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# Hispanics Communication Experiences in the Organizational Setting

Nicole Abeyta

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Nicole Abeyta

*Candidate*

Communication and Journalism

*Department*

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Thesis Committee:*

*Dr. K. M. M.*

, Chairperson

*Judith Hendry*

*Susan Breese-Robert*

HISPANICS COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCES IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL  
SETTING

BY

NICOLE ABEYTA

B.A., COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2000

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
Communication

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 2009

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, for always providing the support I needed. I love you all very much and I appreciate everything you have done for me throughout my life. Mom you have been my strength and inspiration, just when I thought I could not continue or was overwhelmed with emotion, you always had the right words to comfort me. I love you with all my heart and I thank you for pushing me to reach my goals in every aspect of life. More importantly, I thank you for lending an ear, being there, and just giving me a hug when I needed one the most.

Dad you have been my courage and silent mentor. Not only have you eased my tension with your jokes, but you have shown me how to reach my goals in life. Thank you for believing in me and showing me that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. By your example, I have learned to work hard for the things that I desire in life. Dad I love you and thank you for always being there for me.

To my sister, Ashley, I thank you for kicking me off the computer at times, this gave me the opportunity to take a break from school and relax. Thank you for supporting me, I love you!

I also want to thank my husband, Steve, you have been so supportive and without you I don't know if I could have made it through graduate school. Thank you for not only being my best friend, but also being there when I felt overwhelmed and frustrated. I also want to thank you so much for all your patience, support, and encouragement when I needed it most. I love you!

I thank the Lord everyday for all the blessings in my life, including having such a wonderful and supportive family. Thank you for everything and I love you all very much!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the organizational communication experiences of some Hispanic employees. In this thesis, I employ a narrative analysis method, and share the interviews and standpoint of twelve Hispanic employees to help advance the understanding of how Hispanic employees feel about integrated communication practices in the workplace. I also uncover how Hispanics feel about their work environment, what type of communication practices are utilized, and how Hispanics use technology in the organizational setting.

The personal experiences help establish a general understanding of the influences of Hispanic culture, language, values, beliefs, and traditions in organizations, specifically on their communicative and technological experiences in organizations. The information included in this study is not representative of all Hispanics, but offers a new perspective lacking in current research.



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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Hispanics today face many challenges in society including those within their workplaces. Many Hispanics are struggling to fit into mainstream culture while simultaneously trying to hold on to traditional values and beliefs. The dialectical tension resulting from this struggle can be exhausting and can lead to varied experiences of different ethnic groups. Ferdman and Cortes (1992) suggest that workplace situations involving multicultural encounters with those from different ethnicities can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. There is a broad tradition of research on intercultural communication in organizations (Adler, 1991; Bochner, 1982; Brislin, 1981; Ferdman, 1992; Ferraro, 1990; Kochman, 1981; Shaw, 1990) as well as research on how these encounters could be improved and made more effective (Albert, 1986; Albert & Triandis, 1985; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986; Hughes-Weiner, 1986; Landis & Brislin, 1983a, 1983b). However, we need to further examine the invisible barriers or “glass ceiling” that prevents not only Hispanics, but also other people of color and members belonging to minority groups from organizational advancement.

According to the 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to work in service occupations (19 percent versus 12 percent) and almost twice as likely to be employed as operators and laborers (22 percent versus 12 percent). Conversely, 14 percent of Hispanics were in managerial professional occupations, compared with 33 percent of the non-Hispanic Whites. Although Hispanics are holding more advanced positions than seen before, there is still a need for concern when it comes to the roles that Hispanics play within organizations. For example, it is

important to understand why Hispanics hold so few advanced positions, how the organization is influencing minority advancement, what attitudes or perceptions are influencing the organizational culture and how Hispanics experience their work environment.

Hispanics need to be given the opportunity to voice their feelings about their organizational environments and experiences. Therefore, the next sections will introduce the purpose and rationale for this study. More specifically, I will briefly explain the lack of research on Hispanics and their organizational communication experiences and the lack of communication research from the standpoint of Hispanics.

#### Purpose

The primary purpose for this study is to explore the communication experiences of Hispanic employees, specifically centered on issues of organizational communication. In this study I address issues that surround Hispanics' experiences, to discover how their organizational communication experiences may be different from the normed experiences of majority Anglo American organizations, and to determine what it will take to transform organizational experiences in a way that appreciates and builds on Hispanics and their cultural identities.

For the purpose of this thesis, a clarification and distinction of Hispanic is offered due to the large number of Hispanics living in New Mexico. Hispanics are considered the majority in this state; however, how they classify themselves is based on the areas of the state in which they reside. Many of the Hispanics from the southern part of the state refer to themselves as Mexican-Americans or Mexicans and many are first or second-generation immigrants and they usually refer to themselves as Latino. Those living in the

northern part of the state describe themselves as Spanish or Hispanic and many trace their roots to conquistadors from Spain and Mexico in the 1500s. Therefore, I will use the term Hispanic to honor the differences of those residing in this state, which all contain Hispanic heritage.

I will focus on Hispanics who currently live in New Mexico, but may have been brought up in different U.S. states. I will examine their experiences and perceptions on different aspects of their workplace and hopefully come to understand how they were shaped. These organizational-lived experiences will be further examined using standpoint theory, to gain a better understanding of how these perceptions are developed. Standpoint theory suggests that the material, social and symbolic circumstances of a social group shape what its members experience, as well as how they think, act, and feel (Harding, 1991; Wood, 1993, 1995). Standpoint theory asserts that the social groups we are surrounded by shape the way we understand, communicate and experience the world. For example, if a Hispanic grew up with individuals who faced discrimination or prejudice often, their standpoint may be different than someone who has never experienced discrimination in their social group. Therefore, the two individuals might respond differently to similar experiences given their personal standpoint. The experiences of different groups shape their perceptions and the way they interpret the world around them. Standpoint theory will help explain how Hispanic employees experience organizational communication and their organizational environment.

Discovering communicative and technological experiences of Hispanic employees in organizations will provide a fresh and uncovered perspective within organizational communication. In the next section, this chapter provides a rationale for



studying the lived experiences of Hispanic employees. Further, I discuss the lack of research in organizational communication from a Hispanic standpoint, followed by a summary of organizational communication research, specifically as it relates to standpoint theory.

### Rationale

In 2008 Hispanics made up 46.7 million of the U.S. population, representing 15 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2008). According to Stone, Stone-Romero & Johnson (2007):

Recent reports (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000) indicate that over 34 percent of the U.S. population is made up of ethnic minority group members, and it is expected that minorities will make up 50 percent of the workforce by the year 2030. Given these trends, organizations are concerned with attracting and retaining employees from diverse cultural backgrounds (e.g., to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse mix of customers).

The number of immigrants arriving in the U.S. has also increased dramatically, with the foreign-born populations rising to 39.1 percent (or 12.8 million) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Although many Americans support increased opportunities for members of minority groups and people of color, as a society we need to assure we are integrating their cultural attributes so we can truly appreciate the value and uniqueness they bring to mainstream culture. Therefore, there is a need to better understand Hispanics and their lived experiences.

Approximately one in eight people in the United States is of Hispanic origin. Despite the fact that Hispanics are one of the fastest growing segments of the population

(U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000) and are becoming increasingly more visible in corporate America, little has been written about Hispanics, their level of experience, work roles, and how these experiences relate to cultural attributes (Ferdman & Cortes, 1992). Ferdman & Cortes further explain by stating:

Investigations have aided thinking about the role of cultural differences in ethnically diverse organizations (Ferdman, 1992), empirical research rarely has considered the precise ways in which the cultural features of ethnic minorities are expressed in work contexts or how cultural differences interact with other variables to affect individual work experiences and behavior. While cultural differences from the dominant Anglo majority certainly can comprise an important influence on the organizational behavior and experiences of Hispanics, we know little about the texture of this relationship or about how Hispanics at work think about their cultural features. (p. 249)

Organizations are slowly realizing the necessity of understanding cultural differences in the work environment. Not only should the focus be on cultural differences, but also on how one communicates and if these communication practices are fostered within the organization. The present study focuses on enhancing our understanding of organizational communication by examining communicative practices from the standpoint of Hispanics.

These narratives will increase understanding of the perspectives of Hispanic employees. It will further uncover some of the norms in today's corporate workforce, specifically in regard to Hispanics. However, most importantly this study will seek to contribute to further enhance our understanding about Hispanic employees and their

organizational communication practices, technological experiences, and interpretations of organizational environments.

Although numerous studies have been done on other minority groups in relation to organizational communication, there still tends to be a gap when it comes to understanding Hispanics. Most of the research in organizational communication is based on Anglo-American males. Some research has been conducted on other minority groups, however the presence of Hispanics in organizational research is insufficient. The lack of research on Hispanics suggests, “We know little about how they [Hispanics] might think about their ethnic and cultural identities in the context of work” (Ferdman & Cortes, 1992, p. 251). Because of the rise in the Hispanic population it is vital to research and understand organizational communication from the standpoint of Hispanics.

The critiques of domination in social theories “claim that white, patriarchal, capitalist societies are structured around conflicting social interests and that their stability and coherence is achieved by the ability of the power-block to promote and hold its interests against those of subordinated social groups” (Fiske, 1991, p. 331). Hall & Hall (1990) further distinguish the role of Anglo Americans in American culture in their study of business and culture by stating:

While the U.S. is a nation of immigrants and there are many people in American business who are not of northern European heritage, for the purposes of our discussion of American culture, it is the American-European culture we refer to and not the many other cultures represented in the American population. This dominant or mainstream business culture is the norm to which people with other cultural backgrounds are expected to conform, particularly in large corporations.

Despite its ethnic diversity, the U.S. has managed to absorb bits and pieces of many cultures and weave them into a unique culture that is strikingly consistent and distinct...While the United States has absorbed millions of people from countries around the globe, the core culture of the United States has its roots in northern European or Anglo-Saxon culture. (cited in Kikoski & Kikoski, 1996, p. 59)

Although these are just a few examples of marginalizing people of color and minorities in organizations, their inclusion represents the need for further research in organizational communication, specifically in regard to Hispanics. No minority group should be expected to conform to the dominant culture, but rather individuals comprising the work force should mold the organizational culture. Because no one cultural group is better than the other, more research is necessary to better understand and appreciate the value each can bring to the organization.

#### *Hispanic Standpoint in Organizations*

Today Hispanics are already making their numbers felt in the labor force, approximately one-fourth of new entrants into the labor force are Hispanic (Fullerton, 1993). Many Hispanics are struggling to uphold their values and also trying to fit into mainstream culture. Solorzano (1992) claims, "The struggles of Mexican Americans to be accepted by Anglo Americans brings them to change not their ethnicity but their most representative values" (p. 173). Hispanics are aiming to be successful in their professional lives, while simultaneously upholding the values that are respected in their own culture. Although there are vast differences between American culture and the Hispanic culture, Hispanics continuously struggle to be accepted by both cultures.

According to a study by Len-Rios (2002), most Hispanic public relations practitioners do not experience discrimination; however, Hispanic female practitioners stated they had to work harder to prove themselves in the corporate sphere and were viewed as a curiosity rather than an asset. However, as the number of Hispanics continues to grow in the workforce, their influence in the organization will also flourish throughout. The values that Hispanics possess affect how they interact with fellow employees and upper management. Hispanics are establishing relationships, opening up the lines of communication, and accommodating others.

Hispanic cultural values can be an asset to any organization. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, we will see many organizations transform to adopt many of the values the Hispanic culture holds today. Sathe (1983) wrote, “the point is to distill from the ‘laundry list’ of shared things, shared sayings, shared doings, and shared feelings (that is, from the manifestations of the culture) a much shorter list of important shared understandings (that is the culture’s content)” (p. 7). Hispanics need to be able to take the knowledge they possess and clearly articulate their ideas, stay focused and be compassionate about their work.

Organizations need to increase the number of Hispanics represented in the organization to ensure they are representative of the local population and are also represented in leadership positions. Many organizations need to make sure the numbers are reflected in management. If the majority of the organizational members are Hispanic, the same should be true of management. Although Hispanics are making great strides in their professional careers, there are still opportunities for improvement. Hispanics need to continue to pursue quality education, strive to meet their goals, and have high

standards for themselves and their organization. Furthermore, organizations need to give Hispanics the opportunity to advance. The present study makes an effort to develop an understanding about the communicative experiences of Hispanics as a way to enhance the understanding organizations have about Hispanics.

#### Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the communication experiences of Hispanics within organizations?

RQ 2: How do Hispanics view their organizational environment?

RQ 3: How do Hispanics utilize technology in the organizational setting?

#### Summary

To better comprehend Hispanic experiences in organizations, we must first recall the perspectives of standpoint theory and what it is based on. Corporate organizations are significant mechanisms for realizing how social groups view the world. More specifically, the limited work on organizational communication experiences of Hispanics to date makes this study an important topic to address. The present study examines the narratives of Hispanic employees based on their communication practices and experiences within organizations. The goal here is to access the lived experiences of Hispanics and develop an understanding of the various standpoints involved in these experiences. The study is important because it provides us with an understanding of organizational communication relations, perspectives, and insight in the production and reproduction of knowledge and truth, in this case as it impacts Hispanics' organizational standpoint.

## Thesis Preview

In chapter two, I present a review of the relevant theoretical and research literature. In chapter three, I describe the method of in-depth interviews, research design and methods used for analyzing these interviews. In chapter four, I present my findings and analyze the data that emerged from this study. In chapter five, I discuss the implications of my findings in relation to the research questions, suggest ways in which the application of these findings can provide insight into how Hispanics experience their organizational environments and suggest options for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter identifies and explains the role of people of color and minorities in U.S. society, further examining Hispanics and their cultural identity and values. The chapter then describes standpoint theory, elaborating on current organizational communication research and its limitations as well as cultural diversity research in organizations is described. This discussion is situated from the framework of the lack of research on both communication and diversity issues from the Hispanic standpoint. Finally, the chapter outlines some questions guiding this study and concludes with a summary.

### People of Color and Minority Groups in the U.S.

Traditionally, social scientists investigated the social and cultural dynamics of people of color in comparison to Anglo Americans. Recently, scholars suggest the need to compare people of color with one another, rather than, or at least along with, Anglo American culture (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). Comparing people among minority groups diminishes the chance that Anglos in American culture will be seen as normal and provide the standards by which people of color live. Despite the many differences that exist between people of color and Anglos, each minority group is unique in itself. Individual and subgroup differences, cultural values and practices shared among African-Americans, among Asian-Americans, and among Hispanic-Americans are sufficiently distinct to make them clearly identifiable groups (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Kitano & Daniels, 1995; Marin & Marin, 1991; in Kane, 1998, p. 94). According to Rose (2002), "Ethnic diversity now characterizes the United States: the overall minority/ethnic population is estimated to represent fully 30% of the total population" (p. 14).



In organizations, it then becomes important to distinguish between each of these groups and learn how their cultural experience and standpoint affect how they interact within the larger organizational setting.

Rose (2002) indicates that U.S. culture is not transforming individuals of different ethnic groups, but rather is being influenced by each of these groups:

Experts agree that today's world is no longer characterized by assimilation – immigrant subcultures being readily absorbed and disappearing into a 'mainstream' U.S. culture. Instead, the contemporary paradigm is one of acculturation – where the cultural patterns of immigrants endure in some fashion and the host culture incorporates elements of the immigrant groups' cultures.

Consequently, we can expect that the Hispanic population will remain distinct, all the more so because of the continuing influence of new immigration, the critical size of Hispanic enclaves in many major urban areas, and the cultural importance of the family. (p. 14)

The social, economic, cultural and political impact various ethnic groups have on U.S. culture makes it even more important that we understand the varying and multifaceted experiences of each of these groups. In the next sections I look more closely at the Hispanic culture and how their values and language are transforming traditional American culture.

### Hispanics: Identity and Culture

One of the largest debates among Hispanics is what is the appropriate or politically correct term for this group? Many believe that it is a preference. Their geographic location will determine how Hispanics refer to themselves. People use such

terms as Chicano/a, Latino/a, Spanish, Mexican, Hispanic, and many more. Those who are aware of their cultural history may choose a term based on that knowledge, while others might choose the term most accepted within their community. However, a Hispanic can be defined as any individual that considers himself or herself Hispanic (Lopez, 1997).

Hispanics reside in all 50 states, but “more than three-fourths of Hispanics lived in the West or the South. In fact, among the 50 states where Hispanics comprised a majority of the total population, 43 were located in either Texas or New Mexico. About 3 in 4 Hispanics lived in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona and New Jersey combined. In New Mexico, 42 percent of the population was Latino, the highest proportion of any state” (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The Hispanic community is composed of people who come from as many as 24 different countries (Lopez, 1997). Although the Hispanic culture is viewed as one homogeneous group, the fact is it encompasses a variety of people. They include Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Venezuelans, and Costa Ricans, among others. “Hispanics encompass many nationalities, many gradations of education, income levels, acculturation, and differing language abilities” (Roslow & Nicholls, 1996, p. 68). Grouping them all together is like “grouping Americans with British, Canadians, Australians, and residents of Jamaica and Bermuda, just because they all speak English” (Lopez, 1997, p. 2). Yet, speaking Spanish does seem to be a commonality of the Hispanic culture, but like any other language, there are differences in the dialect. Lopez (1997) states:

Think of the differences between British English, American English, and Australian English. There is no doubt that you can communicate with each other,

but sometimes the meaning is lost due to regional differences. The Spanish differences are often subtle but sometimes drastic. Puerto Ricans use a word that means insect, yet to most Latin Americans, it is a vulgar expression. (p. 3)

Cordova (2002) further explains the differences in dialect by stating:

Even in New Mexico, where 42% of the population is Spanish surnamed, there is a distinct difference between northern, southern, rural, and urban Hispanics.

Northern New Mexico Hispanics date their presence in the region to the sixteenth century prior to the establishment of Mexico as an independent state. Southern New Mexico Hispanics have a close affinity to Mexican culture. To complicate the cultural issues many of these Hispanics have Indian blood in their genealogy and proudly proclaim the fact. A large number of Indians carry Spanish surnames. This political aspect has been of importance in the history of Mexico as it developed a theory of racial superiority (La Raza Cosmica\_The Cosmic Race) based on race mixing (mestizaje) and the sense that it was the best because of the mixture. (p. 12)

Because Hispanics come from different areas around the world, it is important to acknowledge the differences among their subcultures. Although there are numerous definitions of the term Hispanic, for the purposes of the present study I use the term Hispanic, but acknowledge that label preferences differ from region-to region, state-to-state, and even city-to-city.

As of August 2008, the Census Bureau predicts the most dramatic gain in the Hispanic population. The Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple, from 46.7 million to 132.8 million, from 2008 through 2050, representing a growth from 15 percent

to 30 percent (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2008). “By 2002, the U.S. Hispanic population will make the United States the fourth largest Spanish speaking country in the world; by 2010 it will be the second” (Rose, 2002, p. 14). According to the U.S. Bureau of Census forecasts, as we look into the future of our country the percentage of Americans who will be Hispanic increases dramatically (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1996). The Hispanic population is growing rapidly, therefore making it necessary to understand their culture. Hispanics have a more significant presence in the workforce. Numerous scholars project they will overtake African-Americans as the largest minority group in the United States early in the 21st century (Braus, 1993; Exter, 1993; “Latinos on the Rise,” 1993; McKay, 1982; Powers & Oliver, 1992). The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994) predicts that by the mid-point of the twenty-first century more than one in five (and almost one in four) Americans will be Hispanic. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007), “about 1 of every two people added to the nation’s population between July 1, 2005 and July 1, 2006, was Hispanic. There were 1.4 million Hispanics added to the population over the period” (p. 1). The U.S. Bureau of the Census figures does not include the nearly 4 million residents of Puerto Rico (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007).

When looking at the number of Hispanics in school and the professions they hold, the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007) shares that:

Hispanics make up approximately 19 percent of the nation’s elementary and secondary school students. In 2007, 60 percent of Hispanics age 25 and older had at least a high school education, and 13 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Furthermore, 811,000 Hispanics age 25 years and older had advanced degrees in 2006 (e.g., master’s, professional, and doctorate). Although Hispanics are

represented in a wide variety of occupations, less than one in five (17 percent) works in managerial, professional, and related occupations. Hispanics instead are disproportionately employed in service and support occupations. Twenty-four percent work in service occupations; 22 percent work in sales and office jobs; 18 percent work in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations; 17 percent work in construction, extraction, and maintenance jobs; and 2 percent work in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations (cited in the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: The Federal Hispanic Work Group Report, 2008, p. 5).

Blancero, DelCampo, and Marron (2007) state the:

Projected rise in the numbers of Hispanics poses opportunities for both researchers and practitioners and has important implications for organizations. Given the current and forecasted statistics for Hispanics it is particularly alarming that Hispanic Business Professionals (white-collar workers with a minimum of an undergraduate college degree) and their experiences have been largely ignored in academic research, as this group will be an important talent pool for organizations as well as a critical consumer pool (p. 14).

Mainstream America focuses more on individualistic behaviors, low context, and the future. These American values are not only apparent in our family lives but are also apparent in our professional lives. Americans are always striving to be the best, to improve their skills/experience, and to openly share their feelings or expectations, all in the hopes of having better opportunities in their personal and professional lives. Hispanics, on the other hand, have different values than those of Anglo Americans or

mainstream society. “Hispanics values tend to emphasize collective interdependence (especially for and within the family), personal dignity, greater acceptance of age or gender hierarchy, collectivism, affiliation, and cooperation” (Kikoski and Kikoski, 1996, p. 141). Many people in society believe that younger generation Hispanics are becoming more acculturated and highly Anglicized.

Understanding Hispanic values can be somewhat of a challenge for those people brought up in traditional Anglo American culture. However, Hispanics struggle with their identity everyday. Solorzano (1992) writes about the Chicano struggle:

The sense of ethnic identity by Chicanos is an outcome of their community values. Working under an Anglo system of beliefs, Mexican-Americans are forced to fight for their survival and to compete with each other. This competition undermines the community values of Chicanos; it becomes a violation of Chicano cultural traits. (p. 174)

While Hispanics struggle to fit into American culture, they also struggle in upholding many of their own cultural values. Often I hear people say that, Hispanics are already a part of American culture; but are they really? What does it mean to be a part of American culture? Who sets the standards? We can think about all the stereotypes that exist pertaining to the Hispanic culture. Could we say these stereotypes are the same among all minorities? If differences do exist, think about what one respondent of a focus group stated:

Many believe we all like the same things and eat the same things. I attended a conference for Hispanic communication representatives and they served us

enchiladas and beans thinking that would make us feel more comfortable because we would be eating foods we were familiar with. (Abeyta & Hackett, 2002, p. 29)

Although many Hispanics enjoy Hispanic entrees, is it fair to assume that serving them a traditional Hispanic entrée would make them feel more valued or appreciated? Some Hispanics may laugh at the choice of entrée served, but others would be offended that the traditional American entrée was not served just because Hispanics were attending. These stereotypes not only hinder the strides being made to reach the Hispanic population, but they also fail to acknowledge the unique characteristics that makeup each Hispanic individual. If organizations rely on existing stereotypes in hopes of gaining more Hispanic employees or Hispanic customers, they may be faced with dissatisfied or unengaged employees or losing customers to other organizations which target Hispanics in a more professional and culturally sensitive manner. Although many of these individuals share similar traditions, values, beliefs, and norms, there are still differences that exist between each of these groups, making it difficult for minorities to feel a part of American culture.

Collectivism in the Hispanic culture is “characterized by interdependence, sensitivity, and empathic sacrifice—all in the name of maintaining personal relationships” (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1996, p. 142). Hispanic people are highly concerned with the group and how their actions affect the group, rather than how their actions affect themselves. Hispanics are aware of emotional responses and how the group will react. “Collectivistic Hispanics tend to be more sensitive and respectful in their interpersonal relationships, while individualistic white males are likely to be more confrontational in theirs” (Triandis, Marin, Hui, Lisansky, & Ottati, 1984, p. 315).

Coming from a more collectivistic culture, Hispanics have different goals in mind when involved in business situations. Therefore, when interacting with someone from a low-context culture, conducting business can be very difficult. The Anglo-American tries to get down to business while the Hispanic is trying to establish a relationship with the American.

The Hispanic culture is a high-context culture. In high-context cultures, the “communication or the message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message,” whereas “a low context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of information is vested in the explicit code” (Hall, 1976, p. 91). Hispanics rely less on the spoken word and often use more nonverbal cues in order to relay their message, whereas Anglo-Americans tend to be more explicit. Being accustomed to only one context can cause difficulties when trying to communicate with someone from a different context.

In the Hispanic culture, the idea of polychronic time is seen as more valuable. “Polychronic time individuals tend to be more present oriented and less likely to be punctual for unimportant business occasions” (Kikoski and Kikoski, 1996, p. 148). Hispanics believe that it is more valuable to establish a relationship with someone, rather than worry if they are late for an appointment. When Hispanics have appointments at a particular time with those in other cultures, they are not likely to be punctual, but rather show up when they are finished with other business.

U.S. mainstream culture is more monochronic, meaning that they believe time is valuable. Americans tend to do one thing at a time and usually organize their day based



on a schedule. Americans are more focused on keeping on task, rather than establishing relationships. Therefore, when Hispanics and Anglo-Americans make arrangements to meet, both may become frustrated. This can be avoided if each group takes the time necessary to understand the culture of the individual with whom they are planning to meet.

According to Kikoski & Kikoski (1996), “The family (*familism*) is an extraordinarily important Hispanic value. The strong ties of loyalty, unity, and reciprocity between members of nuclear and extended families define and provide strength and support” (p. 142). Family is probably the most valuable asset to the Hispanic culture. Although most Hispanics seek out support from their immediate and extended family, others seek out affection and attention from other outlets. However, in most Hispanic families values, beliefs, norms, and traditions are passed on by the family, as well as the support and unity needed to survive in American culture. Hispanics value their nuclear family and their extended family. “The attempt by Mexican-Americans to maintain their extended family is a demonstration of the relevance of their values. Extended families are not merely an economic strategy to survive, they are a value in itself” (Sena Rivera, 1979, p. 70). The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) reported that 30.6 percent of Hispanic family households consisted of five or more people. For many Hispanics, their family is at the center of everything they do. They depend on one another in both the good times and the bad and share the most precious of moments in one’s lifetime not only with immediate family, but with the extended family as well.

Bradford, Meyers, and Kane (1999) suggest that “the combination of *simpatia* and high power distance (respect for and loyalty to one’s superiors) in Latino culture may

influence Latinos' communication behaviors" (cited in Leonardi, 2003, p. 163). In addition, Leonardi (2003) believes that "interactions among family members in Latino culture tend to be much tighter and tradition-bound than in Anglo cultures" (p. 163). Hispanics place high value and strong regard for family which are a critical component of Hispanics cultural values.

Two other important concepts in many Hispanic cultures are machismo and patriarchy. Kikoski and Kikoski (1996) state, "To Hispanics manliness (machismo) implies a spectrum that ranges from dignity and fearlessness in the face of death to distinguished, intellectual accomplishments...One should be aware not to intentionally or unintentionally attack an Hispanic's manhood; appear to engage in a public humiliation or insult; or engage in a joking pretense of disrespect for any member of his family, especially a female" (p. 144-145). Hispanics are also a patriarchal society; the father or eldest male in the family is seen as the authority figure. Kikoski and Kikoski (1996) observe, "The female's role is to tend to her husband and rear her children. She should be submissive and tolerant (of alcohol and mistresses) and a devoted mother who is respected by her husband and revered by her children" (p. 142). Although times are changing, the father is still viewed as the head of the household, and the mother is seen as devoted and the glue that holds the family together. Although aspects of machismo and patriarchy exist in some instances, many of the actions linked to the two are less common in Hispanics living in the United States today than in previous years.

As a result of their upbringing, Hispanics in workplace settings might be less likely to question those in authority positions; they do not want to jeopardize the relationship. "The autocratic and hierarchical nature of authority in Hispanic society

does not encourage individual initiative or problem solving without consultation with a superior” (Kras, 1995, p. 24). In the Hispanic community personal life and work are closely related. Although the family still comes first, those who collaborate with Hispanics on a work project are usually friends with whom a relationship has been established. Diaz-Guerrero (1987) writes:

The underlying struggle between the Anglo culture and the Mexican ethos is a struggle for values. The values of individualism, detachment, and competition, representative of the Anglo tradition, clash with the values of community life, cooperation, and unity characteristic of Mexican Americans. (p. 239)

One stereotype of Hispanics is that all Hispanics speak Spanish. This is no truer than claiming all Americans speak proper English. However, the ability to speak Spanish presents an advantage in the workplace, especially for Hispanics living in cities with higher Hispanic populations. More job opportunities are available for the bilingual employee. A person speaking Spanish fills the communication void where Spanish and English meet. Len-Rios (2002) found that being able to speak Spanish provided Hispanics with opportunities they otherwise would not have had if they did not have the ability to speak the language. “Being fully bilingual has opened many doors in my life,” says Nerea Alvarez, director of corporate communications for YupiMSN (Microsoft & TELMEX). “In public relations, fully bilingual means you have to read and write both languages well because what we do is write and communicate and craft and create” (cited in Len-Rios, 2002, p. 23). Speaking the same language as the client helps reduce anxiety between the employee and the customer.

Hispanic culture, language, identity and values directly affect how they communicate with members of dominant and other minority groups as well as experience the communication of these others, both in social as well as organizational contexts. Although Hispanics are making strides in the workforce, there is much to be understood about their value systems and their views. Standpoint theory offers one such frame to understand Hispanic perspectives and experiences. The next section situates the importance of standpoint theory for the present study.

### Standpoint Theory

Our everyday experiences are directly connected to our standpoints. These standpoints derive from our membership in various communities, the most powerful important groups determining the nature of our broader standpoint. Standpoint theory claims “the social groups within which we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others, and the world” (Wood, 2000, p. 219). Although people may live in the same society, they do so from different positions that affect how they see the world and what they do not see. Hegel (1807) concluded:

Societies involve unequal power relationships, there can be no singular and no correct perspective on social life. Each individual perceives and understands society primarily as it is experienced from the perspective of his or her social groups, and that perspective is shaped by the group’s location in the culture as a whole. Thus the perspectives are partial in what they notice and emphasize, as well as in the meanings they assign to social activities and identities. (cited in Wood, 2000, p. 220)

We are all assigned to groups in society. These group designations are determined in the United States based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Based on these classifications people are differentiated by value, worth, responsibility, and expectations. Sometimes, these classifications give people less or more power, privileges, and opportunities. Therefore, culture is not experienced the same by all members of society, but rather, based on this theory, the social, material, and symbolic circumstances of each social group shape how they view the world and the lens they use to interpret the actions of others.

According to standpoint theorists, knowledge is plural; it refers to the various ways of perceiving, experiencing, and knowing that is shaped by our social situations. Allen (1998) writes that standpoint theory proposes that we should rely on our:

Perspectives of social reality to construct knowledge and critique the dominant knowledge claims (which usually are based on White men's lives)...view women as 'strangers' or 'outsiders' whose experiences might provide insight that is invisible to 'natives' (usually White men) who are too immersed within dominant institutions to detect the patterns and behaviors that comprise reality. (p. 576; cited in Hennesey, 1993)

We could think about the ways in which our social location has shaped our thinking, actions, and perceptions of others. Do we think others share the same perspectives as us? Standpoint theory argues that some positions are more accurate than others. For example, those in less privileged positions hold more accurate interpretations or views of society than do those who are in higher positions in the social hierarchy. Harding (1991) suggests:

People with subordinate status have greater motivations to understand the perspective of more powerful groups than vice versa...they may have fuller insight into the social order in that they have no personal investment in maintaining, much less justifying, the status quo. Groups that are advantaged by the prevailing system have a vested interest in not perceiving social inequities that benefit them at the expense of others. (p. 59)

The theory suggests that people in higher positions in the social hierarchy have more to lose and try to preserve a system of power that benefits them. Those who are in the center of their social group are less likely to make changes that benefit people outside of their group, but rather will work to maintain current conditions. Wood (2000) explained this further stating:

Standpoint logic would suggest that whites are less likely than people of color to recognize the continuing legacy of racism and discrimination and to support affirmative action and other programs designed to equalize opportunities in education, politics, and business and industry. Because minorities in many societies have suffered historical injustices and the persistent consequences of these, they are more likely to perceive and denounce inequities and to see the need for and the justice of programs designed to reduce or eliminate inequality. (p. 223)

Standpoint theory suggests that we develop our standpoints by interacting with others in our social and cultural groups. By communicating with others in our groups we come to a better understanding of our values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and communication practices. Our standpoints determine how we see the world around us,

interact with others, interpret situations, respond to situations, and communicate. Many times Hispanics speak Spanglish when speaking to other Hispanics, which may be considered disrespectful or rude to non-Hispanics. For example, when some families get together they tend to speak more in their dominant language (Spanish), but also use the acquired language (English) in a single sentence. To Hispanics this may seem normal, but many non-Hispanics might consider the integration of Spanish as a way to conceal information from those not in the social group. Although standpoint theory does suggest that certain social groups have a more accurate view of society, it simultaneously does not deny individuality. It implies that the social groups to which we belong influence how we perceive and interact in the world.

#### Hispanics and Organizational Experiences

Historically Hispanics have been victims of discrimination and prejudice and are considered lower in status than Anglos. This status classification of Hispanics clearly explains the undervaluing of the Hispanic culture by other cultural groups in society (Ferdman & Cortes, 1992). Hispanics who work in organizations dominated by Anglos might have fellow Hispanics colleagues, however, they also share certain roles and organizational affiliations with Anglo co-workers. This leads to differences in the way Hispanic employees handle their work roles, how they experience their work environment, their social interaction, and how they experience their culture and ethnicity at work. These behaviors, characterized by their ethnic group, reflect their values, attitudes, and beliefs. Cheney (2000) states, “participation will relate significantly to your perspective on the world, the terms you use to describe it, the stories you like to tell,

and the opportunities you'll have professionally to speak about ideas like networks" (p. 134).

Not only are Hispanics struggling to fit in with the dominant cultural norms that govern behavior within organizations, but they also experience contrasting styles with the Anglo culture. Hispanics continuously have to reevaluate their behavioral roles within the organization and either modify or assimilate to those more acceptable by the dominant culture. Although one might argue that everyone has to assimilate to some extent, I would argue that the process many Hispanics go through is more extreme. Hispanics not only have to make adjustments to traditional American norms (e.g. individualism, monochronic time orientation, low context culture, use of the English language), they must also defy the very norms, beliefs, and values that comprise their culture. In a study conducted by Ferdman and Cortes (1992) one respondent stated, "If a Hispanic manager or even a black manager gets promoted, I think there's a burden on him [sic] to prove himself more than, say someone who's not from a minority group" (p. 266). Another respondent stated, "We are treated as second class citizens...Maybe because of my culture I'm more sensitive to the way they feel. Because I understand what it's like to be treated differently, and be ignored" (p. 266). People from different cultures experience many social issues within the organization that cause an internal tug-of-war between their cultural and workplace norms and expectations. Although this struggle is a difficult adjustment for Hispanics, the goal for Hispanic individuals is to be judged based on their success in the workplace, not on their success in assimilation to the dominant organizational culture. Cheney (2000) asserts:



Still organizational or management communication finds itself in a difficult rhetorical dilemma. Having chosen at least to recognize currents of opinion outside those accorded the status of 'mainstream,' we find that the master narratives of scholarship in this arena are being told by basically the same people: a small group of mostly Euro-American scholars who are closely identified with organizational communication as a descriptor and as an intellectual community. (p. 134)

It is important that individuals are not treated differently or stereotyped, but rather treated as an individual with the potential to succeed. Hartsock (1997) stated:

When we privilege the knowledge of the oppressed or outsiders, we reveal aspects of the social order that previously have not been exposed. Consequently, we might gain information and insights that will help us to describe and theorize about how we construct and maintain social order. Moreover, we can envision and begin to enact more just social practices. (cited in Allen, 1998, p. 577)

Organizational communication research has been normed on a predominantly White, male, Anglo-American population. Recently scholars have developed feminist and African-American perspectives of organizational communication. However, another area of concern with organizational research is the issue of cultural diversity, discussed in the next section.

### Cultural Diversity in Organizations

Understanding culture and cultural diversity are very important. Kumar and Chakravarthi (2009) define culture as "the norms, beliefs, customs, ethics, codes, mores, values, sentiments, behavior and attitudes of individuals in a society." Cultural diversity

is one of the most widely addressed themes in organizational research as well as organizational communication research. Carnevale & Stone (1994) define cultural diversity:

implies differences in people based on their identifications with various groups.

But it is more. Diversity is *a process* of acknowledging differences through action. In organizations, this involves welcoming heterogeneity by developing a variety of initiatives at the management and organizational levels as well as the interpersonal (individual and intergroups) levels. (p. 22, emphasis added)

Cheney (2000) suggests that networks have a strong bearing on who we are and that social segregation can exist in various forms. The networks that are established with colleagues are based on the language we use, symbolic meaning, established routines, myths, and how we interpret situations. Cheney (2000) asserts:

...we have heard various calls to consider how the field has been biased in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and especially U.S. ethnocentrism. Every one of these claims has had traction, although some of them (feminism in particular) have up to this point been explored more vigorously than others. (p. 136)

It is up to us to transform the idea of isolation and seclusion from those who are different from us and make genuine efforts to accommodate humans of all colors and cultural standpoints. We need to recognize and value diversity, and most importantly take a stance in educating organizations about diversity issues. "Taking difference seriously means not only allowing the Other to speak, but also being open to the possibility that the Other's perspective may come to influence or even supplant your own" (Cheney, 2000, p.

140). Basically, research on diversity has a constant emphasis on managing diversity, and managing the process to conform to how dominant cultural groups research, understand, and define the norms and values of the organization. The real challenge and direction for practice should be situating diversity from the lenses and perspectives of the “Other” within organizations and organizing as an artifact of cultural conversations and dialogues.

Understanding cross-cultural dimensions in the organizational setting is of immense importance. There are a number of studies on the international business sector and managing cross cultural communication and international business (Trompenaars & Hamden-Turner, 1998; Gesterland, 1999; Choi & Kelemen, 1995; and Joynt & Warner, 1996). These studies highlight the differences in behaviors and values that can result in problems if not managed effectively through cross cultural communication. Training in cross-cultural communication helps employees and managers alike in better understanding those from different cultures and helps them better related to others.

Kumar and Chakravarthi (2009) suggest that:

Learners, executive or a global manager, one has to come out of one’s cultural paradigm and try to know others and their culture. Today’s managers have to work in cross-cultural teams or virtual teams having members from various countries and backgrounds. Knowledge of cross-cultural communication ensures that one can live in a multilingual, multiethnic and multidisciplinary society (p. 43).

In addition, Hugh Flouch, a practice leader at Career Innovations, a research and workplace innovation company, states:

Managers are often unaware of the negative impact they can have on their employees by not figuring in cross-cultural dimensions. Once the awareness is there, individual managers or organizations can provide themselves with the necessary development. But unless the awareness is there, neither manager nor organization can focus on the development that's required (cited by Hartley, 2009).

Understanding cross cultural communication impacts the effectiveness of communication and determines the social reaction and experience. Effective communication is necessary because it is the ultimate means by which behavior is modified, change is effected, knowledge is acquired and shared and goals are achieved (Howes & Tah, 2003). Given the limited knowledge we have about organizational communication from the Hispanic standpoint and the limitation in cross cultural communication and cultural diversity research that seeks to “manage” cultural differences within organizations, in the next section I discuss Hispanic’s use of technology in their organizational setting.

### Hispanics and Technology

It is no surprise that technology has become a part of everyday life. Technologies affect various aspects of our lives; we use them at work, home, in leisure activities, and to gather information. The use of computer technology is no longer a novelty, but rather has become as common as telephones and television. Most people are riding on the information superhighway, also known as the World Wide Web. It is also not unlikely for Hispanics to have used the Internet, e-mail, telecommuting, teleconferencing, video-conferencing, chat-rooms, Twitter, Facebook, software programs, databases, or

something as simple as cell phones. However, with the integration of all the new technologies, the question is how do Hispanics utilize these different technologies? How much are they relied on? A relevant question to ask is whether Hispanics or the population in general use different forms of technology everyday.

Some believe that many Hispanics are at an economic disadvantage when compared with other groups in the United States and will fall behind in areas of technology. The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau reports that Hispanics were less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have earnings of \$35,000 or more (23 percent compared with 49 percent). However, some technologies may actually be more cost efficient. For example, in many cases cell phones have started replacing people's traditional land lines and allow people to use the cell phone while at home, running errands and also at work while also saving them money too.

According to Felipe Korzenny of Cheskin Research, a market research company with headquarters in Redwood Shores, California, "the number of personal computers in Hispanic homes increased faster than in homes of the general population during the past two years. The divide is closing because Hispanics are extremely determined not to be left behind" (Garcia, 2000, p. 80). Another study by Forrester Research, found that "49 percent of Latino households have computers-the same percentage as the general population" (Garcia, 2000, p. 81). Additionally, in a study by Leonardi (2003), Latinos viewed cell phones as a means by which to maintain interpersonal relations with people both near and far. Consistent with research suggesting that Latinos value consistent, close interpersonal contact...cell phones were beneficial for a variety

of reasons. In times of emergency, distress or simply with the rise of unexpected events, users can maintain contact with friends and loved ones (p. 174).

Research (Roger, 1995; Scott, Quinn, Timmerman, & Garrett, 1998) suggests that technology use is often influenced by social practices...The social influence model of technology use (Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, & Power, 1990; Fulk & Boyd, 1991) proposes that the communicative framework behind media perception accounts for the effect of information on group perceptions and attitudes toward technology, resulting in the adaptation of communication task requirements and communication technology use and behavior (Fulk et al., 1990) (as cited in Leonardi, 2003, p. 162).

Although we utilize a variety of communication technologies to enhance our social constructs, it is also important to note that understanding our cultural communication practices is just as important. Hispanics have embraced technology and allows them to use technology to enhance their communication practices on some of the things they value most like culture, language, personal relationships and family.

Although most of the literature on technology does not address the issue of Hispanics and their use of new communication technologies, we do know that new technologies have transformed how communication happens within the organizational environment. Distancing ourselves from new technologies is becoming more and more difficult. However, as scholars of communication we may believe that technology will dehumanize the workplace environment or we may believe that it speeds up processes, is more cost-efficient, and improves quality. Whatever the case, understanding the

dynamics of communication that occurs through convergent technologies is of immense importance.

### Summary

In this chapter I discussed the increasing influence of minority populations in the U.S. Second, I discussed Hispanic culture, identity and values and how that impacts understanding Hispanics. Further, this chapter introduced the theoretical framework of standpoint theory. The chapter then examined the limitations in organizational communication research as well cultural diversity research, and concluded with research on Hispanics and technology.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The primary goal of this qualitative study is to gain a better understanding of some Hispanics' communication experiences in their corporate organizational setting. Although there is a lot of research on Hispanics related to cultural diversity and organizational experiences, qualitative research studies on Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting are limited. Therefore, this chapter includes detailed information on the data gathering and data analysis methods used to uncover the organizational communication experiences of some Hispanics living in New Mexico.

This chapter starts with a description of the theoretical framework of narrative analysis. The next section describes the data collection process. Thirdly, the chapter then introduces the participants interviewed for the study and how they were selected. The fourth section explains the interview protocol. I conclude with a section describing how the gathered data will be analyzed.

### Research Method

For this study, a qualitative approach was used to uncover Hispanics' experiences and to better understand how they view their organizational environment. Narrative analysis was used as the primary method for this study to help uncover the participants' past, current and future perceptions and viewpoints of their cultural background and their organizational communicative practices.

### *Narrative Analysis*

Our everyday experiences are richly produced through various narratives that we share with friends and family. Fisher (1984) argues that humans are essentially homo narrans or storytellers who implicitly or explicitly make sense of their world through



narrative. People of all cultures produce narratives as a way of making sense of their own lives (Fisher, 1984; Bauman, 1992; Philipsen, 1987). For researchers interested in interpreting human experiences, narratives serve as a solid foundation to understand how we internalize and express our understanding of our various social and cultural environments. Narratives are stories that are particularly well suited as the linguistic form in which human experiences can be expressed (Ricoeur, 1984/1991). “Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5).

The primary goal of my research is to expand our understanding of Hispanics’ standpoint as it relates to their communication practices and experiences in organizations. In order to answer some of the general questions posed, I conducted in-depth interviews and employed narrative analysis to improve the understanding of how Hispanic employees feel about communication in the workplace and communicating in a cultural environment where technologies tend to be privileged over face-to-face interaction. Interviews were chosen as the best source of gathering information based on the seven basic qualitative interviewing objectives pointed out by Lindlof (1995):

- 1) learning about things that cannot be observed directly by other means, 2) understanding the social actor’s perspective, 3) inferring the communicative properties and processes of interpersonal relationships, 4) verifying, validating, or commenting on data obtained from other sources, 5) testing hypotheses the researcher has developed, 6) eliciting distinctive language—vocabularies, idioms,

jargon, forms, of speech—used by social actors in their natural settings, 7)  
achieving efficiency in collecting data. (p. 166)

Gathering the data using interviews enabled the study to uncover the most valuable aspects regarding Hispanics and their communicative experiences within organizations as cultural environments different from the everyday lived experiences.

### Data Collection

This study uses personal face-to-face interviews to gather data for analysis. The interviews were utilized to gain detailed information concerning Hispanics' communication practices, organizational experiences, and their workplace environments. Lindolf (1995) wrote:

Interviews are especially well suited in helping the researcher understand a social actor's own perspective...Expert insight, because they represent a certain status or category, or because of critical events in which they have participated. The researcher expects the special nature of what they have experienced to result in a special articulation: words that can be expressed only by someone who has 'been there'. (p. 167)

The interviewees for this study are active participants in their organizations and, therefore, qualified to speak about their employee and workplace experiences of being Hispanic.

I feel that qualitative research is the most beneficial approach to this type of study because it lends the opportunity to allow individuals to share their personal experiences, making the data rich, based on experiences. McCracken (1988) describes the qualitative methodology as:

a sharply focused, rapid, highly intensive interview process that seeks to diminish the indeterminacy and redundancy that attends more unstructured research processes...[it] departs from participant observation insofar as it is intended to accomplish certain ethnographic objectives without committing the investigator to intimate, repeated, and prolonged involvement in the life and community of the respondent. It departs from group methods of qualitative research insofar as it is conducted between the investigator and a single respondent. It departs from the 'depth' interview...in so far as it is concerned with cultural categories and shared meanings rather than individual affective states. (p. 7)

The qualitative approach best suits this study because statistical data would not lend itself to the richness of personal narratives that each of the interviewees possess. According to Lindlof (1995):

At its best, the qualitative interview creates an event in which one person (the interviewer) encourages another person to articulate interests or experiences freely. The interview's ability to access experiential or subjective realities has made it a preeminent method in communication and the other social sciences. (p. 163-164)

The information generated will help establish a general understanding of the influence of Hispanic culture, values, beliefs, language and traditions in organizations, specifically on their communicative experiences in the organizational setting. The information collected may not be representative of all Hispanics, but offers a new perspective lacking in current research.

## Participants

For the present study 12 individuals were interviewed, all identifying themselves as Hispanic. These individuals reside and work in large corporate organizations in New Mexico in industries such as utilities, healthcare, government and banking to name a few. They range in age from 27-52, there were 4 males and 8 females and their years of service with the organizations range from one year to 30 years. Some of the positions held by the participants were recruiter, human resources manager, firefighter, assistant vice president, independent contractor and events director just to name a few. The names and organizations of the participants in this study have been concealed for purposes of confidentiality. Anonymity was ensured to all participants. The participants for this study were gathered through purposeful or judgmental sampling and snowball sampling. Maxwell (1996) defined purposeful sampling as a “strategy in which particular settings, person, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 70). Babbie (1998) further explains that purposeful or judgmental samplings are often used when studying a smaller subset of a larger population, but the enumeration of all the community would be impossible. Although many of the interviewees were strangers, their selection was based on Hispanic ethnicity and if they held a professional position in the corporate organizational setting. Snowball sampling was also used to generate further Hispanic employee contacts. Snowballing is the “process of accumulation as each located subjects suggests other subjects” (Babbie, 1998, p. 196).

## Interview Protocol

Interviews were conducted with 12 employees working for large corporate organizations located in New Mexico. Each of these interviews was analyzed to gain a more thorough understanding about the communicative practices and experiences of Hispanic employees as a way to enhance the understanding organizations have about Hispanics.

In each of these interview sessions I begin by establishing rapport and trying to make the interview participant feel comfortable. I began each interview session by introducing myself and telling them a little about my research interests. I then briefed them on my current research project and explained that they were not obligated to participate. I also explained that at any point throughout the course of the interview session, if they wanted to stop or felt uncomfortable we could conclude the interview. I also verified the amount of time they set aside for the interview, to ensure I did not overstay my welcome. I also asked if a follow-up interview would be possible, if needed.

As each of the interview sessions began I asked if it was acceptable to tape record the session and I also informed them that I would be taking brief notes throughout the course of the interview. Lindolf (1995) states, "An audiotape recorder enables the researcher to obtain a verbatim record of the verbal features of the interview. It also frees up the researcher to participate more fully in the conversations than if he or she were trying to write it all down" (p. 193). Each of the interviews were tape recorded, to allow the researcher to review the material discussed and accurately transcribe interview sessions. I tried to ensure that the participants were aware that I was actively listening; this was accomplished by using many nonverbal cues to reinforce what they were saying.

After each interview I transcribed the content discussed and later reviewed the interview session data.

I started by asking them some informational questions about their position within the organization and how long they had been working there. I followed up by posing some general open-ended questions and probing questions along the way. I went into each interview session with a list of questions, to ensure that all respondents are answering some of the same primary questions (Appendix B). A semi-structured interview was used to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their personal experiences. McCracken (1988) believes that it is important to allow the interviewee to tell their own story on their own terms. During the process I will look for many of things that McCracken (1988) suggests, “the interviewer must also listen for many other things, including impression management, topic avoidance, deliberate distortion, minor misunderstanding, and outright incomprehension, taking, in each case the necessary remedy to deal with the problem” (p. 39). The semi-structured interviews allowed for participants to openly share their viewpoints and freely share their personal experiences. This allowed the interviews to be more conversational, rather than formal. Using the basic interview questions to guide the interview is referred to as the “instrument of choice for most qualitative interviewers” (Lindlof, 1995, p. 185). Each interview was scheduled to last an hour in length and location of the interview session varied based on each participant’s preference.

### Data Analysis

The goal of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). Therefore, the

interviews for this study were analyzed using narrative analysis. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that if you choose knowledgeable participants to interview, the questions will provide examples, narratives, and stories. Narrative analysis relates experiences, events, and actions to one another by connecting them to an explanation or thematic plot. Themes were established if it was mentioned at least six times during the course of the interview process. Rubin and Rubin (1995) note, “Sometimes, themes just jump out at you because they are repeated both within and between interviews” (p. 185). Examining the themes that emerged allowed me to understand the general underlining perspectives of Hispanic communicative practices in their organizational setting.

#### Summary

In this chapter I have presented the framework of narrative analysis and described the rationale for choosing in-depth interviews as the mode of data collection. Next, I gave a brief description of how participants were chosen for this study. In the subsequent section the interview protocol that was followed was presented, followed by a description of how the data was analyzed.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The goal of the current study is to better understand the communication experiences of the Hispanics interviewed. The analysis of the twelve interviews that I conducted with Hispanic professionals in New Mexico provides insight on Hispanics' communication experiences, and also on how they view their organizational environment.

The findings of this thesis will be organized by each of the three research questions. RQ1: What are the organizational communication experiences of Hispanics? RQ2: How do Hispanics view their organizational environment? RQ3: How do Hispanics utilize technology in the organizational setting? After examining the data (Appendix C) gathered from interviews, core phrases or patterns were apparent and became the themes of the findings. As shown in Table 1, the six themes identified to support the research questions were: 1) influence of the Spanish language, 2) cultural values influence on how Hispanics approach work, 3) opportunities for Hispanics in the workplace, 4) Hispanics' satisfaction and engagement at work, 5) Hispanics' technology preferences and 6) Hispanics' preference for face-to-face interactions.

Table 1: Interview Themes

Theme #	Theme Topic	# of Mentions in Interviews
1	Influence of the Spanish language	26
2	Cultural values influence on how Hispanics approach work	22
3	Opportunities for Hispanics in the workplace	7
4	Hispanics' satisfaction and engagement at work	6
5	Hispanics' technology preference	9
6	Hispanics' preference for face-to-face interactions	7



After examining the data gathered from interviews, two themes that were identified to answer RQ1 were the influence of the Spanish language and how cultural values influence how Hispanics approach their work. RQ2 identified two themes to support how Hispanics view their organizational environment; one was the opportunity for Hispanics in the workplace and Hispanics' satisfaction and engagement at work. The final two themes identified were Hispanics' technology preferences and their preference for face-to-face interactions to answer RQ3. In the following section, each of the research questions will be listed followed by the themes identified. Selections from the interviews will be provided to support each of the research questions and themes.

#### Hispanics' Organizational Communication Experiences

The first research question of this thesis is: What are the organizational communication experiences of Hispanics? In the analysis of the data, I identified two themes to answer RQ1: 1) influence of the Spanish language and 2) cultural values influence on how Hispanics approach work. Each of the themes will be explained in detail and supported by excerpts from the data.

##### *The Influence of the Spanish Language*

The first theme I uncovered from my study was the role the Spanish language played in the individuals' upbringing and how they use it in their work environment. There were two different categories under this theme that emerged related to the role the Spanish language plays in their lives. The first category identified included those who learned Spanish as children and the second category included those who were not taught Spanish as children even though their parents were Spanish speakers.

### *Hispanics Learning Spanish as Children*

The first group interviewed was those who grew up speaking Spanish as their primary language and struggled to learn the English language when they started school. Most of their parents spoke Spanish and very little English; therefore, when they entered school, they were behind because of the language barrier. Some of them not only struggled with starting school, but starting school in an English-only environment. They didn't understand what their teachers or fellow classmates were saying; therefore, some of them fell behind in school and had to work hard to overcome the language barrier. In addition to this struggle, they had to constantly make the transition from their English school environment to their home Spanish environment. As children, this was difficult for some of them, participant K stated:

I spoke Spanish as a child and wasn't introduced to English until I entered first grade. In first grade, Sister Carmen, my teacher, use to yell at me all day and I didn't understand a word she was saying, so I thought she was always upset with me. Later, I realized that she was trying to teach me English. She would work with me everyday, for I can't remember how long after school so I could learn the language and learn to read. That's how I learned English. You know, my parents primarily speak Spanish. It was a real struggle for me when I first started school.

Participant D also grew up speaking Spanish and shared her perspective on what she experienced and how she feels about it today:

It was a different time back then. In my parent's generation, it was very important for Chicanas to pass along not only our cultural values and traditions, but also our language. My parents worked very hard to preserve who we were

and focused less on what the outside world thought about us. To them family and culture are everything. Although the transition was difficult for me, I wouldn't change a thing. I think it's kind of unfortunate these days that so many of us are expected to fit into mainstream culture and have lost sight of some of things that we (Chicanos) value most – culture, tradition, family and our language.

Although participants K and D struggled in school because they only knew Spanish when entering school, they also appreciated the Spanish language. Participant L had a slightly different perspective:

My parents knew the English language, but chose to raise my sisters and brothers to speak only Spanish because they thought that language would be better suited for our career paths and us as adults. In their mind, they knew the traditional jobs that Hispanics held and saw less of a need for us to speak English. I personally struggled in school because I was always confused. I know my parents made the best decision they could at the time and only wanted the best for us, but I always struggled on why they thought we didn't deserve better and couldn't get one of the non-traditional Hispanic jobs. Being so strong-willed, this really pushed me to strive for the "unreachable." I knew from an early age that I wanted a professional job with a strong organization. I've never looked back. My cultural traditions are still very important to me and are apparent in every aspect of my life, but I'm very proud to have a good job and show others that Hispanics bring a lot of value to the workplace. Although early on in my life, I struggled because of language, today I value my ability to communicate in both languages.

Although they learned English for the first time when they entered school, participants K, D, and L were able to pick up the language primarily from their elementary school environment. Interestingly, as adults the participants understand their parents' reasoning for choosing to teach them Spanish as children and not introduce the English language. Although the transition was difficult for them, the experience has served to be a valuable insight in how they've chosen to approach their life and career.

### *Hispanics Learning English as Children*

The second half of those I interviewed were never taught Spanish because their parents had negative experiences with the language as children. Numerous participants shared examples of how their parents were punished for speaking Spanish in public and in school. Therefore, many of the participants were never taught Spanish because their parents didn't want them to have to go through the same things they had to go through as children. Participant B shared:

My father told us that when he was growing up he was force-fed English. There was no Spanish speaking. You were forced to learn the English language and were punished for speaking Spanish. They never taught you Spanish and they made you feel bad for the speaking the language. Also, my father and uncles were in the military and they experienced a lot of racism toward Spaniards outside of New Mexico. So he didn't want us to have to go through what they went through because of their Spanish accents. So none of his nine siblings taught their children Spanish and today we are still unable to speak the language and only understand the language. None of my cousins know Spanish either due to the

time they grew up in. Now my dad wishes everyday he would have taught us Spanish and regrets his decision.

Participant E's parents also had some negative experiences as children and chose not to bring their children up speaking Spanish, but rather taught them English in hopes that their children would not have the same experiences. Participant E stated:

You know I've asked my parents many times why they didn't teach us kids Spanish as children. Both of my parents were discriminated against and teased for speaking Spanish in school. You know when you're way behind in the English language; you fall behind in everything especially in English class. The teacher assumed they understood more than they did so eventually my parents became more and more afraid to speak in class. And when they were forced to talk in class the other kids made fun of them because of their accents and their inability to communicate very well. I think it was such a negative experience for them that they didn't want us kids to have to go through that. Given their experience, I completely support the decision they made for us; however, times have changed and I believe there is real value in teaching my children both languages as they grow up. Living in a state like ours, the ability to speak Spanish is so critical.

Participant H had a similar experience. She shared:

It was interesting because growing up my dad refused to speak Spanish in the home and his reasoning was because he felt his children needed to know English or the only way that we would get ahead is if we would master the English language. My dad and mom had negative experiences as children so they did not

speak Spanish to us. So we actually learned Spanish from our grandparents or in school, but my parents did not speak Spanish to us at all. So in that regard we are not traditional because we speak English.

Regardless of which category the interview participant falls into, their culture and everyday lived experiences have in some way shaped and influenced who they are today, the value they place on the Spanish language, and how they integrate it into their current personal and organizational experiences. The influence of the Spanish language is dependent on the individual and how they have chosen to integrate their childhood experiences, family experiences and cultural values. By utilizing their Spanish speaking skills they are able to integrate a little of their culture into their interactions at work and it also allows them the opportunity to help those who are unable to speak English and truly make a difference for those individuals. Although language has influenced who they are today, whether they learned Spanish at a young age, later as an adult or not at all does appear to impact the jobs they have, their roles, perceptions and communication experience in the organizational setting.

#### *Cultural Values Influence How Hispanics Approach Work*

The second theme that was uncovered was how Hispanics cultural values influence how Hispanics approach their work in the organizational setting. This was by far the most prominent theme in my findings. Of the Hispanics I interviewed, 100 percent of them believe that their cultural values play a vital role in how they do the work and how they interact with co-workers and their customers. The degree to which their values come into play varies by individual, but overall the interview participants felt

strongly that their values have helped shape their professional persona. Participant F shared:

From a working perspective, some of my cultural principles that influence me at work are the importance of family, flexibility, empathy, respect and being people oriented. All of these things affect how I approach a particular situation or an individual. Although some of the things may just be how I was brought up, I really do think they have a lot to do with the things my family and we (Hispanics) value.

Many of those interviewed talked about the importance of family, not just immediate family, but extended family, the desire to have a “family like” work environment and the fact that many of them treat customers like family. Family is very important to Hispanics and to many of them their job is just a means to help the family.

Participant B disclosed:

My family worked hard and there was wasn't a lot of educational opportunities for those in my family. So how they made a living was by having land, working hard and doing whatever it took to feed the family. In my job, I try to take care of families by providing services that help and protect them. I'm able to make a connection with my clients because I know how important family is. In the Hispanic community and in the family I grew up in, family is everything.

Participant L had similar thoughts on family and work:

The most important part of my culture that influences my work is mi familia (my family). They are the reason I do what I do. Working not only allows me to provide another source of income for those I love, but helps my children

understand the valuable contribution I'm able to make in the workplace. Another huge bonus is that I'm able to help other families in my job and that really means a lot to me. *Me familia es me vida* (My family is my life).

Many Hispanics also value hard work and sacrifice. Work ethic is a significant part of the Hispanic upbringing as many are expected to help the family at a very young age. As children they observe and are taught the importance of hard work. Participant D explained it by saying:

I feel one of my cultural values that I share with those like me is work ethic and taking responsibility for things. I try to do that at work and be accountable. In my position, my motivation is to help people be healthy. It sounds cheesy, but I love our state and I don't want to live anywhere else. I'm not very individualistic. I'm not about getting all the credit, trying to get ahead or make myself look good. I prefer to work with a team and share the glory and recognition together.

Participant C also shared:

The cultural values that I hold with me are respect and working hard for your achievements. I was taught the value of working hard for what you are given or what you have. I put no blame on those who inherit their family's wealth, but those who flaunt their wealth without having worked to achieve their fortune, don't understand the meaning of a hard day's work. By no means am I wealthy and will probably never be, but I can say I am where I am because I worked hard for what I have at this point in my life. Growing up I was taught, that you are to respect others in the same manner that you would expect them to respect you. However, in the same manner, respect is earned not given. I was taught never to



disrespect someone, but to stand up for myself and not let myself get disrespected.

Others are to be treated as equals, no matter who they are or what their background.

As was shared by participant C above, respect is another important Hispanic quality and value that was expressed by the interview participants. Participant J expressed what respect means to her:

My family has always taught me to treat everyone the same regardless of their role in society or the company. I refuse to honor the president of the U.S. more than I honor a housekeeper. People here tend to treat people in higher positions better than those in lower positions and in my opinion we are all equal and we all deserve respect. Personally, I think I bring a lot of value to the organization sometimes more than those in higher positions. I show respect to others not only in how I treat them, but also in how I do my work, how I present myself and being proud of my many contributions. I think respect is one of those terms that we think everyone interprets the same way, but I disagree. For Hispanics, respect is how you see yourself and secondly, how you treat others.

Cultural values appear to be an important distinguisher in how Hispanics in this study approach their work, how they interact with others and how they see themselves. Our cultural standpoints determine how we see the world around us, interact with others, interpret situations, respond to situations and communicate. Hispanic cultural values strongly influence both their personal and professional lives.

## Hispanics' Organizational Environment

The second research question of this thesis is: How do Hispanics view their organizational environment? In the analysis of the data, I identified two themes to support RQ2: 1) opportunities for Hispanics in the workplace and 2) Hispanics' satisfaction and engagement at work. Each of the themes will be explained in detail and supported by excerpts from the data.

### *Opportunities for Hispanics in the Workplace*

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was how Hispanics perceive their opportunities within the organization. The majority of those interviewed were primarily focused on the opportunities in the workplace that have been given to them over the years versus the percentage of Hispanics in upper management positions in their organization. The majority of those interviewed believe that they had every opportunity to advance their career if they were willing to work hard, were determined and had the skills to succeed. They did not seem to be concerned with the low number of Hispanics in upper management positions. Participant G shared the following:

I love what I do in my job today. I don't really have a desire to have a higher position within the organization. I think most Hispanics work to make a living, not live to work. Unfortunately, upper management positions come with more responsibilities and work hours and that is just not something I'm interested in. I want to come to work and enjoy what I do, but at the end of the day I want to be able to disconnect and enjoy time with my family. I think there are not as many Hispanics in upper management not because they are not qualified, but because they share the same values as I do.

Participants A and C agreed that Hispanics' desire for opportunities are up to each individual and have little to do with ethnicity. Participant A stated:

Every person has the same opportunity to advance in the company so long as they have the skill and determination to do so. I do not feel or see that a person's ethnicity plays any role in their opportunity to advance in the company.

Participant C stated:

All the advancement and training/learning opportunities are provided to anybody who is willing to put forth the time and effort. One does not have to be the smartest person, they just have to want and work for everything. Overall the opportunities are there for Hispanics and the opportunities are provided when the person is ready to work hard to accomplish their goals or pursue new career opportunities.

Participant H shared her experience and thoughts on why some Hispanics may not advance in organizations like many of their non-Hispanic counterparts:

In my personal experience, out of 13 grandchildren, I was the first to go college and my brother and my sister both graduated from college in the last few years but there are still only three of us out 13 grandchildren. Secondly, a lot of the Hispanic folks who have gone to college and work here started with the company right out of school. Although education is something that's valued in this organization, so is experience. If they don't have other work experiences and are not willing to move to other parts of the country for positions because of their family connection, then it's harder to move into management positions. I know when we disbanded the payroll office, there was a really high percentage of

Hispanic women who were not the primary bread winners in their family, so when the company offered them an incentive to move to another location, most of them turned it down. Whereas folks who were non-Hispanic who have had more work experience, didn't mind moving if it meant it was save their current job or provide them with opportunity to advance. I think many Hispanics are reluctant to move their family, so they're willing to give up a better job or an opportunity for a different position, so they can stay closer to home and their family.

Those interviewed seemed to measure opportunities for Hispanics differently than what you traditionally see in the literature. From the participant's perspective, success and opportunities for Hispanics are in the eyes of the beholder. Like everyone else, Hispanics who choose to apply for advanced positions have a greater chance of achieving their goals as long as they are willing to work hard. Because of the values Hispanics' place on the family, some of the participants felt like many Hispanics choose positions below upper management so that work does not interfere with the quality of family time they look forward to everyday.

#### *Hispanics' Satisfaction and Engagement at Work*

The fourth theme that emerged in this study is Hispanics' level of work satisfaction and engagement. According to studies by Lankau and Scandura (1996) and McNeely (1989), Hispanic employees experience higher overall satisfaction compared to the Anglo minority. In the current study, a majority of the participants interviewed seemed to have a high level of both satisfaction and engagement in their current work positions. The primary factors that seem to influence how those interviewed feel about their current positions are relationships with their coworkers, opportunity to help others,

opportunity to develop and move around in the organization and the overall corporate environment.

Of those interviewed, some of the participants shared that working in a job that allows people the opportunity to help others, truly makes them feel like they are doing meaningful work and making a difference. Participants J and C shared some of examples of how something as simple as having the ability to communicate with people in their native language makes them feel better. Participant J shared:

In the position that I currently hold, I am able to help employees whose English language is very limited or cannot speak the language. I interpret at our employee meetings, at training classes or have when employees have issues and want to talk with Human Resources. They know that they can come to me and I will share their information/question with the right person. So I just help facilitate the communication between them and the organization. I feel that they identify with me; and if they have concerns, they can come to me and I will help them. It's not they don't trust that others will help them, it is just that they can ask me in their language and I can respond to them in their language, which is more comfortable for them. Knowing I can play this very important role for both the employee and the organization is extremely satisfying.

Participant C shared:

There is a feeling of satisfaction you get when you are able to communicate with someone who cannot speak English and all their needs are met and any problems they had are treated and the situation turns out good. At the end of the day, it feels good knowing you've made a difference or helped at least one person.

Participant L shared her level of satisfaction when she said:

Working for this organization is great. There are a lot of opportunities, people are treated well, we are well informed on what's happening in the company and most importantly I love what I do. Being Hispanic, in my opinion is a huge advantage because I'm able to connect with my customers (who are also Hispanic) and I have the opportunity to make meaningful connections everyday.

Both participants F and G shared similar experiences. Both were able to grow their careers at their organization, value the people they work with and believe the organization's values are in the right place. Participant F shared:

I've kind of grown my career here so I started in an entry level role and have moved into different positions over the last 10 years, so I think I've never been treated differently because of my age or race. By the time I had a few years in, I understood the organization, learned about my job so when I worked with leadership I knew more and was more respected. I truly enjoy the work I do, believe in the work of the organization and overall feel like this is a great place to work.

Participant G also shared:

I've grown up here and served in many different roles. I think how I function in my job would be very different if I just entered the organization today. I've grown my career here and in the process I've learned a lot about people, the organization, the changing environment and working with different generations. I have a strong appreciation for the mix of employees that we have and the value each of them bring not only to their individual jobs, but also to the organization.

No matter how big or small their role may seem it serves a purpose and others could not do their jobs without it. An organization is a team; there is no one person that makes an organization what it is. Teamwork is key. Also, I couldn't work here if I wasn't respected, didn't respect those I worked with or didn't believe in the values of the organization. Working here is fulfilling both professionally and personally.

Overall, a majority of the participants interviewed were satisfied with their jobs and appeared to have a high level of engagement. Although none of the participants held executive level positions, they were happy with their current position and the organization they worked for. Given the many cultural values that are inherent to Hispanics like the value of close relationships, respect, hard work and loyalty, it is not surprising to find a high level of both satisfaction and engagement of Hispanics in the organizational setting.

#### Technology Use by Hispanics in the Organizational Setting

The third research question of this thesis is: How do Hispanics utilize technology in the organizational setting? When analyzing the data, the fifth theme that emerged was technology preferences of Hispanics. The sixth theme that was identified was Hispanics' preference for face-to-face communication even in the current corporate environment surrounded by technology options.

#### *Technology Preferences*

We are living in the digital age where technologies are heavily relied on in both the organizational setting as well as for personal use. In today's society it is not uncommon for people to own personal computers, iPods, blackberries, cell phones and

more as well as heavily rely on tools like the Internet, social media, email, and text messaging. Participant H shared how she uses technology both at work and at home:

Growing up we used the phone, television, electronic games, but now I have three computers just myself, fax machine, cell phone, pager, palm pilot and voicemail that I rely on daily. I never had an answering machine until I went to college, but now it's like everything out there deals with technology. 90% with my job and what I do is on the phone or e-mail. I work from home three days a week because I have back-to-back phone meetings. I don't work with a lot of people that are on site here at our department mostly with people outside the department. Last year when we had more than fourteen acquisitions, I was on the phone or e-mail for at least six hours a day. I very rarely have face-to-face meetings, but I think that has a lot to do with where I work.

Participant L stated:

I love technology. I'm not sure what I would do without it. At work it makes my day more efficient and at home it's more convenient. Some of my favorites are blogging, the Web, email, texting, podcasts and tivo. I can be anywhere and use my iPhone to look something up, get directions, contact a friend and reply to work emails.

Some of the technology preferences identified by those interviewed were email, Internet and telephone. Although there are others that they use, these three technologies tend to be the ones they heavily rely on both inside and outside of the working environment. Each of these technologies give them access and the ability to transmit information quickly as shared by participant L, "email provides me with the opportunity



to communicate with others sitting down the hall or with those working in another location, ask and answer questions, and submit reports instantaneously.”

*Preference for Face-to-Face Communication*

Working in a professional setting today requires the use of technology and employees are expected to use it and rely on it to get their job done, but when given a communication choice most of the participants prefer not to use technology. Although research suggests that Hispanics make less money than non-Hispanics, the research also shares that Hispanics are purchasing and relying on technology like other ethnic groups. Participant H relies on a variety of technologies both at work and at home, but she shared, “Although, I love the techy stuff, in many situations I prefer the opportunity to have more personal connections.”

Participant D also relies on technology in her job, but more than for convenience she uses it for different reasons in her job:

I like email because people don't hear the sound of my voice or comment on how I pronounce certain words. In an email they can just read it. I'm not a warm and fuzzy person, so I feel less comfortable with face-to-face communications at work. If I'm dealing with people I know really well or with people outside of work then I prefer to have the more personal interactions.

Although most of the participants use technology in their jobs, a number of the participants, when given the choice, preferred face-to-face interactions and having the opportunity to make personal connections. Participant J shared:

I prefer face-to-face because I enjoy people. I like talking to people, getting to know them, and reading their body language. I do use email, but mostly because of the size of the organization and different locations that we have.

Participants F and I prefer face-to-face communication because with e-mail the opportunity for miscommunication is high. Participant F stated:

I know text messaging is in, but I'd rather call people on the phone. I'd rather call and talk with someone than use e-mail or sending a text message. I see it as kind of rude, because it seems like you don't want to talk with the person. It does take more time to call because you have to say how are you, how are you doing, what's going on, but calling is more personal. I usually won't text someone back, I will generally call them back.

Participant I also expressed:

My preference is face-to-face. I just think you get so much more accomplished. Clearly, email can save you time, but my preference is face-to face because you can see their reactions, see their feedback and it is just more personal. Whereas with voicemail or email, you have to be more careful in how you structure your message, what words you use and the tone can be interpreted in many ways (intended or not). The reality is that e-mail is a large part of how we do work and can be effective, but when given the opportunity to choose, I'd always choose the personal connection. Obviously, there is not enough time to do this every single time so I do rely on e-mail greatly to accomplish my work. I also think face-to-face is my preference given my more than 30 years in the workforce, you know email didn't come around till much later in my career.

Although everyone interviewed highly relies on technology both inside and outside of work, there is a strong preference for face-to-face communication and the opportunity to build relationships. Technology is the way of the future and Hispanics are aware that using technology is necessary in the work environment, but they tend to hold on to what they feel comfortable with and the cultural preferences they learned at a very young age. Technology will continue to play a large role in our mainstream culture and Hispanics will continue to be large consumers of technology both in their personal and professional lives.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have presented each of the three research questions that have guided the current study of understanding Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting. The research questions were presented at the beginning of each section and answered by the six themes that were identified in the data analysis process. Analysis of the thematic patterns were used to examine the interview transcriptions and help aid understanding of Hispanics' perceptions of their organizational environment and communication experiences. In the next chapter, a discussion of the key findings will be provided, followed by suggestions for future research and a brief conclusion.

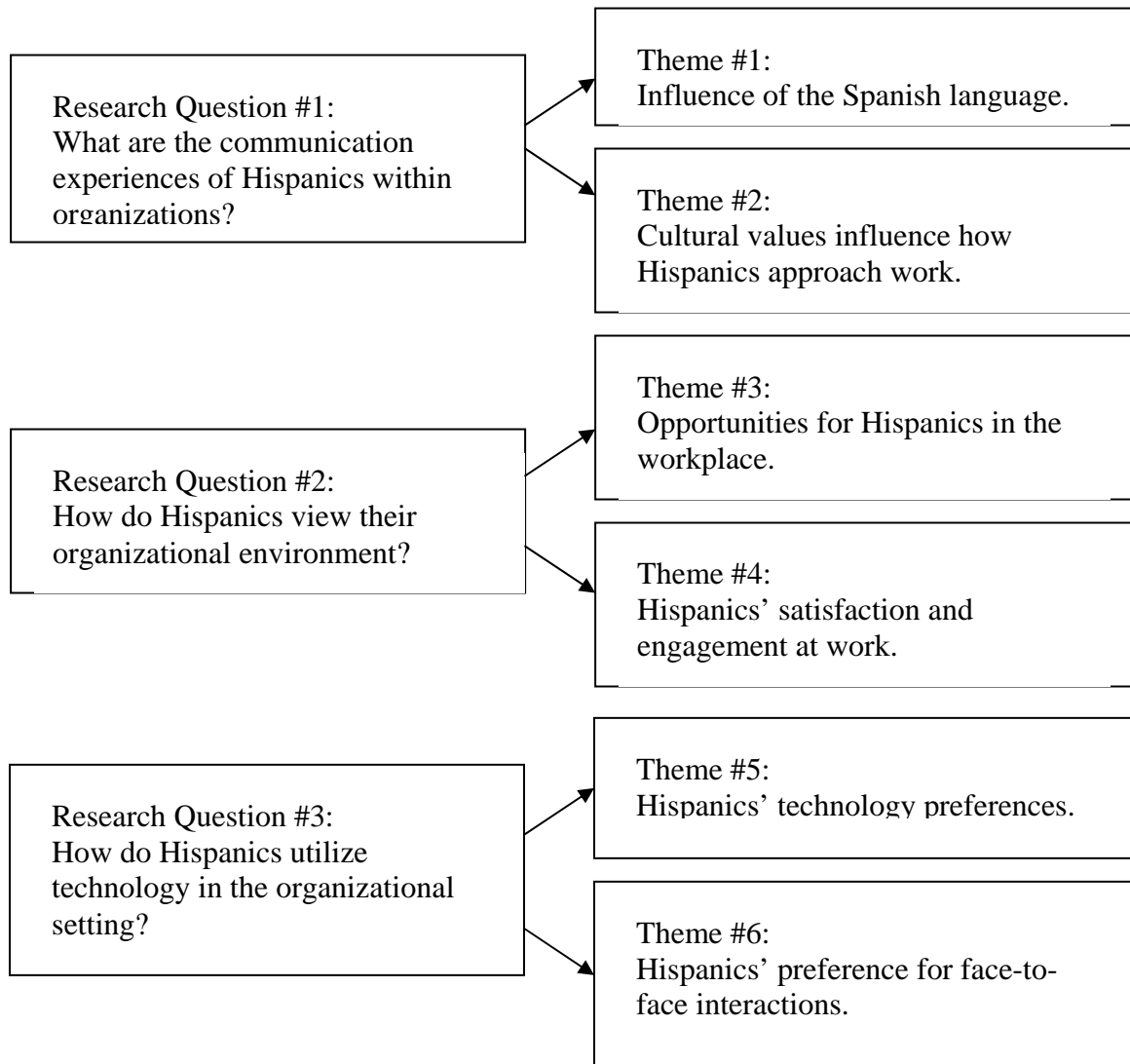
## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The current study examined the communication practices and experiences of Hispanics living in New Mexico and working in the corporate organizational setting. Through their personal narratives, I have learned how their upbringing, background and cultural identity have shaped how they interact with others in their work environment. In this chapter, I will summarize the key findings, explain some of the implications of the key findings, discuss the limitations on the study and offer suggestions for future research.

### Summary of Key Findings

The data was gathered through a face-to-face interview process to help answer the three research questions posed in chapter one. Using narrative analysis to understand how those interviewed internalize and express understanding of various social and cultural attributes in the organizational setting, I analyzed the interview transcriptions and uncovered six themes to help address each of the three research questions posed. Figure 1 shows the three research questions for the current study and the themes identified to support each question.

Figure 1: Research Questions and Themes Identified



### *Research Question #1: Hispanics' Organizational Communication Experiences*

The first question of this study was, "What are the communication experiences of Hispanics within organizations?" The themes that emerged to help answer this question were the influence of the Spanish language and the role that cultural values play in how Hispanics approach their work.

#### *The Influence of the Spanish Language*

The Spanish language not only significantly influences how Hispanics approach work, but also how they approach life in general. The parents of those interviewed were very different and made purposeful decisions on whether or not to teach their children Spanish. The findings do not indicate that if they learned Spanish then they interpret or approach life in a specific way, but rather suggest that there is a connection with language and a reason their parents chose to teach them Spanish as children. Although the findings do not specifically mention how frequently, in what circumstances, or if the interview participants get paid additional money for the ability to speak the language, from the comments we can conclude that language is in fact very important to many of those interviewed for the current study.

Some of the participants interviewed grew up speaking Spanish and their parents chose to teach them the language because it was their parent's primary language, it was important for their parents to pass along their cultural values and traditions including language and they thought the language was better suited for their potential career paths. Most of those interviewed who grew up speaking Spanish struggled when they first started school because they did not know English. The participants primarily learned English at school and learned to transition between Spanish and English both inside and

outside of their home. Of those who were taught English as children, their parents made that decision because they had negative experiences speaking Spanish as children, they struggled in school and felt like they were always behind and they believed that the best way to get ahead in school and life was to learn the English language. The influence of language is very strong and has shaped the participants' communication experiences and their professional approach in the organizational setting.

#### *Cultural Values Influence How Hispanics Approach Work*

The cultural values that Hispanics' were taught and use today help shape their communication experiences because these principles influence how they interact with others and how important work is as part of their life. Our social groups that we interact with daily strongly influence what we experience, how we communicate and how we those around us. Some of the values that participants mentioned were the importance of family, flexibility, empathy, respect, working hard and responsibility. Each of these directly affects how they interact with others in the work setting. For some of those interviewed, their culture and their family are the reason they do what they do. They have the opportunity to do meaningful work, make difference in someone's life, while simultaneously holding on to the values they treasure most. As Hispanic employees they also teach their children and family a number of lessons and values in the process.

Family is of utmost importance to Hispanics and many feel that it is important for their job to be one that allows adequate time with the family. Respect is also very important to Hispanics. Hispanics not only believe in treating others with respect, earning respect but also respecting oneself. Of those interviewed, cultural values seem to be the bond that molds their approach to both their personal and professional lives. These

values influence their perceptions, determine how they interact with others, and represent who they are and what they believe in. The cultural values shared through the personal narratives of Hispanics' greatly influence the communication experiences of those in the organizational setting.

### *Research Question #2: Hispanics Organizational Environment*

The second question was "How do Hispanics view their organizational environment?" The themes that surfaced to answer this question were the opportunities available for Hispanics in the workplace and their level of satisfaction and engagement. These themes seem to be interconnected. Of those interviewed, many were satisfied with their current jobs, fully engaged and less interested in advancing to upper management positions.

### *Hispanics' Advancement Interests and Work Satisfaction*

Of those interviewed, most seem to be highly satisfied in their current jobs. Some of those interviewed talked about the opportunities given to them by the organization by allowing them to grow their career and having the opportunity to interact with fellow employees at all levels of the organization. Participants also discussed the importance of being respected in their job and respecting others, regardless of their roles within the organization. Most of those interviewed also shared their opportunity to make difference by simply helping someone overcome a language barrier or saving someone's life. It was also very important for the Hispanics interviewed to believe in values and purpose of organization and just enjoy the work they do everyday.

Based on the information provided during the interview process, there seems to be a connection between Hispanics' interest in advancing and their level of satisfaction in



their jobs. The participants in this study did not express a strong desire to hold positions in upper management and were less interested in working toward advancement. As was shared by one interview participant, they really didn't have a desire to have a position in upper management because it would likely require longer work hours which would mean less time with family, which is not something they are interested in pursuing.

Of those who participated in this study, their feelings were relatively consistent. They liked their current position and had little desire to move into upper management positions. However, most of them were highly satisfied with their current positions and felt like they were making valuable contributions to both the organization and those with whom they were working. This view of Hispanics organizational environment is important because many of those interviewed self-selected out of upper management positions that tend to attract many people in mainstream culture. From the standpoint of Hispanic participants, success and opportunities for Hispanics' are in the eyes of the beholder.

*Research Question #3: Technology Use by Hispanics in the Organizational Setting*

The third research question posed was, "How do Hispanics utilize technology in the organizational setting?" The two themes that emerged were Hispanics' technology preferences and their preference for face-to-face interactions over technology. For many of the Hispanics interviewed, although they highlighted certain technologies they rely on daily they still had a strong desire to maintain the personal relationships that are developed through face-to-face interactions.

### *Hispanics' Technology Preferences*

As a society, we are surrounded by technology and have to rely on it more and more to accomplish numerous tasks throughout our day. When the participants were asked which technologies they preferred, they stated email, the Internet, and telephones. Although those were the types of technology mentioned most frequently, many participants also rely on the web, telephone voicemail, social media and their cell phones to get work done. Technology has become a way of life and Hispanics like mainstream culture rely on technology daily both at work and at home. Technology allows the participants to have information at their fingertips to look up information for work, for leisure or for entertainment. Technology is both efficient and convenient.

As shared in chapter three, Hispanics tend to make less money than non-Hispanics, but technology has allowed them to keep up with the fast-paced technological world. Many technologies are very cost efficient and have multiple uses. Through technology they are able work efficiently and to stay connected to work, their friends and family.

### *Preference for Face-to-Face Interactions*

Although the participants use technology daily, they still prefer the opportunity to make connections with people in person. Technology is of immense importance in the organizational environment due to people's reliance on it to expedite transactions and processes, the size of companies, number of employees, multiple physical locations of employees and the ability to interact and serve customers quickly. Technology, however, appears to be just one tool in the communication toolbox for Hispanics.

Through this study, I was hoping to learn more about how Hispanics use technology, why they choose certain technologies over others and better understand how much they rely on technology. Instead, when I asked the question on their technology preference, many stated face-to-face communication which is closely tied to Hispanics' cultural values. Many of the participants expressed a preference for face-to-face communication because it provides the opportunity have more personal connections by getting to know people, reading their body language and allows them to build relationships.

It appears that technology has not dehumanized the workplace environment, but rather given Hispanics an opportunity to work more efficiently, created the ability to do more work in less time and improved the time it take to process information. Hispanics in this study have embraced technology and use it when it is appropriate, but still fall back on some of the values they hold and take every opportunity to make personal connections with fellow co-workers and customers alike.

Overall, the findings of the current study will help aid our understanding on Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting. The Hispanic communication paradigm in the workplace environment can be both complex and simple depending on your understanding and knowledge of the Hispanic population. Kikoski and Kikoski (1996) suggest that the term Hispanic encompasses many different types of individuals, who "share a common language and cultural heritage, come from distinctly different national and ethnic communities" (p. 136). Because the term Hispanic includes people who "trace their ancestry to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, any 1 of 17 other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, or to Spain itself," generalizing the

communication experiences can be very difficult (Kikoski and Kikoski, 1996, p. 136). However, from the standpoint of the Hispanics interviewed for this study, they seem to share similar reactions to technology and their preferences for communication in the workplace.

### Implications

While this study was limited in scope, it can serve as a foundation for future academic and business-related research on Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting, specifically in the areas of work environment, aspirations, culture, language, and technology. By enhancing our understanding in these areas, researchers can extend the knowledge of Hispanic employees and provide more insight on Hispanic communication preferences and experiences.

First, the study can aid future academic scholars' research by enhancing their understanding of Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational environment which is important because of the growing Hispanic population. Further research could also aid understanding on how first, second or third-generational Hispanics utilize both language and technology while at work. In addition, research could further explore the role cultural values play both inside and outside of the working environment.

The current study contributes to the theory of organizational communication and practical implications because it provides a foundation for understanding Hispanics' organizational communication practices and how they interpret their organizational environment. Although research addresses Hispanic employees, future research could break down those individuals that fall under the term Hispanic. This would provide

additional insight on the similarities or differences that exist among those Hispanic sub groups related to their organizational experiences and communication practices.

Third, while the findings in this study provide insight on Hispanics' organizational standpoint as it relates to communication, more research is needed on what Hispanics desire in the organizational environment. From the current study, I found that many of the Hispanics I interviewed had different perceptions of what success means and what drives their level of satisfaction and engagement while at work. Advancing up the organizational chain may not be what many Hispanics aspire to; therefore, additional research could focus on what Hispanics desire in their organizational setting and whether Hispanics are self-selecting out of management positions.

Lastly, additional research could be done using a longitudinal study to examine whether the standpoints of the participants interviewed for this study change over time based on their personal, professional and social experiences. This would provide additional insight on Hispanics' experiences in the organizational setting.

### Limitations

Because this study was limited in scope, there are limitations to the current study. The five primary limitations of the current study were: 1) the length of the interviews conducted, 2) potential generational differences, 3) the sample size and 4) all those interviewed reside in New Mexico.

#### *Length of Interviews*

The first limitation to this study was the length of each of the interviews. When I asked people to participate in this study, they were told the interviews would last no longer than one hour. After the first few interviews, it was evident that one hour was not

sufficient time to gather all the information. Additional time with each of the interview participants would have provided me the opportunity to ask more probing and follow-up questions based on the information that they were sharing. It would have also allowed me the opportunity to gather richer data and helped me further understand each of the three research questions in more detail.

### *Generational Differences*

The second limitation was the possible generational differences of those interviewed. There may have been some generational differences that could explain and aid in understanding the influence of the Spanish language, how their parents' experiences have influenced them, the cultural values they learned and continue to use at work, how they view potential opportunities at work, what drives their job satisfaction and their preferences for and use of technology. When speaking with each of them, I was curious if age further influenced Hispanics' communication experiences in their organizational setting. Based on some of the information shared, age may play a key role in how Hispanics interpret their culture, values, how they communicate and their technology preferences.

### *Sample Size*

While the sample size was appropriate for this study, the interview participants were not representative of the various groups that are lumped together under the term Hispanic, equally representative of different age groups, or representative of the large percentage of the corporate organizations in New Mexico. A larger sample size would have further aided the understanding of Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting. If more interviews were conducted, those selected to participate

could have represented all generations and included Hispanics not born and raised in New Mexico or in the United States. The additional data would provide further insight into being Hispanic and working in the organizational setting.

#### *Participants' Residence*

The fourth limitation of the study was the fact that all of the participants currently reside in New Mexico. Due to the large population of Hispanics in New Mexico, Hispanics are present in almost every organization; therefore, there is more acceptance of Hispanics in the organizational setting than there might be in other parts of the United States. If this same study was conducted in another state or country, the results might be very different. Also, because of the rich cultural environment of New Mexico, there are many non-Hispanics who live here that have embraced the Hispanic cultural traditions, values, and the language.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This study provided insight into Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting. Additional research could look at different geographic areas, how language influences perception of culture, how Hispanics perceive opportunities in the work environment, what technology Hispanics rely on both inside and outside of the workplace and Hispanic employees in upper management. Each of the above suggestions would provide further insight on Hispanics' organizational communication experiences, technology preferences and provide clarity on many of the stereotypes and communication paradigms attributed to Hispanics.

By looking at different geographic areas, a researcher would likely see differences based on the population size of Hispanics in that area. A suggestion might be to look at

different geographic areas, one with a small number of Hispanics and an area with a large Hispanic population. By conducting interviews in these three geographical areas, the researcher might see differences in the themes uncovered in the current study and additional insight on Hispanic communication experiences.

Future research should focus on Hispanics to better understand how their spoken language influences their integration of language and perception of Hispanic cultural values in the organizational setting. There could be a connection based on whether their primary language was Spanish or English, if they learned Spanish as an adult or whether they have learned the Spanish language. These language variations may influence Hispanics' cultural values and how they choose to integrate language or cultural values into their life.

The third suggestion for future research would be to better understand what success looks like from the Hispanic point of view. The findings from the current study indicated that many of those interviewed were not interested in holding positions in upper management. It would be interesting to further understand what success means to the Hispanic population. Does it mean having a good employer, having a high-ranking title, enjoying what you do, getting paid a high salary, or simply doing something where you have the opportunity to make a difference? Based on the values of Hispanics, it could mean any of these things. I think there is real opportunity to further understand how Hispanics perceive success and whether working in upper management makes the top of the list.

Future research could look more closely at Hispanics' use of technology. Of those interviewed in the current study, most of them use technology both inside and



outside of the work environment. It would be interesting to better understand how and why they choose to use email, Internet, text messaging, social media, blackberries, voicemail and other technologies. It would also be interesting to further understand their reliance on technology and whether they feel it enhances or hinders the opportunity for making the personal connections that so many Hispanics value.

Additional research could further explore if some Hispanic employees self-select out of management positions. The findings from the current study indicate that many Hispanics have self-selected out of management, therefore additional research could explore if that is true for the larger population.

Finally, researchers could study Hispanic employees in upper management to better understand if their perspectives and communication experiences are similar to those who have self-selected out of upper management positions. In addition, it would be interesting to see if their experiences leading up to their current upper management position were similar or different than those shared from interview participants in the current study.

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have revealed the perspectives and experiences of some Hispanics' working in New Mexico. I have attempted to enhance our understanding of Hispanics' organizational communication and technology preferences by examining the communication practices and experiences from the standpoint of a dozen Hispanics. After presenting a review of relevant literature, I shared the methods used to gather the data and analyzed the findings. In chapter four, I shared the findings from the current study and provided examples from those interviewed to support the results. Finally, I

shared a summary of the key findings, presented implications of the study, outlined potential limitations and offered suggestions for future research.

While the scope of this study was limited, it provides useful information for other students or researchers to explore Hispanics' communication experiences in the organizational setting. By understanding the experiences of different groups, we are better able to appreciate how their perceptions are shaped, how they interpret the world and what they value. The intent of this thesis was to shed some light on how Hispanics communicate, what they experience in the organizational setting, to better understand their perceptions and how they utilize technology. The standpoint of Hispanics is one that is valued and deserving of future research.

APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

I am a graduate student conducting a study on Hispanic experiences in the organizational communication setting. Your participation in the study includes participating in an interview which will last approximately one hour. During the interview session, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences as a Hispanic.

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You are welcome to ask any questions at any time. I will be using the information you share during the interview process as data for a thesis report, but your name or organization will not be revealed or connected to any information you share during the interview. If there is specific information that you are not comfortable with me including in the thesis report, please let me know and I will ensure that information is excluded.

If you agree to participate, please sign this form below. If you would like a final copy of the report, please let me know and I would be happy to send one to you.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Nicole Abeyta

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Signature of Interview Participant

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Date

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Signature of Researcher

## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is your ethnicity?

What is your position or job title?

How long have you been with the organization?

What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

What cultural values do you hold that influence how you interact with others at work?

What was your primary language as a child?

Do you speak Spanish? If so, is this something you have to use on the job?

Are there direct benefits of being able to speak Spanish on the job? Please describe.

How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences? Outside of work?

In your organization, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglo Americans?

What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

Do you think your preferred technology has anything to do with your cultural values/upbringing? If so, how/why?

How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

## APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

### Transcription A

N: What is your ethnicity?

C: Hispanic.

N: What is your position or job title?

C: Construction Inspector II.

N: How long have you been with the organization?

C: Two years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

C: I would say that my company is mainly Anglo-American. The reason for saying this would be that the majority of the people who work for my company are Anglo. Also, all of the top members of the company are Anglo as well. Some of our offices around the country are more diverse. In particular, my office does have a more diverse population. This is probably more because of the location of our office. The gender diversity has changed a lot over the last few years. Working in the engineering field used to be mainly a male dominated field, but lately there have been a lot more women entering the engineering field. So I would say that the gender diversity is a lot more even than before.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

C: My everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic are pretty normal. Looking at my friends and others around me of different ethnicities I feel that I have experienced a lot of the same things they have. I do not live my life according to my ethnicity; I live it as any other person would. I have not spent very much time being in the minority. Most of my life I have been a part of groups, schools, and teams that consist of other Hispanics. I also did not feel like I was in the minority or in the majority, it all felt the same.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

C: I would say that my company is a good place for people of color and minorities. Everyone is treated the same in my company when it comes to ethnicity. I do not feel that there is any greater benefit for being a minority or being in the majority. Every person has the same opportunity to advance in the company so long as they have the skill and determination to do so. I do not feel or see that a person's ethnicity plays any role in their opportunity to advance in the company.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

C: I am not aware of any training that is available for cultural diversity. I would think though that those that are in management have taken or have been given some kind of training that addresses cultural diversity. I have not been given the opportunity to take

any classes through my company to address cultural diversity, but I have taken classes in college that deal with cultural diversity in a personal aspect and in a professional aspect.

N: What cultural values do you hold that influence how you interact with others on the job?

C: The major cultural value that I utilize on the job is to treat all workers the same regardless of race. I feel that a person should not be judged according to their race, but by their ability to do the job. My interactions are the same with people of all races. Respect is also another value I use everyday. I think it's important to respect others and earn the respect of others.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

C: My primary language as a child was English.

N: Do you speak Spanish? If so, is this something you have to use on the job?

C: I do speak Spanish, but not fluently. I have increased my use and ability to speak Spanish because of my job. I work in a field that is currently populated by Mexican nationals that only speak Spanish. So, I have had to learn to speak Spanish better than I had before because of my job.

N: Are there direct benefits of being able to speak Spanish on the job? Please describe.

C: There are a lot of direct benefits to speaking Spanish on the job. Like I stated previously there are many Mexican nationals that work in the construction field that do not speak English, so the only way to communicate with them is to speak to them in Spanish. Being able to speak Spanish has helped me to do my job better and give the correct direction to the workers to make sure they are doing their jobs correctly. I also believe that being able to speak Spanish will help me further my career in the future.

N: Are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

C: Well working in the construction/engineering industry cultural communication is quite different than my normal everyday communication. I know that I play a role at work that is more authoritative and while with others we are the same. Being around Mexican nationals I have to communicate with them differently than others around me. I try to communicate with them in a way that both parties understand what needs to get done even though there is a slight language barrier. One thing that I do the same is to find a common ground between the person that I am talking to and myself. Getting to that point allows the communication lines to be open and the respect for each other to be had. Once these things are achieved communication is made a lot easier.

N: In the workplace, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglos?

C: I know that sometimes people that are in the minority do not interact as well with Anglos as they do with people of their own ethnicity. People tend to draw toward others of the same ethnicity. It isn't until later on that they began to interact with people of other ethnicities. Once the interaction is established across ethnic lines people begin to

work better together. So I would say that initially there is a hesitation between people to interact with others of different ethnicities, but many times the hesitation is overcome with time.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

C: In my job I use the Web for some of our engineering applications as well as email. Although I do not have any particular type of technology that I prefer at work, I use many different things that help me do my job. I feel that technology has greatly advanced the engineering field. With the use of technology there has been an increase in development in our society. Many projects have been fast-tracked with the utilization of technology and equipment.

N: Do you think your preferred technology has anything to do with your cultural values/upbringing? If so, how/why?

C: Like previously stated, I do not have a preferred technology. I do not feel that my cultural upbringing has affected me in not having a preferred technology. I was given almost every opportunity to explore different technologies growing up and that did help me choose the field that I am currently in. Seeing how technology has advanced our society intrigued me to want to be a part of that advancement and be able to utilize that technology.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

C: I do not know if I connect them, but I do know that my ethnic cultural values affect my work behavior. The experiences I have from work play a part in my life regardless of my cultural values. I take every experience and use it as a building block in my life. Each experience helps develop myself as a person and I do not feel it changes my cultural values. For me my work behavior and experiences are not connected to my cultural values, but they do define me as a professional.

#### Transcription B

N: What is your ethnicity?

B: Spanish.

N: What is your position or job title?

B: Independent Contractor.

N: How long have you been with the company?

B: 9 months.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

B: In this region, I would say the population of Hispanics is pretty high for our agents. I would guess it is probably 45% are Spanish and another 45% are Caucasian and the other 10% represent a variety of ethnicities. Our field is male dominated, I would say that the ratio is 9:1, but we are hiring more females into the field.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

B: Honestly, everyday it is not something that I'm conscious of. I usually don't even think of myself being Hispanic or my last name until I interact with customers out of state. Within the state, it's different because the majority of the people that I interact with are Hispanic or have been around Hispanics so it doesn't play an everyday focus in my life.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

B: I would say it's a great place to work. This company does a lot of subsidy programs for agents if they hire bilingual employees. I guess not a broad scale of color because they really do focus on the Hispanic population. If your staff is bilingual you get a bonus, if you're bilingual you get a bonus. There are a lot of infrastructures set by the company for us to hire bilingual and Hispanic people. In this company there are no drawbacks to being Hispanic. There is a large population of our customers that are Spanish speaking and we're trying to get more business which requires us to meet our customers in the manner that they are most comfortable with and many times a Spanish speaking agent creates security for them and makes them more comfortable and that is very important to our company.

N: Do you interact differently inside and outside of work because of your ethnicity?

B: Absolutely. What I say around my family who are all Hispanic is very different than what I would say around my co-workers or customer who are Hispanic. For example, in my family we like to joke around a lot and put our culture/ethnicity down. When I'm around my cousins and friends we make funny comments that I would never say in a professional environment. For me, I don't see Hispanics differently because I grew up in a small Spanish community and the majority of the people I've interacted with have been Hispanic. I think I'm more aware of when I'm around Caucasians or another race than if they are Hispanic. Most of the people that I've worked with have always been Hispanic.

N: What cultural values do you hold that influence how you interact with others at work?

B: My family grew up in New Mexico and I'm a seventh generation New Mexican. My family worked hard and there was wasn't a lot of educational opportunities for those in my family. So how they made a living was by having land, working hard and doing whatever it took to feed the family. In my job, I try to take care of families by providing services that help and protect them. I'm able to make a connection with my clients because I know how important family is. In the Hispanic community and in the family I grew up in, family is everything. I really think that helps me in my job everyday along with a lot of other values like loyalty and honesty. I was taught that it's important to be loyal and honest to your family, with your friends and to the organization that you work for.

N: Are you able to speak Spanish?

B: No. I understand the language, but unfortunately I cannot speak it. My wife, my daughter and my son are bilingual, but I only understand the language. I wish I did speak the language. My father is fluent in Spanish, but my mother doesn't speak the language



so it was rarely spoken in my house as a child so I never learned the language. My father told us that when he was growing up he was force-fed English. There was no Spanish speaking. You were forced to learn the English language and were punished for speaking Spanish. They never taught you Spanish and they made you feel bad for the speaking the language. Also, my father and uncles were in the military and they experienced a lot of racism toward Spaniards outside of New Mexico. So he didn't want us to have to go through what they went through because of their Spanish accents. So none of his nine siblings taught their children Spanish and today we are still unable to speak the language and only understand the language. None of my cousins know Spanish either due to the time they grew up in. Now my dad wishes everyday he would have taught us Spanish and regrets his decision. My dad loves it when he hears my kids speak Spanish and hears my daughter ask for agua (water) or leche (milk). He also loves to tell her dame besitos (give me kisses).

N: In your organization, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglos?

B: I even see it from Hispanic to Hispanic, Latino to Latino, or Spaniard to Mexican. I think people communicate at a slower rate. I really do think there is the perception that Hispanics are not as smart as other people. I even see Hispanics doing it to other Hispanics. In my business, if there is an older Mexican couple I see other Hispanics speak differently to them than other Hispanics. They speak slower and assume they don't understand just because the language is different, which doesn't mean they are not as smart. I really do think there is the perception out there that Hispanics are not as smart as other people. I sometimes hear non-Hispanics speaking about Hispanics they've hired to do labor work for them at their home. It's frustrating to hear people talking like this because like all races, we (Hispanics), hold a number of both blue collar and white collar positions. Not to mention, those who have proved the value Hispanics bring, not only to American culture, but to organizations as well.

N: As a Hispanic and member of a minority group, how do you view the everyday environment in your organization compared to your personal everyday lived experiences?

B: They are different, but some times I think that has a lot to do with the professional environment more than being Hispanic. You know in New Mexico, people use the terms Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Spaniard or Mexican very differently than outsiders would. Some groups would be offended if you called them one thing and they considered themselves something different. I also think the generation in which you are speaking to react differently to the term Hispanic. From my experience, some of the older and younger generations tend to be sensitive to how they label themselves than those in my age group.

N: Are your organizational communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences? If so, how?

B: Yes. When I'm interacting with those engrossed in their culture, especially those in the older generation, I prefer to speak with them over the phone or via email first because I look Caucasian, but I'm actually Hispanic. They want to make a purchase from another Hispanic so by the time they meet me we've already established a relationship. On the

other hand, we have a lot of people walk in and want to make a purchase from another Hispanic so they select one of my colleagues who have a more dominant Hispanic appearance.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural identities?

B: I do one of the things I got from my grandparents and parents which is how to care for people and ask about people in a genuine manner. When we get together we hug, look someone in the eyes and ask them how they're doing. My nana (grandma), taught me a lot, she taught me to be authentic and genuinely care for people. In this job that helps me be successful. I think that is not something you can fake; it has to be from the heart. My nana would hold my hand and ask me how I was doing and she truly wanted to hear about me and my problems. That might not seem like a big deal, but it is to me. It's shaped me as an individual and had a tremendous impact on how I interact with customers in my organization.

N: What technologies do you rely on for your current position? Do you have a technology preference?

B: The top three technologies in my life are tivo, my blackberry, and the Internet. I'm not sure what I do without those items. But if I had to pick just one item it would definitely be my blackberry. I use it for work, to communicate with friends and family, look up information on the Web, and use it to check my Facebook page. Technology has changed our work in corporate America.

#### Transcription C

N: What is your ethnicity?

S: Hispanic.

N: What is your position within the company or job title?

S: Firefighter.

N: How long have you been with the company?

S: 4 years.

N: What is your ethnic diversity of your organization?

S: I would describe my organization as a combination of various ethnic backgrounds, which include, Anglo-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, African Americans and other various descents such as Italian, Irish, English and many others. The organization is made up of males primarily, which I would say is probably 95% male and 5% female. I believe that in mainstream America today, the job of being a firefighter is primarily viewed as a male's profession however, in my experience I did have the opportunity to go through the training process with a female, who was given every opportunity that the males received and she was able to make it through and is now a firefighter.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

S: I would describe my lived experiences as good and pretty successful. I grew up in a primarily Hispanic hometown, where Hispanics were the majority, so the feeling of being in the minority was not common. However, moving on through college and eventually moving out of my hometown, I did get to experience the feeling of being in the minority at times. An example was playing on baseball teams that were primarily Anglo-American and African Americans. However, I feel that Hispanics can be as successful as any other ethnic background people, given the opportunities and having the willingness to work for what they wish to achieve. Being a Hispanic and being a part of my department hasn't really shown any connection as to how I am treated or how I am perceived on the job. Any opportunity to succeed and enhance my career is provided just as the same opportunities would be provided to any other ethnic background employee. The determination and drive is left up to the person themselves.

N: What differences did you notice when you were the minority? Were you treated differently?

S: The main difference that I noticed was the sense of feeling left out. Not to say that you weren't wanted or supported as part of the group, but the feeling I felt made it seem as though I was an outsider and I wasn't accepted as part of the group. I noticed that the group would not speak to me for whatever reason even though I had worked hard to become a member of the organization.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

S: I would describe the organization as a tremendous workplace for people of any color or minority because all the advancement and training/learning opportunities are provided to anybody who is willing to put forth the time and effort. One does not have to be the smartest person, they just have to want and work for everything. Overall the opportunities are there for Hispanics and the opportunities are provided when the person is ready to work hard to accomplish their goals or pursue new career opportunities.

The benefit is that one's success is determined by that one individual. Their performance in the classroom or on the field will determine success and advancement or failure. I believe the people in the front office or with the rank do not determine the opportunity; it comes from within an individual.

There are no drawbacks to being in the minority or a person of color because, we are all provided the same opportunities and all have to climb the same ladder to the top.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

S: I don't know of any cultural diversity training that is provided through my organization. I believe that you learn to work with different cultures the minute that the training academy begins. You are placed into a large group of individuals that you do not know and that come from all different types of backgrounds/cultures. Through the training program, you begin to learn about one another, where each person comes from and the culture that each grew up in. From this, the individuals start to become one unit,

working together towards the ultimate goal of making it through and becoming an officer. There is no other way because those other individuals, from all these different backgrounds and cultures are the ones that you will have to trust your life with when the tense moments arise out on the fire ground. Also in my current job I have had the opportunity to interact with many different people, from Hispanics, Whites, African Americans, Native Americans, etc., out working on the streets, serving the public. Patients also come from all different types of cultures and backgrounds but there is no choice whether to help particular individuals because of their background or culture. Each individual gets the same care and respect. Therefore, just being on the job is cultural diversity training, not so much in formal course training.

N: What cultural values do you hold that may impact how you interact with others on the job?

S: The cultural values that I hold with me are respect and working hard for your achievements. I was taught the value of working hard for what you are given or what you have. I put no blame on those who inherit their family's wealth, but those who flaunt their wealth without having worked to achieve their fortune, don't understand the meaning of a hard day's work. By no means am I wealthy and will probably never be, but I can say I am where I am because I worked hard for what I have at this point in my life. Growing up I was taught, that you are to respect others in the same manner that you would expect them to respect you. However, in the same manner, respect is earned not given. I was taught never to disrespect someone, but to stand up for myself and not let myself get disrespected. Others are to be treated as equals, no matter who they are or what their background. Growing up a Catholic, I was taught not to hate others, but forgive them because they will be judged by God in his time. All people will make poor decisions, but it is how they react or follow up on those decisions, in life that shows a person's true character.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

S: My primary language was Spanish until I started going to school and then I started and still do speak English more frequently than Spanish.

N: Do you speak Spanish? If so, is this something you have to use on the job?

S: Yes. I have and do have to use my bilingual skills on the job because there have been times when patients or other individuals cannot speak English and communication would be very difficult if not for being able to speak in Spanish. Vital information must be obtained from patients when trying to assess their pains and needs, therefore communication with patients is vital. Say a person was allergic to a medication, but because of a communication barrier, emergency medical personnel were unaware and the medication was given to the patient and an allergic reaction took place and the patient gradually got worse and worse until unconsciousness or death occurred. All could have been avoided with clear communication. Therefore, I believe it to be extremely beneficial to be able to speak Spanish with a career like this.

N: Are there direct benefits of being able to speak Spanish on the job? Please describe.

S: Yes. There is a feeling of satisfaction you get when you are able to communicate with someone who cannot speak English and all their needs are met and any problems they had are treated and the situation turns out good. At the end of the day, it feels good knowing you've made a difference or helped at least one person. There is also monetary value to being bilingual. The department pays bilingual individuals more per paycheck as incentive for speaking Spanish. One just has to pass a test to receive the pay.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

S: I do and I feel that is so because at work the environment tends to be more tense or structured at times. In other words, the feeling tends to be more of an "all business" no pleasure feeling. The organization is based on rank and when dealing with superiors, I tend to communicate in a serious manner. I feel that the overall atmosphere tends to be this way because of the seriousness of the job, being that there are times when there are people's lives in our hands. Our actions will dictate the outcome of the seriousness of one's injuries and possibly life. Outside of work, I tend to be more outgoing and a jokester. I like to laugh and joke around and I am hardly ever in a bad mood. I tend to let go of that serious nature and have a good time.

N: In the workplace, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglos?

S: From my perspective, I have not seen any issues of any negative interaction between some employees and other minorities or Anglos. The only tension and not always in a negative or demeaning fashion, is the interaction between veteran firefighters and rookies. However, I don't believe any action to be based on ethnicity. I'm a minority and I have yet to have any negative interaction that I believed has been based on my status as a minority. I feel that the element of trust is extremely huge in the firefighting community and the trust has to be developed early on and carried all the way through your career.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

S: Verbal communication, hand held radios computers and email. Most of the communication is done verbally because of the interaction with the public and patients but hand held radios are also utilized to communicate on large fire scenes or to request further resources such as equipment, more manpower, locations in structures or calls for help. The hand held radios are mainly utilized on larger emergency calls. On smaller calls for service, communication is primarily just verbal amongst the crew on the particular truck. Computers are utilized primarily for scheduling and requests for vacation, sick leave and overtime. Email is mostly used for the company to share key information with us.

N: Do you think your preferred technology has anything to do with your cultural values/upbringing? If so, how/why?

S: No. I feel that the utilized forms of technology and communication within the organization are just the ones that have been used over the course of time, not so much due to the cultural values or upbringing of a particular individual.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

S: The connection comes from within a person. Decisions are based on values that one has learned over the course of their lives and each individual is responsible for their own decisions and actions. Because of my values, I don't distinguish based on background or culture, only on rank because my job is structured by rank. However, as individuals, I respect all those who reciprocate the respect and treat me as an equal. As far as dealing with the public and patients, all should receive the same respect as a patient in need of help. I feel one's values can directly impact their work behavior because what I might see as wrong may not seem so in another's eyes because we are all raised with different cultural values. It doesn't make their actions wrong unless the rules of the organization say they're wrong. Another person may not see respect as a value and treat others in what may seem as a rude manner but that may be the way that particular individual interacts with everyone. However, once one's work behavior starts to disrespect those that we are called upon to assist as public servants, I feel that cultural values or not, the thought process and actions are wrong.

#### Transcription D

N: What is your ethnicity?

L: Chicana.

N: What is your position/job title within the company?

L: Health and Wellness Coordinator.

N: How long have you been with the company?

L: 2 ½ years.

N: What is the majority ethnic group here?

L: I would guess that there are 40% Anglos and 60% people of color. I don't lump people into groups like Puerto Ricans, Asians, Cubans, Mexicans, Pacific Islanders, and so on. I agree with people labeling themselves, but I don't agree with others being labeled. To me Hispanic is a government created term that was used to take identity away from people as is Anglo America. I think the term has been used for people of Spanish speaking decent, but I think it takes away their culture so I don't agree. I'm a Sociology major, there are things done in racist ways and that's one of them. It used to take things away from people than it is to give them things.

N: What is the ethnic diversity in your organization?

L: I would say that it is similar to society. People with power are Anglo and people with no power are people of color. Even if you look at our regional facilities you will find

very few people of color in higher positions. Here in Albuquerque it is more stratified, but that's because it's a more metropolitan area. As far as gender goes, we are majority female due to the type of jobs we have.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Chicana?

L: They're challenging. Obviously I have a very different mind set than a lot of people. I'm from a smaller town and I think that impacts how you think about things. For example, I'm more political even though I'm not a political person. Working here is challenging because of the power structure and I don't agree with it and understand it even though I went to business school. I tend to work with a lot of the same people and sometimes I say things that I've been questioned on. For example, when I say the Mesa room (with the correct Spanish pronunciation), I've been asked why I just don't say the Mesa room. I've also found myself using colloquialisms like "uh que la", then I think what did others think about that. Not that I care about being judged, but I realize I have to be more careful with things like that than I normally would. I guess since I've been questioned on it before it makes me more conscious of what I say especially around those in positions of power.

N: Did you grow up speaking Spanish?

L: Yes, Spanish was my first language and I'm proud of that. I'm not going to lie, it was hard having to learn English when I went to school, but I don't blame my parents for that they were only doing what they thought was right. It was a different time back then. In my parent's generation, it was very important for Chicanos to pass along not only our cultural values and traditions, but also our language. My parents worked very hard to preserve who we were and focused less on what the outside world thought about us. To them family and culture are everything. Although the transition was difficult for me, I wouldn't change a thing. I think its kind of unfortunate these days that so many of us are expected to fit into mainstream culture and have lost sight of some of things that we (Chicanos) value most – culture, tradition, family and our language.

N: How would you describe this organization as a place for minorities?

L: I don't think it's horrible, but I don't think it's great. To move up you have to play the game and obviously there is a power structure that goes along with that. I have a problem with that because I don't have those same values of getting ahead. As a woman having to leave my children with babysitters and not being as involved in my family and home life is not worth the position of power and the time requirements to get there. To move up, you are expected to work hours in the evening and over the weekend.

I also think that those in positions of power judge those who are not. For example, one of our executives has commented on my appearance and my professionalism. When I interact with my friends at work, I'm probably not as professional as I should be, but when I'm in meetings I am professional. I may be more blunt than others, but that's just who I am, I speak my mind. I think at times people question my professionalism because I'm not the cookie cutter employee. I'm not a lambe (brown noser) or a brown noser, just because I need something from them I'm not going to kiss their butt.

The benefits of being a minority in this organization are that you have some job security, especially in some of the smaller communities. There may not be a lot of economic development so people know that this is an organization that is going to be around and a job will be there for them. I also like the fact that we are predominately female, although those females in positions of power are not the type of people I would look up to. I also think the organization is more tolerant of flexible schedules because there are a lot of working mothers. Another benefit is resume wise, this is a well respected organization and provides you with a lot of experience working in a large company and broaden my perspective.

N: What are your communication experiences in this organization?

L: I think that it is comforting that there are those of us who speak Spanish and do so in the workplace and it's not a thing we are afraid to do. I do think there is a bigger need for bilingual speakers because there are many parts of this organization that do not have Spanish speakers and they should based on the populations they are working with. They often have to call us for help. I'm not sure that skill is truly valued if not every department has someone who can speak Spanish.

I do think that I have to communicate differently. I think sometimes I find myself biting my tongue, but I find it interesting that others speak up all the time and don't think twice. I think in a lot of meetings that I attend, I am the only person of color so I am careful on what I say and don't say. Another factor that plays a part is the fact that I'm younger than a lot of those I work with daily.

N: So, as a person of color, how do you view your everyday experiences inside and outside of work?

L: I don't call myself a political person, I do have certain beliefs about things and so they those are more repressed here. I was really shocked that during my first year here there was a message from the CEO explaining our organization's position on something and encouraging us to vote a certain way. That freaked me out because that is no place for an employer. Ever since then, I am very cautious on what I say in front of other people. I am not a conservative person and I'm not a pro-military person. I'm not sure that has to do with being Chicana. I do think people who call themselves Chicana are probably more in line with me politically in the way I think, but I am definitely different outside of work. Outside I speak Spanish more, dress differently, and have different types of conversations. It has definitely been challenging for me, it's challenged me more than I ever thought I would have been challenged. I knew I would be challenged by the size of the organization, but not for me as a person and who I am. I feel like I'm not heard, I need more than that; I need to feel like I'm affecting change. I know these are tied to my culture because I highly value these things and was taught to fight for justice and what's right. It's easier for me to stay below the radar than to be singled out.

N: Do you think that people of Spanish speaking descent have to socialize differently?

L: Language. Many times we have to conform to what is expected, like my earlier example of pronouncing words in their Spanish version versus the English pronunciation.



I don't think non-minorities have to think about how they are acting in a meeting, like I do.

N: When you think about the different ways that you communicate, do you think you a technology preference?

L: No. I like email because people don't hear the sound of my voice or comment on how I pronounce certain words. In an email they can just read it. I'm not a warm and fuzzy person, so I feel less comfortable with face-to-face communications at work. If I'm dealing with people I know really well or with people outside of work then I prefer to have the more personal interactions. I also rely a lot on the Internet for my job. The Internet gives me the opportunity to learn what others are doing in my field, research best practices and learn from others.

N: What cultural values do you think you bring into the work environment?

L: I feel one of my cultural values that I share with those like me is work ethic and taking responsibility for things. I try to do that at work and be accountable. In my position, my motivation is to help people be healthy. It sounds cheesy, but I love our state and I don't want to live anywhere else. I'm not very individualistic. I'm not about getting all the credit, trying to get ahead or make myself look good. I prefer to work with a team and share the glory and recognition together.

#### Transcription E

N: What is your ethnicity?

V: Hispanic.

N: What is your position?

V: Assistant Vice President Business Banking.

N: How long have you been with the company?

V: 3 years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity in your company?

V: I can't say as the organization is very large and I just work in one section of the larger company, but I would guess it is probably Anglo.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

V: In my organization and the fact that I am so strongly focused on sales, being Hispanic is a great benefit because I'm from here and the majority of the people that I do business with are Hispanic and I think that is a competitive advantage. Inside my organization I am one of five female officers and two Hispanic female officers and we have seven managers who are all Anglo males. In my organization I am different because I'm female and Hispanic.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

V: English, but now I'm fluent in Spanish. My grandparents taught me. My parents taught us English even though Spanish was their first language. You know I've asked my parents many times why they didn't teach us kids Spanish as children. Both of my parents were discriminated against and teased for speaking Spanish in school. You know when you're way behind in the English language; you fall behind in everything especially in English class. The teacher assumed they understood more than they did so eventually my parents became more and more afraid to speak in class. And when they were forced to talk in class the other kids made fun of them because of their accents and their inability to communicate very well. I think it was such a negative experience for them that they didn't want us kids to have to go through that. Given their experience, I completely support the decision they made for us; however, times have changed and I believe there is real value in teaching my children both languages as they grow up. Living in a state like ours, the ability to speak Spanish is so critical.

N: Do you think speaking Spanish is an advantage to you in your job?

V: It helps because I bank a lot of contractors and a lot of times and they hire both citizens and non-citizens from Mexico and we have a program where if the business banks with us then the employees of the business can take advantage of free interest rate checking and savings. Their employees don't speak English and their employees don't really care for banks for whatever reason, but the employers like to help their employees and they need help going out and talking to their employees about banking institutions to help them and save them money in the long run. So being bilingual is really advantageous because it helps them communicate with their workers which in turn satisfies both the employees and the employer and provides us with business.

N: What cultural values do you hold that influence how you interact with others at work?

V: My culture seems to really care about individuals as individuals. I wasn't raised to be harsh or let the better person win and step on everyone else. My culture is so giving and so non-aggressive when it comes to business and being business like. It actually helps me especially in this sector and in this region because most business people are like that here in New Mexico. They are not about stepping on other people toes and being aggressive. They value caring about other people and that is really what my culture has brought to my business and it has been a great advantage here. Now I'm not sure I could take that same approach to New York or Chicago, probably not. They are different places with different cultures.

N: How would you describe your organization as a place for people of color?

V: In my particular area there are very few minorities, there are no African Americans, five females (I am one of the two Hispanics), there are no Native Americans and the rest are Anglo, which sucks. This year we had a big kick on diversity with the goal of making the workforce more diverse. In my immediate department within my institution there is nowhere near the diversity there should be. I can guarantee that I wasn't hired because I look Hispanic because I don't. Like I said before, I'm one of two Hispanic females in my unit.

N: Approximately, how many Hispanics work here?

V: Well I can only speak to the officers (of which I am a part of) and there are two out of 35. We do tend to have more Hispanics in the areas of assistants and retail (which tend to be some of the lower paying jobs). In my opinion having very few minorities in the company is a big problem. Especially in sales, it is so unfortunate because you are going to buy something from someone that you relate to whether you come from the same area or share the same culture; it just makes the process a lot easier. So if you are completely foreign to that and you try to come in and make a sale to someone that is from here or to someone who's culture you are not familiar with then you're done from day one. It's not going to happen and they're going to laugh and send you out the door. That's where I think my organization has gone wrong and why other banks have done so well here because they have empowered their minority employees. People who run the businesses in New Mexico feel more comfortable working another minority and that's why I've done so well in my current position. I'm not smarter than my co-workers, but my cultural upbringing carries over into my work and I can relate really well to the New Mexico business owners.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization provide?

V: Yeah we see a short video at 7 am in the morning. That's our diversity training.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

V: I primarily use email and voicemail to communicate externally with my customers and internally with my colleagues. Communication lines are pretty open due to the nature of our jobs. I also use the Internet quite frequently to verify information, get additional information or do research in preparation for a big account.

Technology is highly relied upon both internally and externally. However, in my specific job it is still predominately done face-to-face with clients. I think it may have to do some with our culture here in New Mexico. Once a relationship has been established with the client, I am able to utilize other sources of technology to provide them with information. Without the face-to-face, the business deal would fall through.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

V: Generally pretty open when it comes to business. Would I go and talk to my boss about being a Hispanic female and what my career aspirations are? Never. Our boss is an old fashion Texas man and you can tell he views minorities differently. Minority strike number one: I'm a female, minority strike number two: I'm Hispanic. It is common knowledge that he's on this way out which is good thing because his old school thought is no longer very effective. We need to evolve like those companies that are more regulated when it comes to diversity. I would love to see other organizations' statistics on how many Hispanic females hold management positions. In Hispanic Business Weekly, I know that there are top companies recognized for hiring minorities. We are not where we need to be when it comes to diversity and minorities.

In addition, I have noticed that my Anglo counterparts have a wider and larger vocabulary than I do and I don't blame anyone. My parent's primary language was

Spanish and English was their second language so there are some phonics and elementary things that I never really learned. So, sometimes they are able to communicate things more effectively because they have a little bit larger vocabulary. For example, in high school I had to have a writing tutor because my writing was not where it should have been. Thank goodness I had that because so much of my job is writing and communicating (via email and memos to my counterparts or those above me). Being a first generation English speaker does hurt a little bit because I didn't always learn what others did as a young child because my parents didn't teach me or I didn't understand.

N: How are you treated as a Hispanic female?

V: My boss doesn't think of me as being Hispanic maybe because I don't "look" Hispanic or have a Spanish accent, so he never makes references to my culture. Which is not the case for my fellow Hispanic coworker, she is from Bernalillo and has more of a Spanish accent and our boss often makes little comments.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

V: I'd say I'm a little bit different. In business you have to put your game face on and sometimes you have to interact differently than you do outside of work. I was not taught business etiquette, I had to learn how to dress and speak professionally. In my job, I take clients out to lunch and dinner a lot. I had to make menu choices differently than I normally would, I had to learn what wine to order with what dish. At work I'm very professional, but I still hold true to my cultural values. At home, I can let go more and truly be myself. My family is very relaxed. At home I don't eat, dress or speak like I have to at work. Unfortunately, it is something that many of us have to do to be respected and fit in with the norm.

#### Transcription F

N: What is your ethnicity?

V: Hispanic.

N: What is your position with the company?

V: Recruiter.

N: How long have you been with the company?

V: Ten years.

N: What is the majority gender and ethnic group in your organization?

V: I would guess that we are 60% white, 30% Hispanic and 10% other. I would also say that we are about 70% female. Although we are seeing more and more males starting to enter some of the career fields that have traditionally been held by women.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

V: Because I've always lived in New Mexico and have always been around Hispanics I don't think there are many things that I could differentiate about being Hispanic, except

for the fact that I grew up in a Spanish speaking household. Speaking Spanish was to my advantage to be able to understand and semi-speak Spanish, although I would never call myself bilingual. I have friends who are Native American and the culture is very different. I don't have many other friends or acquaintances that are from different cultures, I guess you can say that I'm kind of narrow-minded. I mostly associate and surround myself with mostly Hispanic people. Most of my life I've been surrounded by Hispanics so I guess you can say that I probably have very different perspectives than many other Hispanics.

N: Do you intentionally surround yourself with other Hispanics?

V: No. I actually hadn't even thought about it until this interview. I think I just grew up around and went to school with Hispanics and they became my friends. Most of my friends today are those that I went to grade school with.

N: At home did your parents speak Spanish or English?

V: They primarily spoke Spanish. They truly are bilingual. As kids they only spoke Spanish to us. It wasn't until my oldest brother started school that English was brought into the house. Then the kids always spoke English and my mom and dad only spoke Spanish. Now my mom and dad mostly speak to us in Spanglish, meaning that they use English and Spanish in the same sentence.

N: So did you learn English at home or at School?

V: Mostly at school. I honestly don't remember how easy or difficult this was for any of us. My mom and dad spoke English, they were educated in the United States, but they chose only to speak to us in Spanish. My mom always tells this story about the first day she took my older brother to school and she dropped him off and he only understood and spoke Spanish he asked her, "Why are you leaving me here with these people that I don't understand?" Why my mom and dad did that I have no idea because they spoke English. Then they realized that they needed to speak to us more in English, but they still spoke to us in Spanish. I don't remember there being a clear transition to English. I wish my mom and dad would have continued to make us speak to them in Spanish, but as we got older we used English more and more in our household.

N: So can you speak Spanish?

V: Yes, but I would never call myself bilingual. When I do have to speak Spanish, I have to think about what I want to say in English and then translate it into Spanish. I try to speak to my daughter in Spanish as much as I can, but when I'm unsure of how to say something, I say it English.

N: Are there direct benefits of being able to speak Spanish on the job?

V: Because I am able to speak Spanish, I'm sought out by people here who need me to translate something or speak to someone who only speaks Spanish. I'm also sought out by many of our Spanish speaking employees. When I was working in recruiting I hired a lot of housekeepers and food service employees and a lot of them only spoke Spanish. I also helped with the Grow Your Career Program which was focused on those who spoke English as a second language. I think they remember me and I get a lot of calls from

those employees when they have any Human Resources type of questions. I think they call me because they know me, they trust me and I speak Spanish. I think they know that I will get an answer to their question even if I don't know the answer.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

V: In the ten years that I've been here, I've never seen any kind of discrimination. I think it is a good organization. On the recruitment side, we are trying to work on diversity recruiting and trying to bring more minorities into the workforce. Of course, we can always do better and try harder. I've never been treated any differently for being Hispanic, either positively or negatively. As far as my age, I've kind of grown my career here so I started in an entry level role and have moved into different positions over the last 10 years, so I think I've never been treated differently because of my age or race. By the time I had a few years in, I understood the organization, learned about my job so when I worked with leadership I knew more and was more respected. I truly enjoy the work I do, believe in the work of the organization and overall feel like this is a great place to work.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

V: Well, at work the communication is the same because I know my co-workers so well that I don't have to communicate with them differently. However, there are some instances where I do have to change my communication style, for example, when I'm giving a presentation or working with an executive. My personality is still there, but of course I'm not going to use slang. I try to be more professional.

At home, with my family and friends I speak English, but we do use some Spanish words when we are describing something. For example, my sister will call my daughter mocosa (booger) or traviesa (trouble maker).

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

V: I don't know if it is based on my culture or just my preference, but I know text messaging is in, but I'd rather call people on the phone. I'd rather call and talk with someone than use e-mail or sending a text message. I see it as kind of rude, because it seems like you don't want to talk with the person. It does take more time to call because you have to say how are you, how are you doing, what's going on, but calling is more personal. I usually won't text someone back, I will generally call them back.

At work, I'd rather call someone about a topic then send them an e-mail. Sometimes I think that e-mails come across rude because you can add attitude and tone into an e-mail. Although e-mail is really convenient, I would still prefer to have the personal interaction with the person.

N: What cultural values do you have that influence how you interact with others?

V: We are a Hispanic family and we were brought up with a strong Catholic faith, which I think many Hispanics are. I went to Catholic school from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I

can remember in 10<sup>th</sup> grade I asked my father if I could go to public school. And he said absolutely not and I didn't have a choice. My mom was a stay at home mom and sent all my brothers and sisters to Catholic school and put us through college on one income. My parents sacrificed a lot for us.

Recently, my sister's best friend's husband was laid off and they decided to take their kids out of Saint Mary's because they weren't going to be able to afford it. I told my sister well that because they don't want to give up their nice cars and going out to eat and going on trips...and that's what's my mom and dad sacrificed. I can remember growing up and them dropping us off at school, we had this brown and yellow station wagon and I was so embarrassed. You know when you go to a private school many of the other kids come from wealth families and they have nice cars. The catholic religion was a very strong presence in our family and molded how and what we did. Today, I really value what my parents taught us and I'm trying to do the same things with my daughter.

From a working perspective, some of my cultural principles that influence me at work are the importance of family, flexibility, empathy, respect and being people oriented. All of these things affect how I approach a particular situation or an individual. Although some of the things may just be how I was brought up, I really do think they have a lot to do with the things my family and we (Hispanics) value.

#### Transcription G

N: What is your ethnicity?

A: Hispanic.

N: What is your position/job title within the company?

A: Special Events Director.

N: How long have you been with the company?

A: 30 years.

N: What is the majority ethnic group here?

A: I would say we are about 50% Hispanic and the other 50% would be Native America, African American, Asian American and Anglo.

N: What is the gender diversity in your organization?

A: Female dominated professions.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

A: Pretty enriching because I've come to appreciate my heritage and my background. The richness of my heritage and background are much stronger today than if you would have asked me this in elementary school. In grade school it was not cool to be Hispanic; we tried very hard not to be. For example, the foods you ate and the neighborhood you lived in. The neighborhood where I grew up was pretty diverse; there were a lot of minorities, probably 80%. When I got to middle school, it was up in the heights and you

saw more non-minorities than minorities. So we would not want to say we had a burrito for lunch, we wanted a sandwich. Today I think it is less of an issue and being Hispanic is more accepted than it was back then.

N: What language did you grow up speaking?

A: Both. My primary language at home was Spanish. It was not until grade school where we started using English. Being as old as I am, in those days you were treated differently and you tried very hard not to speak Spanish in school. I can remember kids making fun of me and I tried very hard not to have an accent.

In work, it varies how I use the language. In my capacity with the board of directors I use Spanish rarely as most are not Hispanic. However, when I'm working on an event and have to work with the staff at the convention center or at a hotel, I think I get a better response and reaction from them if I speak to them in Spanish, if they are a Spanish speaker. If I see they are struggling with the language then I just revert to Spanish and then they will go out of their way to get you whatever you need immediately because there is an instant connection there. So I can use language to my advantage in some cases.

N: Do you tend to speak Spanish more frequently at home?

A: It depends, if I have the grandkids then I tend to speak Spanish a lot because I want them to learn the language and for it to not be foreign to them. With my children I did the same thing, but now that they are adults it is just easier and quicker to speak English. We don't use slang very much. If they do then I usually stop the grandkids and correct them so they learn proper Spanish and are speaking correctly.

N: How would you describe this organization as a place for minorities?

A: Very minority friendly. I've never experienced anything where I was treated differently.

I've grown up here and served in many different roles. I think how I function in my job would be very different if I just entered the organization today. I've grown my career here and in the process I've learned a lot about people, the organization, the changing environment and working with different generations. I have a strong appreciation for the mix of employees that we have and the value each of them bring not only to their individual jobs, but also to the organization. No matter how big or small their role may seem it serves a purpose and others could not do their jobs without it. An organization is a team; there is no one person that makes an organization what it is. Teamwork is key. Also, I couldn't work here if I wasn't respected, didn't respect those I worked with or didn't believe in the values of the organization. Working here is fulfilling both professionally and personally.

N: Do you think the roles in your organization are representative of the population?

A: No, but I think that's okay. I think you tend to see more White people in management positions, but I think there are a lot of Hispanics who are happy in their non-management positions. Like me, I love what I do in my job today. I don't really have a desire to have a higher position within the organization. I think most Hispanics work to



make a living, not live to work. Unfortunately, upper management positions come with more responsibilities and work hours and that is just not something I'm interested in. I want to come to work and enjoy what I do, but at the end of the day I want to be able to disconnect and enjoy time with my family. I think there are not as many Hispanics in upper management not because they are not qualified, but because they share the same values as I do.

N: How are your workplace communications practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

A: I think I'm the same. I try very hard to provide my children the same experience with English and Spanish. It's much harder to learn Spanish as an adult.

Over the years, I think I've been the same person. I don't do things any differently than I did 20 years ago. I think I just place more value on them today than I did back then. I think I always liked them I just didn't value and appreciate them like I do now. I value being who I am and believe that you shouldn't change for someone else. I have to be true to myself, no matter what others might think about me.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your cultural values?

A: Yes. I think I'm sensitive to the fact that others may not be comfortable coming and sharing information about themselves. I think I can relate to how they are feeling and what they are going through. For me being Hispanic has been a benefit, in that I can share those experiences with internal and external people. I also think that I'm more empathetic than a non-Hispanic would be. If I was a non-minority I'm not sure I would be as sensitive and as in-tune as I am.

N: What do you attribute that to?

A: Just my experiences growing up in the public school system and actually seeing other people treated differently because they were black, Asian or Hispanic. That made me much more sensitive to not treat people that way. I wouldn't want to feel that way. In my mind it doesn't matter if you're the CEO, the housekeeper or the bookkeeper they should all be treated the same.

I also value the Hispanic traditions. I try whatever I can to keep those traditions alive. For example, for Christmas we make tamales and I have two sons so I've been teaching my granddaughter to make tamales. I try share our traditions history and meaning with my children and grandchildren as best as I can. It makes me happy to see them trying to do some of things that I've taught them throughout the years, especially with my grandkids. My grandkids love some of the traditional foods that we make. My granddaughter gets her stool and she helps me roll out tortillas and she loves being a part of that. Sharing the background and our culture is so meaningful.

N: What are your preferred technologies to use at work?

A: Primarily email and the telephone because I work in a large company with multiple facilities both inside and outside of the city. I prefer face-to-face communication. I enjoy seeing people's non-verbals and enjoy interacting with them versus sending a text

message or an email. My son says I'm of the old school because I prefer the personal interaction, even at work. I'm not sure if I attribute that to being Hispanic or part of the generation that I was brought up in. Before there was no email, voicemail or text messaging. You had to have personal interactions with both your co-workers and your customers. Don't sit me in front a computer all day and ask me to work, I need the personal interaction. My preference is very different compared to the 20 something's entering the workplace today.

#### Transcription H

N: What is your position with the organization?

R: I manage the mergers and acquisition integration team.

N: How long have you been with the company?

R: 2 years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

R: I would say 40% Hispanic, 40% White, 20% Other (Asian, Black, other ethnic groups).

I think it's diverse by region. This sight is a higher concentration of Hispanic people because that's reflective of the geography where we live in. If you go to California there is a higher percentage or a higher population of the Asian population might be higher and of course in different countries like India and Asia. All of those have their own dominant or majority of the population. I think there is a big mix but only because our organization is in diverse areas and regions throughout the country. If it was a single headquarter, I think it would closely match what the population of where that site happened to be, so I don't think that Hispanics are a higher population overall in our organization, but in certain sites it might be in the same with the other ethnic groups.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer?

R: I think our company has a big commitment to diversity because the different areas are so diverse and can tend to move around a lot. There is not a geographic specific hiring practices so you might have HR folks that have worked all over the country versus other companies that might be just in a certain location and are used to hiring the same kind of people. Just look within departments here, I think we have a lot of diversity not just in ethnicity but people's background, education level, and I think there seems to be not a dominant male versus female or female versus male so you do see at every site a lot of different people, age wise, ethnicity, gender and background.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

R: I think because the site is in an area of the country where there is a higher population of Hispanics, it doesn't seem different for me, so I don't notice it in my day-to-day setting. Yeah, I don't notice that I'm in a situation where I am the only Hispanic in the room, but from a management perspective, when I work with folks that are higher up in grade, I do see a disparity between Hispanics and other ethnic groups. Just walking

through the courtyard or through the café and you look around, there is a mix of cultures and backgrounds. But in the management realm, working with higher levels of folks there does seem to be fewer and fewer Hispanics.

N: How would you describe the situations where you are a minority in a management position?

R: It's uncomfortable. I went to a leadership forum a month and a half ago and it was all high level managers and above. There was probably close to 40 people in the room and it was pretty evenly mixed between men and women, but I was the only non-White person in the room. Not just the only Hispanic, but there were no Blacks, Asians, everybody was White except me. I think that was the first time I had experienced that. I had been in other situations where there were few minorities or mostly men and a few women. For example, when I'm in a group and there are 15 men and 3 women, it didn't matter what ethnic group the women were in. That was the first situation and it was uncomfortable for me. I noticed it and felt like other people noticed it, not that anybody treated me any differently, but I was there with other managers that I knew, so I tended to kind of stick with them.

N: Why do you think there are not as many Hispanics in management positions?

R: I think part of it is of course education. In my personal experience, out of 13 grandchildren, I was the first to go college and my brother and my sister both graduated from college in the last few years but there are still only three of us out 13 grandchildren. Secondly, a lot of the Hispanic folks who have gone to college and work here started with the company right out of school. Although education is something that's valued in this organization, so is experience. If they don't have other work experiences and are not willing to move to other parts of the country for positions because of their family connection, then it's harder to move into management positions. I know when we disbanded the payroll office, there was a really high percentage of Hispanic women who were not the primary bread winners in their family, so when the company offered them an incentive to move to another location, most of them turned it down. Whereas folks who were non-Hispanic who have had more work experience, didn't mind moving if it meant it would save their current job or provide them with opportunity to advance. I think many Hispanics are reluctant to move their family, so they're willing to give up a better job or an opportunity for a different position, so they can stay closer to home and their family.

N: Why do you think that Hispanics are reluctant to leave their hometown?

R: Culture and religion I think are part of it. In poorer cultures, traditional or historically, Hispanics tend to do it for financial situations when they have no other options. For the most part, Hispanics stay where they can rely on the family more than maybe if you came from a family where your parents were wealthy and you could go off to school and have some starting money. I know in my situation, I moved home several times because I was in between jobs or trying to finish up a degree and could not afford to be out there on my own. I know friends who are not Hispanic and would say, "my parents would never let me move home." I don't know, but it is something that is in our

culture that is very much connected to family and religion and not so much independence.

N: How would you describe this organization as a place for people of color or minorities?

R: I think because it is a larger company, it tends to be friendlier in that respect. Unlike smaller companies that don't have a lot of diversity or a lot of opportunity for people to move into diverse areas, you're matched or teamed with a lot of different people all the time. Not just from an ethnic perspective, like I said, but from age, background, etc, you might be on a team with people of all ages, men and women, different levels of education, people who only worked here, or people who've worked everywhere and are new to the company. It seems like there is a lot of diversity in other areas so it tends to lessen that feeling of being singled out or isolated from the ethnic perspective. I think that has been my general perspective, but if I moved to a site where it was predominantly another culture or another ethnic group, I might feel differently about how I was accepted.

I think some of the drawbacks are that if you do look up the management chain, there are not a lot of mentors or people who are Hispanic in those positions that we can look up to and see as role models. So at some point, that may mean Hispanics are not trying out for management positions because they don't see other Hispanics in management positions.

You know I hope there is a commitment to diversity, I know from a personal perspective that is kind of a catch twenty-two. I remember being put in a position where I was on a hiring team and it was for a single position and there were several applicants and many of those were Hispanic and it was a non-Hispanic, a White person who was chosen for the position. I know that I got backlashed personally from some of these folks because I wasn't taking care of my own. It made me angry thinking that as Hispanics we don't want to be looked at differently, but we have an expectations that we should be given something just because of our ethnicity, I don't agree with that either. My commitment as a manager is that we hire the best person for the job regardless of any of the factors, such as ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, etc. But I do think that we do have a commitment to mentor folks that might need help or be the first ones in their family to ever have a corporate job. For some it is just attitude like I said, it is an expectation that you are in a management position and you are Hispanic then you should choose me because I am like you, so it's a tough position to be in.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication practices?

R: In general, I think it's about the same, I found that people here are generally friendly and easy to talk to and it's a real casual environment. That's the kind of life I have outside work. I have friends of all shapes, sizes, and color. I've lived in six different states. I tend to have a lot of diversity in my life. Like I said, the only time I felt uncomfortable was in that room those three days of training.

My experience of being different is when I went to college in a small west Texas town. There was a lot of prejudice and I had a hard time understanding why people were treating me differently. I guess my parents just helped stir me into the mind set that no matter how hard I try to be like someone else, I would always be who I am. That always stuck with me, I don't behave differently inside or outside of work, just look at me I'm wearing a t-shirt and some scrappy tennis shoes. I don't go home and dress up because I don't come to work dressed up. I try and act the same; I think it is important that you bring who you are to work.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

R: English, but I do speak Spanish although not as well as I did when I was younger, I'm out of practice. It was interesting because growing up my dad refused to speak Spanish in the home and his reasoning was because he felt his children needed to know English or the only way that we would get ahead is if we would master the English language. My dad and mom had negative experiences as children so they did not speak Spanish to us. So we actually learned Spanish from our grandparents or in school, but my parents did not speak Spanish to us at all. So in that regard we are not traditional because we speak English.

To this day my parents still speak English to us. Growing up the only time they spoke in Spanish is when they didn't want us to understand something. So sometimes they still do that now forgetting that we've all had enough Spanish to kind of understand what they are saying. My grandparents, who did speak Spanish, have died so I am not exposed to the Spanish language very much except maybe through music and that's it.

N: What is your preferred technology at work?

R: Growing up we used the phone, television, electronic games, but now I have three computers just myself, fax machine, cell phone, pager, palm pilot and voicemail that I rely on daily. I never had an answering machine until I went to college, but now it's like everything out there deals with technology.

90% with my job and what I do is on the phone or e-mail. I work from home three days a week because I have back-to-back phone meetings. I don't work with a lot of people that are on site here at our department mostly with people outside the department. Last year when we had more than fourteen acquisitions, I was on the phone or e-mail for at least six hours a day. I very rarely have face-to-face meetings, but I think that has a lot to do with where I work. Although, I love the techy stuff; in many situations, I prefer the opportunity to have more personal connections.

I think there is some efficiency with using technology and having phone meetings but there is something that is lost that you don't get when you're face-to-face like people's expressions, if somebody doesn't understand something. So as much work as I do on the phone, on net meeting or e-mail, I do prefer face-to-face.

I find that I am so tired of being on the computer and on talking on the phone all day that in my personal life that I really seek out that face-to-face communication. So I spend

more time visiting or having people over, or going on walks with my fiancée, I get my face-to-face communication with people that are more important to me. Whereas if I had human contact all day long and sat in face-to-face meetings all day long it would be hard. I use to do consulting work and I would talk to people all day long that by the end of the day I didn't want to talk to anybody, but I wanted to write an email. I use a lot of technology so it's great because when I leave I don't want to watch TV, turn on my computer or talk on the phone so I tend to do more face-to-face stuff in my personal life which I think is good.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

R: Definitely. I just had this conversation with my mom on Sunday. Growing up we had what my parents called "family meetings" and if anything was going on with anybody in the family my parents felt that it affected everyone that lived in the house. So for example, if my sister was ditching school and getting in trouble, then we would all sit down and talk about how it affected the family and work through it. I use that approach a lot at work with my teams if there is friction, a person's not carrying their workload or if they're always late or something. I'll talk about it with that person, but it is more effective if we talk about it like a family or in a team meeting. A lot of times when they hear from their team members how what they are doing or not doing is impacting them, the team carries more weight than me constantly harping on them. So I use that a lot because it makes for stronger teams, just like it makes for stronger families. People are less likely to slack and not help out when they know they are being called on it.

#### Transcription I

N: What is your ethnicity?

E: Puerto Rican.

N: What is your position within the company or job title?

E: Human Resources Manager.

N: How long have you been with the company?

E: 2 years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

E: Not truly knowing the numbers, I would think a large portion of our population is Hispanic. Although, I think there are a number of different ethnicities in our organization. I think there are more females than males given the roles in the organization.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

E: Do you mean me being Hispanic or Puerto Rican? Back home in New York I refer to myself as Puerto Rican, but here I refer to myself as Hispanic. I grew up in New York and lived in a prominently Hispanic and Black neighborhood so the exposure to negativity was less apparent. So I guess I never saw a lot of the discrimination that others who lived in mixed neighborhoods or cultures saw or experienced. I didn't really experience that, I heard of it and people talked about it, but I was never targeted or

treated differently because I was a Hispanic male. Even after that, I guess I lived a very isolated life, even in the military in a very diverse community with Hispanics, Blacks, Whites you name it, at no time was I treated differently or thought I'm Hispanic and being held back because of that. I can't really say that I've experienced discrimination, but on the other hand I've had people come to me and say I've been discriminated against because I'm a person of color.

Growing up in a Hispanic and Black community we had no choice but to interact. In my upbringing, my parents were only exposed to primarily our Hispanic culture, coming from Puerto Rico and then having to merge with a New York community in the Bronx. I have to say that early on, my interactions with other races were negative because my father was not favorable to Blacks and so I always tried not to let his feelings affect what I thought or did.

N: So did your parents still raise you with some of the Puerto Rican traditions and values?

E: My parents raised us with the foods and music of Puerto Rico, we were not taught a lot of the traditional Hispanic values. I believe our culture was shaped more by those around us and the community we lived in rather than the traditions from my Puerto Rican background. I remember an Italian community that was near us; those from my neighborhood never went into that community because we were fearful that we might get hurt. I learned this more from my older brothers who got hurt after entering those neighborhoods where Hispanics and Blacks were not welcome. So the discrimination existed back then, but I personally never experienced it as I stayed in my own neighborhood.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

E: I think the organization is structured so that people who are willing to strive for opportunities have opportunities to make their career what they choose. Most people I see moving through the ranks are those who are motivated and driven and don't use excuses on why they can't achieve something. A lot of times what happens is that when some don't get what they want or think they are entitled to, they say something like I was discriminated against. They rarely ask themselves, was I the most qualified candidate, how did I represent myself, do I have the necessary skills, etc. Overall, I think this organization does afford people the opportunity, but you have to be motivated and qualified enough to get the positions.

Being a minority here is no different than being in the majority. In other organizations I've heard that there are truly a separation and Whites are very negative or leery about the qualifications of a Hispanic, Black, Asian, etc. I think its more bias than prejudice. I think when people make those conclusions its based on lack of education and understanding because these individuals look different in color.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

E: They do not offer anything specifically or detailed, but we do have some general information shared at orientation. This organization definitely values diversity.

Diversity is so critical given the fact that we have so many minorities working in the organization and the service we provide to the community.

N: What cultural values do you hold that may impact how you interact with others on the job?

E: The cultural values I use most at work are respect for others, working hard and being a loyal employee.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

E: When I grew up, at home I was required to speak Spanish in the house. We spoke Spanglish which is a mixture of Spanish and English. When we spoke to our parents we spoke Spanish, to my other siblings I spoke Spanglish, but outside of the home I spoke English. It was a difficult transition coming from Puerto Rico and only speaking Spanish and then coming to the U.S. and going into the school system where they only spoke English, it was a very, very difficult transition for us. The first two to three years was very hard so we learned to just use English when we were outside of our home and use Spanish only in the home.

N: Did your parents speak English?

E: My parents understood it, but they preferred not to speak at the time, but occasionally they would. For the most part, at home we never heard them speak English, when they would go out into the community and had to use the language they would. For the most part, we typically would accompany them to translate for them, even though they understood, they never quite felt comfortable speaking it.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

E: I don't have family here, but when I go home I speak more Spanish, but here I mostly speak in English unless I'm interacting with someone who only speaks Spanish or prefers to speak Spanish. I speak primarily English here because most of my friends and co-workers only speak English. Other than that, I think I communicate the same whether I'm at home or at work.

From my large family of nine, the one thing that we value is closeness, not just in proximity. It's very common for my family to embrace and kiss each other (even with males and our extended family). In society a lot of people might look at us and say uh because they typically use the handshake, but that's important to us. In the Hispanic culture that is just one way that we stay connected and close to each other, it is one way we take the barriers out that exist in mainstream culture. So I think that's a big part and coming from a mostly male family - I think the values that they had and those my mother had are ones that I had to adapt to. For example, Hispanic mothers were there to serve and care for their children and husband and that's it. Although, I always thought it was crazy and never agreed with that, I could have gone that direction, but I didn't. I think



my mother's interactions with my father and older brothers was right, why should she have to take the burden. So I guess the point is that there are certain things that I chose not to follow or accept that are typically part of the culture.

N: Do you speak Spanish? If so, is this something you have to use on the job?

E: Yes. Occasionally, there are other employees who only speak Spanish so when I'm interacting with them I use the Spanish language more. I also tend to use it when I work with someone where English is their second language. If it's complicated, they prefer I explain information to them in Spanish and give them the opportunity to ask me questions in Spanish too. It serves me well to practice the language and think about the proper translation for things that are a little more complicated.

N: In the workplace, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglos?

E: I think the huge thing is that my mother taught us consideration for others and respect. Those were just her natural way of interacting with others. It doesn't matter what situation you're in or the person you're dealing with you always interact with them in a very respectful manner. I've always kept that in mind. I can remember a time when a woman (who was Hispanic) came into my office and sat there like she was in the principle's office and she said, "I appreciate you treating me the way you have." I told her, "What are you talking about?" She thought I was going to come in there high and mighty because I'm a manager, I told her, "I don't believe in that, I'll treat you with the same respect that I'd treat the president of the company." I think that's a value that came from my mom and my culture that greatly influences my interactions in the workplace today.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

E: My preference is face-to-face. I just think you get so much more accomplished. Clearly, email can save you time, but my preference is face-to-face because you can see their reactions, see their feedback and it is just more personal. Whereas with voicemail or email, you have to be more careful in how you structure your message, what words you use and the tone can be interpreted in many ways (intended or not). The reality is that e-mail is a large part of how we do work and can be effective, but when given the opportunity to choose, I'd always choose the personal connection. Obviously, there is not enough time to do this every single time so I do rely on e-mail greatly to accomplish my work. I also think face-to-face is my preference given my more than 30 years in the workforce, you know email didn't come around till much later in my career.

#### Transcription J

N: What is your ethnicity?

O: Hispanic.

N: What is your position/job title within the company?

O: Employee Relations Specialist.

N: How long have you been with the company?

O: 2 ½ years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

O: About 65% Hispanic, well it's probably higher than that but, I'm counting all who are of some Hispanic descent even if they would classify themselves as another ethnic group. If their parents come from a Hispanic country even if their family has been in the United States for seven generations. Some may not consider themselves Hispanic, but I consider them of Hispanic or Latino descent.

N: What is the gender diversity in your organization?

O: Because of the business that we are in I would say that over 50% of our workforce is female.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

O: Weird. I'm a unique individual. I was born in the U.S. and raised in Mexico. I didn't realize I wasn't Mexican until someone told me that I didn't get benefits from Mexico, you are an American so what are you doing here. Then you come to the U.S. and it's like what do you mean your American. You don't speak the language and your parents are not from here. I've been confused for a large part of my life. I was born here in the U.S. and my mom thought she couldn't take care of me so she took me to my grandparents in Mexico and that's where I grew up. In Mexico you go to school until 9<sup>th</sup> grade and then you have to pay for school. That's when I was told, what you are doing here, you don't deserve any benefits from Mexico. I felt rejected at that point and realized that I needed to come back to the U.S. and needed to learn the language. I also had a friend who was in the same situation as I was and she couldn't get a job in Mexico so she came to the U.S. too. Then you come to this other country and you just don't fit in here either.

I lived in California and a lot of people speak Spanish, maybe not so much because they appreciate the language but they realize the business benefits. If you can speak Spanish you are able to sell to more customers which positively impacts your business. Then I came here to New Mexico and it is completely different. There are a lot of people with Spanish surnames, but they don't speak the language. Then you go to El Paso, right across the boarder, and I fit in there. More people speak Spanish there. If you go to the store most people speak both languages or if you go to a party they play music in both Spanish and English. It just feels more natural.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

O: I like it. This organization is fair. If you are a Hispanic raised in the U.S. then I don't see a difference with other people. If you are Hispanic and English is your second language than language can be a barrier to communication. Our policies, trainings and communications are in English. But I know this population is relatively small, like housekeepers and food service that don't speak English. They are impacted because they just don't know 100% what's going on in the company. But I also think it is

understandable, because if the population is so small, it doesn't make sense to invest or translate everything into Spanish.

N: What are the benefits of being able to speak Spanish in your current job?

O: In the position that I currently hold, I am able to help employees whose English language is very limited or cannot speak the language. I interpret at our employee meetings, at training classes or have when employees have issues and want to talk with Human Resources. They know that they can come to me and I will share their information/question with the right person. So I just help facilitate the communication between them and the organization. I feel that they identify with me; and if they have concerns, they can come to me and I will help them. It's not they don't trust that others will help them, it is just that they can ask me in their language and I can respond to them in their language, which is more comfortable for them. Knowing I can play this very important role for both the employee and the organization is extremely satisfying.

I'm lucky in that a lot of my coworkers speak Spanish which I like because Spanish is my first language. When we speak to each other, we speak both languages. There are some who understand the language, but don't speak and others who are not Hispanic and can speak the language. One of my Anglo coworkers likes for me to talk with him in Spanish because then that gives him the opportunity to practice speaking the language too.

N: So how do you decide when you speak English to them and when you speak Spanish?

O: You don't. Sometimes you don't even realize what you're speaking. You just speak in the language that feels the most natural during that moment. It just flows, it could come out in English or it could come out in Spanish.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your normal communication experiences?

O: The topics are different, but otherwise it's the same. The only difference is with my husband because his primary language is Spanish so I speak Spanish to him, his English is limited. I speak some English at home, but when we are out in public he will tell me to tell someone something because it is very uncomfortable for him to speak English.

With my daughters it could be in either language it doesn't really matter. I have one daughter who speaks Spanish and another who doesn't, but they both understand the language very well.

N: Are there Hispanic traditions or values that you bring into the work environment?

O: Coming from a country where not everyone gets to go to school or not everyone has a chance to be successful. Going to school is highly valued and being a hard worker. The hope is that you get educated and work hard. I was also taught the value of being honest, not lying and help people.

Also, the language is very different. In Spanish there are two ways you speak, to your peers and to those that are older than you that shows respect. When I was trying to merge the two cultures, it was difficult calling my boss Bill. I had to call him Mr. Gladfelty,

which drove him nuts because he was not Mr. Gladfelty, he was just Bill. For me that was hard, how could I call him Bill that would be very disrespectful? Now that I am more comfortable in the U.S., I address people by their first names. However, when I go back to Mexico then I have to resort back to what I was taught as a child. I've had to acclimate myself.

My family has always taught me to treat everyone the same regardless of their role in society or the company. I refuse to honor the president of the U.S. more than I honor a housekeeper. People here tend to treat people in higher positions better than those in lower positions and in my opinion we are all equal and we all deserve respect. Personally, I think I bring a lot of value to the organization sometimes more than those in higher positions. I show respect to others not only in how I treat them, but also in how I do my work, how I present myself and being proud of my many contributions. I think respect is one of those terms that we think everyone interprets the same way, but I disagree. For Hispanics, respect is how you see yourself and secondly, how you treat others.

Also, I really value my entire family from those who live in my home to my distant cousins. My greatest joys, frustrations, sorrows and moments of happiness are related to my family.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

O: Working in Human Resources, I think a lot of people use their ethnicity as an excuse. There are some conflicts with the organizations and they blame it on their ethnicity rather than looking at their own actions. People use gender and race because they are not accountable for their actions. They fail to see that the reason they are in trouble is because of something they did or should have done, rather than it having anything to do with their ethnicity. I'm proud to be Hispanic, but it's unfortunate that some use it as an excuse.

N: What are your preferred technologies to use at work?

O: I prefer face-to-face because I enjoy people. I like talking to people, getting to know them, and reading their body language. I do use email, but mostly because of the size of the organization and different locations that we have. I would probably say I also rely greatly on the web, telephone and voicemail to get my work done.

#### Transcription K

N: What is your ethnicity?

A: Latina.

N: What is your position within the company or job title?

A: Nurse Recruiter.

N: How long have you been with the company?

A: 17 years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

A: I think in this city there are a lot of Hispanics; I think the majority in my organization are Hispanics followed closely by Whites. Although I do know there are many ethnicities that fall under the Hispanic, White and other umbrellas. I also think our organization is predominately female, if I had to guess I would say females make up approximately 65-75 percent of our workforce.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Latina?

A: Good. I've never experienced any negative aspects of being Hispanic or Latina. At work, I think I'm tapped into a lot because of my ability to speak Spanish. I think because I am a citizen of the U.S. and I am a legal immigrant I think I have more compassion than others. Because of my background, I understand those that are struggling or trying to succeed. I also think I appreciate being in the U.S. more, being where I'm at, walking into a grocery store, walking into work, I feel like I am just a little more appreciative of what I have because of what my parents and I have went through. We've struggled; there are so many just trying to succeed. We have a lot of immigrant workers here, and I can relate to what they've gone through, what they've accomplished to get here, what they are still trying to achieve and they are still trying to reach that American dream. I just try to help them in any way I can. When I see some of my peers working with them I can see that they get frustrated with them easier and are less patient, whereas I tend to have more compassion and passion that comes from working with the immigrants working in my organization.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

A: What I see is that our organization is pretty open however, in the upper ranks there are mostly White people. I think because I've been here a long time and grown my career here, I think I really appreciate the different positions or levels within the organization. I've done a variety of jobs here and appreciate the fact that no matter what your position is you have a valuable contribution to make to the organization.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

A: Very brief. We have a one day orientation period and cultural diversity is one of many topics that are discussed. It's informative, but there could probably be more.

N: What cultural values do you hold that may impact how you interact with others on the job?

A: I think that I was brought up to be respectful, mindful, help the elder and do the right thing. These things influence how I interact and approach my job everyday. I think I'm a work horse and was brought up to work really hard, whereas a lot of people aren't brought up that way. People seem to open up to me. You know, I really try to help people and I think that's because of how people were willing to help my parents when they got here.

N: What was your primary language as a child?

A: I spoke Spanish as a child and wasn't introduced to English until I entered first grade. In first grade, Sister Carmen, my teacher, use to yell at me all day and I didn't understand a word she was saying, so I thought she was always upset with me. Later I realized that she was trying to teach me English. She would work with me everyday for I can't remember how long, after school so I could learn the language and learn to read. That's how I learned English. You know, my parents primarily speak Spanish. It was a real struggle for me when I first started school. Now, with my siblings I speak English, but if we're speaking to my parents we speak Spanish. With my daughter, I try and speak Spanish to her, but she answers me in English. She will only speak Spanish to her grandparents. Whereas my husband's family is Hispanic, but never taught their children Spanish because his parents were criticized for speaking Spanish and they didn't want their children to go through that.

N: Do you speak Spanish? If so, do you use Spanish on the job?

A: Yes. My colleagues rely on me a lot to help with our customers who are primarily Spanish speakers. I really enjoy having the ability to speak both languages and I'm trying to teach my daughter both languages so she can reap the benefits of being bilingual.

N: How are your workplace communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

A: At home, at work and with my friends I communicate the same, but with my parents I'm different. I think this is because of the respect they taught me for those older than you. Whether I disagree with them, think their wrong, whatever, I just bite my tongue. As a mother, I'm pretty strict and bringing her up with the same values I was taught.

N: In the workplace, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities?

A: I think it's pretty positive. I work in a very diverse company so I have the opportunity to work with people from different states, different ethnic groups and even with those from different countries.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

A: Telephone I guess, but I'd rather have more people contact. I hate email. It seems so cold and people interpret emails differently than intended. I am a social butterfly which has a lot to do with my personality, but I also think it has to do a lot with all my family interactions. I come from a large family and we are very very close. I was always with my cousins and our family finds any reason to celebrate and have a family get together. I just love people. Technology can be convenient, but I only try and use it when I have to.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

A: Culture is at the center of everything I do. Although I've assimilated a lot, I work very hard to hold true and stay connected to those things that are connected to my history and my cultural background. My parents are pretty good at reminding me of who I am, where I came from and what is really important in life.

For the most part, how I am at work is not different than how I am at home. I am who I am.

#### Transcription L

N: What is your ethnicity?

M: Hispanic.

N: What is your position or job title?

M: Tax Preparer.

N: How long have you been with the company?

M: 3 Years.

N: What is the ethnic diversity of your organization?

M: They are all Anglo American except for me. There are 6 females and 2 males that work here.

N: How would you describe your everyday lived experiences as a Hispanic?

M: As a child, I grew up not knowing that there was a difference in race. Most of the kids I went to school with were Hispanic and spoke both English and Spanish. Even my best friend spoke both languages and she was Anglo. She did look different than me because her hair was so blond that it was almost white, but other than that I thought we were very similar. I grew up around other Hispanics so although it may seem strange, it wasn't until I was a teenager that I could say that I understood that people were of different races. Being Hispanic is wonderful. I have the opportunity to celebrate my rich cultural background and appreciate what we have contributed to our history.

N: How would you describe this organization as a workplace for people of color and minorities?

M: Pretty good, but I'm not sure that has to do with the fact that I'm Hispanic, but rather is due to the fact that I work and serve a high percentage of Hispanics in the work that I do.

Working for this organization is great. There are a lot of opportunities, people are treated well, we are well informed on what's happening in the company and most importantly I love what I do. Being Hispanic, in my opinion is a huge advantage because I'm able to connect with my customers (who are also Hispanic) and I have the opportunity to make meaningful connections everyday.

N: What type of cultural diversity training does your organization offer/provide?

M: To be honest I'm not quite sure. In orientation they talk about the importance of diversity and we also offer many of our materials in Spanish.

N: What cultural values do you hold that affect how you interact with others on the job?

M: The most important part of my culture that influences my work is mi familia (my family). They are the reason I do what I do. Working not only allows me to provide another source of income for those I love, but helps my children understand the valuable contribution I'm able to make in the workplace. Another huge bonus is that I'm able to help other families in my job and that really means a lot to me. Me familia es me vida (my family is my life). There is nothing more important in life than family. My world revolves around my husband, my kids, my parents, and all my tios (uncles), tias (aunts) and mis primos (my cousins).

N: What was your primary language as a child?

M: Spanish. My parents knew the English language, but chose to raise my sisters and brothers to speak only Spanish because they thought that language would be better suited for our career paths and us as adults. In their mind, they knew the traditional jobs that Hispanics held and saw less of a need for us to speak English. I personally struggled in school because I was always confused. I know my parents made the best decision they could at the time and only wanted the best for us, but I always struggled on why they thought we didn't deserve better and couldn't get one of the non-traditional Hispanic jobs. Being so strong-willed, this really pushed me to strive for the "unreachable." I knew from an early age that I wanted a professional job with a strong organization. I've never looked back. My cultural traditions are still very important to me and are apparent in every aspect of my life, but I'm very proud to have a good job and show others that Hispanics bring a lot of value to the workplace. Although early on in my life, I struggled because of language, today I value my ability to communicate in both languages.

N: Do you speak Spanish? If so, is this something you have to use on the job?

M: Yes I use my language frequently in my job. Speaking in Spanish gives me the opportunity to communicate in my native language of some of my customers. I think many of them appreciate this and feel more comfortable with me because I am a Spanish speaker.

N: How are your organizational communication practices different from your everyday cultural communication experiences?

M: I would say there aren't any differences. I try to be the same person all the time. I think you should be yourself and be a good example because you never know who is watching.

N: In the workplace, what is your perspective on how others interact with other minorities or Anglos?

M: You know, I think we all treat each other the same. In my experience, I don't see others treating different ethnic groups differently. More of the differences you see at work are related to other issues like position and personality.

N: What is your preferred technology to use in the workplace? Why?

M: I love technology. I'm not sure what I would do without it. At work it makes my day more efficient and at home it's more convenient. Some of my favorites are blogging,



the Web, email, texting, podcasts and tivo. I can be anywhere and use my iPhone to look something up, get directions, contact a friend and reply to work emails. But I guess if I had to just pick one, I would have to say email. Email provides me with the opportunity to communicate with others sitting down the hall or with those working in another location, ask and answer questions, and submit reports instantaneously.

N: Do you think your preferred technology has anything to do with your cultural values/upbringing? If so, how/why.

M: Not necessarily. I think it has more to do with the age we live in, these days it's hard not to use and rely on technology. Technology is just so convenient. I will say that because of technology I think people in general are more educated because information is at our fingertips. Whether I'm looking for a recipe, directions, what movies are showing at the local theater or how to treat a medical condition, it is only a click away.

N: How do you connect work behavior and experiences to your ethnic cultural values?

M: How I carry myself is directly connected to my cultural upbringing. My parents are very traditional and always pushed us to continue many of our traditions like going to church, building relationships, making traditional meals for the holidays, respecting our elders, working hard and honoring our past. Those are all things I work very hard to continue both in my personal and professional life and teach my children. Being Hispanic is definitely something that I'm proud of.

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