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IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF THE PURHEPECHA CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES, AN INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF
IMMIGRANTS FROM MICHOACAN MEXICO LIVING
IN THE UNITED STATES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Berenice D. Aguirre

June 2008


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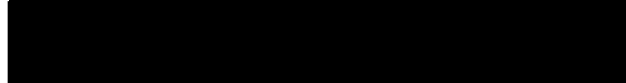
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June 2008

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5/19/08
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ABSTRACT

The principle goal of this study was to bring forth the needs and barriers confronted by the Purhepecha population living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. In order to accomplish this, a tool was developed to identify the population's specific needs. The questionnaire was composed of three parts and included questions that were formulated specifically for the Purhepecha to respond openly, allowing them to report on their interpretation of realities. The researcher was not only an active learner but the participants as well, as the researcher provided the participants with community resources and educated them on issues that were specific to their needs as determined during the interview process. The ultimate purpose was to understand the needs of the Purhepecha as relevant to their language and culture, and make these public for other professionals working with this population. A total number of seventeen subjects participated in the study. Findings from the research were similar experiences and trends among the Purhepecha families such as: reasons that led to migration, awareness of community resources, social supports, and language limitations. Findings about this

study's outcome provide valuable insight for
professionals working with the Purhepecha population.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Rosemary McCaslin for her important contributions throughout every phase of my project. I also wish to thank my mentors and colleagues at the California State University San Bernardino, for their invaluable help and guidance throughout the program.

Special thanks to Jose Hernandez Ortiz, and the Purhepecha community of the Coachella Valley.

DEDICATION

During the course of my study, I have realized that is not intelligence alone that brings success, but the drive to succeed, the commitment to work hard, and the courage to believe in myself. I have strived for and accomplished this important goal in my life in which I have had the unconditional love and support from my family and friends.

I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to my parents, Blanca and Gabriel, for which they have taught and supported me every step of the way, and because they have succeeded in their role as parents in preparing me to meet tomorrow's challenges. A mis abuelos, Mama Gloria and Papa Blanco, gracias por apoyarme en todo, a mi primo Xavier (El Gordo), quien ahora esta en el cielo, y quien en muchas formas me fortalecio en los momentos dificiles, to my sisters Bianca and Gabriella, thank you for not "bugging me"..too much when I was up late studying, and to my future husband, Atilano, thank you for believing in me and supporting me when I needed you the most. I love you. Last but not least, to my future sister, Andrea, who was always there to guide me, and to my Tia y segunda mama, Elvia, gracias por creer en mi.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In the United States there are children of immigrant descent whose needs are currently not met. The fact that these children come from families who do not speak the mainstream language and share the same culture and values, leads them to face multiple barriers when acculturating to American culture. Currently, there are over 10 million illegal immigrants living in the United States. According to the statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Border Crossing Data, most of the illegal immigrants come from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries in South America (Hoefer, 2005). Most of the people migrating from the aforementioned countries are Spanish speaking. Additional problems arise when, previous to migrating to the United States, these immigrants have been excluded within their own country of origin. As a result, these groups of people have become isolated and thus developed their own culture and speak a dialect exclusive to their group. Immigrants of indigenous descent who do not speak Spanish fluently are

a concern to public social service agencies in the United States, as there are no available services provided in the dialect spoken. The language barrier is a major concern as these indigenous immigrants have no means to understand the laws, especially those relating to child welfare or benefit from the few resources provided.

Mexican immigrants of indigenous descent living in the United States are a concern as they face oppression due to their immigration status. The fact that illegal immigrants are undocumented, forces them to work under undignified conditions. Recently, laws implemented to limit services for illegal immigrants have had a direct effect on the futures of these children and their families, for example, legislation such as the immigration reform proposed by pro-immigrants legislators which was not passed by Congress on June 26, 2007 (Babington, 2007). This Immigration Reform Act was originally formulated with hopes of granting legal residency to illegal immigrants.

Illegal immigration is a major cause of child poverty. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2006), an estimated 4.7 million children of illegal parents currently live in the United States. For the purpose of

this research, immigrant children constituted to both the children of illegal immigrants who are foreign-born and those born in the United States. Thirty percent of these children are poor, and six percent of these children have illegal parents. Children of illegal parents are 11.8 percent of all children in the United States (Passel, 2005). Among the many concerns for immigrant children are their low educational outcomes. According to Hernandez (2004), the effects of immigration in children on their educational levels can be detected as early as preschool age (Hernandez, 2004). Immigrant children are also more likely to live in low socio-economic households; this is often interrelated with other societal problems such as crime related activity, drug use, violence, and teen pregnancy.

Immigrants in general have been a concern to most helping professions, especially those in the social services arena. Immigrant children and their families are a concern to the social work profession as it involves the protection of human rights and immigrants have historically been considered a vulnerable population.

To conclude, Mexican immigrant children and their families are impacted by both the governing laws and

social structure of the United States. As the laws that seek to impede the wellbeing of those children and their families continue to be discussed among decision makers, the welfare of immigrant children and families is severely impacted. Despite the fact that there are existing services and organizations that promote the rights of this group, services are often limited or not utilized. Therefore, it is important that members of this disadvantaged population continue to advocate for themselves and become empowered by professionals to fight for their rights. The ultimate purpose was to seek services that promote the health of their children and families by becoming familiar with the laws and regulations of the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to do an action research project to empower and educate a community of immigrants who are vulnerable and adversely affected as a result of their language barrier, as many of them may speak neither English or Spanish, but a dialect exclusive to their group. The language barrier causes this population to be unaware of child welfare laws and human

rights in the United States. In Southern California's Coachella Valley, there is a current need for preventative services for a group of immigrants who are known to be from the mountainous region of the Central Mexican State of Michoacán. These groups of people are called Purhepecha, also referred to as Tarascan. A recent article by Olson (2007), published by the Press Enterprise estimated that about 2,000 Purhepecha immigrants currently reside in Riverside County, in a rural area near the Salton Sea (Olson, 2007). The Purhepecha living in the Coachella Valley are mostly field workers and are known to live under demeaning circumstances.

The principle goal of this study was also to bring forth the needs and barriers confronted by the Purhepecha population living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. In order to accomplish this, a tool was developed to identify the population's specific needs. The questionnaire was composed of three parts and included questions that were formulated specifically for the Purhepecha to respond openly, allowing them to report on their interpretation of realities. The researcher was not only an active learner but the participants as well, as

the researcher provided the participants with community resources and educated them on issues that were specific to their needs as determined during the interview process. The ultimate purpose was to understand the needs of the Purhepecha as relevant to their language and culture, and make these public for other professionals working with this population.

Among the many challenges faced by the Purhepecha, is discrimination as they are viewed as indigenous Indians. The Purhepecha not only endure discrimination from Americans with whom they may come into contact, but by other Mexicans living in the area. These groups of immigrants are also faced with struggles to maintain their culture once they have migrated to the United States as they are forced to acculturate to both Mexican and American standards.

One of the hardships confronted by the Purhepecha is the language barrier. Most of the Purhepecha adults hardly speak Spanish. The children speak Spanish and Tarascan, their native dialect and learn English while attending school in the United States. The fact that these children are presented with three different languages impacts their learning process. As a result of

the language barrier, the Purhepecha struggle when attempting to communicate with government officials, health care workers, teachers, social workers, and other customer services agencies. Ultimately, language barrier may be the main reason the Purhepecha do not utilize available resources and are ignorant of child welfare laws and applicable human rights.

There are various agencies and individuals who have vested their interest in helping the Purhepecha community living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The mass attention by local and state news reports to the Purhepecha, as the result of the majority of Purhepecha families residing in a trailer park which is currently undergoing a law suit for violation of safety and hazardous codes, has made this population more vulnerable and has gained the public's attention. The trailer park, also known as Duronville, is located in property of the Torres-Martinez Indian Reservation. Currently, the park does not meet the standard set forth by the city's sanitation regulations. According to officials this is a major concern for the tenants. Some of the sanitary problems include water leaks, problems with drinking water, electricity, and over population. A recent article

written by Kelly (2007), published by the Desert Sun, reported that an inspection was conducted which resulted in a settlement between the owner and governmental officials (Kelly, 2007). The settlement required that the owner of the trailer park would address the living and safety conditions of the residents. Recently, it was found that the owner has failed to comply with the regulations and improvements as stated on the settlement. As a result, authorities have begun to voice their concerns and announced that the trailer park may be closed.

Despite efforts from various agencies such as mental health and hospitals, which offer linguistic services through interpreters, there is still a major concern for the Purhepecha community's access to primary, secondary, and tertiary services. Children who survive the conditions in which the Purhepecha live create a source of concern for governmental officials. For example, Riverside County Department of Children Services (DCS), refers to one interpreter which they have used for over three years. As the Purhepecha population increases and continues to live in demeaning conditions, child neglect

among many other concerns and risk factors have increased.

To demonstrate the effects of the language barrier on the Purhepecha population, using DCS as an example, is the fact that a child welfare worker may not be able to offer services to a Purhepecha family or conduct a safety risk assessment taking the culture and language into consideration. The fact that the Purhepecha are not being provided services taking their language and culture into consideration can be considered a violation of rights. Therefore, preventative services, education, and culturally competent services are essential in order to ensure the wellbeing of the children and families, as services utilized ultimately impact the lives of this population.

To conclude, there are many factors that influence the wellbeing and lives of the Purhepecha, especially the children. This study hopes to acquire the interest of professionals from various fields to further their skills to become culturally competent when working with people of indigenous descent. Specifically, the aim of this action research project was both to learn from this population and to educate and empower them on

understanding the social welfare system and laws of the United States and, specifically, child welfare related laws.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Traditionally the social work profession advocates for the poor, vulnerable, and the oppressed as it seeks to instill social justice and equity. The social work profession is aware of the characteristics and the reciprocal influences of home, school and the community. These all have an impact on the adjustment of individuals, therefore, taking into consideration that cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity characteristics are important when working with the Purhepecha children and their families. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics dedicates a full section to cultural competence in the social work field (Weaver, 1999). As noted by Roer-Strier (2005), social workers from distinct countries are faced with this challenge and should tailor their scope of practice to the diverse needs of clients from distinct multicultural backgrounds (Roer-Strier, 2005). Further researching the needs of the Purhepecha community and their culture is necessary in

order to assure that social workers deliver competent services and can assess their needs. Last, this will not only benefit the Purhepecha children and their families, but the community as well. The community and agencies will benefit as this group has continuously struggled due to the language and culture barriers.

Social work as a profession whose core value is the protection of human rights, should promote integration of the Purhepecha population into the public and social services sector to ensure the wellness of their members. It is important that social workers are aware of and acknowledge the needs of vulnerable populations to help the community recognize special needs, and to establish the rights of indigenous people. Ultimately, social workers can help promote both individual and community's awareness of the Purhepecha's risk and protective factors, by creating a safe and healthy environment for this population to voice their concerns, ask questions, and educate professionals about their lifestyles and culture. In order to successfully establish a safe environment and provide genuine services, the professional must identify their own biases. Weaver, (1998), emphasizes the importance of social worker's

ability to reflect and examine self biases, and how these impact the delivery of services when working with a culturally diverse population (Weaver, 1998).

The phases of the Generalist Intervention Model from Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2002) that were informed in this study are beginning or engaging, assessing, and planning. The implementation, evaluation, and termination phases are briefly discussed in this study. These phases are future goals which include the development of programs and a resource tailored specifically to this population, and gaining support and interest for future studies to develop tools and resources for this community to establish necessary social supports.

In the engagement phase, the researcher, prior to interviewing the participants, researched factors and characteristics relevant to the participants, i.e., the Purhepecha. This is important as the researcher needed to have some knowledge of their culture and current living situation in the process of engaging with the participants throughout the study. After the researcher engaged the participants and developed rapport, the second phase, assessment, occurred. Due to the nature of the study, which seeks to identify the client's needs

through an assessment based on their perspectives, the engagement and assessment phases occurred throughout the interview. According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2002), the phases of engagement and assessment occur simultaneously and continuously throughout the intervention (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2002). In the third phase, planning, the researcher had a clear picture of the needs of the population. The planning phase then allowed for the researcher to formulate levels of interventions based on needs, establish goals, and specify objectives and action steps. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (1999) describe this phase as working with the client in prioritizing problems and then translating into needs (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 1999).

In order to identify the needs of the Purhepecha children and families living in the Coachella Valley, the researcher performed action oriented research which involved working collaboratively with participants and the community to come up with solutions. In this study, the researcher exemplified the beginning, assessment, and planning stage to identifying the needs of the Purhepecha. As stated previously, the implementation, evaluation, and termination phases were not performed

since the specific needs, previous to this study, were not identified and therefore a specific plan or program could not be developed at the time of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Many studies have been done in fields such as anthropology on indigenous groups and their cultural customs. The researcher reviewed findings from the only study on the Purhepecha in the Eastern Coachella Valley titled, "Patterns of Community Cross Border Migration from a Purhepecha Town: A Dispersion of People and Culture," by Ayala and Mines (2002). This article focused on the history of the Purhepecha as it relates to their social, political, and economic status and how this constructs their identity. The fact that there has been no previous action research project performed specifically with the Purhepecha, has led the researcher to review literature from various fields on groups of people, including immigrants.

For the purpose of this study, illegal Mexican immigration data is reviewed as the Purhepecha are from the state of Michoacán in Mexico. The researcher used existing information to construct a tool to educate this group, who are already known to have difficulties in

understanding United States societal structures. This was accomplished by performing a culturally competent action research tailored specifically for the Purhepecha in the Eastern Coachella Valley. Based on this, the researcher referred to other similar indigenous groups across the world in order to model the interventions used. The research viewed the Purhepecha from different theoretical perspectives including ecological, strengths, and systems theory.

Immigration

Immigration to the United States has been subject to ongoing debate as many argue that immigrants cause problems for the United States economy. Illegal immigration is defined as the act of foreign individuals entering the United States in violation of United States immigration and naturalization laws. Illegal entry to the United States is considered a crime and therefore sanctioned. As stated by the reports on the Immigration and Naturalization Act, the illegal act of entering into the United States is a misdemeanor for first time offenders, and those who have attempted to enter the country on multiple occasions may be charged with a

felony (NASW, 2006). Immigrants who are caught by immigration officers are deported to their country of origin. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a bureau of the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is the agency responsible for enforcing the Immigration and Naturalization Act (NASW, 2006).

Statistics and Characteristics

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, was the last immigration law passed by the United States Congress, in relation to comprehensive immigration reform. From 2005 to present, attempts to approve immigration reform for the illegal immigrants in the United States were defeated by Congress. With the intention to control the entry of immigrants, local and state governments have responded by passing laws which prohibit employers from hiring illegal immigrants and created housing restrictions (Passel, Van Hook, & Bean, 2004).

In March 2006 the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that the undocumented population ranged from 11.5 to 12 million individuals; these data were supported by the U.S

Government Accountability Office (GAO). The Pew Hispanic Center estimated that 57 percent of this population comes from Mexico, 24 from Central and South America, nine percent from Asia, six percent from Europe, and the remaining four percent from elsewhere. The Pew Hispanic Center reported on the various methods of entry into the United States. According to the report people become illegal in three ways: one by entering the country without authorization and inspection, second by staying after the authorized period of time, and third by violating the terms of authorized stay such as a granted visa or work permit (Passel, 2005).

Illegal immigrants who enter the country are faced with life threatening circumstances. In a recent study by the Center of Immigration Research from the University of Houston, Eschbach and Rodriguez (2001), looked at the increase in deaths along the United States and Mexico border. The authors found that the rural and mountainous desert border between Arizona and Mexico is considered one of the major entrance areas for illegal people. The authors also highlight the fact that there are several hundred immigrant deaths at the United States and Mexico border, and that, reportedly, the number of deaths has

increased since the mid 1990's (Eschbach & Rodriguez, 2001).

One of the causes of people migrating to the United States has been identified as trade liberalization, a component of North America Free trade Agreement (NAFTA). Due to NAFTA, there have been major cuts of subsidies for Mexican producers and significantly increased competition. It is estimated that since the 1990's an average of two million agricultural farmers from Mexico have been forced to leave their farms and seek employment elsewhere. Studies assume that most of these two million workers have migrated to the United States illegally (Henriquez & Patel, 2004).

Employment for illegal immigrants in the United States is a concern to the United States government. For decades employers have been alerted to the penalties for employing illegal immigrants. On September 1, 2006, a federal judge ordered sanctions for those employers who altered or failed to review employee's immigration status. Although many pro-immigrants activists and organizations argue that immigrants are key contributors to the United States economy, others argue that

immigrants are a burden as they cost more in services than what they supply (Passel, 2005).

Purhepecha Characteristics

Recently, Ayala and Mines (2002), researched the Purhepecha living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The study included the different variables that led this group of immigrants to settle in the Coachella Valley. In the study various components of their migration were described. Some of these included poverty in their country of origin, as well as personal challenges with hopes of a better future in America. Although, the Purhepecha living in the Coachella Valley live under demeaning circumstances, it was found that they live better compared to their lifestyle in Mexico. This can explain why the Purhepecha in the Coachella Valley agree to live far below the 7,000-dollar average per year income earned by Americans in the state of California (Ayala & Mines, 2002). At this time, further studies have not been found on the specific characteristics of the Purhepecha.

Language

Another important factor that was found by Ayala and Mines (2002), was that most of the Purhepecha living in the United States, who are between 30 and 39 years of age only speak Tarascan. It was also found that Purhepecha people's monolingualism is related to age. Younger children are not learning the language once they have migrated to the United States (Ayala & Mines, 2002).

The Annie E. Cassey Foundation also reports on children growing up in America, who are of indigenous descent. According to this report, 23 percent of the Mexican children who are under the age of 18 live in families where at least one family member speaks an indigenous language. Seven percent of children from the ages of five to 19 years of age speak an indigenous language (AECF, 2005).

Poverty

Historically, indigenous groups have been the poorest which causes indigenous people to be vulnerable and excluded from larger groups. Despite discrimination in terms of language, race, and culture, the indigenous struggle to survive under the most deprived environments.

As noted by McLead and Edwards (1995), this is a factor that has an effect on the individual's mental, physical, emotional, and academic successes (McLead & Edwards, 1995). This coincides with findings by Ayala and Mines (2002) in regards to Purhepecha living in the Coachella Valley, where individuals have been found to suffer from high levels of pulmonary illnesses, coughs, infections, and skin rashes (Ayala & Mines, 2002). This is similar to indigenous groups from across Latin America that live in isolated environments where conditions are hard and they are exposed to health hazards and depend on their skills to survive (Montenegro & Stephens, 2006).

Immigrant Children

Academic function in indigenous children has been found to be below average. The fact that the proportion of child migration to the United States increases every year, is a concern to American educators and collaborative agencies as they assist these students in the transitioning process. According to Chiswick (1986), children who migrate from the poorest and most rural areas of Mexico, are most likely to have maintained a low academic achievement previous to coming to the United

States. Therefore their level of competency and struggle in assimilating to the new educational environment is affected (Chiswick, 1986). In contrast, other research has shown that children of immigrants are more successful in the assimilation process. The fact that children of immigrants are able to integrate into mainstream society as they attend to school from an early age, allows them to develop a sense of belonging while attending school. It is not until the age of 18 years that, due to their immigration status, immigrant children are prevented from achieving a college education (Allensworth, 1997).

Immigrant children in the United States educational system are a source of major concern for educators. Historically, educators have always faced this challenge, yet recently, there has been a major increase and a highly diverse group of children entering the country's school system. California's immigrant child population, for example, rose by 150 percent in the past ten years. The increase brings forth issues in the public school systems as both students and educators struggle to work with diverse groups (Suarez-Orosco, 1995).

In a study of the implications of California's immigrant children for education, Rumbaut and Cornelious

(1995) highlighted the importance of education as the key to a better life. Statistically, immigrant children show higher risk for violence and crimes, among other societal troubles (Rumbaut & Cornelious, 1995). An important argument by the authors of this study was that the less professionals who work with immigrant children are educated on the specific needs to this population, the more likely these students will drop-out of school. As noted by Landele, Oropesa, and Llanes (1998), overall educational outcomes for immigrant children in the United States are significantly poor compared to other immigrant children around the world (Landele, Oropesa, & Llanes 1998).

It is important that not only educators, but all professionals who may come to contact with this population assess their educational and cultural competencies. The high level of child poverty among illegal immigrants has been found to be due to parents' low socio-economic and educational levels, which places them at high risk. Waters (1999) states that although adult immigrants who enter the country are less likely to be arrested; the children who are raised in the United States are more likely to be incarcerated than are the

native born. According to Waters (1999), this is due to the fact that immigrant children raised in the United States live in poor rural or inner-city areas (Waters, 1999).

Other factors such as family relationships, and social support experienced by Mexican immigrant children and families pose an effect on their academic functions and their mental health. A study by Sanchez-Sosa, Bohon, and Santos (1998), examined the association between family relationships, adult distress at home and work, and the mental health concerns of Mexican immigrants. Multiple stressors were identified as a result of migrating from their country of origin. The authors argued that immigrants are adversely affected in multiple ways as they seek to adapt to lifestyles in the United States. Findings suggested a valid correlation between mental health distresses and stress experienced through migration. Although this study examined migration stress theory, it was found that it was not conclusive with Mexican immigrants. As a result, findings of this study emphasize that although migration has an adverse effect on the lives of people; immigrants who were found to be psychological resilient coped with migration better than

those who were more vulnerable psychologically previous to migrating to the United States (Sanchez-Sosa et al., 1998).

Other studies support the effects of migration and assimilation on both children and family's psychological health. A study by Alegria, Shrout, Guarnaccia, Sribney, Villa, Polo, Cao, Mulvaney-Day, Torres, and Canino, (2007), for the Center of Multicultural Mental Health Research examined psychiatric disorders for Latinos living in the United States and identified several risk and protective factors. In the process of identifying risk and protective factors the authors took into consideration factors such as processes of acculturation, immigration, family stressors, supports, and social status of Latino sub-groups. Within the Latino subgroups discussed, Mexicans' findings suggested that all of the aforementioned factors are important, yet highlighted three key factors. These three factors were, maintaining family harmony, integration of people around them, and the maintenance of positive self-perception of social standing in the environment (Alegria et al., 2007).

In relationship to children and the effects of migration, Sanchez-Sosa et al., (1998) discussed the

importance of parent-child attachments. As the parent provides the child with skills to cope with society and establishes a sense of security to explore the world, the child begins to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. As noted by the authors, parent-child relationships related to attachment theory are relevant to different nationalities as the definition of attachment is not a term that can be altered according to context or nationality (Sanchez-Sosa et al., 1998).

Other findings on the hardships immigrant children are confronted with accentuate the importance of family structure. In an analysis of the data collected by The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Padilla, Radey, Kim, and Hummer (2006), found that children of Mexican immigrants whose family structure was composed of a single parent household are significantly more disadvantaged than those children of U.S. born parents living in a single parent household (Padilla, Radey, Kim, & Hummer, 2006).

Health

Health of illegal immigrants including those from indigenous groups, are adversely impacted by their

immigration status, educational level, and socio-economic status. As most of indigenous populations live in isolated environments where living conditions are unfortunate, the chances for various health hazards are increased. Isolation from society and access to healthcare may cause this population not to benefit from available medicine and treatments. In a study on the health of the indigenous, Montenegro and Stephens (2006), write on the different concerns relating to the health of indigenous populations from both Latin America and the Caribbean. The authors emphasize the importance of medicine and education for this population and the meaning of medical terms among low-income mothers (Montenegro & Stephens, 2006). Health education or health literacy, as defined by Porr, Drummond, and Richter (2006), is the extent as to which an individual can have both access to and understanding of healthcare information (Porr et al., 2006). Health literacy is also consider important when working with indigent groups as an empowerment tool for individuals to be informed of and make clear judgments on assessing their health risks and seeking accurate medical assistance.

An example is the action research project conducted by Phillips, Bawah, and Binka (2006) in which an isolated group from Ghana's most impoverished region where health, social, and economic problems dominated, were studied. This study was named the Navrongo Experiment and was performed as a result of high mortality rates in children. Findings from this study deduced the impact of the cultural traditions which impede indigent healthcare access, as well as seeking other resources provided by government agencies. As part of this study, researchers ensured that in the process of gathering data to study this group, interventions to help this group would not be dismissed. The fact that this population faced extreme poverty and had no access to healthcare resulted in high rates of childhood mortality. As part of the Navrongo Experiment, services were provided such as prenatal and post partum healthcare access. Services and resources provided to the community reduced childhood mortality by half in a period of three years (Phillips et al., 2006).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

For the purpose of this action research project, an ecological perspective was considered. The fact that the

Purhepecha have migrated from their country of origin required them to adjust to the demands of the new environment in which they now live. Using the ecological perspective helped the researcher identified the Purhepecha's migratory experience and their adaptation process, and struggles perceived as changes in family's structure, role, and social supports occurred. The effects of discrimination on the well-being of this group and their survival skills were also viewed from the ecological perspective. The strengths perspective was also considered in order to highlight and empower the Purhepecha's attempts to adapt and migrate for a better quality of life. Last, systems theory was used to understand the connections between the resources and social support networks of this group.

The ecological perspective was embraced as the researcher took into account the social context and the importance of social supports with indigenous populations. An individual in the environment perspective was important as the political and economic aspects were considered when assessing the circumstances and hardships to which this population is exposed to.

The ecological context in which indigenous groups live and the circumstances to which they are exposed have an ultimate impact on the way they perceive themselves and others in the world. In an international analysis of the psychologies of indigenous groups around the world, Allwood and Berry (2006), gathered data from various professionals on the effect of social, political, and cultural characteristics on the lives and psychologies of indigenous groups. The ultimate goal of the researchers was to emphasize the differences in psychologies as a result of context by eliminating subjective aspects of the psychology of individuals. The three most important aspects found were that: psychologies of the indigenous are influence by realties and how these are constructed based on how they perceive and interpret the world; perception occurs in context; and last, that reality is formed by using one's five senses, symbols, and the language developed by our culture (Allwood & Berry, 2006, p. 250). These findings support the relationship between lives of individuals, environmental conditions, and the relationship in the environment by representing the ecological perspective of the community.

Empowerment, as defined by Shams (2005), is the power to pursue individual goals. According to this definition, the absence or loss of empowerment leads to marginalization and minimal sense of community identity (Shams, 2005). Therefore, it is important that professionals assist the Purhepecha in developing a positive attitude and empower them to seek needed services. The Purhepecha can become empowered by constructing knowledge and becoming aware of their social support networks, in order to gain competences in their social environment. This can be accomplished with the assistance of professionals from various human services agencies and organizations, which will assist them in gaining confidence as the Purhepecha people feel their culture, language barriers, and values are addressed. This will ultimately, initiate and improve relationships between the Purhepecha and social networks as they gain mutual support.

Summary

The ultimate goal of this action research project was to educate and empower the Purhepecha living in the Eastern Coachella Valley on specific moral and legal

rights and responsibilities they must adhere to once living in the United States. The researcher also hopes to educate human services providers, who work with this population, about the culture and language barriers faced by this population, with the ultimate purpose of encouraging professionals to work towards tailoring services to this population's specific needs. Last, the researcher proposes further studies and action oriented research that addresses the loss of culture among the Purhepecha communities in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

Based on the fact that there has only been one study identified which focused on the reasons why the Purhepecha have migrated to the United States, and that there are no existent data and/or research found on the specific needs of this population, in particular those living in the Eastern Coachella Valley, a participatory action research design was considered. The purpose of this research was to identify the needs of the Purhepecha in order to ensure the safety of their children.

Providing this population with some benefits as they allowed the researcher to go into their community was considered. An example of how the researcher executed this plan of study was that, as the Purhepecha were identified as having a lack of knowledge in parenting skills while collecting data, parents were active learners and were provided with information on parenting skills.

Study Design

As described by Grinnell and Unrau (2006), participant observation is useful when the focus is to understand people from their own experiences (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). Conducting a participatory action study, in this case, included interviewing the Purhepecha. Despite the fact that the researcher was bilingual, an interpreter was needed. This was because most participants spoke minimal or no Spanish, being that they primarily spoke Tarascan, their native dialect. Observation was also an important component in this participatory action project, as the researcher went to the place where the Purhepecha reside and collected data as relevant to the topic. Given that there was no previous research or existing data sources that could provide information on the specific needs, residents that identified themselves as Purhepecha were considered the main source of information. And last, the purpose of utilizing participant observation in conducting participatory action research was to identify problem areas in order to plan actions to better serve this group of people. This is also an example of how the researcher observed the participants and conducted research through

an ecological perspective. The participants were involved in refining the study design as they were considered to be the experts on themselves. The participants assisted the researcher in understanding their problems and perceived hardships, assessed the situation from a multi-perspective, i.e., micro, mezzo, macro level, and indentified strengths to build on.

In formulating the question that guided this research, independent and dependent variables as applicable to this study were formulated. Independent variables included, age of both parents and children, time of migration, income, health status, gender, sources of income, disability, education, age at migration, marital status, relatives in the area, knowledge/awareness of available resources, and child welfare laws. The dependent variables identified for the study are needs of the Purhepecha children and families, and how these are impacted by their language barrier and culture.

In order to determine whether conducting this research was feasible there were various actions the researcher took. Due to the fact that participatory action research involved interacting with people in the

study, the researcher adhered to ethical considerations. For example, before interacting with the Purhepecha and beginning to collect data, it was an ethical duty for the researcher to have explained to the participants the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, as well as their right not to participate. The researcher also obtained permission before recording any data observed, as well as maintained confidentiality. The researcher also took into consideration the fact that the questions, as well as the wording of these, were be modified to the understanding capacity of the Purhepecha. This is because some of the Purhepecha participants had a minimal level of understanding of the Spanish language. As a result, the researcher used the assistance of an interpreter when needed. If indeed the interpreter was utilized, the researcher explained confidentiality and terms and procedures to adhere to when utilizing third party assistance in research studies. A consent form was formulated for the interpreter to sign similar to the consent form for participants. To conclude, the researcher also established clear boundaries in order to protect this population at risk from foreseeable harm.

Sampling

Sampling was performed through a snowball method of recruiting participants. The initial participants were recruited and referred to the researcher by non-Purhepecha members who work with this population. The researcher inquired of identified participants what other potential members of the Purhepecha community might be interested in participating in the interview. The researcher also referred to possible participants by members of local churches, and community leaders. The sample targeted those Purhepecha individuals living in the Eastern Coachella Valley who voluntarily desired to participate in a study that promotes the wellbeing, safe environment, and social justice of this indigenous population. The number of participants in the study was seventeen members of the Purhepecha community. The sample size was kept small for reasons of time constraints and the researcher's availability to capture quality content from participant responses. The participants in the sample were at least eighteen years of age, identified themselves as Purhepecha, and resided in the Eastern Coachella Valley.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher collected data through a face-to-face interview process. Interviews were held where the participant felt the most comfortable within their community. If the participant desired for the interview to be held at their home, the researcher accommodated the request. This was important as the researcher hoped to observe the environment in which the participant lived. The fact that the researcher went to where the participant lived gave the participant a sense of security, which ultimately promoted a sense of equality in the participant and researcher relationship. This also allowed for the researcher to observe participant's interactions between others in their natural settings (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005).

The researcher developed a questionnaire composed of three parts (Appendix A). The questionnaire was developed in both English and Spanish. Topics included in part one of the questionnaire include demographics, history of residence, information on their family characteristics, social support, questions related to immigration experiences, and awareness of community resources. The aforementioned were independent variables and, due to the

sample size and nature of qualitative study, the level of measurement was nominal. Most of the questions were open-ended questions formulated with the purpose of allowing the participant to provide responses based on their realities.

Part two of the questionnaire included three short stories that were read to the participants who were asked to report what they would do if confronted with similar situations. The short stories were formulated to assess knowledge of available resources or awareness of what to do in case of crisis within the limitations of the participant's environment. Once the participants responded to the case scenarios, the researcher promoted critical thinking and crisis intervention formulations to educate the participant on what he or she can do in cases of emergency.

The third part of the questionnaire was also composed of open-ended questions. Questions in this section included attitudes about how to discipline children, and elicited participant differentiation between the child welfare laws and regulations in the United States versus Mexico. Other questions included knowledge of human rights. The interview ended with a

question that allowed the participant to express their feelings about how other non-Purhepecha perceive them, and how this has affected them. The interview also inquired into the participant's perception of the strengths of themselves, their family, and their community.

The researcher was guided by the interview guide, but took into consideration other topics for discussion set forth by the participant and validated what he or she disclosed. The researcher provided participants the opportunity to report on their experiences and their knowledge. To conclude, all of the questions were categorized with a common theme that ultimately helped assessed the research focus, which was to identify the needs of the Purhepecha children and their families.

The fact that the researcher developed a tool to collect the information from participants through a qualitative interview had both its strengths and limitations. For example, the tool allowed participants the opportunity to expand and respond to the questions based on their realities. This was also important as no existent tools were identified by the researcher

previously used with indigenous populations, specifically with the Purhepecha.

Despite the fact that the researcher made an effort to be cautious when speaking of culture and other topics that were sensitive to this population, such as experiences of having migrated, the qualitative interview had several limitations. These included the fact that the open-ended questions were unstructured, and therefore could be considered suggestive rather than objective. In order to prevent this from occurring and to maintain minimal risks when obtaining responses from participants, the researcher did not limit the time of the interview and used the help of the interpreter when requested. Although the questions were worded in a manner that could be understood by individuals for whom Spanish was not their first language, clarification of terms will was used by the researcher to guarantee the participants understood what was being asked. Ultimately, the researcher selected this method of collecting data as some of the participants were known to be illiterate and therefore would have not been able to effectively complete a survey themselves. Further, the researcher accommodated the participants in the sample with a safe

environment to participate in the study. At the end of the study the researcher provided the participants with community resources, and education tools based on the needs identified during the process of the interview.

Procedures

The sample for this participatory action research was gathered through a snowball approach. The researcher inquired of identified participants what other potential members of the Purhepecha community might be interested in participating in the interview. Initial participants were recruited and referred to the researcher by non-Purhepecha members who work with this population. The participants were interviewed face to face by the researcher within the parameters of the participant's community. Estimated time for the interview was one to three hours, and varied depending on the conversational style of the participant and/or use of the interpreter. Participants were provided with a packet of community resources at the end of the interview and a twenty-dollar gift certificate from a local food store was given as a gift for the participant's time and cooperation. Total time for the study was ten weeks.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participation from members of the Purhepecha community was solicited on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained as their identity was not reported in the findings of the study. Although, the researcher reported the area of study, i.e., Eastern Coachella Valley, participant's addresses, names, or other identifying information was not disclosed. Participants were assigned a participant identification number for the purposes of recording and analyzing data by the researcher only. Participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study both in writing and verbally (Appendix B). A debriefing statement was also given and explained to the participants after the study (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Based on the fact that the researcher used qualitative procedures in this study, open coding was used to analyze the content of the responses by the participants. Open coding was used to conceptualize and categorize the data provided. The purpose of using open coding was to find similar categories that were

applicable to the research questions and how these could be interrelated. For example, the researcher hoped to find common perceptions defined by the participants themselves on what they define their needs to be. Categories that emerged from this analysis were then grouped together and analyzed for possible correlations and distinctions among participants' responses, for example, whether participants' responses shared similarities as to how they feel their culture and language barriers have affected them when living in the United States.

In analyzing the data collected by the interviews the researcher transcribed the data as written down verbatim to allow no chances for interpretation. After the data were clearly transcribed and legible the researcher reviewed the data to come up with possible common themes or categories. Demographic data collected in the study were used to represent sample characteristics in relation to data obtained from study. As the researcher reviewed the data, a journal was kept in order to process and capture emerging concerns or thoughts on the analysis. To conclude, the researcher

used open coding to identify common categories and themes from the participants to answer the research question.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to bring forth the needs and barriers confronted by the Purhepecha population living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. In order to accomplish this, a tool was developed to identify these population specific needs. The questionnaire was composed of three parts and included questions that were formulated specifically for the Purhepecha to respond openly, allowing them to report on their interpretation of realities. The researcher was not only to an active learner but the participants were as well, as the researcher provided the participants with community resources and educated them on issues that were specific to their needs as determined during the interview process. The ultimate purpose was to understand the needs of the Purhepecha as relevant to their language and culture, and make these public for other professionals working with this population.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

A total of seventeen subjects participated in this study. The participants identified themselves as members of the Purhepecha community living in the Coachella Valley. All interviews were conducted in the participants homes, and an interpreter was used by the researcher in nine of the interviews. The responses of the participants to all open-ended questions were grouped with similar answers. Average time for the interviews was one hour and fifty five minutes. This time included the disclosure to the participant by the researcher of the purpose the study, the engagement process, informing the participants of community resource based on the needs identified throughout the interview.

Presentation of the Findings

A total of seventeen subjects participated in the study. There were eleven males and six females. The age range of the participants was from thirty two to forty eight years, the average age being thirty-nine. The

average age of when the participants migrated was twenty-four, fifteen being the youngest age and forty-four the oldest. All six female participants migrated at an older age as opposed to the male participants. According to the responses from the interviews, male participants migrated to the United States at a younger age to work and returned to Mexico once the working season was over. Females stayed in Mexico, to raise their children. All of the female participant's husbands migrated to the United States.

The level of education completed by the participants was from having never attended school to the sixth grade. The average education grade level completed was the second grade. All participants had similar responses as to their education level. Some of the responses included that education was not enforced by the parents as participants were expected to help by contributing financially to the home. Other participants attributed their low education completion level to the fact that, in Mexico, there were fees to attend to school and that the student parents were expected to pay. All participants reported that they spoke Purhepecha, and that their Spanish was limited. Male participants reported that they

had learned Spanish since their arrival to the United States. Female participants reported that their Spanish was limited and they felt more comfortable communicating in Purhepecha. From the total sample of seventeen participants, only two male subjects reported that they had a minimal capacity to read in Spanish. The rest of the participants reported not having the capacity to read or write in Spanish or Purhepecha.

Current living conditions reported by the participants indicated that an average of seven people lived under one household. The minimum number of people was four, and the most nine. Nine of the participants lived in "los Duros" trailer park, and the remaining eight lived in a studio/apartment in the City of Mecca, California. During this research, two out of eight participants that resided in the City of Mecca, California were impacted by a train derailment which caused them to evacuate their home for forty-eight hours.

The average monthly income reported by the participants was eight hundred and forty-one dollars, and ranged from three hundred and one-thousand dollars. The income reported by the female participants was indicated to be their significant other's income. At the time of

this study none of the female participants were working. That was unusual, as reported by several female participants, in that they typically work and contribute financially to the home. They were reportedly not working at this time, and indicated that it was due to the current low production of crops in the fields. In addition, participants reported that work was overall slow for all field workers and male participant were allegedly working an average of thirty to thirty five hours a week. This was contrary to other work seasons where participants worked forty to fifty hours a week.

The immigration status of all the seventeen participants was explored. All six female participants were illegal and had crossed the border through the desert. Nine out of the eleven male participants were undocumented and had crossed the desert on multiple occasions. The two remaining male participants reported having acquired their permanent residency in the early 1990's through an immigration reform. According to one of the two participants, permanent residency was given in exchange for a U.S employer's request. This was accomplished through a letter submission to immigration

by the employers in order to legalize the individual in the United States for work related purposes.

The civil status of the seventeen participants was also explored and it was found that all participants were married. All participants were similar in that they had married in Omichuaro, Michoacán, Mexico, and reported to have married under the "dos leyes" (two laws). It was furthered indicated by the participants that the two laws were the law of the Courts and the law of God. In addition the average number of years married was twenty, and ranged from thirteen to twenty seven years. Only one of the seventeen participants reported being currently separated for two years, and that she had been married for a total of twenty four years.

The average number of children per participant was five, and ranged between two and seven children. The ages of the children averaged thirteen years of age, with the youngest being one and the oldest twenty five years old. The total number of all children to all seventeen participants was eighty four, and only eleven of those children were born in the United States. The remaining seventy three children were born in Michoacán Mexico.

From the total number of eighty four children, thirty nine were males and forty five females.

The participants indicated that only the children who were born in the United States had medical insurance provided to them. The children who were born in Mexico were only provided with "Emergency Medical." Emergency medical assistance was also provided to those women who were pregnant and delivered their child(ren) in the United States. For the remaining participant and children who were undocumented, the participants indicated that they seek medical assistance when needed at the nearest local clinic. All participants highlighted that for minor health concerns they buy over the counter medicine or drink several teas to reduce symptoms.

Community resource knowledge of the participants was explored. In regards to general community resources, only seven out of the seventeen participants reported knowing services offered in their community. Out of the seven participants that reported to know of services, three participants indicated that they knew of food drives, three knew of free medical clinic services, and one knew of mental health clinic free medication services. The participants were all reportedly members of the Catholic

Church. Furthermore, the participants were asked if they were part or members of an organization. Eleven participants reported that they did not belong to a group or organization, and the remaining six denied being part or members of an organization but stated that they belong to the Catholic Church.

It was furthered asked if the participants had both telephone and transportation access. Twelve out of seventeen participants reported having no telephone access, and five reported owning a cellular phone. Out of the twelve participants that reported having no telephone access, eight reported that they knew someone that had access to a telephone in case of an emergency. Only one out of the seventeen participants reported to know when to call 911 or even knew of the emergency number. In regards to access to transportation, ten participants reported having no transportation access but that he or she could get rides elsewhere, and the remaining seven reported owning an old vehicle of eight hundred dollars or less value. All female participants reported not knowing how to drive a vehicle.

Participants were also asked questions in relation to child welfare and human rights in the United States.

In regards child welfare laws, the participants were asked if they knew how to discipline children in the United States and the limitations as directed by law. Thirteen of the seventeen participants reported not knowing the protocol of child abuse laws. The four remaining participants indicated that they knew some factors such as, "not been able to hit their children." On the topic of human rights knowledge, only three out of the seventeen participants knew some factors. For example, they knew they can request an immigration officer or Mexican consulate representative when detained by immigration, and knew not to sign the "voluntary deportation." The remaining fourteen participants reported that they were not informed about their human/immigrant rights.

The reasons that led the participants to reside in the Coachella Valley were inquired. The eleven male participants indicated that they migrated to the Coachella Valley because it was were his "Paisanos" (natives) all came, and because it was an area where work was abundant. All of the answers by the six female participants to this question were similar. These responses were that they did not choose the Coachella

Valley, but it was where their husbands had brought them. Further, they believed it was where they had most of their "Paisanos" (Natives) or relatives. All of the participants indicated that he/she and their families all lived in Omichuaro, Michoacán previous to migrating to the Coachella Valley. All of the seventeen participants reported that they had family and/or "Paisanos" in the Coachella Valley.

Several questions were asked to determine the needs of the participants' children. Participants were asked if any of their children had a physical, psychological, or other special needs. The researcher provided the participants with examples of the aforementioned. Out of the seventeen participants interviewed, only one indicated that one of her children had a special need and that it was related to mental health. This participant indicated that she did not know what the condition was or the severity of such. The participant granted permission to review medical documents on the participant's child, and determined that the child had a mental health diagnosis. The remaining sixteen participants indicated that they believed that their children had no history of,

nor were currently experiencing any psychological, physical, or other related special needs.

A question was presented to the participants in relation to the problems perceived by their children in school. Two of the seventeen participants reported that they never had concerns in relation to their children's school and/or education. The remaining fifteen participants indicated experiencing problems. Among the problems perceived was the participant's inability to assist their children in the completion of school work. Other factors were their children's behavior which often resulted in "misconduct reports." It was further inquired of the participants that disclosed having problems, whether they felt supported by school staff when experiencing difficulties. All participants reported that they felt supported. Three of the participants emphasized their gratitude to the United States and the free of charge educational curriculum for their children despite their immigration status.

The participants were also questioned on what they considered the basic needs of their child(ren) to be. Responses to this questioned were very similar from all the participants and indicated food and shelter to be the

most important needs. Furthermore, only two participants from the seventeen, identified that a basic need for their child(ren), in addition to food and shelter, was school work assistance.

The participants were also questioned on their experiences as immigrants. In relation to this question similar responses were provided by all seventeen participants. Participants' responses indicated that the most difficult thing they perceived was crossing the border illegally and leaving family behind. Some of the males' responses to this question were that migrating to a new country and being limited in the Spanish language was difficult. In addition, the males reported that although they left their family behind they came to the United States accompanied by their "Paisanos" (Natives). The females' responses also indicated that crossing the border through the desert and not knowing what to expect was the hardest thing they experienced. According to females' responses, knowing that their husbands were waiting for their arrival and the fact that their children traveled with them gave them courage and braveness. According to the statement by one of the females, they had no choice, "they either stay in

Omichuaro and die of hunger, or attempt to cross the desert for a better future." It was further asked by the researcher if they had difficulty adjusting to the food and culture, once in the United States. All participants' responses coincided that they live far better in the United States versus the life they lived in Omichuaro, Michoacán. One participant responded that his greatest regret and hardship was not been able to see his mother before her death.

The participants' perception of having felt discriminated against by other community members in the United States due to their culture, language, and/or appearance was explored. All participants' responses coincided in that they each provided examples of other non-Purhepecha members making fun of their language, the Purhepecha dialect. Interestingly, only one participant reported that he/she felt affected and was upset, while the remaining sixteen participants reported that they did not feel bad as they are proud of where they come from and their culture. Most participants' responses also coincided in that other non-Purhepecha call Purhepecha members "Oxaquitas." According to several participants' statements, "Oxaquitas" are another group of indigenous

immigrants from another state of the Mexican Republic which are known to have similar physical and culture characteristics. Participants' responses indicated that being Purhepecha does not affect them or the fact that other non-Purhepecha ridiculed them based on their accent, what affects them is that they call them "Oxaquitas." Thirteen out of the seventeen participants indicated that their children, upon their arrival from Mexico and once entering to the school system in the Unites States, were reported to be ridiculed and made fun of due to their accent and appearance by other non-Purhepecha students.

The participants were also presented with a question that elicited their feelings in regards to what they would like the United States government to know about the specific needs of their population. Participants' responses were similar and grouped into three similar categories. First, participants expressed their desired to improve housing conditions. This included a larger space for their family and affordable rent. Second, participants indicated that they needed "more work" (job security) in order to provide food and shelter for their families. A the third category identified was the

opportunity to remain in the United States legally in order to accomplish more for their children in the future. Several participants specified that they pay taxes and contribute to the economy, but that due to their illegal status will not be able to receive Social Security compensations in the future.

The participants were asked to identify at least three perceived strengths of their self, family or/and community. All participants were unable to identify strengths on their own. The researcher provided examples of strengths to the participants based on the interview content. Strengths observed and identified by the researcher included but were not limited to: strong social support, culture identity, values, and the ability and braveness to adapt and migrate to the United States. In addition, the participants were asked questions on their social support. The participants' responses to the above were similar in that they all identified their "Paisanos" (natives) and relatives as their social support. Participants' responses indicated that these are people they would go to if they needed assistance with financial, familial, and or other types of problems.

At the end of the interview, all participants were asked by the researcher if they would be interested in participating in a support group or organization that could be developed in the future specifically for the Purhepecha members of the Coachella Valley. Examples of topics that the support group or organization would address were provided to the participants, such as psycho-educational sessions and/or parenting classes. Other topics could include problems perceived by the Purhepecha community. It was further recommended by the interpreter utilized in this research that the researcher asked the participants if they would be interested in participating in Spanish language classes. These classes would be in a location near the participants' community and the researcher would teach and instruct the interpreter on what to teach the participants. This idea emerged from the need for the Purhepecha members to learn Spanish to better communicate with other non-Purhepecha people and with other professionals. All seventeen participants indicated that they would be interested. In addition some participants indicated that the meetings of the classes or/and groups would have to be after work hours. Participants had other concerns such as cost of

the aforementioned programs, and if child care was provided. The researcher explained that it was just a pre-contemplation for future plans and that the Purhepecha community would be considered in the development of the service.

Summary

A total of seventeen subjects participated in this study. The responses of the participants to all open-ended questions were grouped with similar answers and included reasons that led the Purhepecha to migrate to the Coachella Valley, problems perceived in the process of migrating and acculturating to United States standards, social support, and access to community resources. Furthermore, the demographic characteristics of the participants and their children were presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This qualitative research's purpose was to identify the needs of the Purhepecha children and families living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The principal goal was to identify needs and provide the participants with information on services to address these needs. The researcher was able to provide the participants with information on community resources, child welfare laws, and their rights as immigrants. In addition, the researcher analyzed and discussed the possible effect of the participants' culture and life expectations on the indentified needs and findings of this study.

Discussion

The qualitative findings of this study did not completely support the initial assumptions made by the researcher, about the perceptions of non-Purhepechas of the specific needs of the Purhepecha children and families. The results did show possible culturally related life expectations and meanings attributed to

their needs. For example, it was observed by the researcher and stated by other professional community members, that the Purhepecha members living in the Coachella Valley reside under dire conditions. Although, this is also supported by the intervention of City Code Enforcement, the Purhepecha members that participated in this study disclosed that their living conditions were not of major concern. On the contrary, participants reported to live far better than they once did in Mexico.

The responses from the participants in regards to having felt discriminated against and/or negatively impacted by non-Purhepecha people, were contrary to those presumed by the researcher. Interestingly, the participants were able to identify situations perceived to be discriminatory statements or judgments by non-Purhepecha people, yet these were reported by participants as not having had an effect on them. Thorough out the course of the study, the participants were observed by the researcher to have a strong cultural identity and to be proud of their indigenous origins. Due to the composition and duration of this research, the researcher was unable to seek responses to the aforementioned question from the Purhepecha children.

Children may have been more impacted by culture and language differences and prejudice. Based on the fact that school-age children interact with other non-Purhepecha children in the school setting. In addition, the developmental stages of the school-children involve identity formation and social interaction. The Purhepecha children may be able to identify and verbalize how they are affected by and discriminated against in their process of assimilating to American standards while seeking to maintain their cultural identity at home.

The researcher's assumptions in regards the Purhepecha's poor community resources awareness/access and child welfare laws was confirmed. For example, only seven out of the seventeen participants reported knowing of "some" services offered in their community. In addition, a need for services to the Purhepecha community was identified. What were left unknown were the effectiveness and utilization outcomes of services provided to this community. This is based on their responses which indicated that they rely strongly on their personal social support, which was identified to be their "Paisanos" (natives).

Furthermore, overall responses from the participants were analyzed by the researcher and concluded to be strongly influenced by the culture of this population. Overall expectations for quality of life and perceptions of their needs were directly influenced by their lifestyles in Mexico. In addition, the expectations for and understanding of their children's needs and school performance were also impacted as many of the hardships perceived and stated by the participants were not necessarily considered as a problem and/or need by the participants. For example, more than half of the participants reported specific behaviors and/or situations in which a school teacher/aide had contacted them to report concerns in relation to their child(ren), yet were unable to reflect and/or consider such a problem or educational need.

Based on the findings and observations made by the researcher through out the course of this study, it was concluded that the Purhepecha children and families' identified needs will persist and increase if not attended to. The needs of the population include: increased community awareness/access to resources, child age appropriate services (e.g., tutoring), parent

education courses, Spanish language skills, and improvement of their home conditions.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the project. The sample size of participants used in this research project may have had an impact in the results. Most of the participants had similar responses, and male participants were almost double the number of female participants. Another limitation is that the tool created to collect the data may not have been accurately designed to reflect the needs of this population. Although the researcher used the assistance of a an interpreter who spoke fluent Purhepecha both to conduct interviews and to pilot the tool, the areas to be assessed were not necessarily representative of the questions asked. Another limitation was that the interpreter was used only in nine out of seventeen interviews. This could have led to subjective responses and documentation from the interpreter's responses to the data collected as opposed to those of the researcher. For example, some participants may not have felt comfortable providing honest responses to the interpreter as he is a well known

member of the Purhepecha community. In addition, even though the participants allowed the presence of the researcher in their home in order to conduct the study, the Purhepecha community is known to be a secretive community.

Other limitations include the time given to collect the data and total time to complete the study. For example, the researcher could have addressed more culturally specific issues for this population, such as their expectations of life, and their perceptions of their adaptations process, if she had had more time to explore the community before developing the instrument.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Further research on the needs of the Purhepecha community and their culture is recommended and necessary in order to assure that social workers deliver competent services and can assess their needs accurately. This will not only benefit the Purhepecha children and their families, but the community as well. The community and agencies will benefit as this group has continuously struggled due to language and culture barriers.

Social work as a profession whose core value is the protection of human rights, should promote integration of the Purhepecha population into the public and social services sector to ensure the wellness of their members. It is important that social workers are aware of and acknowledge the needs of vulnerable populations to help the community recognize special needs, and to establish the rights of indigenous people. Ultimately, social workers can help promote both individual and community awareness of the Purhepecha's risk and protective factors, by creating a safe and healthy environment for this population to voice their concerns, ask questions, and educate professionals about their lifestyles and culture.

During the last phase of this research study and after multiple months of deliberation, a federal judge ruled that the owner of the trailer park known as "Duronville," in where estimates of half of the four thousand tenants are Purhepecha, remain open. Several conditions were ordered which included twenty critical changes such as hiring contractors to upgrade sewage, water, and electrical systems. The Court order also imposed a ninety-day limit for these conditions to be met

and calendared Court Hearings to evaluate progress every thirty days. This is important as the judge's conditions included a consortium of banks to make community development loans for the improvement and restructuring of the trailer park and requested the involvement of social services agencies. Additionally, it was ordered that an education program is created to ensure that tenants understand their rights and responsibilities. The repairs are expected to be made over a three to five-year period (Kelly, 2008).

The researcher further recommends to the various agencies and individuals who have vested their interest in helping the Purhepecha community as a result of the mass attention made by the local and state news reports of the Purhepecha families residing in "Duronville" trailer park, that they seek the opportunity and utilize the available resources and grants ordered by the judge in order to develop preventative services, education, and culturally competent services. Furthermore, this will ensure the wellbeing of children and families, as services utilized will ultimately impact the lives of this population.

Last, the researcher also hopes that future studies are conducted on the Purhepecha residing in the Eastern Coachella Valley. At the time of this study there was only one previous study, which only provided information on the political and economic status of the Purepecha living in Mexico. This research should be considered a stepping stone for future research studies on the Purhepecha. Some recommendations that could be made to improve future research with the Purhepecha are the continual use of the interpreter, utilization of larger sample and inclusion of children, consideration of working with another researcher to suppress social desirability and/or biased observations, and last, to continue to genuinely provide and care for vulnerable populations as the researcher initially intended this research to be.

Conclusions

The conclusions extracted from this project include the methods, findings and limitations from the study. The researcher conducting this research developed a tool to identify the Purhepecha population's specific needs. A total number of seventeen subjects participated in the

study. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher and composed of three parts. It included questions that were formulated specifically for the Purhepecha to respond openly,, allowing them to report on their interpretation of realities. The researcher also provided the participants with community resources and educated them on issues that were specific to their needs as determined during the interview process. Findings from the research were similar experiences and trends among the Purhepecha families such as: reasons that led to migration, awareness of community resources, social supports, and language limitations. While there were needs identified by the researcher to the participants, the results showed a possible culture related expectation of life and meaning of their needs. Limitations of this study were discussed and recommendations were made. Findings from this study provide valuable insight for professionals working with the Purhepecha population in order to provide culturally competent services.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Tentative Interview Guide

Part I Demographics

What is the gender of the participant?

What is the age of the participant?

What was the age of migration to the United States?

Are there other place/s where the participant lived previous to relocating to the Eastern Coachella Valley?

What are the reasons for selecting the Eastern Coachella Valley?

What are the languages the participant speaks?

What is the highest level of education completed by the participant?

What is the marital status of participant?

If married, or lives with someone please answer the following in regards to the person: age, age at migration, education level, time together, employment, language(s) spoken.

Does the participant have child (ren)? How many?

Birthplace of the child (ren)?

Age, gender, education level, languages spoken?

How many people live at the participant's house?

Does the participant have family or a network support in the area?

Does the participant belong to an organization/group?

Questions related to the child (ren) of the participant:

Do any of the participant's children have a disability or special needs, either psychological or physical?

What does the participant think are the basic needs of his/her child (ren)?

Do the children have a healthcare provider? If not how do they seek medical attention when needed?

Does the child (ren) have difficulties in school? If so, can the participant describe them? Does the participant think some problems are due to culture and/or language?

Questions Related to immigration Experiences

What does the participant consider to have been the most and least difficult in their adaptation to the United States?

If the participant could express his/her needs to government officials or/and authorities what would these be?

Has the participant ever felt discriminated against and/or affected by members of the community on the basis of their culture, language, or personal self?

Awareness of Community Resources

Does the participant have access to a telephone?

Does the participant own a telephone directory?

If so, does the participant know how to utilize it?

Does the participant have access to transportation? If so, what kind?

Does the participant know when to use the emergency number 911?

Does the participant know where he/she can get food assistance and /or low-cost healthcare?

Part II Vignettes

Vignette 1

You, the participant, come home from work one day and you find your 10 month old infant with high temperature. You bathe the infant four times throughout the night. The infant cries overnight and continues to have high temperature. The next morning the infant vomits, does not eat, sleep. The infant is excessively vomiting, and continues with a high temperature. What would the participant do? Who would the participant call?

Vignette 2

The participant takes his child to a doctor and they are interpreted by one of the staff. How does the participant feel when he/she needs assistance from others to communicate with others? Does the participant feel they are able to express themselves accurately?

Vignette 3

If you, the participant, had no means to provide food for his/her children, would he/she know what to do?

Part III

Open-ended Questions

Does the participant know the laws in regards child(ren) discipline in the U.S.? If so, can the participant describe the differences between the U.S. and Mexico, his/her native country?

Is the participant aware of the human rights in the U.S., rights that are not determined by legal status?

Can the participant explain how she/he thinks that culture, language, and area where they live have impacted his/her family, and how?

What does the participant believe that government and non-government agencies that come in contact with this population should be aware of, specifically related to the needs?

Can the participant identify 3 strengths and 3 weaknesses in relation to him/her, his /her family and community in which he/she live

References

Does the participant know anyone who she/he thinks wishes to participate in this study? If so can the participant provide contact number?

Does the participant have any further questions for the researcher?

Formato Tentativo de Entrevista

Parte I

Preguntas Sobre el Participante

¿El participante es del sexo femenino o masculino?

¿Edad del participante?

¿Edad de cuando este emigro a Estados Unidos?

¿Localidad donde el participante vivió antes de colocarse en el Valle de Coachella?

Razón por cual el participante eligió el Valle de Coachella
Lenguajes/idiomas que el participante hable
Nivel de educación completado

Estado civil del participante

Si el/la participante tiene pareja, por favor conteste lo siguiente:

Edad, edad al emigrar, educación, tiempo de casados, empleo o profesión, lenguaje

¿Tiene hijos el participante? ¿Y si tiene hijos cuantos?

Lugar de nacimiento de los hijos

Edades, sexo, nivel de educación, lenguaje, de los hijos

¿Cuanta gente comparte vivienda con el participante?

¿Tiene el participante familia en el área?

¿Pertenece el participante a un tipo de organización no lucrativa a la que este recuda para apoyo?

Preguntas relacionadas con los menores/hijos del participante:

¿Tiene el hijo/a del participante alguna discapacidad o necesidad cual requiera ayuda especial (física o psicológica)?

¿Cuales son las necesidades básicas que usted piensa su hijo/a requiera?

¿Su hijo/hija tienen seguro medico? ¿Que tan frecuente lo usa?

¿Tiene problemas en la escuela? ¿Cuáles son, y acaso se debe a la cultura o lenguaje de este?

Preguntas relacionadas con experiencias como emigrante

¿Cuál a sido lo mas fácil, difícil en la adaptación al vivir en Estados Unidos?

¿Si usted pudiera expresar su necesidades a autoridades o agencias gobernantes en las cuales tal vez usted haiga tenido un acercamiento cuales fueran?

¿Se ha sentido usted discriminado/a, o afectado por miembros de la comunidad en base a su cultura, lenguaje, o persona?

Conocimiento a Recursos en su Comunidad

¿Tiene acceso a una línea de teléfono?

¿Tiene el Participante un directorio de teléfonos? Si contesta que si, lo puede utilizar?

¿Tiene acceso a transportación? Ruta de autobús, carro, etc.

¿Sabe el participante cuando utilizar el número de emergencia 911? Sabe a donde acudir para recibir despensa

gratis, o medicamentos a bajo costo?

Parte II

Historia 1

Un día por la tarde al llegar de trabajar usted encuentra a su hijo/a de 10 meses de edad hirviendo en calentura. Usted baña a su hijo/a con agua tibia cuatro veces durante el transcurso de la madrugada. Su hijo/a no duerme, usted se desvela y su hijo/a sigue con calentura. El próximo día su hijo/a vomita, no toma bocado, tiene diarrea, y sigue con calentura. ¿Usted que haría? ¿A quien llamaría?

Historia 2

Usted va al doctor con su hijo/a al medico, y en la clínica le ofrecen a una persona que la interprete de Ingles y Español. ¿Usted se siente incomoda/o cuando esto ocurre? ¿Se ha sentido que no puede expresarse de la forma adecuada?

Historia 3

¿Si algún día usted no tuviera dinero para darle de comer o beber a usted y a su familia, que hiciera?

Parte III

Preguntas Abiertas

¿Sabe usted algo sobre la forma en la que se disciplina a los niños en Estados Unidos? ¿Puede usted identificar como esta se diferencia de su país natal?

¿Sabe usted sus derechos como humano en este país, no importando su estatus legal?

¿Puede usted explicar como usted piensa que su cultura, lenguaje, y área de vivienda ha afectado a usted y a su familia?

¿Qué le gustaría que agencias gobernantes, y organizaciones no lucrativas supieran sobre su comunidad y las necesidades?

¿Puede usted identificar 3 cosas buenas sobre su usted, su familia, y su comunidad, y tres cosas que necesiten mejorar?

Referencias

¿Conoce usted a alguien que estaría interesado/a en participar en este estudio? ¿Si usted conoce a alguien podría referir con la investigadora?

¿Tiene el participante alguna pregunta?

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Potential Participant:

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to identify the needs of the Purhepecha community living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. This study is being conducted by Berenice Aguirre a student in the Masters of Social Work Program at California State University of San Bernardino. The student is not a representative from law enforcement, immigration, and or other agency. The student is being supervised by Dr. Rosemary McCaslin. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be interviewed on several topics that include questions about you such age, age at migration, languages spoken, education, number of children, marital status. The interview also consists of three vignettes followed by question in regards to what you would do if you had the same problem. The purpose of this is to inform you about possible resources that could be used if these were to occur.

The interview will be conducted in the community in which you live. You have the option to choose where you will feel the most comfortable, for example your home. The interview may take up to one to two hours depending on the participant and interviewer. The researcher will compensate the participant with a twenty dollar value gift card from a local food store as a show of appreciation for participant's cooperation and time devoted for the interview.

It is very important that you know that all the responses you provide will remain private and that you have the right not to participate in the study. You also have the right to stop once the interview has begun as well as to say you don't want to answer questions asked by the interviewer with no penalty. Benefits of this study may include contributing to educating the non-Purhepecha community about your community's specific needs and perceptions. The benefits to the participants could be better access to relevant services and \$20 worth of groceries. A possible minimal risk may be the time spent to engage and answer the questions in the interview.

If you have questions or concerns about the study and/or your participation, you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at (909)537-5501.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the purpose of this study, and voluntarily wish to participate, and that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant's Initials

Interpreter's Initials
(when applicable)

Date _____

Date _____

Documento de Consentimiento Autorizado

Posible Participante:

El siguiente estudio en el que se le ofrece participar tiene por objetivo tratar de identificar las necesidades y cultura sobre la comunidad Purhepecha en el Valle de Coachella. La persona que conduce este estudio es estudiante del Programa de Maestría de Trabajo Social de la Universidad Estatal de California de San Bernardino y practica bajo la supervisión de la Dr. Rosemary McCaslin. Este estudio ha sido aprobado por el Instituto de la Universidad Estatal de California de San Bernardino.

Si usted acepta participar en el estudio, la persona que conduce este estudio le informa que las preguntas consistirán de los temas siguientes: preguntas sobre usted, por ejemplo edad, edad al emigrar, educación, lenguaje, número de hijos, entre otras preguntas sobre su llegada a este país. Usted también será presentado/a con una serie de tres historias cortas seguidas por una pregunta sobre que haría usted en caso de que esta situación le sucediera. La razón por la cual estas preguntas forman parte es para identificar posibles servicios de la comunidad que puedan asistir al participante y su comunidad en sus necesidades.

La entrevista será conducida en su comunidad. Usted puede elegir el lugar que crea conveniente. La entrevista tomara un promedio de una a dos horas dependiendo de usted, el participante, y de los temas. La persona que conduce el estudio también le otorgara al una tarjeta de certificado como compensación por la participación con un valor de veinte dólares.

Es importante que usted sepa que tiene todo el derecho a rechazar la participación o de terminar la entrevista aunque esta ya haya empezado. Le informo que las respuestas y sus preguntas serán confidenciales y no revelaran su identidad a ninguna organización o autoridad. Como ya reiterado el estudio es solamente para identificar necesidades y servicios que puedan serles útiles a usted y a la comunidad Purhepecha del Valle de Coachella.

Los beneficios al participar en este estudio son la contribución a su comunidad para aumentar la atención de profesionales a su comunidad así educando a estos sobre sus necesidades y cultura, y los recursos de la comunidad que serán presentados con el fin de ayudarle a usted y a su familia. Riesgo mínimo de ser participe es el tiempo que este participante otorgara en contestar las preguntas.

Si tiene alguna pregunta o comentario sobre este estudio, puede contactar a mi supervisora de facultad, la Dr. Rosemary McCaslin al (909)537-5501.

Yo acepto que haya sido informado/a sobre el contenido al cual voluntariamente deseo participar, y que soy mayor de 18 años.

Iniciales del Participante

Iniciales de testigo/interprete

Fecha _____

Fecha _____

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

To: Participant

From: Berenice Aguirre

I would like to thank you for volunteering your participation in this research to identify the needs of the Purhepecha children and families living in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The findings of this research will be used to increase the awareness and cultural competency of those professionals and members of the community who come into contact and work with the Purhepecha members.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and outcomes of the study will be reported only as group findings. A copy of the results of the study will be delivered to you.

If you have questions or concerns about the study and/or your participation, you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, at (909)537-5501.

Again, thank you for participating in this action research project.

Berenice Aguirre

Declaración De Información Sobre el Estudio

Atención: Participante

De: Berenice Aguirre

Quisiera agradecerle su participación en este estudio cual propósito es identificar las necesidades de la comunidad Purhepecha que reside en el Valle De Coachella para a si crear nuevos programas y servicios creados especialmente o que tomen en cuenta la cultura y lenguaje de esta su comunidad.

De nuevo, le informo que su identidad y respuestas son confidenciales y los resultados del estudio serán reportados en grupo. Los resultados publicados no revelaran información personal o información que le perjudique. Al final del estudio usted será enviado una copia de los resultados.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta en referente al estudio o sobre su participación, puede contactar a la supervisora de facultad, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, al (909)537-5501.

Por ultimo, agradezco su participación y cooperación en este estudio.

Berenice Aguirre

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