teach their native language to their children. The majority culture is institutionally taught to respect people’s differences. These changes have prompted church leaders to develop several new resources addressing the multicultural and immigrant church.

In her book, *Culturally-Conscious Worship*, Black (2000) distinguished between worship involving multicultural participants and worship that is multicultural:

I want to distinguish between those congregations that assimilate persons of other cultures into the traditional worship of that congregation and those that intentionally design worship to be inclusive of the diversity of cultures represented in the congregation. I have chosen another phrase to describe the latter: “culturally-conscious worship” (Black 2000, 12).

Black described different models of and motivations for developing multicultural churches and worship services, Biblical precedence for multicultural worship, how to find or develop a common culture that unites people, and how to balance different needs. There are four appendixes of global worship resources and a questionnaire to learn about the worship-culture needs of one’s church. Black determined culturally-conscious worship was a complex pursuit requiring great sensitivity and hard work.

In *Diverse worship: African-American, Caribbean & Hispanic Perspectives*, Maynard-Reid (2000) examined how culture influenced worship throughout history. He examined which parts of worship must Biblically remain constant despite cultural differences and historical change. For illustrations, Maynard-Reid surveyed the worship of three cultural
groups: African-American, Caribbean, and Hispanic. He concluded by discussing the rational, emotive, and physical aspects of worship.

The next four resources begin with scholarly study, but then apply the conclusions to develop “culturally-conscious” worship. This first resource examined changes that occurred in the worship of the Roman Catholic Church. Vatican II caused dramatic changes in Catholic liturgy, especially the incorporation of music styles representative of the congregation’s culture. Barkhymer (2004), in his Master’s Thesis, *The Emergence of World Music in Hymnals of the American Catholic Church*, examined these musical developments by studying three Catholic hymnals. He noted that the hymnals included several Latin American and African hymns, but only a few Asian hymns. He learned that the publishers agreed to share some copyrighted pieces. Barkhymer recommended that future publications include more Asian hymns and substantially increase the number of Latino hymns. He challenged publishers to develop hymnals that were culturally representative of their constituents. Finally, Barkhymer shared how his own church worked towards culturally conscious worship.

In her book, *Praising in Black and White: Unity and Diversity in Christian Worship*, Aghahowa (1996) conducted case studies of two contrasting African American churches. They were associated with the United Church of Christ and the Assemblies of God. In this study Aghahowa examined how personal taste affected the worship and peoples’ responses to the worship. Aghahowa concluded that churches need to examine whether they misappropriate personal taste as a measurement of the spirituality of worship.

In addition Aghahowa made the following three recommendations. First, the worship, especially the preaching, must be “live and exciting,” [and relevant to the people’s lives] if
churches are going to grow and thrive (Aghahowa 1996, 171). Sermons must address social injustices affecting society, spiritual nourishment, and personal and practical issues. Secondly, churches need to be gender inclusive. Restricting women from substantial roles in ministry relegates them to second-class citizenship. Finally, churches need to reexamine their treatment of social issues. In her review of the Religious Right, Aghahowa passionately concluded that many of the political solutions the Religious Right tried to enact actually hurt rather than helped the poor and suffering. “In formulating policies to punish those who some feel have made poor moral or lifestyle choices for which they must now suffer, the judgmentalists forget that one person’s destiny is tied to the destiny of all of us” (Aghahowa 1996, 187).

Hawn (2003b) examined the complexity of multicultural worship in his book, One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship. Part I approached worship anthropologically, looking at issues such as assimilation, non-verbal communication, and power and communication. Part II described four case studies of four multicultural churches. These case studies were conducted and written by Knipe and Stevens (Grace Church), Hawn (Agape Church), Aponte (All Nations Church), and Parker (Church of the Disciple). These case studies described the worship in the context of the churches’ history, neighborhood demographics, congregational constituency, and neighborhood programs. In part III Hawn described the role of musicians and music in enabling multicultural worship. Hawn described the worship leader as an “enliveners” who must bridge the gap between the musicians and congregation, and encourage the congregation to worship. Finally, he presented lessons learned from the four case studies. Hawn concluded that churches must first understand the
various cultures in their congregations, and then look for commonalities that unite the groups.

Another book by Hawn (2003a), *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally*, discussed how churches are incorporating ethnic hymns and songs into their liturgy. However, this may lead to “liturgical ethnotourism” (Hawn 2003a, x), a borrowing of songs without learning about the people who write the music. Hawn countered this ethnotourism by examining the lives, culture, and work of five of the most influential church musicians found in North American hymnals” (Hawn 2003, back cover). These included Pablo Sosa (Argentina), I-to Loh (Taiwan), David Dargie (South Africa), Patrick Matsikenyiri (Zimbabwe), and John Bell (Scotland). Hawn concluded that worship must genuinely reflect the diversity of the community, be open to new experiences, and demonstrate a concern for the global community.

**New Hispanic Worship Resources**

The previous resources recognize that each cultural group has specific needs. Of Hispanic music, Maynard-Reid stated, “Hispanic music is not only meant to stimulate the emotions of the participant; it is a means by which a people recapture their rich and varied history. Through music they return to their roots. In music they express their inner and total self—their yearnings, feelings, struggles, and historical passages” (Maynard-Reid 2000, 188).10

While many Hispanics still enjoy translated hymns of European tradition and Gospel songs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is a strong shift towards rejecting this

---

10 Summarizing Hispanic theologian, Virgilio Elizondo (1975). From *Christianity and Culture: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Ministry for the Bicultural Community*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 168.
music. Maynard-Reid documented this trend stating, “Many Hispanics find it difficult to put their soul into such musical expressions. It is clear that having the hymn in their language is not the problem. ‘What is missing is the ‘sentimiento,’ the ‘feel,’ the ‘passion’ which only authentic cultural music can bring.’” Raquel Gutiérrez-Achón stated “in order for [church music] to have authenticity, it has to include our cultural and linguistic roots” (Gutiérrez-Achón 1996, 101-102).

The need for culturally relevant Hispanic worship has resulted in an explosion of new Christian hymnody in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches of Latin America and the Hispanic United States. The music is influenced by Latin American folk and popular music and English-language contemporary Christian music. The song texts express the social realities of the Latin American and Hispanic American experience.

The Methodist church produced several worship materials incorporating songs composed by Latin Americans. Two books published in 1979 and 1983, Celebremos and Celebremos II (Escamilla 1983) were written both in English and in Spanish so that non-Spanish-speaking congregations could use the materials. A new Spanish language hymnal entitled Mil Voces Para Celebrar was presented in 1996 (Martinez) by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. An additional book of worship, Fiesta Cristiana: Recursos para la Adoración came out in November of 2003 (Martinez).

The last ten years also resulted in a huge growth of original Hispanic Christian music in the recording industry. Some of the most popular Hispanic contemporary Christian music artists include Marcos Witt, Ingrid Rosario, Marco Barrientos, Danilo Montero, and Jesús

---

Adrian Romero. Several artists such as Marcos Witt and Jesús Adrian Romero published accompanying sheet music. *Llamada Final* (Final Call), a Pentecostal ministry out of Los Angeles, California, also has a popular series of worship books and recordings. In addition Marcos Witt wrote books on worship including *Que Hacemos Con Estos Musicos* (What Do We Do with These Musicians?) and *Adoremos* (Let’s Worship).

Publishing houses and distributors have taken notice and have developed extensive Latino divisions. Some of these include *Pan de Vida* (Bread of Life) distributors, *Editorial Mundo Hispano* and *Casa Bautista de Publicaciones* (Hispanic World Editorial and Baptist Publishing House). These distributors have large websites of Hispanic Christian resources including categories for music and worship. Clicking just on the Alabanza (worship) genre of Christian music at the Pan de Vida Distributors resulted in 370 listings of CDs.

**Hispanic-Worship Scholarly Research**

Unfortunately while resources for use in Hispanic worship have substantially grown, actual scholarly studies of Hispanic Protestant worship in the United States are limited. One of the most important resources is the book *Alabadle! Hispanic Christian Worship* (González 1996). This landmark book on U.S. Hispanic worship is a collection of writings from Hispanic authors of various denominations. This review describes three of the chapters. In

---

12 These artists produce a Spanish-language version of English-language contemporary Christian music, also known as praise and worship. The English-language version was birthed in the 1970s. It constantly evolves to match recent secular pop and rock styles. The Spanish-language version exploded in the 1990s. The music is similar to the English-language version, but eclectic. It is influenced by pop and rock, salsa, and what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish music. A larger percentage of the music is written in minor keys than its English counterpart. Recently I was informed about influences of *régaton*, a Latinized version of hip hop. Finally, one frequently encounters story-telling texts, probably an influence of the *corito* genre. Based on this brief discussion, one may more accurately conclude that what I label as Hispanic contemporary Christian music is actually a combination of several different genres placed under one umbrella term.

his introduction to Hispanic worship, González provided an overview of the major factors affecting Hispanic worship in most Hispanic churches. Soliván’s chapter described important features common to Hispanic Pentecostal worship. Finally, Gutiérrez-Achón gave a brief historical summary of the development of Hispanic hymnody. She discussed differing views on whether or not there is an established Hispanic American hymnody. Finally, she encouraged the development of creative Hispanic hymnody that explores the cultural music of Latin America. Another important resource is Maynard-Reid’s (2000) book, Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean & Hispanic Perspectives. Part IV described many general characteristics of U.S. Hispanic worship. However, much of the content was similar to Alabadle! Hispanic Christian Worship. After these books were written in 1996 and 2000, dramatic changes have occurred in the Hispanic Christian music scene; I am not aware of any scholarly studies documenting these developments.

Ricourt and Danta’s 2003 ethnography, Hispanic de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood, included two Protestant church case studies. One was of Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostal, an Assembly of God church. The other was of La Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida de Corona, a First United Methodist Church. Each case study described how a family began attending the church, the history of the church, a typical Sunday worship experience, and additional church activities. Both churches had diverse Latin American nationalities. Ricourt and Danta concluded that the “Latino pan-ethnicity that emerged was both experiential and institutional; although the purposes that brought people together were religious” (Ricourt and Danta 2003, 91).

Of all the topical studies related to Hispanic Protestant worship, hymnal music has received the greatest focus. The final four resources examine hymnal music including texts,
musical genres, theology, composer biographical information, and hymn usage. The researchers examined actual hymnals, conducted observations and interviews, mailed out questionnaires, and examined secondary sources for historical information. As noted by the dates of publication—1968, 1978, 1981, and 1997—these resources do not examine any developments made since 1997. That three of these studies (1968, 1978, and 1997) are limited to hymnal music is also significant because much of the Hispanic Protestant church music has been passed on through oral tradition.

Greenlaw (1968) examined nine of the most popular hymnals used in Protestant churches of Mexico in his dissertation, *Traditions of Protestant Hymnody and the Use of Music in the Methodist and Baptist Churches of Mexico*. These hymnals include *El Nuevo Himario Popular; Himnario Especia; Himnario Evangélico Presbiteriano; Himnos Selecto; El Nuevo Himnario Evangélico; Himnos de Vida Cristiana; Lluvias de Bendición*; and *Himnos de Gloria, Cantos de Triunfo*. Greenlaw concluded that the hymnals included only a few indigenous hymns and that the contents were so eclectic they did not present an accurate picture of true Mexican hymnody. Many of the Western hymns were based on nineteenth century gospel songs introduced by Protestant missionaries.

To study the role of hymnody in the churches, Greenlaw sent questionnaires to every Spanish-Speaking Baptist and Methodist church in Mexico. For comparison, several additional questionnaires were sent to churches of other denominations. He received a total of eighty-four replies. While respondents noted that hymns were used to worship God, more often they cited their role in the conversion experience (Greenlaw 1968, 182).

When asked about musical styles, people noted the presence of *coritos* whose rhythms resembled popular Mexican rhythms. Others recognized the influence of the march
and the popular ballad from the revolutionary period in Mexico. Some noted a “decidedly national flavor” (Greenlaw 1968, 213). Pastors also felt that hymns were frequently interpreted in a jazz style.

In a 1978 survey of *Spanish Evangelical Hymnody in Mexico and the United States (1864-1978)*, Gomez was one of the first to provide biographical information on translators and composers of Spanish hymnody in the United States and Mexico. Gomez also explored the hymn characteristics and texts. The survey concluded with several important indexes. These indexes documented the number of Spanish Evangelical hymnals published in Mexico and the United for each year from 1964 to 1977, and gave a list of publishing companies.

In his study, *Recent Developments in U.S. Hispanic and Latin American Protestant Church Music*, Lockwood (1981) chronicled the development of new Hispanic sacred music from 1960 to 1980, and gave a theological rationale for the composition new music. The results of a short survey he sent to two hundred and fifty church music leaders throughout the Western hemisphere demonstrated widespread interest in current developments.

In his study, Lockwood found nine ways in which much of the music still suffered from the effects of Western cultural imperialism. The following is a summary of his major points. (1) Music and texts demonstrated ethnocentrism: even though guitars, accordions and other popular instruments in Latin America were more accessible to churches, historical mainline church rejected them in favor of organs. (2) Hymns lacked theological diversity and balance. (3) There was little interest in representing the different historic eras of the Christian church. (4) The music had an essentially Greek, dualistic theology in which the secular world was sinful and should be avoided whenever possible. (5) Song texts treated personal relationships with God and others as extremely individualistic. As a result worship became a
private event even though one was worshipping in a sanctuary with hundreds of other people.

(6) Some hymns treated the Christian life as a passive faith that just let life happen. Others encouraged “conquest” evangelism in which souls must be conquered for the Kingdom of God.


Rather than focusing in fine detail on any one topic, Blycker conducted a survey of numerous issues. In his textual analysis Blycker studied major theological themes, socio-political references, translation issues, poetic issues, and hymn structures. By comparing the frequency each hymnal placed on a theological theme, Blycker asked, “Do the hymnals selected for this study faithfully represent the doctrines to which their denominations or sponsoring groups adhere?” (Blycker 1997, 66).

In his discussion of musical genres, Blycker identified the different types of Western European hymns. He described how they were brought to Mesoamerica and incorporated into the churches. Blycker also described the development of Hispanic hymnody and identified
many of the textual and musical characteristics “indigenous” (i.e. non-Western European) to Latin America.

Some of Blycker’s most important contributions were his work to identify the hymnal publishing companies and editorial boards, identify the names and biographical backgrounds of hymn composers, and document the history of the hymnals’ development. Spanish language hymnals commonly had incomplete or even inaccurate composer/translator and copyright information. Some hymnal pages identified composers on the right while others identified their names on the left.

PART THREE: ESTABLISHING A METHODOLOGY

Three Case-Study Models

This thesis was modeled on three previous case studies. The first two are ethnographic case studies by Manuel Vasquez (1999). These case studies were referred to in the “Purpose of the Study” section in chapter one. The following description expands on the previous discussion. Vasquez studied and compared the collective ethnic and religious identities of two Hispanic Pentecostal churches located in New Jersey and Washington D.C. In particular, Vasquez focused on two questions: What roles do “Pentecostal ideas, practices, and forms of organization play in the construction of community and collective identity among Salvadoran and Peruvian Pentecostals in the U.S”? Secondly, in what ways do “Peruvian and Salvadoran Pentecostals draw from their religious resources to redeploys their Latinidad in response to the multi-ethnic and multicultural milieu of their receiving localities” (Vasquez 1999, 618). He found that one church identified mostly with their Pentecostal beliefs while encouraging their members to set aside their ancestral ethnic
identity for a pan-Latino identity. This church was a fully bilingual Spanish and English-speaking congregation with first, second and third-generation Latinos. The congregation represented twenty-four countries but had a “small but growing group of first-generation, Spanish-speaking Peruvian immigrants” (Vasquez 1999, 622). The other church identified foremost with their national identity. Most members were first-generation immigrants from El Salvador. Vasquez determined that Pentecostalism offered a broad set of survival strategies for Latinos suffering from problems such as poverty and anti-immigration policies. He concluded, researchers must study the role of Pentecostalism from a broad perspective rather than from a narrow view that “Pentecostalism does x for Latinos” (Vasquez 1999, 631).

The third case study was an analysis of how music created an atmosphere that attracted people to a Pentecostal Hispanic church in downtown Los Angeles (Alviso 2001/2002). By observing the worship services, examining the music and interviewing the pastor, Alviso concluded that music performed twelve roles. These roles include “sanctifying of the space, spirit invocation, deepening of the spoken word, attracting people to the service and holding their attention, helping the worshipers to achieve an ecstatic experience, providing a feeling of pleasure, fulfillment of scriptures, evoking connections with Israel (the ancient promised land), evoking connections with America (the modern promised land), creation of another world within the service, alluding to the possibility of a better [world] outside the church in our lifetimes and beyond, and personal transformation” (Alviso 2001/2002, 77).

While the third case study did not directly address the issue of religious and ethnic collective identity, it did address how religious and ethnic identities could be observed in a
worship service. For example, using music for spirit invocation highlighted the importance that Pentecostalism places on the role of the Holy Spirit. Using music to evoke connections with America highlighted how Latinos connected with or acculturated to U.S. culture. While most people have had experience talking about themselves and their beliefs (i.e. their identity), I assumed few people had considered how identity influenced their choice in music. Thus, these twelve roles served as a starting point to establish a tangible topic for conversation. Alviso’s study provided clues for how to observe the services and how to direct interview topics. In addition to using Alviso’s study as a conversation starter, his church service description served as a model for how to describe and document church services I observed in my research.

**Latinidad and Pan-Ethnicity**

This introduction summarizes the national debate over the salience of a distinct Hispanic ethnic group, and considers factors driving the development of the pan-Latino identity. Possessing Spanish as a common language has created a unique social context enabling people from different Latin American countries to communicate and integrate. The integration resulted in a pan-national solidarity referred to as Latinidad or Hispanidad. A national debate is occurring over (1) whether Latinos should be treated as a homogenous group or as separate nationalities and (2) why Latinidad exists. These questions implicate a serious possibility—the development of a new unique ethnic group. Several scholars have written essays and conducted research on the topic.

Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu (1986), Rosenfeld (2001) and Claassen (2004) conducted statistical studies to determine whether there were homogenous Hispanic behavioral patterns. Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu’s study on Hispanic consumer behaviors
revealed great diversity in behavior and opinions thus weakening the argument for Hispanic homogenization. In contrast, Rosenfeld’s study on Hispanic marriage patterns and Claassen’s study on political views demonstrated homogenous behavior, thus supporting the viability of a Hispanic ethnic group.

Other authors examined why *Latinidad* exists. Padilla (1985) and Calderon (1992) conducted ethnographic studies of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago and Monterrey Park, respectively. They determined that *Latinidad* is situational, useful for establishing political power to obtain political objectives. Rodríguez (1998) examined Latino responses to a 1969 fiesta in downtown San Jose, CA. He discovered some Latinos felt *Latinismo* supplemented their national identity and strengthened Latino political power. However, some Chicanos felt *Latinismo* supported oppression of the indigenous peoples.

A pan-Latino ethnicity may not only be advantageous for Latinos but also for the economic industry and U.S. government. Gómez (1992), and Dávila (2001), and Gale (2003) found that television networks, radio stations, magazines, food stores and other venues encouraged Latino homogenization because marketing towards a large Latino market is easier than marketing towards each individual Latin American ethnic group. Establishing a pan-Latino identity also addressed the United States’ system of racial documentation for the U.S. Census:


Several authors also documented how an experiential pan-ethnicity grew out of a shared immigrant or minority experiences. Ricourt and Danta (2003) conducted an extensive
ethnography of Queens, New York. They discovered that an experiential pan-ethnicity grew out of Latina’s participation in daily neighborhood and work activities.

The term *mestizaje* was developed by Virgilio Elizondo (1992) to describe the intermixing of Europeans with indigenous peoples of Latin America during periods of conquest and colonization. Later it was applied to the Mexican-American immigrant or minority experience of being pushed to the margins of society and ignored. Justo González commented on the immigrant experience faced by huge numbers of Hispanics.

If, for whatever reasons, the lands of our birth are now permanently lost to us...we are no longer Latin Americans living in exile in the United States but Hispanic Americans, people who have no other land than this, but who nevertheless remain exiles....

...Hispanic Americans who are native to this country also live in ambiguity. They have no other land. They never did. And yet in many ways, both tacitly and explicitly, they are being told to go home. Home? Where? They have no other home (González 1990, 41-42).

These studies revealed a great diversity of conclusions regarding the pan-Latino ethnicity debate. This review identified three reasons for *Latinidad’s* existence: pan-ethnicity may result from natural, situational, or experiential circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Developing culturally conscious worship requires more than merely incorporating the culturally appropriate music. As Hawn stated, this leads to liturgical ethnotourism. Instead, as did the ethnographers in this review, one must examine music in its cultural context to understand the deeper meanings behind the music. I examined how *Latinidad* influenced worship within the context of one multinational church community.
CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

This study is about the culture and worship of Iglesia Ebenezer, a Hispanic Pentecostal church in the St. Paul-Minneapolis metro areas of Minnesota. I conducted field work at the church from November 2006 to January 2007. I observed and recorded several Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship services, one music practice, and one women’s prayer meeting. In addition, I talked with participants and conducted ten semi-structured interviews.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I organized this case study around the constructivist position that valid information can be obtained by examining how participants interpret their own experiences. Rather than trying to establish one specific interpretation of how Latinidad influenced Iglesia Ebenezer’s worship, I presented detailed perspectives of several participants. A case study approach enabled me to focus on Latinidad while allowing other topics to emerge from the participants. It was also conducive for conducting semi-structured interviews and observations.

14 All the names in the study have been changed.
As a result of my participation in the Hispanic community, I have visited eleven Hispanic churches in the St. Paul-Minneapolis metro areas, so I was familiar with music used in local churches before I began my fieldwork. This music included genres such as *coritos*, Hispanic contemporary Christian music, commercialized salsa, rock, what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish-influenced music, and contemporary Christian music translated from English to Spanish. My research site selection of Iglesia Ebenezer was based on what I felt best represented a local Hispanic, mainline Pentecostal church. In addition, Iglesia Ebenezer’s congregation represented a variety of nationalities and generations.

**FIELDWORK**

The following information describes the logistics of how I contacted the church and introduced myself to the musicians. My fieldwork occurred over three stages. The first stage involved five separate visits in April 2006-November 2006. During this time I visited the church, contacted the pastor, and obtained research consent. The second stage occurred from December 3 to December 21, 2006. During this period I observed Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship services and one music rehearsal. I conducted six semi-structured interviews with the pastor and five musicians. I also talked with a few members of the church about my research and obtained their insights. After stage two, I analyzed and wrote chapters four and five, compared the data for themes, and looked for areas that needed clarification. The final stage of my research began on Wednesday, January 3, 2007. I returned to church to conduct four additional interviews and share my conclusions with the participants. These last four interviews included the worship leader/director, the head pastor’s wife, assistant pastor, and the youth leaders.
I contacted the pastor of Iglesia Ebenezer to verbally request permission to conduct fieldwork on Sunday, May 21, 2006. I visited the church again on October 29, 2006, to inform the pastor I would soon begin my fieldwork, but he was absent that day. On Wednesday, November 15, 2006, I returned once again to obtain written permission to conduct research. This time the pastor and I discussed the details of the field work, and I presented him with the research consent form. On the visits in May and November I was accompanied by my husband. I asked him to accompany me in case I had problems communicating the details of my research intentions in Spanish. He helped explain why the consent form was needed and helped clarify the details of my interactions with the church. We also explained that my husband would help translate when needed. The pastor requested to read the consent form over the weekend and meet again on Sunday to discuss any questions he might have.

On Sunday, November 19, 2006 my husband and I returned to the church and met with the pastor at which point he signed the consent form. To my surprise, the pastor explained that he and two leaders in his church had participated in a similar study the previous year. Another researcher had visited the church and interviewed them about church leadership and growth because their church was growing so rapidly. The pastor suggested I talk with this researcher. I chose not to talk with this researcher during my study because I did not want his conclusions to bias how I conducted my own research.

On Sunday, December 3, 2006, I introduced myself to several of the musicians. I explained I was conducting research, asked for permission to interview them, and handed out my research information letters. The vocalist and I recognized each other from non research-related visits I had made to a bookstore where she worked, and through casual interactions
while attending my other Hispanic church. She was very willing to participate in my research. Sensing that additional personal contact would help ease my outsider persona for the other participants, I decided to attend Wednesday night services in addition to Sunday mornings. At my suggestion, the pastor introduced me and my husband to the church on Sunday, December 10, 2006.

DATA COLLECTION

Since my husband is Hispanic and speaks Spanish, I asked him to accompany me during my research and interpret when I needed his assistance. The only time he interpreted for me was when I introduced myself and my research to the pastor. I also believed his presence would function as a “gate-keeper,” showing the participants I had a personal connection to their culture. Previous personal experience suggested that having a Hispanic husband and being able to speak Spanish myself enabled me to develop a rapport with Hispanics more quickly than may have occurred otherwise.

During my fieldwork I recorded services and interviews onto a minidisc. During services I usually set the minidisc on an empty chair next to me. I sat in a different location at almost every service to obtain a variety of perspectives. While at the field site I occasionally jotted notes in a three-by-five notebook. These notes were mostly records of names, times, numbers of people, questions I wanted to ask, and hypotheses.

INTERVIEWS

During my research I interviewed all six musicians (One was practicing with the worship team, but not playing during services because he was new to the church.), the head pastor, full-time assistant pastor, the head-pastor’s wife, and a married couple serving as
youth leaders. Except for the youth leader couple, these semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one. Before I began my fieldwork I decided to limit interviews to the head pastor and musicians. I determined that if more information was needed, I would extend interviews to other church leaders such as deacons or board members. I developed the following criteria to determine if I needed to conduct additional interviews:

1. If the interview responses were clear and consistent among participants, I would assume I had received sufficient data, and would not conduct additional interviews.

2. If the interview responses were unclear, I would first conduct follow-up interviews with the same participants. Or, if I determined that additional interviews would likely be unhelpful, I would conduct interviews with other leaders to compare responses.

3. If the interview responses were clear but inconsistent among participants, I would assume I needed to conduct interviews with additional leaders to draw conclusions.

4. If the interview responses by the worship musicians were clear and consistent with one another, but had significant differences with the pastor or music director, I might conduct additional interviews with the same participants to ask about the differences. Or I might conduct interviews with other leaders to compare responses.

Unfortunately, I had not seriously contemplated a fifth criterion which I encountered during my fieldwork: a major communication error. Meanings of Spanish words change from country to country. This language challenge was described by every single participant, and I experienced it first hand. During the first stage of interviews I asked questions about how culture affected the church’s worship. Unfortunately, I did not know that for parts of Latin America, the word afectar (affect) means “to hurt or injure.” Therefore, when I asked participants how their culture affected the worship, they interpreted it as how did their culture hurt or injure their worship. After figuring out the problem, I did very short follow-up interviews with four participants, replacing the word afectar with influir (to influence).
However, these second interviews were only two or three minutes. I decided the most effective way to collect accurate information was to interview new participants using the corrected terminology. While the communication error definitely colored participants’ responses during the last third of each interview, I feel confident that I detected which responses were biased by this error. Much of this information was discarded, but I chose to include some of it because it provided valuable perspectives that may not have been stated had I asked the questions correctly. I added a footnote whenever I used this information.

The ten interviews were conducted with three different goals. My goal for the musicians’ interviews was to explore differences and similarities in their perspectives. The case studies in chapter five were based on these interviews. All the musicians’ interviews closely followed the interview guide found in the appendix. This interview guide was used as an outline to direct the flow of discussion and ensure I covered the same topics with each participant. During every interview I added questions and left out questions, depending on the direction of the conversation and interests of the participant. These interviews lasted from thirty-five to forty-five minutes.

My goal for the pastor’s interview was to discuss the church’s history and vision statement and learn about his personal cultural perspectives. The interview included most of the questions found in the interview guide in the appendix. This interview lasted forty-five minutes.

My goal for the final three interviews (pastor’s wife, assistant pastor, and youth leaders) was to clarify hypotheses and fill in missing details needed for my analysis in chapter six. I wanted to clarify how participants felt the culture influenced the worship and whether participants identified more with their Hispanic or national identity or if they even
thought about their cultural identity while at church. In addition I asked the pastor’s wife to
describe the church’s theology and spiritual beliefs. These three interviews lasted about
twenty minutes.

All the interview recordings were transferred to my home computer or laptop and
transcribed verbatim. My husband helped transcribe several of the interviews conducted in
Spanish and edited the ones I transcribed in Spanish. Six interviews were conducted in
Spanish and four in English. We used a software program called Audacity to play back the
recordings while we typed. He also translated most of the quotes used in this paper. I then
edited the translations to ensure they flowed properly with the remainder of the text. The
quotes were translated to preserve their idiomatic style. Spanish idioms were translated to
their equivalent English idioms. The majority of white noise words such as “um, ah, right,”
were deleted for ease of reading. The only time they were left in was when participants
hesitated before responding or appeared to stumble over words because they were unsure of
how to answer questions. Extended periods of silence were noted by “[silence].” Words that
were inaudible or unclear were indicated by “[inaudible].”

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data was analyzed by indexing and coding for themes, comparing results to current
literature, verifying the results with participants, and examining it through the lens of
personal experience. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, 166) described indexing as the use of etic
categories which “were drawn from the initial theoretical framework and applied to the text
in order to aid in the retrieval of material for further analysis.” Coding refers to “the
development of categories that emerge from the data (emic) as a result of reviewing the data
for inherent concepts and patterns.”
Data verification occurred on several levels. Fieldwork data was compared to current literature. Interviews were used to elicit information and verify hypotheses I developed during my fieldwork. After reading chapter six, my Hispanic husband commented on my interpretations based on his own perspectives as a member of the Hispanic community. Finally, my personal experiences as a Pentecostal Christian and as a previous member of two Hispanic Pentecostal churches were considered in my interpretations. Final interpretations were shared with the participants in written English and Spanish. After reading chapters four and six, the head pastor and his wife were very excited. The pastor told me it was just like I had taken an x-ray of his church. He wanted copies to use for training their church leaders.

Final analysis of data is presented in several forms:

1. A description of what happened during a typical Sunday morning service.
2. A description of the different music genres and instrumentation used in the services.
3. Direct quotes in their original English or English translations.
4. A written analysis answering the research questions.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The primary ethical consideration in this study was that the participants and the Hispanic population did not just become another topic of scholarly study. My desire was to develop a practical resource to help churches understand the dynamics of Hispanic worship and culture. It would be humbling, but a great honor, if Hispanics considered this study worthy of consideration for promoting future discussion. Finally, I hope that this study is useful to those interested in working with or developing a multinational or multicultural church. My desire is to serve as a catalyst to promote cultural understanding.
A second concern of mine was drawing attention to Hispanics who would prefer to remain in the shadows of the political system. The immigration system frequently uproots individuals and families who have worked, married and raised children in the United States for several years, all done legally. I have had several Hispanic friends deported. Many others are struggling to maintain their life in the United States while waiting through a deportation process that may last months or years.

In light of the two issues presented above, several steps were taken to protect the rights of the participants:

1. The objectives of the research were shared with the participants verbally and in writing.

2. Current and possible future use of the information obtained during research was shared with the participants verbally and in writing.

3. All names in this study were changed.

4. The pastor was asked to sign a general Research Consent Form for the site before the study was conducted. Other participants received an information letter.

5. Final interpretations and quotes to be used in the thesis were shared with the participants in writing.

6. Participants’ rights and desires were considered first when making choices about including information from personal interviews.

7. With respect to collective interpretations about the church, the pastor’s and music pastor/director’s rights and desires were considered first when choices were made about presenting final interpretations.
CHAPTER 4

IGLESIA EBENEZER

Chapter four is divided into two parts: The Church and The Services. *The Church* describes background information including the following:

1. A summary of the church’s theology
2. A general demographic description of the Twin Cities metro area
3. Biographical information about the pastor
4. A history of how the church began
5. A brief cultural description of the church
6. A description of the church’s vision statement and how it impacted church activities

*The Services* describes a service as it unfolds and worship expressions observed during congregational singing.

**THE CHURCH**

**Theology**

Iglesia Ebenezer is a Hispanic Pentecostal church. It is a member of a well-established Pentecostal denomination, with beliefs representative of mainline Evangelical churches. The church believes in one God revealed in the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus was God’s only Son who came to the earth in human
form, died on the cross for the sins of mankind, and rose three days later. New believers are
baptized by immersion in water as a public demonstration of their conversion.

As a Pentecostal church, they believe that the Holy Spirit works in the same way
today as two thousand years ago. Believers can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit as
recorded by Acts 1:8, 2:4, 10:44-46, and 19:1-7. This baptism empowers recipients with
boldness to fulfill the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20) and power to work miracles.
Evidence of one’s Holy Spirit baptism is the ability to speak in tongues, a special prayer
language given by the Holy Spirit, but not understood by individuals.

Twin Cities Metro Area

Iglesia Ebenezer is located in the inner-city metro areas of St. Paul-Minneapolis,
Minnesota. About three million people live in this diverse community. The Cityview Report
2006: Strategic Data for Effective Ministry (Mayer 2006) recorded the following statistics.
The Twin Cities ethnic make-up is 74.3% Euro-American/White (2,452,500 people), 8.8%
African/African-American (291,500 people), 8.7% Asian (285,500 people), 3.8% Hispanic
(125,000 people), 1.2% Native American (40,000 people), and 3.2% other (105,500 people).
“The Hispanic population more than doubled from 1990 to 2000. The Twin Cities was the
eighth fastest growing Hispanic city in the Unites States during the 1990s decade” (Mayer
2006, 35). Thirty-seven percent of the Hispanic population has lived in the Twin Cities less
than five years.

Out of 2,808 churches, 133 are Hispanic. Twenty-five percent of Hispanic churches
are located in Minneapolis, twenty-four percent in Saint Paul, and fifty-one percent in the
suburbs. Nearing four hundred constituents, Iglesia Ebenezer is one of the ten largest
Hispanic churches in the Twin Cities.
Pastor Joe

Iglesia Ebenezer began in 1993 when the current pastor felt a call from God to start the church. At that point Pastor Joe had just completed two years of training at an Anglo-American Minnesota Bible school for training pastors. Born in Latin America, Pastor Joe moved to the United States 27 years ago. As a result he had adapted well to the American culture. During the fieldwork we mostly spoke in Spanish. When I spoke Spanish, he spoke Spanish. When I spoke English, he spoke English.

Church History

The church began in a northern suburb of the Twin Cities and then moved to an inner-city location at the beginning of 1994 where the concentration of Hispanics was higher. The church moved because, although Hispanics were visiting the church, they were not staying. The church began to grow after this move. Pastor Joe attributed this growth to “evangelism, much prayer, and holding services of fire.”

Church Culture

Today the multicultural congregation represents thirteen different countries including the United States, Mexico, Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Aruba, and Asia. The following paragraph is Pastor Joe’s description of the congregation.

In our congregation we have twelve or thirteen different groups. So our church is multicultural, but we all focus on the same thing. We are a diverse church, but we are united in the Lord. It is very interesting because, for example, the languages. It is the same Spanish, but we use different words. So I think the church culture is very interesting, and I like that there is diversity because of what we learn. For example, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans are different, but we learn from one another.
Church Vision

About four years ago the church initiated a plan leading to dramatic growth and change. Central to this plan was a vision statement underscored by clear goals. The pastor organized a vision team of five leaders who worked together with an Anglo-American church that had gone through the same process. After evaluating how Iglesia Ebenezer was doing, they concluded they needed goals and purposes. After much research, evaluation, and prayer, they developed a vision with three focuses: reconciliation, restoration, and growth. Pastor Joe emphasized that they did not copy anyone in their vision statement and plan: “It was something original that God gave for the church.” The vision statement stated:

Our Vision: RRIG: Reconciliation, Restoration, and Integral Growth
The plan that God has given us as a congregation is to serve in the body of Christ as a multiethnic ministry with the purpose of:
- Reaching the Lord’s harvest
- Receiving the harvest
- Preserving the harvest
- Providing the harvest with effective tools for growth through the Word of God

In their vision statement they included the word “multiethnic.” The pastor explained the purpose for this in the statement below.

The reason why we included the word ethnic is because we know that in Minnesota, there are many ethnic groups. There are 336,000 people from other countries. But we also knew that the Gospel has no borders. The Gospel is for everyone. So we made the decision to open the doors to all races, all ethnicities, the ethnic groups. And for this reason we started the translation ministry, to translate [the sermons] from Spanish to English. So we have a group of leaders who translate from Spanish to English.

While the vision statement recognized and responded to the needs of a multiethnic congregation, its most important focus was spiritual growth. Pastor Joe described some spiritual values that were part of the vision statement:
We took the values that we have in our vision from the Bible. Not much from culture, only the Bible—what the Bible says about me and about the new believer. So more than anything, they are Biblical values, not really cultural. 

…We believe we are all priests of God, that we can all serve God. This is a very important value we have in our vision. We all have a call of God on our lives. This is another important value. Another value is that God wants to use everybody—not just the pastors or teachers—everybody. So these are important values. We have a long list of values.

Church members frequently referred to these spiritual values. While the focus of this study is not the spiritual beliefs of the church, one will frequently encounter references to these values in the quotes throughout this paper. This is because participants’ culture and faith were intertwined: they expressed their faith through their culture.

Once the vision statement was completed, the team put together an elaborate presentation including a video and power point presentation. They first presented the vision statement and plan to a group of about forty key leaders in the church. They gave a second presentation to a group of about fifty leaders on a retreat. Finally, in May of 2003, they presented the vision statement to the entire church. When the church began talking about the vision, they grew by more than 100 people in a month’s time. Before the implementation of the vision statement, church attendance averaged 200 to 250 people. By the time I began my fieldwork, church attendance averaged almost 400 people.

In addition to numerical growth, they experienced great spiritual growth. As part of the vision, the church began a discipleship program that taught new believers the fundamentals of the Christian life. The second discipleship level equipped and empowered Christians to disciple others. The church experienced many changes as a result of the discipleship program. Many people became members, marriages and families were restored, and many people experienced emotional healing.
In addition to the discipleship program, the church began translating the sermons and announcements from Spanish to English. The first three or four times I attended, someone approached me, asked me if I understood Spanish, and offered me a wireless headset through which I could hear the English translation. Since I understood Spanish I declined. Translation needs varied greatly. On some Wednesday evenings no one needed translation. Most Sunday mornings only a few individuals needed translation including both Latinos and non-Latinos.

As a result of the translation ministry, many mixed-language couples began attending Iglesia Ebenezer. The spouses understood and spoke varying degrees of Spanish and English:

For example, there are wives married to Hispanics, and they don’t speak any Spanish. So the Hispanic doesn’t speak any English….But she wants an American church. So you benefit because you understand, but your husband doesn’t. So the facility of translation allows them both to understand because the preaching is in Spanish, and she is listening in English. Therefore, I believe it is a very good method. And the good thing is, for example, the Chinese people speak English, the Japanese people. So it is very easy. We can have couples from other cultures, including other countries, and we can minister to them (Pastor Joe).

This past year, 2006, the church focused on organization and growth in even greater detail. They developed six specific ministries such as a parking lot greeters, foyer greeters, and altar workers. Each ministry had a manual. Directors were put over these ministries to train others. The organization and ministry opportunities empowered members because they played an important role in the church. My conversations with members confirmed that, for many, the strong organization was a major reason why they attended Iglesia Ebenezer.

THE SERVICES

The remainder of this chapter describes a typical Sunday morning service. My initial impressions of the church were, Wow! This is a friendly church! Parking lot greeters helped individuals find parking and welcomed them to the church. Upon entering the church
building, two more greeters were always waiting to welcome people. In the fellowship room where people congregated, talked, and drank coffee, more greeters waited to fill out visitor cards and help orientate people to the church. Another line of greeters waited along the outside wall of the sanctuary to welcome people, help them find seats, and reroute wandering babies.

The sanctuary was nearly empty at 11:00 AM, the time the service was scheduled to start. Twenty to thirty people sat quietly talking, praying, or waiting silently for the service to start. By a quarter after, the service had started and the sanctuary was half full. People came from their Sunday school classes or just arrived to church. Over the next hour another hundred people wandered into the sanctuary. By 12:00 PM congregational singing ended and announcements were made. Names of new visitors were read. They were invited to come to the altar to receive a prayer of blessing. At this point the sanctuary was almost full—between 300 to 350 attendees. Next, the tithes and offering were taken. First the children, then the youth, and then the adults approached the pulpit to place their tithes and offerings in large baskets on the floor. The musicians played another song during the offering. After the offering, children and youth were dismissed to attend age-appropriate classes. The pastor preached forty-five minutes to an hour, until about 1:15 PM when he made an altar call, inviting individuals to commit their lives to God or receive prayer for healing and other needs. The worship team played background music or sang while people prayed. By 1:30 PM the service ended. Many quickly left. Others mingled and talked for another half hour. By 2:15 everyone left. At 6:00 PM that evening, another service was ready to begin.

Sometimes the service activities changed. At one service, congregational singing lasted until 12:25 PM. Once a month, communion was served between the worship and
preaching. A baby dedication occurred at another service. Sometimes special guests ministered instead of the pastor. A missionary and a traveling musician ministered at two separate services.

These final paragraphs describe the congregational singing. The congregational singing was led from the pulpit by a group of five musicians, one female and four males ranging from mid twenties to thirties in age. Instrumentation included electric keyboard, electric rhythm guitar, bass guitar, and drum set. The fifth musician sang back-up vocals. Most services were led by the keyboardist. All the instrumentalists sang back-up vocals except for the drummer. Most of the music was similar to English-language contemporary Christian music common in charismatic churches. Many songs were influenced by Latin American flavors. Chapters five and six describe these influences in more detail.

Congregational singing was initiated by the worship leader who briefly greeted the congregation and prayed for God’s blessing over the service. Singing lasted about forty-five minutes and included six or seven songs, each which were repeated three to four times. Services always began with three or four fast songs followed by two or three slow songs. Several times the worship concluded by singing a medium or upbeat tempo song. During one service in which congregational singing lasted until 12:25 PM, the worship ended with a string of three fast songs. Stringing songs together, one right after the other without playing a musical conclusion is common in corito\(^{15}\) singing. Iglesia Ebenezer usually concluded each song before beginning another, so this was an atypical experience.

---

\(^{15}\) A corito is a type of Hispanic hymn written in a style that resembles polka or what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish music. Many coritos are written in minor keys, and they frequently use story-telling texts.
Most people stood during the singing. An equal number of males and females, and all ages from youth to older adults participated by singing, raising their hands, clapping, jumping, shouting, and praying. Occasionally, some prayed or sang while kneeling at the altar. In between songs or verses one of the worship team members, usually the worship leader, exhorted the church to freely express their worship or to call out to God. Frequently, at the end of slow songs, the musicians played while singing improvisational words of praise or adoration. The congregation was encouraged to do the same. At the conclusion of the congregational singing, the head pastor or full-time assistant pastor approached the pulpit to make concluding remarks about the worship and transition to the rest of the service.

CONCLUSION

Iglesia Ebenezer was a multinational, Hispanic Pentecostal church located in the diverse inner-city metro areas of St. Paul-Minneapolis. Its constituents were from thirteen different countries. The church had a well-established vision statement that influenced the organization of their ministry and reflected their spiritual values. Worship was lead by a small band. The music and congregation were lively, and the people responded with physically demonstrative expressions.
Chapter five presents case studies of the musicians. The information is based primarily on their interviews. Chapter five is divided into two parts. Part I presents detailed case studies of each musician. Part II summarizes these case studies and then describes the collective identity of the musicians. The collective identity of the entire church is discussed in chapter six.

The interviews were divided into two sections. The first half of each interview focused on the musical backgrounds of the participants and their perceptions of the music used at Iglesia Ebenezer. The second half focused on how participants defined culture, how they described their culture, and how they perceived culture influenced their church experiences.

Part I describes these interviews in three sections: Vignettes, Music, and Culture. The major points are summarized at the end of most participants’ responses. The vignettes section describes the musical background of the participants. It describes how participants got involved with the worship team, how they learned to play their instruments, previous musical experiences, and personal musical tastes. These vignettes provide a context for the following two sections.

The music section describes musicians’ perceptions about the music played at Iglesia Ebenezer. It begins with a technical explanation about how new music was chosen and
learned, and how song lists for worship were selected. The remainder of the section describes the musicians’ perceptions about Iglesia Ebenezer’s music including what styles of music were played, what music was appropriate for worship, and to what degree did or should culture influence the way people lead or organize worship.

Finally, the culture section examines the musicians’ cultural perceptions. The information is taken from the second half of their interviews (how participants defined culture, how they described their culture, and how they perceived culture influenced their church experiences). Data from observations and other interviews is integrated into the analysis as deemed appropriate.

PART I

VIGNETTES

Estér

Estér was born in Puerto Rico. At age three, she immigrated to Springfield, Massachusetts, where she was raised. In 1998 she moved to the metro areas of St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minnesota. She easily navigated the English language and was one of three musicians who interviewed in English. She was in her thirties. Estér was very involved with the church. She was the worship team back-up vocalist, adult Sunday school teacher, a discipler, and a youth group volunteer. She had attended Iglesia Ebenezer for about six years. Estér had been involved with the worship team for three to four years. She used to sing solos in church before participating regularly on the worship team. Sometimes the worship team asked her to participate with them for special events. One time she was asked to direct the congregational singing. She was integrated into the group shortly after.
Estér had participated in church music since she was young. She attended church since she was eight years old. While growing up, she always sang in church choirs and sometimes sang solos. In 1996 she heard another vocalist singing in church, and she asked to borrow some of her soundtracks. Estér practiced with the soundtracks at home until God developed her voice and ear. She had produced two CDs since 1996, and was near completion of her third. Now she travelled to different churches, singing and ministering through music, much of which she composed.

Estér liked to vary the style of music in her recordings. When asked about how she decided on the style of music to use in her recordings, she responded:

So I’ll just tell the [person] who’s doing the arrangements, well, you know, I wanna, I wanna record this song in a, in a Texan. Or I wanna record this song in flamenco. You know, I also hear what’s coming out—what’s popular, what [pause]. And so this last recording that I’m doing, I wanted to do it like, uh, little bit of different flavor of different countries. So that was one of the ways I decided to do it. And...for the most part, they decide what instruments are going to be used. But in one song or the other I’ll tell them, well, I want, I want a guitar, you know. I want a bolero with, with a Spanish guitar. Or I want this one to have a violin with a Spanish guitar. Or I want this to have a violin, you know. So sometimes I’ll make suggestions and sometimes when I write the song, I’ll have the style that I wanna use for it. Or God will give me the mus[ic]—you know, the sound to it if it’s a praise and worship, and how I want the music to go.

Growing up at home, her family listened to a lot of Christian music, especially old hymns and coritos. However, working at a bookstore expanded her musical interests

---

16 Texan music is similar to the polka with 2/4 or 6/8 time signatures. Typical instrumentation includes accordion, bajo-sexta (a twelve-stringed guitar), and drums. The term Texan is interchangeable with norteño.

17 Schechter defined bolero as a “slow-paced, romantic, sentimental song-type in Mexico. It occupies an important place in the repertoire of mariachi ensembles” (1999, 460).

18 A corito is a type of Hispanic hymn written in a style that resembles polka or what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish music. Many coritos are written in minor keys, and they frequently use storytelling texts.
because the bookstore carried a large variety of Hispanic Christian music. When asked if she had a favorite style of music she personally liked, she responded:

Yah, I think praise and worship is kind of like my strongest points, but I do like a lot of the Caribbean styles like you know salsa,\(^1^9\) and merengue,\(^2^0\) and you know. So it’s kind of like a mixture of what I like…And that’s like what I love to do is to sing praise and worship. But I also like to sing the faster kind of, you know, Latin style music.

Her favorite songs the church sang were *Levanto mis manos* by Samuel Hernandez, *By the Power of Your Love* by Darlene Zschech, and [song title] from her album. She was drawn to these songs because she felt they brought the presence of God.

**Summary:** Estér was born in Puerto Rico, but grew up in the continental United States and spoke fluent English. She was in her thirties. She learned to sing through aural tradition. Her position on the worship team was back-up vocalist, but she also worked as a traveling music minister and recording artist. Her favorite music was contemporary praise and worship.

**Jorge**

Jorge was born in Mexico. He immigrated to the metro areas of St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minnesota, about six-and-a-half years ago. He was also very comfortable in the English language. He was in his twenties. Jorge had been attending Iglesia Ebenezer for about a month at the time of the interview. At the time of his interview, he was still getting to know the people in the church. He was rehearsing with the worship team, but not playing during

---

\(^1^9\) Salsa is a dance genre developed and commercialized in New York in the 1960s and 70s. Salsa is a combination of jazz harmonies and the Cuban rhythms *son* and *guaracha*. Typical instrumentation includes keyboard; bass; brass instruments such as trumpets, trombones, or saxophone; and percussion such as the claves, guiro, cowbell, timbales, bongos, and congas.

\(^2^0\) Merengue is the national dance of the Dominican Republic. Merengue is usually played in cut-time. It is inspired by the *rumba francesa*. Traditional instrumentation includes the *tambora* (a two-headed drum), metal guiro, and sometimes *marimba* or the *marimbola*. Modern ensembles have incorporated the piano and saxophone upon which rapid melodies are played.
services. Before attending Iglesia Ebenezer he was the worship leader at another Latino church. He was in charge of organizing the music for the services and special events, and leading the rehearsals.

Jorge played several instruments including guitar, drums, keyboard, and bass. He also sang. At his previous church he primarily played guitar and keyboards. However, since he was the only guitar player, he taught someone else to play guitar and he focused on the keyboard. Like Estér, he primarily learned to play by aural tradition. He used to watch others play and then copied what they did.

Guitar was kind of hard because it was my first instrument. I started playing when I was thirteen, right? And so, like my pastor taught me D, and then G, and then A. And that was it. And then after that in my church home, there were a lot of musicians, and a lot of Christian bands would come to our church and perform. And so I watched what they did with their fingers and would just copy exactly what they did. And I would just put [my] fingers. And just practice them without knowing the names. And then I would ask a question: Ey, what is this? What is that? What is this position? What is this? And they would say, Oh that’s B minor, and that’s A7 or suspended A, whatever. So that was the guitar part.

Jorge first became interested in music at the age of four when his mom bought him a little toy guitar. He remembered having a general interest in music and ability to express himself. As he grew up and went to church, he saw other musicians and the passion they had for worship. Developing a love for music, he decided maybe he should become a musician.

Growing up in Mexico, he was mostly surrounded by Western hymns and coritos. When asked what music he personally liked, he responded:

What music do I? We also played like Marcos Witt back then. Pretty much that was the main thing over there. Marcos Witt was like the pioneer of Latin, Latino music. So pretty much coros, coritos, alabanza y adoración (choruses, coritos, praise and worship), and then Marcos Witt stuff. But soon as the music, the Christian Latino music started to grow up, and a lot of Christian Latino, Christian musicians and singers started rising up. So then I started, you know, grabbing tastes from different worship leaders like Danilo Montero, Jesús Adrian Romero, Marco Barrientos. Ah,
then, now that I came here, I still have that, but I also like the English worship. So I kind of mix it up all together.

Summary: Jorge was born in Mexico, but spoke almost fluent English. He was in his twenties. Jorge was new to Iglesia Ebenezer but worked as the worship-team leader at his previous church. He sang, played guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums. He primarily learned to play by aural tradition. Jorge’s favorite music included both Latino and English-language contemporary praise and worship music.

Fer

Fer was born in Mexico. He moved to Minnesota two years ago. Fer could speak a little English at the time of the interview, but was not conversant. Therefore the interview was conducted in Spanish. Fer was in his twenties. He had played drums for the worship team for two years.

Fer first learned about Iglesia Ebenezer when he attended a regatón21 concert which they hosted. He returned to attend a service and saw no one was playing the drums. He asked Diego, who was the worship leader at that time, if there was an opportunity to play. Diego invited him to attend the practices. He was able to play for the worship services after attending practices for a month-and-a-half.

Fer first became interested in playing the drums between the ages of five and seven. Like Estér and Jorge, Fer learned to play by aural tradition: listening to songs, practicing different time signatures, and practicing on his own. He also listened to many different genres such as praise and worship, salsa, merengue, regatón, heavy metal, and rock music.

---

21 Regatón is a blend of reggae, hip hop and rock. The music was popularized in Puerto Rico in the late 1990s. The music is very popular among Latin American youth.
One of his goals for 2007 was to enroll in a music school to learn more because, “when you offer your best to the Lord, the Lord offers you the best.”

Fer’s favorite music was heavy rock. He also liked some regatón and recently went to a regatón concert by a Puerto Rican musician. However, his favorite music groups were the Christian rock groups Petra and Guardian. He preferred to listen to the music in Spanish, but also listened to it in English to help him learn the language. Petra and Guardian inspired him, especially their lyrics.

**Summary:** Fer was born in Mexico and spoke almost no English. He was in his twenties. Fer learned to play drums by aural tradition. His favorite music was heavy rock.

**Inosencio**

Inosencio was born in Mexico. He could speak a little English at the time of the interview, but was not conversant. Therefore, the interview was conducted in Spanish. Inosencio was in his early thirties. He had played bass and keyboard for the worship team for two years. He described his role in the church as a Levite.  

He supported the worship by playing the bass and keyboard. A few times each year, when the leader was absent, he filled in as worship leader. During my field work I observed him co-lead on keyboards with Alex on guitar for a Wednesday evening service.

Inosencio attended Iglesia Ebenezer for two years before playing for worship, watching and observing and getting to know the church. After this time he talked with the pastor who introduced him to the group. He practiced with the group four months, and then began playing for the services. In addition to playing bass and keyboard, he learned the

---

22 The Levites were the group of Jews responsible for performing the temple worship and sacrifices.
arrangements to new songs and helped the group learn the songs by showing them how to play the parts.

Inosencio mostly played by ear like the previous musicians. When he was twelve, his pastor visited his house during summer vacation and asked if he wanted piano lessons. He did not want to learn, but his mom forced him. During these lessons he learned to play “all the chords.” After three years of practicing he began playing piano for worship. He learned to sing just by singing during worship. He taught himself bass by transferring his piano knowledge to the bass and watching other players. At age seventeen he went to a Catholic school of music for one year where he learned to read music and play the acoustic and classical guitar. There he primarily studied the musical genre rondalla. This genre was performed by an ensemble of ten to twelve guitarists playing boleros. In addition to bass, keyboards, and guitar, he wanted to learn to play the violin and accordion. Inosencio pointed out that the accordion was popular in Mexico.

Where Inosencio grew up, people loved to listen to pop and rock music in English even though they did not understand the words. Mariachi was also popular. In the North, people listened to banda music. However, Inosencio’s favorite music was Latin rock which he felt very passionate about playing. He also liked the contemporary Hispanic Christian music like that of Marcos Witt and Marco Barrientos. He found these musical styles attractive because:

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{23}}\]

Mariachi is a Mexican music ensemble. Typical instrumentation includes violins, the diatonic harp, trumpets, guitars, and the guitarrón, a Mexican bass guitar. Mariachi music indicates a specific type of instrumentation, not a specific song genre.

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{24}}\]

Banda is a fusion of norteño music with brass bands.
The words are fresh. The songs say what the youth live. And because generally, the words are different. The Latin music in the churches renews itself. Every three or four months the music is renewed.

Summary: Inosencio was born in Mexico and spoke minimal English. He was in his early thirties. He played bass and keyboard and sang for the worship team. He was one of two musicians who received formal training, having studied acoustic and classical guitar for one year at a Catholic music school in Mexico. He was also one of two musicians who knew how to read music notation. His favorite music was Latin rock and he was very interested in playing for or starting a mariachi band.

Alex

Alex was born in Mexico. He could speak conversational English at the time of the interview, but not sufficiently to interview in English. However, when I stumbled over my Spanish he did switch to English to bridge the communication gap. Alex was in his twenties. He played guitar with the worship team for three-and-a-half years and frequently led the singing on Wednesday evening services during my fieldwork. His favorite music was rock.

Alex converted to Christianity four years ago while visiting family in New York. This conversion ultimately led him to join the worship team at Iglesia Ebenezer. He shared with me the following story about his conversion and how it led to his participation on the worship team.

While visiting New York for three weeks, his family brought him to church, but he had a very bad attitude. However, the worship surprised him because it was very different from his church in Mexico. At the fourth service he attended with his family, he decided to
sit closer to his sister-in-law who was playing the drums. He wanted to listen to her and
watch how she played. When she started playing during communion, he suddenly realized he
was crying.

I was crying and, and it wasn’t just, it was when I reacted. I said to myself, “What is
happening?” But in that moment it just came to my mind to ask the Lord’s
forgiveness for my sins... And I was listening to the song they were singing. And it
was something that impacted me very much. And in that moment, my way of thinking
changed completely. And it was there that I realized that something existed that is
bigger than every thing, that there was a supernatural power. And I cannot say that it
was anything less than the Holy Spirit.

In that moment I received a hunger to know more of God. In that moment I
didn’t want to hear about anything but the Lord. And I told my sister right then, “You
know what? Make me copies of some cassettes for, I want to listen to the music that
you all play. Since I’m familiar with it and it makes me feel good, it relaxes me. It
takes me to another level. And.” And I wanted to listen to more of the Lord’s word. I
had a Bible that I was reading all the time... I believe it was an experience I will never
forget.

And then I returned from New York to the Twin Cities in Minnesota. And the
first thing I did was look for a church, a church where they preached the Gospel.
Because I was very hungry for God. I forgot about the bars, I forgot about the clubs. I
forgot all my vices. It all happened to me in that moment and I started to go to this
church. And I remember that back then the pastor would give time for testimonies.
And instead of testifying I would go in front to sing a song. Because I used to play
guitar but, just a little….I only knew a few simple chords. So, I would go in front to
sing some songs from the ones I could rememb...er from childhood. And well, I kept
attending. I would come Wednesdays, I would come on Sundays.

I was attending the church about 6 months when the worship leader, the
worship leader or Diego asked me if I wanted to serve in the music [ministry]. And,
and I just [stood] there like, like, I don’t know, impressed. I can say in awe because I
never expected that. And I knew that it came from above. And I didn’t even think, I
just said, “Okay, yes I want to serve.” I was only sitting in the pews for six months
before the Lord called me to serve. And from then on, well, I have been here on the
worship team.

At the time Alex joined the group, he could only play a few chords on guitar. However, after
a lot of practice and a lot of encouragement from the worship leader, he was ready to play for
the services.
Summary: Alex was born in Mexico and spoke conversational English. He was in his twenties. Church music played a significant role in his conversion experience. He played guitar and sang for the worship team. He primarily learned to play guitar through oral tradition. His favorite music was rock.

Diego

Diego was born in Mexico. He spoke English comfortably and interviewed in English. He was in his early 30s. Diego had been the worship team leader for seven to eight years. He also used to minister in Mexico. Diego always led worship from the keyboard but could play several instruments including the guitar (his primary instrument), bass guitar, harp, and violin.

Diego began playing keyboard at Iglesia Ebenezer about one-and-a-half years after attending the church under the direction of another leader. He eventually took over the leadership position. His responsibilities included setting up and repairing the sound system, selecting the song orders for worship, conducting rehearsals, and leading worship for services.

Diego began playing guitar at the age of nine when his dad taught him a few chords and how to tune. He continued to learn by reading instruction books. He started learning piano at age fourteen. At age seventeen he attended a music school in Mexico City where he obtained a three year degree enabling him to teach high school music. His major instrument was guitar, but he studied several instruments, choir directing, music appreciation, and how to read music notation. The school focused mostly on Mexican music. After graduating he taught high school music in Mexico and then piano lessons in the United States.

25 The diatonic harp common to Mexico.
At the time of my fieldwork, Diego was focusing on developing his voice and wanted to take lessons when he had more time. He started singing around six years old. His favorite music was the Mexican bolero and felt his voice best fit that genre. He grew up listening to bolero. Now he wanted to start a mariachi band, play ranchera music with acoustic guitars, and sing lead voice. Diego was also very interested in opera because of its professional sound. He frequently attended opera concerts in downtown Minneapolis.

Summary: Diego served as the worship team director. He was born in Mexico and spoke English very well. He was in his thirties. Diego played keyboard and was the lead vocalist for worship, but he also knew how to play guitar, bass guitar, harp, and violin. He earned a three year music degree in Mexico City and taught high school music in Mexico and piano lessons in the United States. His favorite music was the Mexican bolero, but he was also interested in opera. He was also very interested in singing lead vocal in a mariachi band and playing ranchera music.

MUSIC

How music for congregational singing is chosen

This section describes how new songs for worship were selected and how worship song-lists were chosen. The worship leader or one of the members brought music recordings to the group. These songs were usually taken from new CDs that came out, but sometimes they re-did old songs in a new style. The group listened to the recordings. Based on the instrumentation available to them, they decided which songs they could play.

\[26\] Ranchera literally means ranch or farm. It has been described as the Mexican version of country and western music. Ranchera texts traditionally talk about love relationships or patriotic subjects. The songs are usually performed by mariachi ensembles in the style of the waltz, the polka, or bolero. When mariachi ensembles perform rancheras, they frequently use less brass and incorporate more guitars.
Stylistically, new songs were based on whatever the top praise and worship recording artists, such as Marcos Witt or Jesús Adrian Romero, were producing. The expectation was that the congregation was already listening to the songs. Therefore, if the group wanted to learn a fast song, and a recording artist produced a fast salsa, the group might learn salsa. The frequency with which they introduced new depended on how quickly the congregation learned them. Sometimes they did not introduce a new song for three months.

The members listened to a recording of the song over and over and learned their parts aurally. No written music was used. Sometimes Diego listened to a song two hundred times to learn all the musicians’ parts. When the musicians came together for practice, they helped each other learn any parts with which they were struggling. One song could take as much as three to four weeks of rehearsals. When first learning a song, they tried to copy the recording as closely as possible. However, after learning a song, they improvised, never playing it the same way twice. The musicians used to rehearse Thursdays and Fridays, but now, since they were so busy, they stopped scheduling practices on Thursdays. However, on Saturdays, they frequently called each other to get together and practice. Rehearsals sometimes lasted five to six hours.

Whoever led congregational singing selected the songs for that service. Diego led congregational singing for most services, but Alex frequently led on Wednesday evenings. Occasionally, Estér and Inosencio led services. The following two quotes describe how song lists were selected. The first quote by Alex describes a spiritual approach to selecting the song list. The second quote by Diego describes an approach based on church events and congregational needs.

First of all, well, you prepare yourself. You communicate with God to ask for direction, to ask the Lord to bring to mind the songs with which you will be able to
minister to the people….The first thing one does is to pick songs to exalt Him, to tell Him He is good and [to let us] rejoice in His presence. And we can do some five songs, four songs, six songs of joy. And from there, well, there is a time when one prepares himself in order to enter into His presence more, to be able to feel the anointing in oneself, His presence more than anything else. And one begins to worship, to tell Him, well, that we love Him and “Thank You” for what He does in our lives. They are songs that are directed to Him because of [all] He is. And that is the way we pick the songs (Alex).

I will look if it’s going to be a holiday [and] we’re doing something. If it’s not then I always pick out the songs that we’re going to be singing. Even if we’re getting one new song, but if it doesn’t fit in the repertory I’m going to be singing, I don’t put it in there. I just wait until the next service. So what I’ll do is start with some, if it’s like I said, a holiday. [Or] if the people are going through problems, if I can see that like someone died in the congregation, I will consider that too. Or if we’re just on fire, we’re dancing; we’ll use that kind of music. I always think of what’s going on in the church (Diego).

Participants’ perceptions about the style of music played at Iglesia Ebenezer

Estér

Estér described the music as “very contemporary.” Her initial definition appeared to equate contemporary with new because she immediately differentiated between contemporary music and old music:

Well it’s very contemporary. They, they don’t sing a lot of the old because they really don’t know a lot of the old songs, so it’s a lot of contemporary worship style music taken or derived from what’s coming out in the Christian market right now, in the Latino [market].

Another statement made later in the interview supports this idea: “[Marcos Witt] took out a recording of like oldies and stuff, and so, but they haven’t used [any of the songs].”

When asked to give the music a stylistic label, Estér was not sure how to respond. It appears by her response that she considered praise and worship music to be its own stylistic genre and not a broad category which contains a large variety of genres, all of which could be used for congregational singing:
[The music style is] praise and worship, uh [silence]. Uh [silence]. I don’t know. You know it’s a lot of contemporary, like I said, worship style music. I can’t—trying to think of how I would describe it in Spanish. They say música de alabanza y adoración, um. But they do put into it a lot of other styles. We’ve been using some regatón, some, um. What other styles do they use? Some salsa in some of it. But the majority is just, you know, praise and worship.

Summary: Estér described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as very contemporary. They played mostly praise and worship music but also incorporated a lot of other styles such as regatón and salsa.

Jorge

Jorge initially stated that the music “focused on the Latino side. It’s more like Danilo Montero, Marcos Witt, Jesús Adrián Romero.” When prompted to explain in more detail, he described the music as Latino pop, but stated some songs included influences of merengue and “Latino flavors.” However, he had a difficult time clarifying exactly what characteristics defined the music.

When asked if there was a difference between American pop and Latino pop, besides the language, Jorge explained that the differences were primarily in the musical arrangements:

I think there could be a difference, maybe. Um. Yah, I think there is a difference between Latino and American pop. Ah, like American pop may include more European arrangements in their music. And we put more Spanish—although Spain is from Europe—we put more Latino arrangements into our music. And the composers do that a lot. They do agrégalo Latin, y introducciones Latinas, instrumentos Latinos, como conga, guitar Española (Latin arrangements, Latin introductions, Latin instruments like conga, Spanish guitar). So I think that’s the difference.

He mentioned the group Salvador as an example of instrumental differences. (The worship team was currently learning a Mexican cumbia by this group.) However, an additional

27 For a description of praise and worship music, see the section entitled “New Hispanic Worship Resources” in chapter two.
statement he made implied that the church actually used three different genres: “They also play that kind of music and pop and worship songs.”

Jorge felt that the church mostly used the same kind of music at every service. However, he stated that the previous month, a visiting church led older, Marcos Witt style worship during a service. A regatón group performed at another service. At both services the people responded very positively and were jumping around.

These visits by outside groups actually occurred regularly—at least monthly. During December an Ecuadorian church came to perform. They were dressed up in their traditional Ecuadorian clothing and played Ecuadorian worship music using charangos,29 panpipes, and traditional drums. They also performed traditional dances. Iglesia Ebenezer frequently planned events incorporating a wide variety of music. A group of youth prepared a regatón song for the Christmas Eve service. Another lady lent me a video that taught dance with tambourines. She was working with a group to learn tambourine music and dance for another performance.

Summary: Jorge described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as “focused on the Latino side.” When asked to give it a stylistic name, he described it as Latino pop, but some songs included influences of merengue. Latino pop used different musical arrangements from American pop. One of his musical descriptions indicated the church played three different musical genres.

---

28 Mexican cumbia is dance music that originated in Colombia and became popular in Mexico. Instrumentation traditionally includes accordion, congas, timbales and cowbell. The cowbell and timbales are played on the downbeat while the conga is played on the off-beat.

29 A charango is a South American, Andean guitar with five pairs of strings. The bodies were traditionally made from armadillo shells, but now are mostly made from wood.
Fer

Fer also stated Iglesia Ebenezer’s music was contemporary. Notice he differentiated between his church and churches that use organ music:

It is not, it is neither rock or, or ballads. Rather it is a music that—because there are lots of churches that only use the organ. But I think it is a style, well, normal style that should be in whatever church.

Summary: Fer stated Iglesia Ebenezer’s music was contemporary. It was neither rock nor ballad.

Inosencio

Inosencio also described the music as pop. When asked if there was a difference between Latino pop and American pop, Inosencio stated the main difference was that Latino music used a lot more improvisation. Part of this improvisation resulted from the group never using sheet music (They learned everything aurally.).

It is different because… [there is] a lot of improvisation that does not exist in the Anglo environment. They stay in the written music and play from the music. It is different in Spanish because we use more improvisation. If you pay attention we hardly ever play a song twice in the same way.

Summary: Inosencio described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as pop. Latino pop incorporated more improvisation than American pop.

Alex

Alex described how Iglesia Ebenezer varied the music. They used rock, pop, cumbia, and a little messianic music.
Diego

Diego stated Iglesia Ebenezer mostly played rock and some pop. They were also trying to incorporate more Latin styles such as bolero. He also described the music as “universal”:

The music that we play is like a universal level. Any Pentecostal church will play the same music that we play. The only difference is the language. So actually I would say the only influence is about changing the language and changing the words. Where the music, it’s all the same.

What music genres are appropriate to use in church?

Estér

Estér felt that the style of music was not as important as using music that people were buying and listening to in their homes. This meant people would already be familiar with and relate to the music sung during worship.

Jorge

Jorge had mixed feelings about the importance of musical style in worship. One needed to be aware of the culture of the people but balance cultural needs with spiritual principles. God did not require a specific style to worship Him. He just required that people worship:

I don’t think [style] is important because God said that we need to worship Him with a new song, and renew our song, and give Him a new song, and worship God with different instruments. That’s what the Psalm says….So, like I have a lot of tastes. For me, it’s not important for me, but if I’m going to perform in the worship team where we have a lot of old people, then you have to watch your tastes of music that you’re playing because they’re not, maybe they’re not comfortable hearing alternative pop worship, but they’re comfortable hearing hymns. So it’s important, but in other ways it’s not important, so it changes. You gotta know…what kind of people you’re performing [for].

Jorge felt that being musically flexible was also very important for evangelizing:
We live in a really colorful society where you have lot of people with different tastes. Every person is a different world. So you kind of have to reach out for each one of them. That means that you have to, not just focus on one style, but being able to be flexible in your worship. So let’s say this group of people like Norteño, this group of people like cumbia, and this group of people like salsa, merengue, and this [one likes] regatón. What do you do then? Do you just kind of leave them? I think you have to open to be able to reach them out for God. So, for me I think it’s okay to be flexible and open to play those different styles. Because at the end you’re doing God’s work. They need God.

Summary: Jorge felt the worship styles should be culturally relevant to the congregation. Stylistic flexibility was also important for evangelization. However, cultural needs must be balanced with spiritual principles.

Fer

Fer felt all styles were appropriate. Therefore, one should know at least a little bit about all types of music and not shut oneself in with just one style:

Because a musician should know and do balada, ranchera, norteña, pop, rock. Well, you should know a little of everything so that you can— I don’t know if tomorrow they may want to create a band and they tell you… “We want to play rock, we want to play ranchera, we want to play balada.” You would then be able to participate in that also.

Inosencio

Inosencio liked music that was lively. It should have solid Biblical truths. It should help you. The messages should be Biblical promises put into songs that the people can sing.

Alex

When looking for new songs, the group tried to find music with which the church could identify. They avoided songs which the people couldn’t use to exalt God, especially if it was too musically difficult to sing. In addition they chose songs with rhythms the people liked and a good message.
Diego

When selecting new songs, Diego examined the text to make sure the congregation could sing it with integrity:

I always look at the words. What are they saying in the words? Like it’s saying something the people is really going to do it. We got a new one, but I don’t really usually sing it much because it said, “I’m getting myself,” like a promise, “I’m going to wake up early and get on my knees.” People don’t do it. It’s kind of like a lie. I feel like if people sing it, like, that it’s a lie.

To what degree should or does culture influence the way people lead or organize worship?

Estér

Estér felt music should be culturally relevant to the congregation:

Music should be adapted to the culture in a way that the people can relate to, and that they can participate in, and they can get into it. If you do it in another style of music that doesn’t attract them or that isn’t part of their culture, I don’t think they will be able to have the same experience.

To help make the music culturally relevant, the church invited singers who performed regatón for the youth. Since Estér was an “old schooler,” she always sang some of the older songs like coritos when she led worship. In addition the worship team tried to sing a variety of songs that “different people groups inside the church can relate to.” While the worship team did not frequently sing older songs, they recently discussed the need to incorporate older songs for those in the congregation who enjoyed them.

Summary: Estér felt music should be culturally relevant to the congregation. To make the music relevant, the worship team tried to sing a variety of songs, but rarely sang older songs.
Jorge

Jorge pointed out the need to consider how age influences worship preferences.

Fer

Fer noted the significance that most of the musicians were from Mexico and that their shared culture united them:

We are from the same country. The music we use [in Iglesia Ebenezer] is what we use in Mexico. We [musicians] are connected because we bring the same culture, the same, the same music we play here in the church. It’s the same music that the people like. Even though we are from different countries, we identify with the music. I believe it is a blessing.

This comment revealed three interesting perceptions. First, the worship team had a shared culture that connected them. Secondly, the music sung at Iglesia Ebenezer was the same music sung in Mexican churches. Thirdly, people from all different countries identified with this music. Therefore, was this music Mexican church music, or was it pan-Latino church music?

Summary: Fer noted that most of the musicians were from Mexico. Iglesia Ebenezer played the same music as his church in Mexico, but the multinational constituents in the church identified with the music.

Inosencio

The church did not play much regional music associated with specific countries because the congregation was so culturally diverse:

So then we look for songs that are well more or less universal, that are to the liking of the people and so that everyone can share the experience well. And there are no problems with the people there because we play a style of music they like. Occasionally we use boleros. We use rancheras, but it is not our usual style. Although personally, I really like ranchera. The music really fascinates me.
Inosencio explained that one of the challenges of such a diverse Hispanic population was that many times people came from very distinct musical backgrounds. Since the musicians did not know how to play their cultural music, the people left the church:

What happens is each person brings an identity according to his country…. Sometimes people come with a totally distinct form of music according to their countries. It is very hard… And lots of times we feel bad because we do not have the same culture as them and we cannot play their music. So then there are many people who have come and gone from the church because they feel that their music is not being played….and for that reason it is very difficult for a person to establish himself in a church. Because if you do not play the type of music or have the customs that he has, he does not establish himself well in a church.\(^{30}\)

**Summary:** Iglesia Ebenezer did not play much regional music because the church was so diverse. Instead they looked for songs that were stylistically universal. The musicians also did not know how to play all the distinct Latin American musical genres.

As a result, some people left the church people because their cultural music was not played for worship.

**Alex**

Like several participants, Alex explained how the congregation liked and identified with the music they played for worship:

Well, the culture influences in that, in that we can identify a lot with the music we play. Because there are times that we will vary the, we vary the music. There are times that we play, for example, *cumbia* because a lot of people like *cumbia*. A lot of people like rock/pope. Sometimes we play a little messianic music….It isn’t a problem for us. On the contrary we identify with the music. Or that is, well, no, no one says, “You know what? Well, I don’t like the music you all play.” Rather just the opposite, we have heard comments from people that, that listen to us a lot to the music we play, for example. What we play, they can identify with it and say, “Yeah, well it sounds good. We like the music you all play.”\(^{31}\)

---

\(^{30}\) This response may have been biased by the word *afectar*. See the Interviews section in chapter three for discussion. The participant made this comment in the follow-up interview.

\(^{31}\) This response may have been biased by the word *afectar*. See the Interviews section in chapter three for discussion. The participant made this comment in the follow-up interview.
Summary: Iglesia Ebenezer used music with which the people could identify. This included rock, pop, *cumbia*, and some messianic music.

CULTURE

How do the participants define culture and what is their personal culture?

Participants were asked several questions about how they understood culture in general and their culture specifically. These questions asked whether they had a preference for the terms Hispanic or Latino and why, how they defined culture, and what was their culture.

Estér

Estér felt that both terms, Hispanic and Latino, described her cultural background, but she preferred the term Hispanic. When explaining her preference, she used the first-person, plural pronoun, *our* cultural background (instead of *my* cultural background). This indicated she identified with a larger cultural group and that she felt qualified to speak for the group.

She defined culture as one’s roots, nationality, ethnic origin, food one eats, what one speaks, dialect, habits, music, beliefs, and religion. Her explanation of her own personal culture demonstrated a connection with both her Puerto Rican heritage and a pan-Latino identity. In addition, more than any other participant, she revealed a very strong connection to her American identity.

Well of course I, you know, I always say that I’m Puerto Rican because that’s where my place of national origin is from, but I’m also Hispanic. So that’s also part of my culture too, and I speak Spanish. So I would categorize that as Hispanic-American you know. Uh, speaking Spanish as my first language, but having the Hispanic roots. ….I mean I can identify a lot with my Puerto Rican culture, but of course I wasn’t raised there. So I don’t know a lot of the historic, you know, but I’ve been there. I know my family. I do love the country, but at the same time I’ve been raised
here. So I identify with both a lot at the same [time]. And I try to teach my kids that, because they normally say, “well, we’re Puerto Rican.” I say, “Yes, but if you’re Puerto Rican, you’re American, you know. You were, you were raised and born as an American, and you were raised here.” So sometimes it’s a little conflict with them, but I’m like, “no you are an American. You’re Hispanic and Puerto Rican, but you’re also an American because you live and you were born here.”… So I think with Hispanics you know, it’s, you always, never loose your origin or where you came from. And at the same time you can be an American also because you are here and are maybe born here. But the roots of where your parents and where you are from are always there.

Despite indications of a pan-Latino identity, Estér viewed each nationality as a separate cultural group. Interestingly, every single musician felt the same: that each nationality was a separate cultural group. Below is Estér’s explanation.

And we speak the same language, but at the same time, we have so many different idioms, and so many different ways to say things, and different foods that we eat. I mean, everything is different about us. So, I wouldn’t [say] it’s just one large cultural group. I think it’s different cultural groups, and [one] big category, but they’re all different.

When asked if there were similarities between the nationalities, she had a difficult time answering the question. Her reaction reinforced her response that each nationality was a separate cultural group.

The language that we speak, basically. That’s generally. Um. What else would I say is the same? [Silence.] Um. [Silence.] That many of us come from countries that are warm climates maybe? But other than that I don’t see much. You know, there are so many differences.

However, her response contradicted her use of the pronoun our: “our cultural background.”

When asked how she thought others from the church would respond, she stated:

They would say we’re all one in Christ, you know. Of course we’re all the same before God. And that’s another—we’re alike in that way. That it doesn’t matter where we come from. We are one in the body of Christ, and we’re the same. But I think that all of them would still kind of consider the differences because the know, you know, we’re Latino, we’re Hispanic, but at the same we come from different places.
This response was very representative of the explanations I received from all the participants, both solicited and unsolicited. In one situation, on the first day of my field research, while engaging in casual conversation (but before any of the congregation knew my reason for attending the church), another lady made almost the same unsolicited statement to me. The statements “We’re all one in Christ,” or “We’re all brothers or sisters in Christ,” were frequently heard throughout my field research. These statements will be considered later in chapter six.

Summary: Estêr preferred the term Hispanic. She defined culture as one’s roots, nationality, ethnic origin, foods one eats, what one speaks, dialect, habits, music, beliefs, and religion. She had a difficult time describing similarities between the cultures of different Latin American countries, but her choice of words indicated connection to a larger Hispanic cultural group. She was the only musician who specifically referred to her American identity.

Jorge

While Jorge felt both terms Latino and Hispanic were appropriate, he was the only participant who preferred the term Latino. To be Latino denoted he was not born in the United States. In the paragraph below, Jorge defined what he meant by the term Latino. His explanation indicated three layers of cultural identity: a Latin identity, a Mexican identity, and a regional identity within Mexico.

When I say Latino I’m generalizing. I’m saying I’m not from United States. I wasn’t born here. But when I have to be specific, I say I’m Latino, I’m Mexican. So I’m Latino in general, or people that know I’m Mexican. But when it comes to specifics, I’m from Mexico. That’s my country. Because in Mexico it’s different. Every country is different. Like people from the south of United States are different from people from the North. People from the West and Mid-West, and the East, they’re different. So, I think it’s the same in every country. So Mexico is the same thing….Like the North, they’re kind of different people than the middle and the South y las costas. So it changes. Although we’re all Mexicans, we’re totally different.
While almost the entire interview was conducted in English, Jorge switched to Spanish when I asked him to define culture. The reason for this language switch may have occurred because of a communication gap when I used the English word *culture*. When the participant was unsure of my question I switched to Spanish. Below is the interview excerpt.

My questions are in bold print.

**Culture. Como cultura.**

*Cultura*. It’s a way of life, *Cultura* it’s for me, I don’t even know what the real definition is. But for me, as far as I can understand it, it’s a way of life. *Cultura*—it’s *costumbres, comida, baile, música, festividades*. A way of life. (Culture—it’s customs, food, dance, music, festivals.)

**What would you say your culture is?**

¿Mi cultura? Latina. Mejicano.

The switch to Spanish may indicate that the participant felt a very close connection to his Latino culture since he chose Spanish to express this intimate topic. This hypothesis is supported by his body language and tone of voice which suggested he had strong feelings about his culture. This strong connection was also expressed later on in the interview. When asked if he would ever consider attending an Anglo-American church, he expressed great hesitation because he would miss the loss of intimate relationships associated with Latino culture.

Despite this strong cultural connection, when at church, Jorge did not think about his culture at all.

When I come to church we all come to worship God. And when we come to worship God, our culture, our nationality drops to the ground. It’s nothing…. It’s not a factor. I don’t say I’m Mexican. This is the kind of worship I like to listen to. When we come to God, to worship God, we become as one. That’s what the Bible says. We unite in worship….So I don’t think about it. I just think of myself as a son of God when I come here. And that’s my fellow brothers by my side and in front of me or behind me.
This explanation clearly reveals a strong belief in spiritual unity. Every participant expressed this spiritual unity. The existence of this spiritual unity is also supported by the attendance of a few white and black Americans who spoke little or no Spanish, but worshiped alongside their Hispanic brothers and sisters. In addition, the youth pastor and one assistant pastor were both Anglo-Americans. However, Jorge’s explanation, “Our nationality drops to the ground. It’s nothing,” also lends support for a pan-Latino identity which would enable individuals of different Latin American countries to worship together more easily. If there was one overarching culture, this might lessen the tendency to think about one’s national culture within the church community.

When asked whether Latinos were all one cultural group or separate groups, he stated he viewed the situation both ways.

We’re all Latinos, from Mexico down to South America. So we’re all Latinos. Like Americans is an American continent. I view myself with other cultures as one because we’re all Latinos. But when it comes to identifying, ey, this is Puerto Rican, this is Mexico, this Guatemaleco, this is Chileno, Argentino, I view it as totally different in all the ways. Although we speak the same language, but we’re totally different.

Summary: Jorge was the only participant who preferred the term Latino. To be Latino denoted he was not born in the United States. He described culture as, “its costumbres, comida, baile, música, festividades. A way of life.” (it’s customs, food, dance, music, festivals.) He also described three layers of cultural identity: Latino, Mexican, and regional within Mexico. He did not think about his culture when at church.

Fer

Fer felt the term Latino could be used because Latinos are from Latin America. However, he preferred the term Hispanic because they all spoke the same language, and the
term Hispanic implies the person speaks Spanish. Fer described culture as, “the races of your country, what you believe, what your parents taught you since you were little,” and the different idioms or dialects. However, when asked what his culture was, his response was hesitant.

My culture is, it’s Hispanic. My culture is, it’s ah, it’s ah [silence]. My culture is, ah, one has always been a worker type of person. Mm, the culture is, it’s, eh, what I am right now.

When asked to define what it meant to be Hispanic, he discussed qualities which appear to be strongly tied to his Mexican culture. For example, in my experience, Mexicans commonly speak with pride about their strong work ethic.

It is a, well a privilege to be Hispanic. Because a lot of people don’t—. I like being Hispanic because—the American people have always had a good perception of us. Uh, in the sense that we are a people… that like to work, that we don’t give up easily that we like to find options. That we like don’t like to be conformists. But, it also has to do with the way you talked about culture. That’s what I think.

Several factors, including his choice to describe characteristics strongly tied to the Mexican culture, indicate a weaker concept of the pan-Latino identity. When I asked whether he identified more with his Hispanic or Mexican culture, he did not understand the question. After explaining that Americans commonly view Hispanics as all one cultural group, Fer stated he was describing his Mexican culture. To reinforce his explanation of the Mexican culture, he shared that he knew people from several different countries including Argentina, Italy, Canada, and Egypt. These people had very different cultures from the Mexican culture which he was describing. Although people from Latin America may speak the same language, they have very different cultures.
When asked what he thought about the homogenous American concept of *hispanidad,* he replied with the following statement which again reinforced the worker theme. He also described an awakening that occurred upon coming to the United States:

"I think that through the years, uh, as Hispanics, we have grown more in the United States because of the need we have in our countries. More than anything to support our family. And well, [silence] I think different types of Hispanic people here—. Because everyone, every person is a world to themselves. Every person thinks differently. But, that is, I cannot know for what reason someone would come from Chile. I don’t know why some would come from another country, but all of us come with the intent of working. Why? Everyone has different needs. But I think it is with just one objective, to work. But the thinking of the Americans is very liberal. It’s, it’s very good, it’s good because, it’s a—. Americans are a people who are always thinking, their minds are open and that’s good I believe. Because when you come here, you arrive timid and you wake up here. That’s why it’s good."

**Summary:** Fer preferred the term Hispanic. The term implied someone who spoke Spanish. He described culture as, “the races of your country, what you believe, what your parents taught you since you were little,” and the different idioms or dialects. He appeared to have a weaker concept of a pan-Latino identity. When asked what his culture was, he responded hesitantly. His concept of Hispanic culture was strongly linked to his Mexican culture. He described his Mexican culture as: We like to work. We don’t give up easily. We like to find options. We don’t like to be conformists.

**Inosencio**

Inosencio defined the terms Hispanic and Latino with two dichotomous meanings. The term Hispanic referred to those people who speak the Spanish language, while the term Latino referred to the national heritage. If a person had a Latin American heritage but did not speak Spanish, he or she was Latino but not Hispanic. U.S. Latinos were creating their own version of Hispanic culture. One may also be both Latino and Hispanic. Since Inosencio
spoke Spanish, he felt Hispanic. He defined the difference between Hispanic and Latino as the following:

So there are people born here in the United States and they don’t, but they don’t know Hispanic culture. But they are changing—it isn’t Anglo. Or that is, they generated their own Hispanic culture. And to me those are the Latinos. I know a lot of people who do not know how to speak Spanish and are Latinos, yes. To me they are—that’s the difference between the two.

His description of his own culture demonstrated an articulate concept of culture, but did not describe a pan-Latino identity. Instead he described specific examples associate with his Mexican culture:

Culture is related to universal traditions of a certain group, of a certain group from a certain town that forms an identity. For me it is the customs that form a group’s identity.

What is your culture then? My culture? If you mean as a Mexican, my Mexican culture is mariachi music. It’s dressing up in a sombrero with some boots. That is part of my culture of what I am. To me that is my culture.

When asked how his understanding of culture changed when he moved to the United States, Inosencio expressed two paradoxical ideas: he easily adapted to the American culture but began to value his Mexican culture much more and developed the desire to conserve it. He described his adaptability to the American culture in the following paragraph:

I had been over there in Mexico with American folks who would go to study. So I was able to adapt to the American culture more easily. Yes, I adapt very well. Basically I could always adapt to the American culture more [than others]. In my case, I adapt better to the traditions, in my way of being, in the way I express myself. The way they express themselves, they greet each other here, their likes, their traditions—I was able to assimilate them very well. And more or less integrate myself into the American culture.

The ability to adapt was described by almost every participant.
In the following description Inosencio described how he began to value his Mexican culture more after moving to the United States. Two examples of cultural practices he wanted to conserve included music and clothing:

What happens is you do not value the traditions when you are in your own country, and it is here that you begin to appreciate them. It begins as a, ah, not a competency, but rather like a feeling of wanting to preserve what you have from your country.

**What things did you begin to preserve?**

My music, I never stop practicing. [inaudible] I practice the songs I know on my acoustic guitar at home. Yes, um, I conserve, well, oh I like to buy Mexican clothes, in the Mexican style. Mexican clothes, yes.

**Summary:** Inosencio preferred the term Hispanic. He described a dichotomous concept of the terms Hispanic and Latino. A Hispanic was someone who spoke Spanish. A Latino was someone born in the United States who didn’t speak Spanish or know the traditional Latin American Hispanic culture. They created their own Latino culture. He defined culture as the customs that form a group’s identity. When he moved to the United States he developed a desire to conserve his Mexican culture.

**Alex**

Alex used the terms Hispanic and Latino equally and had no preference for either term. However, he felt the term Hispanic described someone who spoke Spanish. When I pointed out that I spoke Spanish, but I wasn’t Hispanic, he responded that culture also had a lot of influence. He identified a lot with the American people and more or less understood the American culture, but it was very different from the Latino culture. In the paragraph below he listed specific examples of how his culture differed with American culture:

For example I, one thing, not because I’m judging or because, but I feel that we are like, like a little happier. Like we like to move [our bodies], like we always like being together, enjoying one another’s company. We like to be constantly laughing, we like
to laugh. We like to play a lot. That is, sometimes we try to find ways to not always be shut out from things. We’re always looking for someone to talk with or to go out with. And well, then, or that is American culture is, the culture is a little different because they sometimes, like they focus a little more on work—a lot, on the work.

He felt the above description was common throughout Latin America. This would indicate an awareness and connection with a pan-Latino identity:

The majority is in common [amongst us Hispanics] in that we always look for a way to be happy, to find an environment, an environment that we are happy. We always look for alternatives.

When I asked if his understanding of culture changed when he moved to the United States, the theme of adapting was discussed once again:

I think that when I moved over here, it was all new for me. I had to adjust a bit to culture so I could get ahead, to be able to, that is to communicate with people, to be able to uh buy things, to be able to, I don’t know, talk business with people over here.

**Summary:** Alex used both Hispanic and Latino equally and had no preference for either term. The term Hispanic described someone who spoke Spanish. Alex listed the following characteristics to describe his culture: We are happier. We like to move our bodies. We always like to be together. We always look for alternatives.

**Diego**

Diego mostly used the term Hispanic. He defined Hispanic as someone who spoke Spanish:

Hispanic is just because I think we speak the language, not because we’re Mexicans or Latinos, but because we speak Spanish I would say.

I asked him, if I spoke fluent Spanish, would I be Hispanic? His response described how Americans and Hispanics were different, and how Americans who grew up in Latin American countries took on Latin American culture:
We’re totally different I think. We’re totally different the way we take a lot of stuff. The way we think about taking stuff in our lives—decisions—it’s totally different. Some people say [Americans and Hispanics are] the same. I don’t think so…No. It’s not the same because an American who grows up in Mexico or Guatemala or anywhere where the culture is totally [different], they come over here and they say, “American, what is this?” It’s totally different. So I would consider because we speak Spanish and we grow in a family, in a Hispanic family which is different types of the way we work. The way we eat is totally different. Any American I won’t give spicy food. To Hispanics, they’ll like it….32

There’s a lot of Americans who say, “I got a Hispanic heart.” And sometimes I ask them why. “Because you guys love each other like this and you guys.” It’s not that the other ones don’t, but we are more like—…..Like I won’t let my daughter go because she’s 18. She will stay with me. And in the American culture it’s a little bit different. It’s more like, “You can go if you want to. You got the age.” We don’t. Or like. There is a lot of, a little different. The way we are. It’s not that it’s bad. It’s just the way we are. It’s the way we are….

We are more like um, together, like in the families….We get together like especially on those holidays. We get together. We really want to get together. I don’t care if it’s in Mexico City. Then we’ll go down there because we want to be together. And sometimes in another culture I can see there is. It’s a holiday, let’s celebrate! No. No we wanna be as close as we can….Our parties, when we get a party, it’s more, more fun in the way we do it….We cook a lot of food. We get a lot of stuff. And [if] I were to go to an American [party] I would only get chips and cheese and ham.

Summary: Diego mostly used the term Hispanic which referred to someone who spoke Spanish, but not necessarily someone of Latin American heritage. Diego was very aware of the differences between the American and Hispanic culture and described several of these differences. He verbalized a very strong concept of the pan-Latino identity.

How do the participants perceive culture influences their church experience?

Estér

When asked to compare her experience at Iglesia Ebenezer to some of the other Hispanic churches she attended, Estér described Iglesia Ebenezer as “not so conservative, …more contemporary, …[and] more modern.” Some churches were more legalistic and sang

---

32 Diego did not clarify if he meant spicy as in a lot of spices or spicy as in hot peppers. Since Mexicans are well-know for eating hot peppers, he likely meant hot peppers. I have Latin American friends from Guatemala and Honduras who would disagree with his statement. They have said to me on more than one occasion that people from their country generally do not eat hot food.
older songs. One church associated with a particular Latin American country did not “believe in the ministry of the woman.” The women had to sit separately from the men, wear a veil, and were not allowed to hold higher positions than the men. Estér thought these differences were influenced by both cultural and religious beliefs.

In the following paragraph Estér commented on the culture shock she experienced when she moved from New York to Minnesota. Her church in New York was Puerto Rican while the churches she attended in Minnesota were primarily Mexican. Her culture shock reinforces that each Latin American country has a unique culture:

When I first came to Minnesota I was in culture shock....Since I’m Puerto Rican, and a good, large majority come from Mexico, we do worship different. And I do still miss that from my other church where I used to belong to in New York because it is different. We [Puerto Ricans] are even more lively. It’s just that the songs we sing, and everything is different. So, you know, I always miss that.

...Well, when I first came, just the fact of even what they cook, let’s say for an activity after church, it’s so much different. So we’re like “oh no.” So really we cannot get any of the food that we are accustomed to eating at a church activity because it’s basically all based on what they know how to prepare which is from Mexico.

When asked if her experience would be different if she attended an Anglo-American church, Estér responded that she would miss the music. She actually visited two Anglo-American churches which her family greatly enjoyed. There were a lot of American churches with good Bible-based teachings and a lot of well-organized, structured activities for kids. Her family chose not to attend an American church because her husband did not understand English well and they wanted their children to conserve their Spanish language and culture.

However, if she did attend an American church, her versatility would help her “get used to it.” The one contingency was that the church needed to be a

---

33 According to the assistant pastor, Mexicans represented about 45 to 50 percent of Iglesia Ebenezer’s constituency as of January 2007.
revived, on fire church for God….You know, worshipping and being so alive that if I
go to an American church where there’s less expression, and it’s more calm, maybe,
yah, I would greatly miss that.

Her statements reveal that while Iglesia Ebenezer was not as lively as her Puerto Rican
church in New York, she still viewed it as a lively, expressive, “on fire church for God.” In
her comparison of Hispanic and American worship, she felt Hispanics had more of an
emotional experience:

I think we have expression, more life. Sometimes even more profound, you know. I
don’t know. More profound, not so much in the Scriptures, but I don’t know. Maybe
we just are more emotional with faith, so [we] have more of an emotional experience?
That’s what I think.

Estér’s comments suggest she experienced three levels of identity: a Puerto Rican
nationality identity, a Hispanic identity, and an American identity. First of all, culture shock
occurred because her Puerto Rican culture was different from the predominantly Mexican
culture of Hispanic churches in Minnesota. Secondly, even though Iglesia Ebenezer was not
Puerto Rican, she viewed the Hispanic church as a place where her children could learn about
their culture and her husband could speak Spanish. In addition, they had culturally engaging,
lively, profound, emotional worship, even if the worship was not as lively as her Puerto
Rican church. Finally, the way Estér talked about American churches suggested she viewed
them in different cultural category from Hispanic churches. While American churches would
meet her family’s spiritual needs, only a Hispanic church could encourage her children to
learn Spanish and conserve their heritage.

Summary: Estér experienced culture shock when she moved from her Puerto Rican
church in New York to Iglesia Ebenezer which was largely made up of Mexicans. If Estér
went to an American church, she would miss the Hispanic worship the most. Her family
chose to attend Iglesia Ebenezer because her husband did not understand English well, and they wanted their children to conserve their Hispanic culture.

**Jorge**

When asked if he would ever consider attending an American church, Jorge was very hesitant, but explained that he was aware his feelings were deeply connected to his cultural upbringing. He felt he would miss the intimate relationships associated with the Latino culture. His explanation appeared to be pan-Latino since he mentioned he would miss the “connection between Latino and Latino” and not Mexican and Mexican. He did not think he would miss the music because he loved both Latino and American worship. Below is his response to the question about whether or not he would attend an American church. Notice, like several other musicians, he felt he easily adapted to American culture:

Ah. [Silence] Maybe? [Silence] Maybe not. I don’t know. I’m comfortable with the American society. I’m comfortable with the American culture. I’m very comfortable. I can adjust myself to it. I don’t, I don’t have a hard time facing changes. I can adjust (snapping), that quick. I don’t know? I could [silence]. Ash…

**What do you think you’d miss if you went to an American church?**
The people. The connection between Latino and Latino. Because the American cultures are different. They’re more reserved. I would say more, um, um, I don’t want to sound like [inaudible]. It’s more like. Ah. It’s like. It’s like a wall between each person. It’s not the same with every one because like the Southern people are different than people from up here. So, I don’t know. I would miss that. I would miss the [inaudible], the connection, the life-hood of the Latino circle.

**Would you say like intimacy?**
The intimacy, the closeness. Because Latino people are more like, more like welcoming . I mean, you guys are more welcoming too. It’s more like. I don’t know. It’s just the fact that maybe I grew up in a Latino country because if I was born here and I grew up in an American family, whatever, then I wouldn’t think what I’m thinking. I wouldn’t say that because then I would get to know the culture deep inside, and actually knowing the culture from the outside. You know. So I don’t think it’s that. I think it’s just the fact that I never lived in an American family and actually known a family from deep inside out.
When asked if he thought his Mexican or Latino culture affected the way he worshipped, he responded that Latinos “from Mexico down [to South America]” experience a lot of trauma. If they do not let go of the trauma this could make it difficult for them to worship. His choice to include Latinos from all over Latin America supports a pan-Latino identity:

Because Latino cultures are more suffering than American culture (because American culture, they kind of have it all, and Latino cultures don’t). So they come from a different background and say, “You know, as a third world country you come from a different background. You’ve been through a lot.” Especially the old people. And the kids too. Like not kids from here, but from over there. So it’s. But when you come to Jesus it’s different. God teaches us, teaches you to let that go. 34

*Summary:* Jorge was hesitant to attend an American church because he would miss the intimate Latino-to-Latino connection. He did not think he would miss the music because he loved both Latino and American worship. Jorge described how Latin Americans generally experienced a lot more trauma than people growing up in the United States. 35 This sometimes interfered with people’s ability to worship.

**Fer**

Fer attended an Assemblies of God church before immigrating to the United States. This church used the same music as Iglesia Ebenezer, but the culture might have been different. While Fer preferred a Latino church, he would consider attending an Anglo-American church to stay within his denomination. When people change denominations, they usually compare the churches. Fer felt comparing was wrong because, “we are worshipping the same God.”

---

34 This response may have been biased by the word *afectar*. See the Interviews section in chapter three for discussion.

35 This response may have been biased by the word *afectar*. 
While Fer agreed that culture influenced the way a person worships, especially in their music and language, he pointed out that how one worships also depends on the church one attends. However, more important than race, color, or language, was their unity in Christ because they worshipped the same God.

*Summary:* Fer felt Iglesia Ebenezer and his Assembly of God church in Mexico used the same music, but the culture might be different. He would consider attending an American church to stay within the same denomination as Iglesia Ebenezer. Fer was the only participant to point out that how one worships also depends on the church one attends.

**Inosencio**

When asked about differences between Iglesia Ebenezer and the churches in Mexico, Inosencio stated that in the rural or secluded areas of Mexico, churches sang traditional Latin *coplas*. Music at Iglesia Ebenezer had more Western influences. Churches in Mexico did not pay much attention to time or the length of services. In the United States, churches paid close attention to time and length of services. It was unclear if Inosencio felt Iglesia Ebenezer paid close attention to time or duration of services (Iglesia Ebenezer’s services lasted an average of two-and-a-half hours on a Sunday morning.). Hispanic worship was also more extroverted and joyful, even in the song messages. People also danced more during worship.

Finally, Inosencio felt the main difference between Hispanic and Anglo churches in the United States (besides language) occurred in the area of friendships. Latinos shared warmer friendships and helped each other more frequently. This same point was made by Jorge. If Inosencio moved to a new city, he would look for a church that had music he liked, a pastor who would respect his ability to minister in worship, and a church with organized leadership.
When asked if being Hispanic affected the way he personally worshipped, Inosencio gave a Biblical explanation that God planned, from the beginning of time, for everyone to worship according to their own culture. Inosencio then explained how the Mexican church was hindered from worshipping God by the Anglo-Saxon culture, but recently began to understand they could worship God with their own culture:

There’s a part in the book of Revelations that says that people from every nation— from every language will [inaudible] before the throne of God. I imagine that God had contemplated that from the beginning, that everyone was going to praise Him according to the culture or whatever moves them. For a long time Hispanic revival was impeded in these countries because they learned to imitate the way of praising of, of the missionaries and Saxons and the long robes. This is the type of song, the gospel type, you know. And I think that it, well, like it limited the spreading of the gospel. But I think ultimately there has been an open mind [concerning these things] that really, uh, our culture can please God. And that we can praise Him with our culture. And for example over there in Mexico they have piled up into the churches quite a bit because they include praise that goes along with the people’s culture. And that’s what makes the people come to hear about God.

Summary: Inosencio described differences between Mexican and American churches and people. Mexican rural areas sang the Latin copla. In general, Mexican churches focused less on time. Hispanic worship was more extroverted and joyful, even in the song messages, and people danced more. Hispanic relationships were warmer. Inosencio described how using European expressions had limited the expansion of the Gospel, but now that the Mexican churches were developing culturally relevant worship, they were rapidly growing.

Alex

Alex felt that if he spoke perfect English he would have no problems attending an Anglo-American church because they played the same styles of rock and pop played at Iglesia Ebenezer. Alex preferred to attend a Hispanic church, but would consider attending

---

36 This response may have been biased by the word afectar. See the Interviews section in chapter three for discussion.
an American church because he could also experience the presence of God at an American church:

Moreover, I have attended American churches, and the truth is, that is I have felt God’s presence. I have listened to Americans praise, and the truth is, it has impacted me, not just the talent they have, but the way they are covered by God. Uh, I think attending an American church would be a beautiful thing also.

However, if he did attend an Anglo-American church, he would miss speaking Spanish with Hispanics:

[I would miss] talking with Latino people, being able to talk with Hispanic people. And some times, upon seeing Hispanic people in an American church, it gives a person pleasure to find someone that speaks Spanish, or I imagine. For example, if I go to an American church and if I would keep attending an American church, and I attend and keep attending, and there would never be another Hispanic? But if I would find one, it would give me much pleasure to see him and tell him “Dios le bendiga.” “God bless you,” ask his name and speak in my first language with someone. It would be something I would miss a lot.

Summary: Alex would consider attending an American church if he understood English well. He had experienced God’s presence during worship at an American church. He also thought the music at Iglesia Ebenezer and American churches was the same.

However, he would miss speaking in Spanish with other Hispanics.

Diego

Like all the participants in this study, Diego described Iglesia Ebenezer as a multicultural church. However, he noted they were building their own unique Hispanic culture:

I can see people from Guatemala—they’re not acting like Guatemalan people anymore. Mexicans, they don’t act like Mexicans anymore. People from Columbia, people from Puerto Rico, they’re even speaking our language. We’re kind of like a building up in this church, like one type of family, one type of special culture. Like I said multicultures.
When asked how the Hispanic culture influenced the way people expressed their faith at Iglesia Ebenezer, Diego described Hispanics’ strong sense of devotion to God after conversion and sentimental predisposition:

I think that [the] Hispanic gets more in love with God sometimes. Like get[s] more closer because I’ve seen more Hispanics taking, when they accept Jesus Christ, they turn their lives 360 [degrees] right away, and they get people right away. And I can seeing that as a little bit harder for the Americans. It’s a little bit hard to get more, to get their people closer….The culture of the Hispanic, it’s more like sentimental, probably….And American is a little bit different. They’re more like reality: what’s going on? What’s going to happen? …It’s more like reality: what’s going to happen, and what I have to do? They take those steps. When a Hispanic listens to anything, they go for what they feel.

When asked if he would ever consider attending an American church, he said yes if it were God’s will; and he would adapt to the church’s culture. However, he would miss his people and the Spanish language:

[I would miss] my people….Because it’s always language, I would say, because there’s uh. Because English is not my first language. There’s still a lot of words that we can’t pronounce and there’s the jokes that I know in Spanish—I can’t tell them in English. The way we talk is not the same. It’s a little bit different sometime. Or the way we take stuff, or when we mean something, they don’t take it that way.

Summary: Diego stated Iglesia Ebenezer was developing its own unique Hispanic culture. He described how Hispanics had a sentimental predisposition and strong sense of devotion to God after conversion. He was willing to attend an American church, or any church if it were God’s will, but he would miss his people and the Spanish language.

PART II

CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

The following pages summarize each musician’s case study. I review the major points, assess the strength of their pan-Latino identity, and highlight any significant influences which may have biassed their responses.
Estér

Estér possessed important biographical differences from the other musicians. She was the only female, she was Puerto Rican while the rest of the musicians were Mexican, she grew up in the United States, and she spoke the most fluent English. She also possessed several musical differences. She was the only non-instrumentalist. Since she did not play an instrument she was not expected to attend music rehearsals. Her musical perceptions were influenced by her Puerto Rican musical background and her experience singing praise and worship as a traveling music minister and recording artist. She sang for both Hispanic and American churches. Her work at the bookstore also kept her up to date on the most popular music among Hispanics. Estér stressed that the church tried to incorporate music that was relevant to the congregation. One type of music she wanted to incorporate more of was older songs like *coritos*.

Estér was the only Hispanic participant in the church who referred to her American identity. She strongly connected with both her American and Puerto Rican identity. When asked to describe similarities between the different Latin American countries she had a difficult time thinking of characteristics. She even described the culture shock she experienced when she moved from her Puerto Rican church in New York to Iglesia Ebenezer. Estér enjoyed her experiences attending American churches, but decided to attend Iglesia Ebenezer because she would miss the Hispanic worship, because her husband did not understand English well, and because they wanted their children to conserve their Hispanic culture.
Jorge

Jorge was born in Mexico. He spoke almost fluent in English. He played several instruments including guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums. He did not currently play for worship services because he was new to the church and was still learning the music. He had worked for some years as the worship-team leader at another Hispanic church. Like Estér, his favorite music included both Latino and English contemporary praise and worship music. Jorge described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as primarily Latin pop with influences of merengue. He stressed the importance of selecting music that was culturally relevant for worship and evangelization.

Jorge was the only participant who preferred the term Latino. To be Latino denoted he was not born in the United States. He was also the only participant who described how cultural differences could exist even within the different regions of a single country. Jorge’s comments indicated a strong pan-Latino identity, but it was difficult to assess whether he differentiated between his Mexican and pan-Latino identity. Jorge was hesitant about attending an American church because he would miss the intimate Latino-to-Latino connections, but he did not think he would miss the music.

Fer

Fer was also born in Mexico. He spoke very little English. He played the drums for the worship team and his favorite music was heavy rock. Fer described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as contemporary, stylistically neither rock nor ballad. They played the same music as his Assembly of God church in Mexico, and church members from several different nationalities enjoyed the music. He also recognized that how one worships is influenced by
the church one attends. Fer would consider attending an American church if he ever moved so he could stay within the same denomination as Iglesia Ebenezer.

When Fer described his personal culture, he described his Mexican culture. He described it as: we like to work, we don’t give up easily, we like to find options, and we don’t like to be conformists. It appeared that his strong Mexican identity resulted in a weaker awareness of a pan-Latino identity.

**Inosencio**

Inosencio was also born in Mexico. He spoke minimal English. He sang and played bass and keyboard for worship. He also knew how to play guitar. He was one of two participants who received formal music instruction when he studied acoustic and classical guitar for one year at a Catholic music school in Mexico. He was also one of two musicians who knew how to read music notation. His favorite music was Latin rock but he was very interested in playing for a mariachi band. Inosencio described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as pop. They did not play much regional music because the church was so diverse.

Inosencio described a dichotomous concept of the terms Hispanic and Latino. A Hispanic was someone who spoke Spanish. A Latino was someone born in the United States who didn’t speak Spanish or know the traditional Latin American, Hispanic culture. His description of culture also demonstrated a very strong connection to his Mexican culture. More than any other participant, his cultural examples referred to traditional Mexican items such as sombreros and boots; mariachi music; and the copla, a Mexican folk-music genre. His descriptions indicated a cultural awakening. These included a desire to conserve his Mexican culture, the rapid growth of the Mexican church due to the development of culturally relevant worship, and his explanation that many Latinos born in the United States
did not know their Hispanic culture. In addition, for his final comments at the end of his interview, he described the growing influence of the Hispanic population in the United States.

Alex

Alex was born in Mexico. He spoke conversational English. He played guitar and sang, and his favorite music was rock. He frequently led worship on Wednesday evenings during my field work. Alex described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as rock, pop, *cumbia*, and some messianic. They incorporated songs with which the church could identify and enjoyed the variety.

Alex’s concept of pan-Latino identity was difficult to assess. In his description of his culture, he listed the following characteristics: We are happier. We like to move our bodies. We always like to be together. We always look for alternatives. If Alex ever attended an American church, he would not miss the music because Iglesia Ebenezer’s music was the same as American praise and worship music, but he would miss speaking Spanish with other Hispanics.

Diego

Diego was the worship team director for the last seven to eight years. He was born in Mexico and spoke English well. He was the lead vocalist and played keyboard for worship, but also knew how to play guitar, bass guitar, harp, and violin. He was one of two musicians who received formal music training. He earned a three year music degree in Mexico City. Following graduation he taught high school music in Mexico and piano lessons in the United States. Diego was the only musician who described a Mexican genre as his favorite music:
the Mexican *bolero*. He was very interested in singing lead vocal for a mariachi band, but also interested in opera. Diego described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music as mostly rock and some pop, but they were trying to incorporate more Latin styles such as *bolero*.

Diego verbalized a strong concept of the pan-Latino identity and was very aware of the differences between the American and Hispanic culture. He stated Iglesia Ebenezer was developing its own unique Hispanic culture. He was the only participant who stated that someone not born of Latin American heritage could be Hispanic if they spoke Spanish and knew the culture. Diego was willing to attend a non-Hispanic church if it was God’s will, but he would miss his people and the Spanish language.

**COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF THE MUSICIANS**

In this section I compare and contrast the biographical, musical, and cultural identities of the participants to ascertain their collective identity.

**Biographical Comparison**

Participants shared the most similarities in their biographical backgrounds. All participants were born in Latin American countries. Except for Estér and Diego, all have lived in the United States for six years or less years. All spoke fluent Spanish. Three participants spoke English fluently or comfortably. One participant spoke conversational English. Two participants spoke halting English. All six participants slipped at least some English idioms into their interviews. All the instrumentalists grew up in Mexico. Estér was born in Puerto Rico but grew up in the continental United States. All participants, except for Diego, joined the worship team within the last four years; and they were all in their twenties to thirties in age.
Musical Comparison

The musicians also shared some key musical experiences. They all received some instruction by musicians they knew from church or by friends. However, they mostly learned aurally. Diego received the most training, attending a music college for three years in Mexico City. Inosencio received the second most training from his pastor and one year in a music school. All the musicians played or sang confidently by ear. Except for two participants, Inosencio and Diego, no one read music notation. However, neither of these two participants regularly played from written notation: they continued to play primarily by ear. Estèr was unique in that she worked as a traveling musician and recording artist.

Participants’ musical preferences revealed a strong appreciation for Western music in two ways. First, most of the participants described a respect for and enjoyment of English-language Contemporary Christian praise and worship music. Many stated the music at Iglesia Ebenezer was exactly the same style as English-language praise and worship. Several mentioned how they sensed the presence of God during worship when they had attended an American church. This was one of the major factors that encouraged them to consider the possibility of attending an Anglo-American church in the future.

Secondly, except for one musician, all indicated Westernized genres as their favorite music. Estèr and Jorge’s favorite music genre was contemporary praise and worship by both Anglo and Latino artists. Alex’s favorite music was rock, Fer’s favorite music was heavy rock, and Inosencio’s favorite music was Latin rock. Diego was the only participant who stated Latin American genres—Mexican *bolero* and mariachi—were his favorite. Inosencio also described a strong admiration of *ranchera* and mariachi music. Both were interested in forming a mariachi band. However, all participants enjoyed a variety of musical genres
including régaton, merengue, cumbia, flamenco, Texan, salsa, older coritos, violin music, accordion music, instrumental music like that of Kenny G. the saxophonist, lively music, and Latin style music.

**Cultural Comparison**

Participants used a variety of terms to define culture, but ultimately shared a similar understanding of what culture meant. The following terms were used to define culture: one’s roots, nationality, ethnic origin, foods one eats, language, dialect, habits, music, dance, festivals, beliefs, religion, clothing style, a way of life, customs, race, what your parents taught you since you were little.

Participants’ definitions of what it meant to be Hispanic or Latino were more diverse. Except for one, all participants preferred the term Hispanic to the term Latino. However, they all thought both terms were appropriate labels to describe their culture. Participants most frequently described a Hispanic as someone who spoke Spanish. However, when I pointed out that I was an Anglo-American and I spoke Spanish, they added that culture was also important to the Hispanic identity. Here are some descriptions of what being Hispanic or Latino meant to them. Note the inconsistencies between statements three through seven:

1. The term Hispanic implies Spanish-speaking people. (Four participants used this description to define Hispanic.)
2. Hispanic-American means that a person speaks Spanish as one’s first language and has a Latin American heritage.
3. Latinos are those people from Mexico down to South America.
4. To be Latino denotes one was not born in the United States.
5. Someone can be Latino even if they do not know the culture, but they cannot be Hispanic if they do not speak Spanish.
6. Latinos are people born here in the United States who don’t know their traditional Hispanic culture. The people are creating their own version of Hispanic culture.

7. People do not have to be born from Latin American ancestry to be considered Hispanic. If they speak Spanish, understand, and live the culture, they could be Hispanic.

8. Hispanics never lose their origin or where they came from.

9. Latinos share close relationships or friendships and frequently help each other.

10. Hispanics are hard workers.

11. Hispanics look for options. They don’t like to conform.

12. Hispanic families are close and like to spend time lots of time together.

13. At parties, Hispanics like to cook a lot of food.

14. The Hispanic culture is more sentimental or expressive.

Inosencio expressed the clearest delineation between his Mexican culture and a pan-Latino culture. In his description of his culture, he stated specific cultural characteristics directly associated with Mexican culture such as mariachi music and sombreros. When he came to the United States he felt the desire to conserve his Mexican culture by practicing the Mexican songs he knew, wearing Mexican clothing styles, and playing ranchera music.

Estéer expressed the strongest American identity. She even corrected her children when they stated they were Puerto Rican: “I say, ‘Yes, but if you’re Puerto Rican, you’re American, you know. You were, you were raised and born as an American, and you were raised here.”

Fer’s description of culture showed a weaker awareness of a pan-Latino identity. This may indicate he fused Latinidad and nationality: the two were one and the same. When asked to define what it meant to be Hispanic, he described his Mexican culture. When asked
whether he identified more with his Hispanic or Mexican culture, he found the question confusing.

Diego displayed the strongest awareness of a personal pan-Latino identity. He was the only participant who explained that if someone spoke Spanish and lived the culture, he or she did not have to come from Latin American ancestry to be considered Hispanic. He also gave the most personal examples of how he identified with the Hispanic culture.

Jorge and Alex were more difficult to categorize. When asked if they would ever consider attending an American church, both stated they would prefer a Hispanic church. Jorge was hesitant about attending an Anglo-American church because he would miss the close “Latino and Latino” relationships. Yet he emphasized he was comfortable with the American society and culture and didn’t have a hard time facing changes. Alex stated that he would prefer to attend a Hispanic church, but would have no problems attending an American church if he understood English well because the music was the same as Iglesia Ebenezer’s. However, even if he did understand English, he would miss speaking with other Hispanics in his first language.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, all the participants closely connected Latinidad to their national culture. The two categories, Latinidad and nationality, could not be neatly separated. Some understood the two categories of Latinidad and nationality as one and the same. Others described varying degrees of separation between the two. In the following chapter I describe in detail how Latinidad and nationality influenced the collective identity of the entire church. In addition, in chapter six, I examine Iglesia Ebenezer’s multicultural, American, and
spiritual identities. I also discuss how all five identities (Latino, national, multicultural, American, and spiritual) interacted resulting in a unified Hispanic community.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter six combines fieldwork observations, the musician’s case studies, and four additional interviews conducted with the head pastor (Pastor Joe), the head pastor’s wife (Pastora Lui), the full-time assistant pastor (Pastor Armando), and a married couple serving as youth leaders (Arthur and Miranda). Comparisons are drawn to establish how *Latinidad* assisted in the construction of Iglesia Ebenezer’s collective identity, enabling them to worship together despite differences in national heritage and degrees of acculturation.

Chapter six begins by presenting important research results. It then answers the individual research questions. Conclusions are made after answering the subset questions 1.1 and 1.2 and after the subset questions 2.1 and 2.2. Chapter six ends by presenting recommendations for future study.

IMPORTANT RESEARCH RESULTS

My research revealed three important research results. First I describe two ways pan-Latino identity significantly influenced Iglesia Ebenezer. Secondly, I describe challenges to analyzing my research as a result of Iglesia Ebenezer’s multicultural identity.

To define *Latinidad* in chapter one, I used Rosenfeld’s definition of pan-ethnic identity: *Latinidad* is “the extent to which people identify themselves as ‘Hispanic’…as opposed to, or secondary to, the national identities” (Rosenfeld 2001,162). *Latinidad* significantly influenced the church in two ways. The most important influence was that it
allowed individuals to interact with one another without stumbling over cultural differences. Frequently throughout my research I was told, “We don’t think about our culture at church.” Chapter six describes six strong pan-Latino characteristics contributing to this unifying culture. The second significant influence was that *Latinidad* provided a culturally relevant context through which the congregation expressed their faith. While several participants indicated they did not think about culture at church, chapter six demonstrates how the church repeatedly integrated faith and culture.

To guide my research I used part of Benham’s theory of Identity and Identity Construction, specifically looking for “the acts of choice individuals and the collective church made in how they defined and applied *Latinidad* to their particular church context” (quoting myself from chapter 1, p. 7). In my fieldwork I tried to find out if participants consciously incorporated their Hispanic culture into the church services. Research revealed that the church’s multicultural identity was so strong it was often difficult to determine whether their “acts of choice” were motivated by their Hispanic identity or by their multicultural identity. In addition the church showed American influences. Therefore, both the multicultural and American identities are referred to throughout chapter six.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What role does *Latinidad* play in the formation of the church’s collective identity, thus unifying a congregation representing several different countries and degrees of acculturation?

   1.1 How does the church describe its collective identity?

   1.2 Within the context of the church setting, do individuals identify more with their national heritage, pan-Latino identity, or American identity?
2. How does the church’s collective identity and concept of *Latinidad* influence their worship?

2.1 How does the church decide what music to use when there are so many different ethnicities represented in one congregation?

2.2 How and to what degree does the church’s concept of themselves as a Hispanic church influence how worship is conducted?

### RESEARCH ANSWERS

1.1 **How does the church describe its collective identity?**

**Introduction**

The terms *collective identity* suggest something that is shared or owned by more than one person. While a church’s true collective identity requires the input of the entire church, the perceptions of a small group of leaders were primarily considered because leaders generally hold the most influence over the development of church culture, over what music is used for the services, and how worship is organized. The terms collective identity also recognize that this identity is made up of individual people biased by their own personal experiences. Even though all the participants (except for the Anglo-American youth pastor) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, their definitions all varied to some degree, not just in the words they used, but in their actual concept of what it meant. These definitions were tempered by their nationalities, by their degree of acculturation to the American culture, and by other life experiences. These differences are important to recognize because without them, an explanation of collective identity would be oversimplified.

The musicians’ case studies in chapter five were important because they revealed individual perspectives about the Hispanic culture and how it uniquely impacted each person. Chapter six is important because it examines the collective identity of the entire church. The
inclusion of several quotes allows participants to express their unique perspectives, but supports a cohesive identity.

**Iglesia Ebenezer’s Collective Identity**

Iglesia Ebenezer was a multicultural, Latin American church, united as one body in Christ. Its strongest ethnic influence was the pan-Latino culture, but also had American influences. Individual nationality was relegated to a position of low importance except in two instances. The combination of individual nationalities in one church: (1) resulted in a multicultural church identity and (2) made the musicians conscientious of the need to incorporate music that was relevant to a diverse congregation.

My field research revealed two different perspectives about which aspects of their collective identity were most influential: the participants’ description and what I observed. In both models the church’s spiritual identity was most influential and national identities the least influential. Chapter six incorporates both perspectives.
Participants described Iglesia Ebenezer as a multicultural, Latin American congregation made up of thirteen different nationalities. Each nationality represented a unique culture. Participants expressed a wide range of views about whether Latin American countries shared any cultural similarities. Some thought there were many similarities while others thought there were very few. Some participants actually described the Hispanic identity as stronger than the multicultural identity. However, every participant emphasized the multicultural identity of Iglesia Ebenezer or of Latin America. Ultimately, they were all united as one body or one family in Christ.

The second model describes how I observed culture influencing the corporate activities of the church. While participants described their congregation as multicultural, I noted six pan-Latino characteristics which helped create a unified Hispanic culture. Five of these six characteristics were described by the participants. I chose to use the terms American Influences instead of American Identity in model #2 because, in the collective body, American influences were minimal. Among individuals (except for the Anglo-American youth leader), only one participant acknowledged an American identity.

Multicultural and National Identities

Participants’ decision to recognize the church as multicultural was largely influenced by the Biblical command to share the Gospel with all people including their multicultural neighborhood. It signified their decision to open their church to all cultures—not just Hispanic—and resulted in the translation ministry. I viewed their multicultural identity as a conscious choice to clarify their role in the community. Their choice to include this identity in the vision statement was significant because the vision statement was their guidepost (secondary to the Bible) for organizing present and future activities in the church
I noticed that labeling themselves as multicultural also provided a practical way to address challenges resulting from their diversity. Having multiple nationalities and cultures congregate in one church has been known to result in divisiveness. Although the participants appeared comfortable discussing their multiculturalism, they avoided public discussion of individual nationality, stating it was not important. In particular, a multicultural identity explained why individuals acted differently, provided a comfortable platform for discussion, and served as a guidepost for how to appropriately respond to the diversity. It acknowledged a person’s nationality or unique culture but contextualized it to the church community. The following excerpts demonstrate different ways participants dealt with their diversity. This first example from Estér shows how Iglesia Ebenezer’s spiritual identity united them. They were one spiritual body even though they were of different nationalities. The second example from Estér recognizes the need to understand the differences and minister in culturally relevant forms:

[People at church] would say we’re all one in Christ, you know. Of course we’re all the same before God. And that’s another—we’re alike in that way. That it doesn’t matter where we come from. We are one in the body of Christ, and we’re the same. But I think that all of them would still kind of consider the differences because…we’re Latino, we’re Hispanic, but at the same [time] we come from different places.

We have to understand that in our church there’s so much diversity even though it’s one church, that yes, there’s so many different countries represented there. We have to try to minister to them in a way and a style that they can relate to.

The following two excerpts are from Alex. The first excerpt shows how Alex viewed the diversity as an opportunity to learn about different cultures. The second example highlighted how communication enabled him to develop friendships with people of different cultures.
I think that someone can learn a lot of things from the people that come to this church because they’re people from a lot of countries. One thing I know I like, for example, are foods from different places. Different ways of talking also.

It’s easy to communicate among Hispanics to understand better….I believe that apart from what the Lord does, it’s a way we unite more with the people, by talking more, chatting more. Although it’s not the Lord in this moment, even if it’s just to be friends with the person. But, but um, that’s one of the ways that unifies us the most.

This final example from Pastora Lui, the head pastor’s wife, highlighted the importance of teaching about unity from the pulpit. The pastor was very proactive about teaching reconciliation and unity from the commencement of the church.

From the very beginning, the church has tried to unify and tear down those differences. They’re not racial, but they are ethnicities inside of the same culture. And we have preached a lot also, taught much on that. The book of Ephesians talks about reconciliation, about not having that division within the rest of the groups. We are neither Gentile nor Jew. It could be Mexico and Puerto Rico, it doesn’t matter. We are brothers in the Lord. I think a lot of it comes from the teaching from the pulpit.

**American Influences/Identity**

The American identity was the weakest of the five identities (spiritual, multicultural, Hispanic, American, and national). However, there were five observable characteristics including the employment of Anglo-American staff, a head pastor comfortable with the American culture, the Americanization of the youth culture, Westernized worship music, and a focus on time. The most obvious American influences were the volunteer Anglo-American youth leader and part-time assistant pastor, and a Hispanic head pastor who could easily navigate the American culture. The church was very conscientious about reaching out to their youth who were growing up in the American culture. Therefore, they asked a bicultural couple—American and Guatemalan—to work as youth leaders because they could bridge the gap between the American and Hispanic cultures. The Anglo-American assistant pastor also
worked at an American church. As a missionary to Latin America for many years, he helped access resources not readily available to many Hispanic churches.

In addition, the head pastor lived in the United States for twenty-seven years, spoke fluent English, was comfortable in the American culture, and had strong relationships with American pastors and church leaders. His ability to navigate the language and culture, and his relationships with American pastors and church leaders, also gave him ready access to American resources. Despite his adaptability to American culture, his Hispanic identity appeared to far outweigh an American identity.

The final two American characteristics included the use of Westernized worship music and a focus on time. Most of the Westernized songs were written by Hispanic composers and incorporated Western instruments including keyboard, electric guitar, bass, and drums. A lot of the songs also incorporated Latin flavors. Sometimes Latin instrumentation was used such as the guiro and cowbell and accordion or trumpet sounds on the keyboard.

Although the music sounded Western, this does not necessarily mean it was American. Marcos Witt, a son of American missionaries to Mexico, ignited the development of Hispanic contemporary praise and worship music during the 1980s. He composed music using original Spanish lyrics but in a genre that strongly resembled the English-language contemporary praise and worship music genre. His original Spanish worship music inspired many other musicians to compose their own music at a time when many churches still sang songs translated from English to Spanish. Even though the music copied Western genres, the Mexican people adopted it as their own. They were proud to have their own music, and it spread rapidly throughout Latin America. Today many Hispanic worship composers write in
this style. Therefore, while even the participants recognized that much of Iglesia Ebenezer’s music was similar to contemporary music used in other American Pentecostal churches, the music cannot necessarily be labeled as American. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis did not permit extensive research into the cultural identity of this music genre.

Finally, while the church definitely had a stronger Hispanic than American sense of time, there were three notable time-oriented characteristics which occurred during the services. First, during every service, the pastor remarked on how he had run out of time or how the service would soon end. These remarks were made at least once every service, but frequently were made two or three times. Secondly, the ending times for almost every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services were predictable to the five or ten-minute mark. Finally, congregational singing almost always ended one hour after the service was scheduled to begin, give or take five minutes.

**Spiritual Identity**

While the church’s spirituality was not the focus of this research, it must be addressed because the participants felt it was their most important identity. In addition, culture and spirituality cannot be neatly separated because spirituality is practiced within the context of culture. When asked to describe the church’s culture, Pastora Lui responded with the following description:

> The culture in the church in this place has been structured or made with worship of the Lord as its base, so that the people love to praise the Lord in their minds and in their hearts. They love studying God’s Word, listening to it, to listen to the sermons.

Pastor Joe and Pastora Lui listed several spiritual values of Iglesia Ebenezer. The following paragraphs describe how I observed the spiritual values in the church. Instead of
creating the list of values and intentionally looking for them during my fieldwork, I easily
drew from the examples I had already mentally noted.

*We need to be worshippers*

One of the first observations I made about the services was that people were very
engaged in and passionate about their worship. Men and women were equally engaged and
demonstrative in their expressions. Several people confirmed the church’s passion for
worship including Estér when she described what she would miss if she attended an
American church:

>[It would be different] in the way that they worship if they’re not a really…revived,
on fire church for God. I wouldn’t be able to probably get used [to it] because I’m so
used to the, you know, being loud and praising loud. You know, worshipping and
being so alive that if I go to an American church where there’s less expression, and
it’s more calm—maybe, yah—I would greatly miss that.

*We are all priests/We can all serve God*

Fer was almost moved to tears when he shared his desire to serve God through his
music:

>Music is my passion. I like it a lot. Sometimes I, how do you say it? I, I, it saddens
me because, I’m sorry [silence]. I would like to give more. But at times it’s
impossible, because, well you’re working. You have responsibilities….You have to
sacrifice a little of time so that you can give the best to the Lord.

*We need to be evangelists*

At almost every service people brought new visitors. On average three to five new
people attended every Sunday morning service.
We need to love one another

The very first observation I made about the church was that it was extremely friendly. During the morning services greeters were everywhere: in the parking lot, in the foyer, in the fellowship room, and along the back wall of the sanctuary.

We need to grow spiritually

The church had an organized and effective discipleship ministry to encourage spiritual growth. Once a participant finished the discipleship classes, he or she discipled someone else, who would eventually disciple another person.

Everyone has a call from God

When asked if he had any additional comments at the end of his interview, Alex described the importance of following God’s call:

The Lord has called us for a purpose, so don’t let it go to waste. Because if God gave a talent to a person that only knows a little bit of music, but has the will to pursue it, let him not be discouraged. Let him continue trusting in God Who will help him to advance in the ministry if he has been called by the Lord. Because well, I believe that there are also people who are professionals in music, but who are not called by God….Let them keep in mind the God that is calling to serve and not reproach the opportunity to do it while we are on this earth.

Hispanic Identity

The above list is significant because the spiritual values corresponded with many of the general pan-Latino characteristics described by participants and observed in church activities. During my fieldwork I identified six pan-Latino characteristics which strongly influenced the church: a familial atmosphere, a strong devotion to God, a love for music and worship, a Hispanic sense of time, adaptability, and Spanish as the primary language.

---

37 Iglesia Ebenezer had a mixed Hispanic and American sense of time.
Except for a Hispanic sense of time, the participants themselves identified all these as part of the Hispanic culture. The Spanish language and familial atmosphere were most frequently cited. The following paragraphs describe how these characteristics were observed at Iglesia Ebenezer and how they integrated with the church’s spiritual values.

*Familial Atmosphere*

The Hispanic people are very connected to family. Close familial relationships extend to great aunts and uncles and second cousins. Cousins frequently love one another as brothers and sisters. Families love to spend time together and will go to great lengths to attend special events, traveling across the country and even returning to Latin America. Extended family frequently lives together. When visitors come—even if just for a few hours—Hispanics automatically feed them, frequently offering generous amounts of food. In the following paragraph, Pastor Joe explained the importance of family to the Hispanic culture:

The value of family is very important because the family is [inaudible] life. It includes all the family. It is not only the father, the mother, and the children. The Hispanic culture includes the grandfather, the grandmother, the uncles and aunts. We are very united. So, that is a very important value. And it is important to preserve it, guard it, because the American culture is different. For example, here there are a lot of nursing homes where the elderly go to finish their time. Over there, in our countries, there are not many nursing homes because the elderly live in the home until they die. So there is a difference. Perhaps it is because of the different lifestyle here. It’s a face-paced style (of living). People don’t have time to take care of their families, or have the capacity to do it. But in our countries it is different.

The same familial culture was practiced at Iglesia Ebenezer. Members referred to one another as brother and sister—they were all one spiritual family, and they loved to spend time together. A large proportion of the church showed up at special events. During my fieldwork, one of the youth turned eighteen. Almost his entire youth group came to his party plus a large number of other church members. On most Saturdays the musicians called one
another just to hang out and play together for several hours—just for the fun of it. Frequently, different groups in the church sold food after services as fund raisers. Church members stayed to socialize. One Sunday evening a service went long at the insistence of some members who were enjoying the pastor’s preaching. When it ended at 8:55 PM, most of the people stayed and ate together. When I left at 9:45 PM, a lot of people were still talking.

Church members also frequently helped one another find jobs, places to live, fill out papers, and navigate the U.S. culture. The following quote by Pastora Lui describes the church’s desire to be together:

The Hispanic culture is amicable and we like to be together. We like get-togethers. We like sharing. So it is real easy for someone to go to a house and find half the church there, go to another house and find the other half of the church.

Arthur, the youth leader, made this observation about how family influenced Iglesia Ebenezer:

I think this church is a lot, is more close-knit. The leadership are seem [sic.] to be knit together real closely. I think that has to do with their culture because they’ve grown up—you know—their cousins are almost like their brother and sister, you know. The door to their house is always open to people. Like when my wife and I were down in Guatemala, we would have her uncles and aunts visiting us. They might not even call to visit—they would just show up. You know, there was that open door there, and I think that rubs off in the church. It’s more of a family because of that….The little kids, and then the youth, and then the adults—they all come up and give their tithes. And a lot of churches, you don’t see little kids coming up and dropping off their tithes….But here you see that. And like even last night one of [the] youth had a birthday and he turned eighteen. And pretty much the whole youth group was there, and a lot of people from the church were there. Would that happen in a church that is not Hispanic? Probably not. But here it’s kind of expected. If somebody has a birthday you would go there.

Spiritual Devotion

Many scholars have noted the strong spiritual devotion of Latin Americans. Icons of Mary and the saints are ubiquitous. Indigenous religious practices are still strong. The same
religious devotion is found in the Evangelical community and therefore at Iglesia Ebenezer. Iglesia Ebenezer’s devotion to God resulted in a strong commitment to serve in the church. Many quotes already shared in this paper reflect this devotion. Pastora Lui specifically commented on this characteristic:

The people are very devoted to the Lord in our countries, extremely devoted… That is why we have a large group of leaders. They are volunteers. There are around sixty-five, seventy people, because they love the Lord….And they do it from their hearts. Some of them, they come from their respective countries and they learned to serve the Lord over there with passion, and when they arrive they’re used to that pace. It is very easy.

After reading chapter six, the pastor added that the training they received while attending Iglesia Ebenezer also largely influenced the leaders’ spiritual devotion.

Music, Worship, and Expression

This love for and devotion to God was also naturally integrated with their love of music resulting in passionate worship. Several participants noted how music was a vehicle through which they freely expressed their emotions:

I think we have expression, more life. Sometimes even more profound…not so much in the Scriptures, but I don’t know. Maybe we just are more emotional with faith, so [we] have more of an emotional experience, is what I think (Ester).

I think as Hispanics we take the music more deep than any other cultures… because we really feel the music….If anyone hears the music they cry. When drunk people get the Hispanic Mariachi they cry because they take the music really to heart. So one of the big things, I would say the good things, we got special in the Hispanic—in the Spanish music—because we really mean what we are saying. We sing as we are really feeling it. Around the church that’s one of the things I would suggest. Don’t just sing, because many churches—they just sing because they think they know because they’re professional. But they play and sing so professional, but they’re missing the good part, which is to feel the music—to get with the music (Diego).

Hispanics, we’re very—….We express our emotions quite a bit….We speak loudly. We move our hands….We are raised that way. It’s part of our culture. And that has a lot to do with the corporate culture of the church because if you pay attention it’s easy for the people to come up to the front—come up front to dance. We hardly even have
to invite them [to do it]. It’s normal….We can go up front to dance. We can praise the Lord with a loud voice. It’s something we do. We want to physically demonstrate that praise. Also lifting our hands, moving our feet. We demonstrate our praise to God in a physical language. We also demonstrate our expressions of love to the Lord very emotionally. There is lots of weeping. There are many tears. I have even heard people shout in the sanctuary from the emotions they feel for the Lord….We are explosive people. We shout, sing, praise out loud. We worship out loud. And we express our emotions for the Lord. I think that it’s because of the culture (Pastora Lui).

Hispanics in general, love music and dancing even before they convert to Christianity. Pastor Armando, the assistant pastor, made this observation:

I believe that…there is a Latino way of praising God. I could say it like that, or that is [inaudible], there is a Latino way. Or that is to say we are ambitious. Not so much because we are Pentecostals, but because we were like that before being converted. We liked cumbia, the mambo. We have been a people of [inaudible]. That is to say, they are things that we already have in the blood. Why wouldn’t we when we rejoice in the Lord? I say we are all like that.

**Time**

The participants exercised both an American and Hispanic sense of time, but overall, the Hispanic time was much stronger. Their Hispanic time was very flexible. The services never started at their scheduled time (even though they ended at a fairly consistent time). Sunday school classes frequently ended right before the main service was scheduled to start or after the scheduled starting time. Half the church arrived after the services began. The last to arrive finally trickled in over an hour late. During one service, when the pastor was preparing to end the service because he had arrived at the scheduled stopping point, members encouraged him to continue preaching. All the interviews scheduled to begin at a specific time began late. While a flexible concept of time was not directly connected to the church’s spiritual values, it naturally corresponded to how they expressed these values. Flexible time allowed the church to spend more time together both in and out of the church. It allowed the pastor to respond to the congregation’s request to continue preaching. It allowed the church
to worship longer when the congregation was deeply engaged in the worship. The combination of Anglo-American time and Hispanic time, while paradoxical, did not appear to create any conflicts. This dual concept of time may also be reflective of participants’ ability to adapt to change.

*Cultural Adaptability or Flexibility*

One striking response made by almost all the participants was their cultural flexibility or adaptability to other Latin American cultures, to the American culture, or to non-Hispanic cultures in general. Many noted that their ability to adapt would enable them to successfully attend an Anglo-American church. Pastor Joe also emphasized the importance for Hispanic pastors of learning English and knowing how to function within the American culture so they did not isolate themselves. Exactly how this characteristic relates to Latin America as a whole is less clear. Adaptability in these participants appeared to be an indication of their desire or willingness to acculturate to the Anglo-American culture. However, it did not, by any means, imply a rejection of cultural heritage. On the contrary, all participants expressed a deep connection to their Hispanic and frequently national heritage. The following are general comments about participants’ adaptability:

I’m so versatile that I can get used to [attending an American church] because you know, I like a variety (Estér).

I’m comfortable with the American culture. I’m very comfortable. I can adjust myself to it. I don’t, I don’t have a hard time facing changes. I can adjust (snapping), that quick (Jorge).

Yes, I adapt very well. Basically I could always adapt to the American culture more [than others]. In my case, I adapt better to the traditions, in my way of being, in the way I express myself. (Inosencio).
Several participants described their adaptability as a willingness to be flexible in their cultural identity in order to evangelize their community. In the following excerpt Diego commented on his willingness to adapt to another culture to minister to others:

[I would be willing to attend an American church] because one of things I always think, we are here because God has got us in here. If he will send us to the Chinese, we will serve the Chinese and I can work the way they work because that’s where God will send us. And if it’s an American we will do it. We’re serving them the way they want it, the way they like it. I will get adapted to them and not them to me. That’s what I would do because so I can feel comfortable.

In the following excerpt Pastor Armando commented on how Hispanics in general easily adapted to other cultures and how Iglesia Ebenezer was ready to adapt their ministry to reach its multicultural community:

I think that we Hispanics are open to working with whatever culture. It’s more our, the vision at [Iglesia Ebenezer]. Somewhere it says that we are a multiethnic ministry where we accept different nationalities, that we would also be ready to integrate their languages so that the Word of God could be translated into their languages. Of course that includes their music also, because, well, we Hispanics easily adapt to other cultures. That is why you’ll find Hispanics in all parts of the United States, not just here, but also in Europe and in other countries. That they easily adapt to a way of life in those nationalities. So [inaudible] here in the United States and in the church, we are ready to unite with other cultures, with their music, their language. You could say it is our complete prayer to the Lord. Just as it would be beautiful to have, for example, Chinese, Somalian. I imagine that the Word could be translated and the music included. That is one of the, it is part of the vision of [Iglesia Ebenezer] to integrate that culture.

Understanding adaptability is important, not only because it suggests acculturation, but also because it influences analysis of behavior. If participants readily adapted to foreign culture to connect with the people, one might automatically assume they had the same culture as the people because they displayed the same behavior. It is also important because it influences the development of the pan-Latino identity.
Spanish Language

Finally, the Spanish language was noted as the most important factor contributing to the church’s Hispanic identity. It influenced who attended the church and what music was used during worship. Many attended Iglesia Ebenezer because they did not know sufficient English to attend an American church. This language dilemma was expressed by four of the musicians and also held true for other leaders. It coincides with my definition of natural pan-ethnic identity described in chapters one and two: “Natural identity results when people from different geographical or cultural backgrounds possess similarities to one another. They may recognize the similarities as a means of establishing a common history or paradigm for communication.” Alex’s explanation of the importance of Spanish described this natural identity.

And some times, upon seeing Hispanic people in an American church, it gives a person pleasure to find someone that speaks Spanish, or I imagine. For example, if I go to an American church and if I would keep attending an American church, and I attend and keep attending, and there would never be another Hispanic? But if I would find one it would give me much pleasure to see him and tell him “Dios le bendiga.” “God bless you,” ask his name and speak in my first language with someone.

Interestingly, while Spanish was noted as the primary unifying Hispanic characteristic, it was also the most frequently noted cultural trait that reminded people of their diversity as a multicultural church. Accents and language variations unique to each Latin American country sometimes caused confusion. Miranda, the youth leader, described how different meanings for the same word could remind people of their diversity:

You think that you’re in your country. You’re with your people. So you hear that word and you feel offended, but you’re not realizing it that—oh, it’s because they’re from a different country.
1.2 Within the context of the church setting, do individuals identify more with their national heritage, pan-Latino identity, or American identity?

While every participant described the church as multicultural, every participant also stated they were one body and that nationality was never a major issue in the church. When asked if they identified more with their national or Hispanic identity, most stated that their most important identity was belonging to the body of Christ. They did not think much about their culture when at church. Most, by their body language and voice inflection, insinuated that focusing on one’s nationality could create divisiveness.

These comments suggest that while their religious identity was most important, their second most important identity was their Hispanic identity because it enabled them to relate to one other without being reminded of their differences. The following comments describe this Hispanic identity. In this first comment, Alex explained how he sometimes identified better with people from different countries:

I think we all come to understand that we need to love each other as brothers and sisters, as children of God. And our way of thinking is a little more different and sometimes we don’t see it as other nationalities. Rather we see it as equal [inaudible]. Sometimes I identify with people, I identify better sometimes with people who are not from my country—that are from another country. I identify with them better. I hang out with them.

When asked how he thought the Hispanic culture influenced Iglesia Ebenezer, Pastor Armando noted that the different nationalities in the church were Hispanic and shared many similarities. He also noted the facility with which he adapted to the Mexican culture:

I believe that, in general, the different nationalities that represent the church [Iglesia Ebenezer] or that compose the church, we have things in common. For example, the language. And many times we differ as to ways of eating. But in general you could say that we share things in common, the Mexicans just as much as the Nicaraguans, the Guatemalans. So then in one way we who are already Christians, well, we identify with each other. Of course the most important, the most powerful is what the Word says: not so much [inaudible] cultural [inaudible], without unity in the Spirit, but, being Hispanic helps us quite a bit. It’s another way for us to identify with each other.
We also adapt also. We Nicaraguans are adaptable to a Mexican culture. I am Nicaraguan and my wife is Mexican. I have adapted to that with facility, I adapted to their culture.

**CONCLUSIONS FOR QUESTION 1: What role does Latinidad play in the formation of the church’s collective identity, thus unifying a congregation representing several different countries and degrees of acculturation?**

Each Latin American country has both unique and similar cultural traits. Participants had a wide range of perspectives about the degree of similarities. The strongest similarity was the Spanish language which enabled them to communicate and develop relationships. The second strongest was focus on family and intimate relationships. The remaining four—strong devotion to God, love for music and worship, a Hispanic sense of time, and adaptability—were too difficult to rank in order of influence because they varied from person to person.

While the foundation of their Hispanic identity was based on the six characteristics previously described, Iglesia Ebenezer developed their own unique version of Latinidad. This coincides with Ricourt and Danta’s (2003) description of an experiential pan-ethnicity that grows out of shared immigrant or minority experiences. Diego commented on Iglesia Ebenezer’s unique Hispanic culture:

I would say [our church is] Hispanic because…I can see people from Guatemala—they’re not acting like Guatemalan people anymore. Mexicans—they don’t act like Mexicans anymore. People from Columbia, people from Puerto Rico—they’re even speaking our language. We’re kind of like a building up in this church, like one type of family, one type of special culture. Like I said, multicultures. And because it is totally different than everybody I can tell because we’re not like Mexican. We don’t act like Mexican. We don’t play all Mexican music. It’s not like Guatemala. It’s not like Puerto Rican. We play all kinds of music. We eat all kind of food in here and people, I never have people complain about it. [inaudible] all kind of food from some place. Okay we’re cooking this food from Guatemala, and we will get together and we will eat. And sometimes we’ll get an American style. We’ll get some turkey, stuffing, mash potatoes, corn, and we all eat together. That’s why I said it’s not like many cultures. We’re kind of a building of one specifically for [Iglesia Ebenezer].
That’s the good thing I really like—that we’re building up that kind of culture. It’s kind of interesting.

Iglesia Ebenezer’s *Latinidad* drew from both the similarities and differences of its people resulting in a community that was diverse but united.

### 2.1 How does the church decide what music to use when there are so many different ethnicities represented in one congregation?

Iglesia Ebenezer believed all styles of music were acceptable for use in worship:

[The music is] rather Latino. There is cumbia, balada. We do all the sounds. We are not limited in that respect, because we are a church that is not legalistic and we, well, we can do a rap. What comes from mariachi people with their mariachi band. We accept all kinds of music. Because we know that in the beginning music belonged to God. It’s just that the devil twisted and corrupted it, but in reality all the music originally belonged to God. So we accept whatever kind of music that has praising God as its purpose. (Pastor Armando).

Participants’ perceptions about what type of music they used varied greatly. The following paraphrases include all their comments about what kind of music Iglesia Ebenezer used. They are divided into five categories: Latin music, Mexican music, rock or pop music, contemporary worship music, and universal music.

**Latin Music**

(Diego) We’ve been kind of trying to get some Latin music which we don’t play much, and we’re going to try to introduce bolero.

(Estér) We’ve been using some *regatón* and salsa, but the majority is just praise and worship music.

(Jorge) Some songs are mixed with merengue and Latino flavors.

(Jorge) The music is more focused on the Latino side like Danilo Montero, Marcos Witt, Jesús Adrián Romero, and others.

(Inosencio) Sometimes we take boleros, or rancheros, but it’s not our regular style.
(Pastora Lui) The music we play expresses part of our culture. It’s lively. We can play salsa, merengue, or *cumbia*.

(Pastor Armando) We play a lot of Latino music like *cumbia* or *balada*.

**Mexican Music**

(Fer) It is the same music we played in Mexico.

(Miranda) Most of what we sing in churches comes from Mexico—the big Mexican singers that we hear. Everyone hears them because they’re so famous. I haven’t seen a lot of regional music from different countries played here.

**Rock or Pop**

(Diego) We play a lot of rock and some pop.

(Jorge) The music is like Latino pop.

(Inosencio) When people ask me what style of music I play at church, I tell them we play pop music.

**Contemporary Worship Music**

(Estér) The music is very contemporary, taken or derived from what’s coming out in the Christian Latino market right now. We use music from the top-selling praise and worship artists. The church doesn’t sing a lot of the old because they really don’t know a lot of the old songs.

(Fer) All the music we play is taken from current Christian artists. It inspires people to play and sing and is very beautiful.

(Fer) The music is contemporary. It’s neither rock nor ballad. It’s normal music like what’s found in any other church.

**Universal Music**

(Diego) The music that we play is like a universal level. Any Pentecostal church will play the same music that we play. The only difference is the language, where the music, it’s all the same. It’s just like in our language. We sing in Spanish and English at the same time.
We don’t really play regional music because there is so much diversity of people from different countries. We look for songs that are more or less universal that the people like so everyone enjoys it.

In response to the diverse musical preferences, the worship team mostly played music that had a universal appeal to a majority of the church members. This universal music was a mix of pop and rock music closely resembling the English versions of contemporary Christian music. However, many of the songs incorporated “Latin” flavors. Occasionally, the worship team incorporated genres that were regional-specific genres or less “universal,” but were appreciated by a large number of members. Some examples of these genres included bolero, Mexican cumbia, régaton, Messianic, ranchera, and salsa. Finally, the church hosted special Christian musical events in which a variety of musical genres were represented. Examples of Christian music genres which had been performed during these events included older Latino contemporary music by praise and worship recording artists such as Marcos Witt or Jesús Adrian Romero, régaton, and music associated with the Ecuadorian Andean mountain regions.

Since the church was so diverse the musicians felt they could not play every member’s preferred style of music. There were three main reasons for this. First, the musicians did not know how to play every music genre represented by the different church members. Secondly, they tried to use a lot of “universal” music so a majority of the members could identify with the music. Thirdly, the musicians were limited to the genres of songs released on new worship albums. If the Latin worship recording artists were not composing in a particular genre, then the people were not listening to that particular genre. Therefore, the church did not use the genre in their worship.
2.2 How and to what degree does the church’s concept of them self as a Hispanic church influence how worship is conducted?

Determining when the church consciously made choices based on their Hispanic culture was difficult: were they trying to be multicultural or did their multicultural Hispanic identity naturally give them access to diverse Hispanic worship resources? Therefore, this section will note all conscious choices based on both their Hispanic and multicultural identities. The choices described here primarily reflect their desire to reach out to their community and be culturally relevant to their congregation.

The most obvious conscious choices Iglesia Ebenezer made were to reach out to non-Spanish speakers. They wanted to be culturally relevant to the congregation but open the church to all people, not just Spanish-speakers. This decision resulted in three changes: the inclusion of the term multiethnic in their vision statement, the implementation of the translation ministry, and the employment (on a volunteer basis) of a bi-cultural youth-leader couple. This bi-cultural couple reflected the church’s need for leaders who could bridge both the Hispanic and American cultures because their Hispanic youth were growing up in the American culture.

The strongest conscious choice influencing the worship was their decision to incorporate music relevant to their multicultural congregation. The pool of music from which they drew was primarily written by Hispanic musicians. This music was mostly of the rock or pop styles, but as the worship leader noted, they were trying to incorporate more Latin styles.

Two additional conscious choices were described by Diego and Pastora Lui. These influenced how the sound system was set up and what song themes were emphasized in the church. Diego shared that Anglo-Americans tended to place much more emphasis on the bass in their contemporary church music, but Hispanics placed more emphasis on melody. When
an American came to help him set up their sound system, he listened to his advice and then adjusted it to fit his Hispanic musical sensibilities. Lui described how worship tended to lean towards themes that expressed personal testimonies and moved their emotions. It was not clear if choosing these song themes was a conscious response to their Hispanic culture, or a conscious response to their knowledge that the congregation connected with these songs.

**CONCLUSIONS FOR QUESTION 2: How does the church’s collective identity and concept of *Latinidad* influence their worship?**

The church’s Hispanic identity most strongly influenced the pool of music from which they drew. Most of the music was written by Hispanic composers; a few were written by American composers. Beyond this choice, my research suggests that most of their choices were either *unconsciously* influenced by their Hispanic identity, or *consciously* influenced by their multicultural identity. An alternative possibility is that they consciously made choices based on their Hispanic culture, but did not verbalize it. For the participants, the most important influence was their identity in Christ.

**FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

This research examined a topic which so far has received little scholarly attention: the worship and culture of U.S. Hispanic, Pentecostal churches. This research examined how *Latinidad* assisted one U.S. Hispanic congregation to successfully worship together despite differences in culture. After reading chapters four and six to verify my data, Pastor Joe and Pastora Lui were very excited. Pastor Joe commented that it was just like I had taken an x-ray of their church. He wanted copies in both English and Spanish to train their church leaders.

Throughout the research my husband (who helped with transcriptions and translations) and I were constantly amazed and impressed by the participants’ devotion to
God and sincere display of unity. Participants commented that since the inception of the church in 1993, they never once had a problem with cultural divisions in the church. They attributed this unity to constant teaching from the pulpit and a focus on Christ as the ultimate unifier. To conclude I would like to quote Pastora Lui:

It is possible to be united through the love of the Holy Spirit, and to serve one another because, well, we can: we are an example. Yes, we can do it without divisions or anything…. we are united here: Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia. We are united here. And we coalesce because the love of the Lord is here through the Holy Spirit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Participants noted a very important musical influence: their choice of musical genres was based on what was being composed. As a multicultural Hispanic church, they represented numerous music cultures that could be used to worship God, but were dependent on what others composed. For this reason, I recommend studying how the Latino Christian recording industry is influencing musical genres being used in Hispanic churches.

When participants described Iglesia Ebenezer’s music, they described it as Latino, Mexican, rock, pop, exactly the same as American music, contemporary, and universal. This variety of opinions revealed an inconsistency about the cultural identity of the music. This music was being composed by musicians such as Marcos Witt, Danilo Montero, and Jesús Adrián Romero. Therefore, I recommend studying the cultural identity of this praise and worship music. In addition transcription and analysis is needed to compare and contrast American and Latino praise and worship music.

The theme of cultural flexibility or adaptability suggested many options for future research. How did this theme influence the church’s ability to integrate different cultures? What did it indicate about their acculturation to American culture? Were they actually
integrating the American culture into their own personal identity, or were they just observing American rules of conduct to be polite visitors? Did they feel culturally adaptable before they moved to the United States, or was this a learned trait? How does adaptability influence the development of the pan-Latino identity?

Finally, as noted by many scholars, more research is needed to examine the dynamics between the multicultural and pan-Latino identities. The church clearly possessed pan-Latino characteristics that unified their diverse congregation. However, the musicians’ case studies revealed a wide range of perspectives about the extent of a pan-Latino identity. Therefore, I recommend conducting more case studies that compare and contrast individual perspectives to the collective community.
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

You and your church are invited to participate in a study of U.S. Hispanic/Latino culture and worship. I hope to learn about how the congregation at Iglesia Ebenezer is able to worship together despite differences in national heritage and degrees of assimilation to American culture. I will also study how the Hispanic culture in this church affects the worship. Your church was selected as a potential participant in this study because it is a Hispanic, Pentecostal church. This study is part of a final research project I am conducting as part of my Master’s Degree in Ethnomusicology from Bethel University. The results of this study may be used in future presentations or written articles for teaching about Hispanic worship, but all information identifying participants will be removed.

If you decide to participate, I will observe services and worship rehearsals over the fall of 2006 and January 2007. I will also conduct interviews, primarily with the worship musicians and church leaders about their experiences at Iglesia Ebenezer and how they think the Hispanic culture affects the church and the worship. I may also ask questions about spiritual beliefs. Most interviews will take from 30 to 60 minutes, and will likely involve a short follow-up interview. This will allow me to clarify any additional questions I may have and provide people with the opportunity to make any additional comments. The interviews will be recorded by an audio device and transcribed onto paper.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with specific individuals will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. The report may use direct quotes from the interviews, but names will not be given. One possible exception may be the inclusion of short audio-recorded excerpts of the worship services. However, participants’ names will not be included in the examples.

You and your church’s decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel’s Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant’s rights, or wish to report a research-related injury, please call Kristina Arellano at ###-###-####.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

________________________________________________  ______________________________________
Signature of Pastor                                      Date

________________________________________________  ______________________________________
Signature of Researcher                                   Date
PERMISO DE ESTUDIAR

Usted y su iglesia es invitado a tomar parte en un estudio de la cultura y adoración hispano/latina. Espero aprender cómo la congregación de Iglesia Ebenezer es capaz de adorar corporalmente a pesar de diferencias en el la nacionalidad y grados de asimilación a la cultura Americana. Estudiaré además cómo la cultura hispana afecta el culto de esta iglesia. Su iglesia fue escogida como una participante potencial en este estudio a causa de su cultura hispana y creencias pentecostales. Este estudio forma parte de un proyecto final de investigación para mi título de master en la Etnomusicología de la Universidad de Bethel. Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser usados en futuras presentaciones o artículos escritos para enseñar acerca de la adoración Latina, pero toda la información que identifica los participantes va hacer removida.

Si usted decide participar, observaré los ensayos del grupo de alabanza y los cultos durante el otoño del año 2006 y Enero 2007. Yo le entrevistaré también, principalmente los músicos de alabanza y los líderes de la iglesia acerca de sus experiencias en Iglesia Ebenezer y cómo ellos piensan que la cultura hispana afecta la iglesia y la adoración. Podré pedir también acerca de sus creencias espirituales. La mayoría de las entrevistas tomarán desde 30 a 60 minutos, y hacen posiblemente una más entrevista breva. Esto me permitirá clarificar cualquier pregunta adicional que tendré y le puedo ofrecer la oportunidad de hacer cualquier comentario adicional. Las entrevistas serán grabadas y transcritas en papel.

Cualquier información obtenida con respecto a este estudio que se puede identificar con usted se quedará confidencial y será revelado sólo con su permiso. En algún informe o publicaciones escritos, nadie será identificado o identificable. El informe puede utilizar las citas directas de las entrevistas, pero de su nombre no se identificará. Una excepción posible puede ser la inclusión de extractos cortos de audio de los servicios del culto. Sin embargo, los nombres de participantes no se incluirán en los ejemplos.

El decisión de usted y su iglesia a participar o no, no en ninguna manera afectará sus relaciones futuras con la Universidad de Bethel. Si usted decide participar, usted es libre discontinuar la participación en tiempo sin afectar tales relaciones. Este proyecto de investigación se ha revisado y ha sido aprobado de acuerdo con los Niveles de Bethel de la Revisión para la Investigación con Humanos. Si usted tiene cualquiera pregunta acerca de la investigación y/o los derechos de participante, o el deseo para informar una herida investigación relacionado, por favor llamar Kristina Arellano en ###-###-####.

Usted será ofrecido una copia de esta forma para mantener.

Usted toma una decisión de participar o no. Su firma indica que usted ha leido la información proporcionada encima y ha decidido participar. Usted puede retirar en tiempo sin el prejuicio después de firmar esta forma.

Firma del Pastor

Firma de la Investigador

La Fecha

La Fecha
INFORMATION LETTER

You are invited to participate in a study of U.S. Hispanic/Latino culture and worship. I hope to learn about how the congregation at Iglesia Ebenezer is able to worship together despite differences in national heritage and degrees of assimilation to American culture. I will also study how the Hispanic culture in this church affects the worship. You were selected as a potential participant in this study because of your participation in the church. This study is part of a final research project I am conducting as part of my Master’s Degree in Ethnomusicology from Bethel University. The results of this study may be used in future presentations or written articles for teaching about Hispanic worship, but all information identifying participants will be removed.

If you decide to participate, I may interview you about your experiences at Iglesia Ebenezer and how you think the Hispanic culture affects the church and the worship. I may also ask you questions about your spiritual beliefs. Most interviews take from 30 to 60 minutes, and will likely involve a short follow-up interview. This will allow me to clarify any additional questions I may have and provide you with the opportunity to make any additional comments. The interviews will be recorded by an audio device and transcribed onto paper.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. The report may use direct quotes from the interviews, but your name will not be given.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel’s Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant’s rights, or wish to report a research-related injury, please call Kristina Arellano at ###-###-####.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kristina Arellano
INFORMACIÓN DEL ESTUDIO

Usted es invitado a tomar parte en un estudio de la cultura y adoración hispano/latina. Espero aprender cómo la congregación de Iglesia Ebenezer es capaz de adorar corporalmente a pesar de diferencias en el la nacionalidad y grados de asimilación a la cultura Americana. Estudiaré además cómo la cultura hispana afecta el culto de esta iglesia. Usted fue escogido como un participante potencial en este estudio a causa de su participación en la iglesia. Este estudio forma parte de un proyecto final de investigación para mi título de master en la Etnomusicología de la Universidad de Bethel. Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser usados en futuras presentaciones o artículos escritos para enseñar acerca de la adoración Latina, pero toda la información que identifica los participantes va hacer removida.

Si usted decide participar, yo le entrevistaré acerca de sus experiencias en Iglesia Ebenezer y cómo usted piensa que la cultura hispana afecta la iglesia y la adoración. Podré pedir también acerca de sus creencias espirituales. La mayoría de las entrevistas tomarán desde 30 a 60 minutos, y hacen posiblemente una más entrevista breva. Esto me permitirá clarificar cualquier pregunta adicional que tendré y le puedo ofrecer la oportunidad de hacer cualquier comentario adicional. Las entrevistas serán grabadas y transcritas en papel.

Cualquier información obtenido con respecto a este estudio que se puede identificar con usted se quedará confidencial y será revelado sólo con su permiso. En algún informe o publicaciones escritos, nadie será identificado o identificable. El informe puede utilizar las citas directas de las entrevistas, pero de su nombre no se identificará.

Su decisión de participar o no, no en ninguna manera afectará sus relaciones futuras con la Universidad de Bethel. Si usted decide participar, usted es libre discontinuar la participación en tiempo sin afectar tales relaciones. Este proyecto de investigación se ha revisado y ha sido aprobado de acuerdo con los Niveles de Bethel de la Revisión para la Investigación con Humanos. Si usted tiene cualquiera pregunta acerca de la investigación y/o los derechos de participante, o el deseo para informar una herida investigación relacionado, por favor llamar Kristina Arellano en ###-###-####.

Gracias por su ayuda.

Sinceramente,

Kristina Arellano
PASTOR’S INTERVIEW GUIDE

(The underlined words changed depending on the pastor’s responses. The questions were a general guide and changed slightly depending on the pastor’s responses and interests. In addition to the questions included in this guide, I asked the pastor to share about the church’s vision statement because I sensed it had a strong impact on the church’s organization. My instinct proved to be true.)

**INTRODUCTION: I am interested in learning about how the Latino culture affects the worship at Iglesia Ebenezer. I will ask you questions about music, worship, and culture. The information you share will be used in my final research paper for my studies at Bethel University. Do I have your permission to record this interview on my mini-disk player? Tell me if you would prefer not to answer a particular question.

INTRODUCCIÓN: Estoy interesada en aprender cómo la cultura latina afecta la adoración en Iglesia Ebenezer. Le voy hacer preguntas de música, de adoración, y de cultura. La información que tenga de usted va hacer usada para mi papel de investigación final para mis estudios en la Universidad de Bethel. ¿Me da usted permiso de grabar esta entrevista? Me puede decir si no es dispuesto a responder a mi pregunta.

1. **What is your name?**
   ¿Cómo se llama?

2. **Where are you from?**
   ¿De dónde es usted?

3. **How did you become pastor of this church?**
   ¿Cómo vino usted hacer pastor de esta congregación?

4. **Tell me about the work you do at this church.**
   Dígame de su trabajo que usted desarrolla en esta iglesia.

5. **How and when did this church get started?**
   ¿Cómo y cuando empezó esta congregación?

6. **How would you describe the styles of music this church uses in worship?**
   ¿Cómo describes el estilo de música que esta iglesia usa para la alabanza y adoración?

7. **What characteristics do you look for in praise or worship music?**
   ¿Qué características busca usted en la música de alabanza y adoración?
   - **Is style important?**
     ¿Es importante el estilo?
**Now I’m going to ask you questions about culture.**

_Ahora le voy a hacer preguntas de cultura._

8. **Which of the following words do you prefer: Hispanic, Latino (or Chicano)? Why?**

_¿Cuál es su preferencia para las palabras? ¿Hispano, latino, (o chicano)? ¿Por qué?_

9. **What does the word culture mean to you? How would you define the word?**

_¿Qué quiere decir la palabra cultura para usted? ¿Cómo defina la palabra?_

10. **What is your culture?**

_¿Qué es su cultura?_

11. **Has moving to the U.S. affected/influenced how you understand culture?**

_¿Moverse por los Estados Unidos afectó/influenció de su modo de pensar de la cultura?_

12. **Do you view Hispanics of different nationalities as different cultural groups or as one large cultural group?**

_¿Usted mira los hispanos de diferentes nacionalidades como diferentes grupos de culturas o como un grande grupo de cultura?_

- **What makes them the same or different culture?**

_¿Qué los hace igual o diferentes culturas?_

- **What do you think others from Iglesia Ebenezer think?**

_¿Qué cree usted que otros de la Iglesia Ebenezer piensen?_

13. **Have you attended other churches? Where there any differences between the culture of this church and the one(s) you previously attended?**

_¿Ha usted atendido otras iglesias? ¿Hay algunas diferencias en la iglesia que su asistió y en las anteriormente ha atendido?_

- **How does the culture affect/influenced the churches differently?**

_¿Cómo afecta/influye la cultura a las iglesias diferente?_

14. **Do you think your church experience would be different if you attended an American/English-speaking church? How?**

_¿Usted cree que la experiencia será diferente si atendía a una iglesia anglo-americana? ¿Y cómo?_

15. **If you ever moved to a new city, what characteristics would you look for in a church?**

_¿Si se mueve a una diferente ciudad, qué son las características que va a buscar en una iglesia diferente?_

- **Would you ever consider attending an American church?**

_¿Considerarías una iglesia anglo-americana?_

16. **To what degree should culture affect/influence the way people lead or organize worship?**

_¿Hasta qué grado afecta/influye la cultura la manera que la gente dirija o organizar la alabanza?_
17. Do you think being Mexican or Hispanic affects/influences the way you personally worship?
¿Siendo hispano afecta/influye la manera que adora?

18. How do you know when the congregation is engaged in worship?
¿Cómo le da cuenta cuando la congregación esta se envuelve en la alabanza?
- What types of songs do people respond to the most?
¿A qué clases de cantos la gente responde mejor?

19. What is it like attending a church with so many different nationalities?
¿Cómo se siente atender a una congregación con diferentes nacionalidades?
- What do you like about it?
¿Qué le gusta de esto?
- How often do you think others from Iglesia Ebenezer think about it?
¿Qué tan seguido cree usted que otros piensan de las nacionalidades diferentes?
- What do others like about it?
¿Cómo es que otros le gustan?

20. Are there challenges to having people from so many different countries attend one congregation?
¿Hay obstáculos cuando tiene diferentes nacionalidades juntas en una congregación?
- How do you work through these challenges?
¿Cómo trabaja usted a través de estos obstáculos?

21. Does the variety of nationalities affect how you preach or conduct the services?
¿Usted siente que nacionalidades diferentes afectan el modo de escoger su sermón o dirigir el culto?

22. Any additional comments?
¿Tiene usted comentarios adicionales?
INTRODUCTION: I am interested in learning about how the Latino culture affects the worship at Iglesia Ebenezer. I will ask you questions about music, worship, and culture. The information you share will be used in my final research paper for my studies at Bethel University. Do I have your permission to record this interview on my mini-disk player? Tell me if you would prefer not to answer a particular question.

INTRODUCCION: Estoy interesada en aprender como la cultura latina afecta la adoración en Iglesia Ebenezer. Te voy hacer preguntas de música, de adoración, y de cultura. La información que tenga de ti va hacer usada para mi papel de investigación final para mis estudios en la Universidad de Bethel. ¿Me das permiso de grabar esta entrevista? Me puedes decir si no estás dispuesto a responder a mi pregunta.

1. **What is your name?**
   ¿Qué es tu nombre?

2. **Where are you from?**
   ¿De dónde eres tú?

3. **Tell me about the work you do at this church.**
   Dime de tu trabajo que tú desarrollas en esta iglesia.

4. **How did you find out about this church?**
   ¿Cómo te distes cuenta de esta iglesia?
   - Why did you keep coming?
     ¿Por qué continuaste a asistir?

5. **(WORSHIP TEAM MEMBERS) Tell me about your involvement with the worship team.**
   Dime de qué manera te envuelves en el grupo de alabanza.
   - How did you start participating on the worship team?
     ¿Cómo empezaste a participar en el grupo de alabanza?
   - How long have you been a member of the team?
     ¿Qué tanto tienes de participar en el grupo?
   - What are your responsibilities as a worship team member?
     ¿Cuáles son tus responsabilidades como un miembro del grupo?

-OR-
5. **(WORSHIP DIRECTOR)** How did you become the leader/director of the worship team?
   ¿Cómo fue que le hicieron encabezado(a) del grupo de alabanza?
   - How long have you been the director of the team?
     ¿Qué tanto tiempo ha trabajado con este grupo?
   - What are your responsibilities as director?
     ¿Qué son sus responsabilidades como director?

6. Tell me how you became interested in playing the guitar.
   Dime como te interesaste en tocar el instrumento.
   - How did you learn to play?
     ¿Cómo aprendiste como tocar?
   - Do you play other instruments?
     ¿Tocas otro instrumento?

7. What styles of music do people play or listen to in Mexico?
   ¿Qué clase de música toca o escucha la gente en México?

8. What styles of music do you personally like?
   ¿Personalmente, qué estilo de música te/le gusta escuchar?
   - What attracts you to this music?
     ¿Qué atracción te/le da esa música?

9. Who selects new music for worship at this church?
   ¿Quién escoge la música nueva que cantan en esta iglesia?

10. How would you describe the styles of music this church uses in worship?
    ¿Cómo describes el estilo de música que esta iglesia usa para la alabanza y adoración?

11. What characteristics do you look for in praise or worship music?
    ¿Qué características buscas en la música de alabanza y adoración?
    - Is style important?
      ¿Es importante el estilo?
    - What are your favorite songs? Why?
      ¿Cuáles son tus cantos favoritos? ¿Por qué?

12. What do you think about using regional Latin American styles in worship? For example, Norteño or bossa nova?
    ¿Qué es lo que piensas tú del uso de música regional de América Latina para alabanza?
    Por ejemplo, el estilo norteño o bossa nova.
    - What about folklore styles with Christian lyrics?
      ¿Qué piensas tú de música folklórica con palabras cristianas?
    - What about translated American songs?
      ¿Qué piensas de traducir cantos de ingles a español?

**Now I’m going to ask you questions about culture.**
Ahora te voy hacer preguntas de cultura.
13. Which of the following words do you prefer: Hispanic, Latino, (or Chicano)? Why?
¿Cuál es tu preferencia para las palabras? ¿Hispano, latino, (o chicano)? ¿Por qué?

14. What does the word culture mean to you? How would you define the word?
¿Qué quiere decir la palabra cultura para ti? ¿Cómo definas la palabra?

15. What is your culture?
¿Qué es tu cultura?

16. Has moving to the U.S. affected/influenced how you understand culture?
¿Moverte por el Estados Unidos afectó/influyó como tu modo de pensar de la cultura?

17. Do you view Hispanics of different nationalities as different cultural groups or as one large cultural group?
¿Tú miras los hispanos de diferentes nacionalidades como diferentes grupos de culturas o como un grande grupo de cultura?
- What makes them the same or different culture?
  ¿Qué los hace igual o diferentes culturas?
- What do you think others from Iglesia Ebenezer think?
  ¿Qué crees que otros de la Iglesia Ebenezer piensen?

18. Have you attended other churches? Where there any differences between the culture of this church and the one(s) you previously attended?
¿Has atendido otras iglesias? ¿Hay algunas diferencias en la iglesia que tú asistes y en las anteriormente has atendido?
- How does the culture affect/influenced the churches differently?
  ¿Cómo afecta/influye la cultura a las iglesias diferente?

19. Do you think your church experience would be different if you attended an American/English-speaking church? How?
¿Tú crees que la experiencia será diferente si atendías a una iglesia anglo-americana? ¿Y cómo?

20. If you ever moved to a new city, what characteristics would you look for in a church?
¿Si tú te mueves a una diferente ciudad, qué son las características que vas a buscar en una iglesia diferente?
- Would you ever consider attending an American church?
  ¿Considerarías una iglesia anglo-americana?

21. To what degree should culture affect/influence the way people lead or organize worship?
¿Hasta que grado afecta/influye la cultura la manera que la gente dirija o organizar la alabanza?

22. Do you think being Mexican or Hispanic affects/influences the way you personally worship?
¿Siendo hispano afecta/influye la manera que tú adoras?
23. How do you know when the congregation is engaged in worship?
   ¿Cómo te das cuenta cuando la congregación esta se envuelve en la alabanza?
   - What types of songs do people respond to the most?
     ¿A qué clases de cantos la gente responde mejor?

24. What is it like attending a church with so many different nationalities?
   ¿Cómo se siente atender a una congregación con diferentes nacionalidades?
   - What do you like about it?
     ¿Qué te gusta de esto?
   - How often do you think others from Iglesia Ebenezer think about it?
     ¿Qué tan seguido crees que otros piensan de las nacionalidades diferentes?
   - What do others like about it?
     ¿Cómo es que otros le gustan?

25. Are there challenges to having people from so many different countries attend one congregation?
   ¿Hay obstáculos cuando tienes diferentes nacionalidades juntas en una congregación?
   - How do you work through these challenges?
     ¿Cómo trabajas a través de estos obstáculos?

26. Does having people from various countries affect/influence which music is used for worship?
   ¿En tener gente de diferentes países, afecta/influye la música que usan por adorar?
   - How do you decide what music to use when there are so many nationalities?
     ¿Cómo haces tu decisión para escoger la música que vas a usar para adorar?

27. Any additional comments?
   ¿Tienes comentarios adicionales?
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acculturation: The process by which cultures change as a result of direct contact or indirect influence from another culture.

American: A term used by residents of the United States to refer to U.S. citizens.

Banda: A fusion of norteño music and brass bands.

Bolero: Schechter defined bolero as a “slow-paced, romantic, sentimental song-type in Mexico. It occupies an important place in the repertoire of mariachi ensembles” (1999, 460).

Contemporary Christian music (English-language): Music birthed in the 1970s. It is also known as praise and worship. The English-language version constantly evolves to match recent secular pop and rock styles.

Contemporary Christian music (Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish-language): Spanish-language hymnody that exploded in the 1990s. The music is similar to the English-language version, but eclectic. It is influenced by pop and rock, salsa, and what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish music. A larger percentage of the music is written in minor keys than its English counterpart. Recently I was informed about influences of régaton, a Latinized version of hip hop. Finally, one frequently encounters story-telling texts, probably an influence of the corito genre. Based on this brief discussion, one may more accurately conclude that what I label as Hispanic contemporary Christian music is actually a combination of several different genres placed under one umbrella term.

Corito: A type of Hispanic hymn written in a style that resembles polka or what many Hispanic Christians identify as Jewish music. Many coritos are written in minor keys, and they frequently use story-telling texts.

Hymnody: Songs used in congregational singing.

Latin American: A person from the predominantly Spanish or Portuguese-speaking countries of North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean.

Latinidad: A pan-ethnic Latin American identity not associated with any particular country. It is shaped by the peoples’ collective cultures and experiences. In my research I identified six cultural traits shared by constituents of different Latin American countries, thus facilitating the development of Iglesia Ebenezer’s version of Latinidad.

Latino/Hispanic: People originally of Latin American descent who have immigrated to the U.S., or people born to parents of Latin American descent. These terms are interchangeable. Some people prefer one title over the other.
Mariachi: A Mexican music ensemble. Typical instrumentation includes violins, the diatonic harp, trumpets, guitars, and the *guitarrón*, a Mexican bass guitar. Mariachi music indicates a specific type of instrumentation, not a specific song genre.

Marginalization: The experience minorities have when they are ignored, excluded, or pushed aside out of view of society.

Merengue: The national dance of the Dominican Republic. *Merengue* is usually played in cut-time. It is inspired by the *rumba francesa*. Traditional instrumentation includes the *tambora* (a two-headed drum), metal guiro, and sometimes *marimba* or the *marimbola*. Modern ensembles have incorporated the piano and saxophone upon which rapid melodies are played.

Mestizaje: The quality of being mestizo. This term describes the Hispanic experience in the U.S.

Mestizo/mestiza: A male or female with mixed origins of Native America and southwest Europe including Spain and Portugal.

Mexican Cumbia: Dance music that originated in Columbia and became popular in Mexico. Instrumentation traditionally includes accordion, congas, timbales and cowbell. The cowbell and timbales are played on the downbeat while the conga is played on the off-beat.

Norteño: Music similar to the polka with 2/4 or 6/8 time signatures. Typical instrumentation includes accordion, *bajo-sexto* (a twelve-stringed guitar), and drums.

Pan-ethnic: Rosenfeld described pan-ethnic identity as “the extent to which people identify themselves as ‘Hispanic’...as opposed to, or secondary to, the national identities” (2001, 162).

Pan-Latino: Interchangeable with *Latinidad*.

Ranchera: *Ranchera* literally means ranch or farm. It has been described as the Mexican version of country and western music. *Ranchera* texts traditionally talk about love relationships or patriotic subjects. The songs are usually performed by mariachi ensembles in the style of the waltz, the polka, or *bolero*. When mariachi ensembles perform *rancheras*, they frequently use less brass and incorporate more guitars.

Regatón: A blend of reggae, hip hop and rock. The music was popularized in Puerto Rico in the late 1990s. The music is very popular among Latin American youth.

Salsa: A dance genre developed and commercialized in New York in the 1960s and 70s. Salsa is a combination of jazz harmonies and the Cuban rhythms *son* and *guaracha*. Typical instrumentation includes keyboard; bass; brass instruments such as trumpets, trombones, or saxophone; and percussion such as the claves, guiro, cowbell, timbales, bongos, and congas.

Texan: Interchangeable with *norteño* music.
WORKS CITED


Fer [pseud.]. 2006. Interview by author, 10 December, St. Paul-Minneapolis, MN metro areas. MiniDisc recording.


________. 1996. *Adoremos*. Editores Caribe/Betania: [City unknown].