Capitalizing on diversity management

Yudit Buitrago

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CAPITALIZING ON DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

by

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Discussions of diversity issues are crucial to today's organizations in the United States and elsewhere. Organizations are realizing that diversity is not merely a question of Equal Employment Opportunity (EE), as it has been in the past, but rather a much broader set of organizational issues. Because diversity of many types is a reality in organizations today, it is necessary for organizations of all types to learn how to manage diversity of the workforce and to offer sound means to accommodate that diversity as an integral dimension of the organizations if they want to remain economically competitive and successful in other ways.

This study was exploratory in nature and was conducted in an organization in Phoenix, Arizona (The Phoenix Group). The project focused on ethnic diversity. The organization was chosen for meeting the diversity requirements of this project: a large body of Hispanic employees in the lower levels of the company and a large number of Anglo employees in the upper levels. The project took the form of a case study performed with the intention of 1) exploring differences that might emerge with respect to the understanding of the concept of "diversity management" in this organization; and 2) analyzing communication practices and meanings to evaluate if they are the most appropriate and effective due to the cultural differences between and among various groups of employees.

The major key finding of this study is the notable contradiction between diversity management practices directed toward customers and diversity management practices directed toward employees. Diversity management strategies such as 1) acknowledging and valuing diversity, 2) changing structures and practices to accommodate differences, and 3) adapting communication processes to ensure accurate construction of meaning were all evident in The Phoenix Group's dealing with its customers. However, such practices were not so evident with respect to their employees.

I also discuss three groups of variables that can affect communication among diverse groups: linguistic, context related and cultural variables. I analyze how in The Phoenix Group these variables are obstacles towards positive employee relationship and work performance because they are not being dealt with properly. Finally, practical suggestions regarding diversity management and intercultural communication are offered to give assistance to the organization to help them improve their workplace.
Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments ....................................................... iii
Table of Contents ....................................................... iv
Table of Tables .......................................................... vii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
Motivation for selecting this topic ................................................. 1
Purpose of study and research questions ........................................ 3
Rationale for selecting diversity and communication as arenas of study .......................................................... 5
Meeting the diversity challenge .................................................. 5
Communication analysis as an organizational imperative .................. 9

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW
Diversity: General considerations
  From a socialization model towards an assimilation model that incorporates
  Diversity ................................................................. 11
  Diversity: A people-related business issue ................................ 14
  Defining diversity ....................................................... 17
  Types of diversity ....................................................... 18

Diversity: Specific considerations
  Cultural diversity: Hispanics in the United States ......................... 20

Communication: General considerations
  Communication obstacles towards effective diversity management ........ 22
  Communication as a set of strategies in diversity management ............. 25

Communication: Specific considerations
  Communication differences between Anglos and Hispanics .................. 28
    Context obstacles ..................................................... 29
    Cultural obstacles .................................................... 35
      Individualism / Collectivism .......................................... 37
      Power distance ....................................................... 39
      Uncertainty avoidance ............................................... 42
      Time orientation ..................................................... 44
      Being vs. doing culture ............................................... 46
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic analysis of organizational culture ........................................55
Data gathering techniques ..............................................................................57
  In situ observations .....................................................................................57
  Interviewing ...................................................................................................60
  Content analysis ............................................................................................64

Dialectical analysis ..........................................................................................65
Reliability and validity of a qualitative study ..................................................67
  Reliability .......................................................................................................67
    External Reliability .......................................................................................68
      Researcher status position .......................................................................69
      Informant choices .......................................................................................69
      Social situation and conditions .................................................................70
      Analytic constructs and premises ..............................................................71
      Methods of data collection and analysis ....................................................72
    Internal Reliability .......................................................................................73
      Participant researcher ...............................................................................73
      Mechanically recorded data ....................................................................74
  Validity ............................................................................................................74
Ethical considerations .......................................................................................76
  Consent ...........................................................................................................77
  Confidentiality .................................................................................................78

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction ......................................................................................................82
History - background - company growth .........................................................83
Formula for success .........................................................................................86
What about inside the organization? .................................................................90
  Unawareness about diversity issues and their impact on the workplace ..........91
  Impact of diversity mismanagement on The Phoenix Group’s productivity ....93
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Implications for the Organization .............................................166
Implications for Theory and Research .............................................177

References .............................................181
Appendix A: Consent forms .............................................186
Appendix B: Schedule of interview questions .............................................190
Appendix C: Executive Summary sent to the Organization .............................................196
Table of Tables

Table 1: Major Advantages and Disadvantages in Managing Diversity in Organizations ..8

Table 2: Common Stereotypes Attributed to Mexicans and Chicanos .........................31

Table 3: Variables Frequently Discussed in Research That Can Affect Hispanics' Communication Style ........................................................................................................................................37

Table 4: Additional Variables that Can Condition Hispanics' Communication Style ......48
CAPITALIZING ON DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Diversity in the workplace is a given; capitalizing on that diversity is a choice" (Richard Chang, 1996)

Motivation for selecting this topic

Discussions on diversity issues are at the core of today’s organizations in the United States and elsewhere. Diversity became a center of concern in the 1980s when three power trends strongly emerged: 1) the globalization of the market, 2) the growing diversity of the U.S. workforce, and 3) the celebration of differences by individuals and groups (Roosevelt, 1991). Today, more and more corporations and organizations are understanding that a diverse workforce can be one of their greatest resources if it is managed adequately. Organizations are beginning to understand that diversity is not merely a question of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), as it has been in the past, but rather a broader organizational issue. Because diversity is a reality in organizations in the United States, it is necessary for organizations of all types to learn how to manage diversity and to offer the means to accommodate it as an integral dimension of the organization if they want to remain economically competitive and successful in other ways.

I argue that the promotion of diversity and its effective management is more than a social, moral or ethical imperative; it is also a business strategy that will greatly benefit those who take advantage of it. There are many types of diversity and numerous factors
associated with them that make the managing process difficult and overwhelming. Due to the characteristics of this project (thesis requirement for a Master's program), and considering time limitations, it is my intention to concentrate only on ethnic diversity (diversity based primarily on culture) and to focus on communication processes which many authors describe as primary obstacles to effective diversity management.

Specifically I am dealing with a Hispanic population. I chose this minority group for several reasons: 1) it is the fastest growing minority in the United States -- a 1990 census showed 22.4 million Hispanics in the USA (Valencia & Menchaca, 1993); 2) there has not been much research done with this population in the field of communication nor in the field of business; and 3) being Hispanic myself, I not only have personal interests in this group but also think that my familiarity with the culture and language enhances the execution of the project.

This study is designed to be a valuable contribution to several fields: intercultural communication, organizational communication, and business management. First, this study adds empirical value to both of the above areas in the communication field by putting their concepts into practice and measuring the extent of their validity when dealing specifically with Hispanic culture. A large portion of the research available for reviewing was not conducted on Hispanics but on other cultures (like East Asian cultures) which are considered to have some of the same characteristics (be high context, be collective, have a high power distance etc.). In other cases, the literature simply offered general guidelines for communicating inter-culturally (i.e., the importance of feedback, listening skills, dealing with personal stereotypes and biases etc.). But not many authors
applied these guidelines to one specific population (especially Hispanics in the United States). Second, most of the literature revised offered general information about the need for diversity management in organizations (with examples which although helpful to visualize a concept, were unrelated and out of context). This study is the description of how cultural diversity is affecting one organization. I talk about levels of awareness concerning diversity issues and a description of how cultural differences are impacting the workplace and shaping employee relations. I discuss problems that are taking place and possible solutions.

This study is of an exploratory nature. It takes the form of a case study performed with the intention of adding empirical data to a fairly new and still not complete body of theory and giving practical assistance to a specific organization. The project has two main parts that are organized around my two main research questions. The first part regards the importance of, and the need for diversity management in today's organizations across the United States, and the second focuses on communication obstacles that can prevent an organization from managing that cultural diversity successfully.

Purpose of Study and Related Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to conduct field research in an organization with a high percentage of Hispanic employees in the lower levels of the organization and with a largely "Anglo" management, in order to analyze communication practices and meanings. Especially, the study explores what differences might emerge with respect to the
understanding of the concept of "diversity management" held by these two principal groups. The main objective is to represent as completely as possible the experiences and understandings of what is taking place in the organization from the participants' perspectives.

My primary research question is: How is diversity management understood and manifested in the organization, especially in terms of the perceptions, understandings and experiences of Hispanic employees and Anglo managers? In this vein, I focus on an organization that already has some diversity management policies in place. Nevertheless, I consider also how informal practices relevant to diversity management (but not necessarily found under that label) are functioning. The emphasis on the Anglo manager is due to the fact that in most organizations managers have the power to create diversity awareness and to put into practice diversity management strategies, if in fact they consider them necessary. Supervisors and middle-level managers are the closest to lower-level employees and are the ones who are on a daily basis dealing with the problems that may take place due to diversity. Secondarily, I ask: What specific communication strategies can be practiced, especially by management but also by non-management, to enhance understanding, cooperation, and organizational effectiveness? Here I would like to discover and analyze what communication practices take place in the organization and to what degree are they the most appropriate and effective taking into consideration the cultural differences of the groups communicating. I also want to determine what communication options can be implemented (taken from the feedback received by the participants themselves) if the current communication
situation in the organization is an obstacle to productivity, job performance and employee relationship. This is the desired outcome for this project. I will therefore observe, record, describe and analyze specific communication practices used by Hispanic employees and Anglo managers as strategies to accommodate diversity as an integral dimension of the organization.

Rationale for Choosing Diversity and Communication as Areas Of Study

Meeting the Diversity Challenge

The impact of diversity in groups and organizations has been studied recently by a number of (Adler, 1991; Cox, 1993; Simmons et al., 1993; Jackson et al. 1992; Golembiewsky, 1995; Fernandez, 1991; Roosevelt, 1991; Chang, 1996; Kuga, 1996), who all agree on the complexity of the issues involved. They have described how diversity can have positive and negative impacts in an organization. "Diversity augments potential productivity while greatly increasing the complexity of the process that must occur in order for the group to realize its full potential" (Adler, 1991 p.128). Thus, although it has been proven that multicultural groups can potentially be more productive than homogeneous groups (Adler, 1991 p. 128; Cox, 1993 p. 27), the former can also lose more if the process is faulty. "When properly managed, cultural diversity is an asset to organizations that can be used to enhance organizational performance" (Cox, p. 27). In her book International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior, Adler describes the process losses in culturally diverse groups as the following:
Diversity makes group functioning more difficult because it becomes more difficult to see situations in similar ways, understand them in similar ways, and act on them in similar ways. Diversity makes reaching agreement more difficult. In cultural diverse groups misperception, misinterpretation, misevaluation and miscommunication abound. Stress levels increase, and employees frequently disagree, implicitly and explicitly on expectations, the appropriateness of information and the particular decision that must be taken. Diversity increases the ambiguity, complexity and inherent confusion in the group's process. This process diminishes productivity. (Adler, 1991 pp.128-129)

Attitudinal problems (dislike, mistrust), perceptual problems (stereotyping), and group cohesiveness and communication problems (misunderstanding, inefficiency) are among the issues an organization has to overcome. The question is, Is it worth it? There are numerous studies that demonstrate the variety of advantages and benefits diversity can bring to an organization. Cox (1993), describes how the benefits of diversity on organization performance revolve around five factors: 1) attracting and retaining the best available human talent, 2) enhanced marketing efforts, 3) higher creativity and innovation, 4) better problem solving and 5) more organizational flexibility (Cox & Blake, 1991).

Roosevelt (1991) talks about the “richness” that diversity can give an organization that cannot be provided by a homogeneous workforce. More and better ideas, more creative solutions to problem solving, and avoiding the trap of group thinking are some of the other potential benefits described by Adler (p.133).

The theory of groupthink was developed by Irving Janis in 1982 and it concerns the quality of decisions reached in a group. Groupthink can be defined as a situation where a group of persons who individually are quite competent, meet as a group and
reach decisions which are utterly incompetent (Infante, 1993). The reason this takes place according to Janis' theory is because in this type of group there is such a high level of cohesiveness among members and a great deal of reluctance to deviate from the group position that members do not analyze problems thoroughly (Infante, et al 1993 p. 336).

The pressure towards uniformity will be much less in diverse group so the possibility of groupthink would be minimal. Just being able to overcome the process of groupthink should be a strong incentive for organizations to welcome diversity. "Groupthink constitutes one of the major sources of task group ineffectiveness. Adler explains how "some of the consequences of groupthink can include the incomplete survey of objectives and alternatives, failure to examine risks of preferred choices, failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, poor information search, selective bias in processing information at hand, and failure to work out contingency plans" (Adler, 1991 p. 134).

At this point after considering all possible impacts, the logical course for organizations would be to balance the advantages and disadvantages of having diversity in their organizations and consequently decide how to proceed. The problem is that organizations today do not have this choice. Diversity is present in organizations to an extent that the discussion of whether it is beneficial or not has become irrelevant. The top priorities now are how to deal with this diversity and how to manage it for ultimate effectiveness. Although the focus of my research is on cultural or ethnic diversity, the same observations may be made about other forms as well (gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.). The only natural and logical step at this point if for organization to guarantee diversity management interventions "that focus on ensuring that the diversity
of talents and perspectives that already exist [emphasis is mine] within an organization are well utilized" (Jackson, 1992 p.7).

Authors like Golembiewsky (1995 p.47) have identified several common perspectives on managing diversity. He analyzes advantages organizations will have if they deal effectively with diversity and disadvantages they will encounter if diversity is poorly handled or sadly neglecting. Although Golembiewsky describes these perspectives applying them to the public sector, he tailored this list from the arguments for diversity in business offered by Cox and Blake (Cox & Blake, 1991). I have taken the perspectives I have considered most relevant to organizations and communication.

Table 1. Major Advantages and Disadvantages in Managing Diversity in Organizations (adapted from Cox & Blake, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives on Major Advantages/Disadvantages in Managing Diversity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Legal:</strong> Failure to manage diversity will result in high costs of litigation as well as of adverse judgment by the courts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs:</strong> The costs of doing business will be higher with failure to manage diversity – communication will be more difficult, employee involvement will be reduced, relationships will be strained if not adversarial, and so on, as organizations become more diverse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-group conflict:</strong> A special case of costs with broad implications for the quality of working life, labor-management relationships, the quality of unionization - conflict will be greater where managing diversity is less successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attractiveness to Potential and Actual Employees:</strong> Failure in managing diversity will be a major disincentive for existing as well as potential employees. This attractiveness holds no only for minorities, who will form larger portions of the pool of employees, but also for others interested in a public work force that &quot;looks like America.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attractiveness to Clientele or Customer:</strong> Unsuccessful diversity efforts may well</td>
</tr>
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</table>
have direct implications for how an agency/organization serves its clients or customers. The latter will become increasingly diverse over time, their needs presumably will be more accessible to diverse work forces and management, and the comfort level for both service provider and client/customer should increase.

Creativity-Problem Solving: Many observers argue that organizations successful in managing diversity will bring broader perspectives, different experiences, and lessened attachment to past norms and practices, all of which can be expected to have a positive effect on creativity and problem-solving.

System Flexibility: Agencies/organizations with successful diversity efforts will be more accustomed to dealing comprehensively with a changing environment. They will be more efficient and effective in responding to environmental turbulence.

System Legitimacy: Success in managing diversity is associated with core values in our political and social philosophy and hence that success also should have regime-enhancing tendencies.

System Image: Successfully managing diversity provides another opportunity for government/organizations to exercise leadership as model employer.

Organizations today are faced with the challenge of diversity. Diversity is present everywhere and in Chang's words "it is in no danger of extinction" (Chang 1996, p. 1). On the other hand, after discussing all the benefits of diversity in the workforce and analyzing the advantages if this diversity is managed successfully, organizations should be thankful of its existence. Many of them today have realized the potential of having a diverse workforce and have made the most logical and wisest decision: they are simply finding ways to come up with workable plans to capitalize on that diversity, building resources that would otherwise remain untapped (Chang 1996, p. 7).

Communication Analysis as an Organizational Imperative

After the existence of diversity and the impact it can have on the culture of an
organization is acknowledged, understanding communication practices in the
organization becomes an imperative. "When knowledge about the nature of a particular
culture is coupled with recognition of the role of communication as a primary channel for
disseminating cultural information, several directions for promoting cultural development
in the organizations become apparent" (Bantz, 1993, p. 116). Deresky (1995) also
emphasized the importance of understanding the relationship between culture and
communication and how through this understanding managers "can move towards
constructive intercultural management" (p.98). In her exact words: "culture and
communication are so intricately intertwined that they are, essentially, synonymous." So
the analysis of the communication practices that take place between different cultural
groups can be an important component of organizational development and of managerial
control.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Diversity: General Considerations

From a Unidirectional Socialization Model to an Assimilation Model That Incorporates Diversity

Socialization has been defined by Van Maanen as "a process by which organizational members learn the required behaviors and supportive attitudes necessary to participate as a member of an organization" (Van Maanen, 1975). This "learning the ropes" requires on one hand employees to adapt, adjust or conform to the norms of the organization and at the same time allows new employees to transform from being outsiders to being insiders. (Albrecht & Bach, 1997). In addition the manner in which this process unfolds will shape how well newcomers cope with and adapt to their organizational life, and this will likely determine how satisfied and possibly productive workers they will be (Albrecht & Bach, 1997).

Until now organizations functioned using a socialization model that stressed the formal process of integrating newcomers (Albrecht & Bach, 1997), and this model was structured around the assumptions that organizational socialization had to be based on the needs, desires, expectations and behaviors of the average white male worker. A key point here is that this model is in general a one way process where individuals must conform to the organization but not vice-versa. Organizations considered for a long time that this was the best and only option for employee integration. This situation was acknowledged by Jameson and O'Mara in their book "Managing Workforce 2000," where they stated that
"we have moved from an era in which large portions of the workforce were assumed to be similar, and those who were different were expected to adapt..." (Jameson and O'Mara, 1991, p.6). Living in an era where a dominant majority of the workforce consisted of the "average white male worker," all the policies, management practices, and other aspects of the organizational culture revolved around this employee stereotype.

The pressure on behalf of organizations to make their employees socialize into these beliefs and values is presented by Jameson and O'Mara (1991) who describe how "employees who are not part of the majority of the workforce have struggled for years with subtle demands to adapt and fit in, sometimes not-so subtle biases and discrimination, and a general lack of appreciation of their viewpoint" (p.6).

Today this type of model has severe consequences for those employees that are culturally different or that do not fit the white male worker mold. The problems do not take place due to the socialization process itself (which I believe to be important and necessary for any organization) but due to the presumptions organizations use as guidelines to carry on that socialization process, and to the fact that organizations tend to focus on the actions of the organization on the individuals but forget that individuals also have distinctive characteristics affecting role performance. These presumptions and attitudes are the following: 1) North American organizations have generally presumed conformity of members; 2) North American organizations have generally presumed homogeneity of freely-associating individualistic members; 3) North American organizations have generally devised socialization programs that have stressed fitting in more than the individual's (or group's) potential effect on organizations; and 4) North
American organizations have generally not attended to cultural differences as they affect the conduct of work, the work climate or the satisfaction of individual members.

Today organizations are in need of a new model one that not only considers the needs of the organization but also the needs of the individuals. Albrecht and Bach call this model "assimilation": it includes the perspectives of both the individual and the organization (p.207). The part of the assimilation process that concerns the individuals' actions is called "individualization" and it describes the way individuals adapt work roles to best suit their own needs (Albrecht and Bach, 1997).

U.S. society has become more and more heterogeneous, and this is being reflected on organizations throughout the country. With the introduction of diverse groups in the working environment the founding beliefs of organizations are being questioned and even rejected. Employees are more defiant and not so ready to accept without judgment rules, norms and policies that are not consistent with their personal identities. This argument is supported by Simmons, Vazques, and Harris (1993), who stated that "many cannot and, today would not if they could, disappear into a cultural or organizational mainstream" (p.12).

The Melting Pot no Longer Boils. Changes in North American workplace are so sweeping that it is no longer possible, necessary, or desirable (if ever it was) to try to eliminate cultural differences of individuals and groups entering the "mainstream". Melting-pot thinking assumes that cultural diversity is a temporary nuisance that will go away if we just put enough different people to work, give them fair wages and promotions and, in general, blind ourselves to their differences. (Simmons et al. 1993, p. 6)

Jameson and O'Mara's describe the current situation in the following words:
"today's workforce doesn't look, think or act like the workforce of the past; nor does it hold the same values, have the same experiences, or pursue the same needs and desires. There are some major implications regarding these changes and the organization's ineptitude to cope with them. "Employees have grown increasingly alienated from organizations that don't seem to value them, understand their needs or care about their quality of life on or off the job" (Jameson & O'Mara, 1991, p.6). In Fernandez's words, the "new breed of employees are no longer likely to accept corporate decisions, policies and practices without questioning the whys, whens, and hows"(Fernandez, 1991, p.11).

In sum, employees no longer believe in 'one model fits all" concept. They want organizations to recognize the importance of taking into consideration differences, they do not want to adapt to the organization but in Albrecht and Bach’s words, “they want to coconstruct meaning together” (p. 206). They want to be heard and valued. Organizations with this type of employees will have to adapt an assimilation model incorporating strategies that can deal with the variety of cultures, personalities, values, beliefs and attitudes that compose a "1990's organizational environment."

Diversity: A People-related "Business" Issue

I have described how organizations are going through profound changes and that employees today, in part because of their diverse backgrounds, are less likely to accept mainstream organizational culture. Now why should organization worry about these changes that are taking place? The "assimilation" strategy could still be applied, if you consider the fact that there have always been some types of diversity in the workplace
(i.e. based on age, gender, and race). Why is it different now? It is here where the changes in values become relevant. Although it is recognizable that diversity has increased in the last decades it has been the radical changes in values that has made diversity concerns more evident. Values that have emerged like the "right to be heard" in the organization (Fernandez, 1991); "the right to participate" (Garcia & O. de la Garza, 1977), "to believe in individualism and oppose conformity" (Fernandez, 1991); "to be proud of one's cultural heritage" (Garcia & O. de la Garza, 1977), "to respect differences" (Dodd, 1995); "to expect their individual lifestyles to be accepted as long as they don't interfere with actual job performance (Fernandez, 1991), and many others. These changes in the society's value and belief system have had deep implications in what employees nowadays's expect from their organization. This situation is reflected in a quote from Lou O'Leary, a former vice president of AT &T. He writes:

Today we are faced with burgeoning pluralism. Our people are coming from a lot of different places. We simply can't manage everyone the way we were managed, and expect it, and them, to work. Observers predict this will hold true well into the future. This then, seems to us ... to be our central problem. In a company metamorphosing in the '80s and '90s, many of us are managing people who grew up in the '60s and '70s, and we are managing them with the management style and techniques we learned in the "50s. to the extent that the style of those techniques is based on eternal verities of the human condition, fine. to the extent that they are based on values that have changed and are changing, we are in trouble. (as cited in Fernandez, 1991, p.11)

Fernandez describes how the conflict between needs and aspirations of individuals working in an organization, and the goals and requirements of the organization have always existed. But while in the past the procedure has been simply to socialize the
employee into accepting the organization’s goals, today due to the increased diversity and changes in values, those strategies simply will not work.

The change in circumstances comes not so much from the changing workforce demographics, but rather from the growing tendency of people who are 'different' to celebrate their difference. Many new employees are bringing their differences with them into the organization, as opposed to shedding them at the door. They are less eager to be mainstreamed at the cost of their differences. (Roosevelt, 1992).

In his book *Managing a Diverse Workforce* Fernandez (1991) predicts that "companies that are unwilling to take into account their employees' differences will be unable to attract a sufficient number of workers to fill their needs, because workers will gravitate by preference to organizations where they are fully appreciated" (p. 2).

Simmons et al. highlight how "more people than ever are demanding that organizations adapt cultural differences that they find important" (Simmons et al. 1993, p.12). So companies who are willing to accommodate diversity, who understand the importance of adapting managing styles to respond to the needs of their diverse workforce; who have the ability to integrate the potentialities of every employee; who can fully utilize the heterogeneity of the workforce and who can simply base their policies and their managing organizational style on "openness, honesty, respect and humanness" (Fernandez, p.11) will be the first ones to succeed. Fernandez summarizes this idea in the following statement: "Companies that are willing to accommodate diversity will reap rewards in dollars and cents terms because they will fully utilize their most valuable resource: people" (p.2). This statement not only suggests the interdependence of economic and social issues for the organization but that the consideration or not of one of
the factors will have great impact on the other.

**Defining Diversity**

I have talked about the need for organizations to acknowledge diversity and the value of doing so. Here I would like to offer a definition of "diversity" and explain what this concept involves. Diversity can be understood in terms of difference. According to Kuga (1996) diversity includes consideration for the EEO factors (Equal Employment Opportunity) but propels us beyond those dimensions to include a larger range of differences, such as economic level, educational level, lifestyle, sexual orientation, geographical and regional differences, in addition to many other descriptors (p.8).

Different can also be described as terms of opposition to "sameness". When we say someone is different we acknowledge that that person has characteristics, behaviors, values or beliefs that are different from the person making the judgment. In this sense we can say that the word individual "technically implies diversity," as opposed to the term “collective”. I as an individual am different from other individuals. Although this argument may seem obvious and simplistic, it is forgotten by many organizations when a person passes from being an individual to being an employee. Under the status of "employee" the person is incorporated into a collective and absorbed by the organizational culture and conformity thus becomes the dominant norm. The I is removed, assimilated and in that environment the "this is how we do things around here" becomes the official discourse. Members of a homogeneous culture (whether they belong to the same culture or have been socialized into an organizations culture) operate with a
"false sense of freedom, for the constraints are barely felt". "He or she does not understand that in consenting to that culture [consciously or unconsciously], a form of violence is reproduced, a violence against aspects of the self (or potentially conflicting selves) and a violence against all marginalized groups" (Bourdieu, 1990 as cited in Deetz, 1995 p.59). Echoing Deetz, I would say that those individuals have freedom to express themselves but have no voice. They speak, but only the organizational discourse is used. In these cases socialization constitutes the prime concern of the organization directives. In today's organizations this situation has turned into an artificial form socialization considering the fact that we are dealing with unity without conformity. People are accepting the organizational culture but do not view it as something natural, something in agreement with or that is a reflection of who they are. This is recognized by employees for whom the word "diversity" is at the top of the list of their concerns. Due to changes in their attitudes employees are pressuring organizations to feature diversity as a high priority too.

Diversity is a term that implies more than simply having minority groups in the workplace. Diversity is a challenge organizations and employees have to take in order to incorporate the uniqueness of every individual into the organizational culture obtaining by these means an organizational balance between employees needs and the organization's goal.

Types of Diversity

Diversity can vary by race, by gender, by age, by ethnicity, by immigration, by education, by sexual orientation, by religion, by aptitude, by value and by several other
aspects (Fernandez, 1991); (Jackson & Alvarez, 1992); (Jameson & O'Mara, 1991) and
(Walker & Hanson, 1993). Diversity is a broad term that includes numerous aspects of an
individual. Groups can be studied and analyzed in different ways according to what
aspect of diversity is taken into consideration. In order for an organization to take full
advantage of the characteristics of their workforce, their approach towards diversity has
to be in Roosevelt's words: "philosophically broad enough as to encompass all
dimensions of diversity" (Roosevelt, 1992, p. 22). "An organization cannot progress
taking into consideration one or two dimensions of diversity and ignoring all others." All
aspects of diversity should be managed. Roosevelt defines diversity management as the
process that focuses on creating an environment that works naturally for the total
diversity mixture.

The suggestion that managing diversity is a process describes its evolutionary
nature, its ability to adapt and change as many times as necessary to tap the potential of
all employees. By total diversity mixture, Roosevelt is also including white males, who
are as diverse as any minority group. The importance of this concept derives from its
objective. Until recently organizations have only focused on creating a diverse workforce
or including people who traditionally have had limited participation in corporate America
(e.g. through Affirmative Action programs. Through managing diversity, organization
scan go a step further and capitalize on that diversity that they have incorporated in their
workforce. They can introduce strategies in order to take full benefits of all the
advantages that come from having diversity. However, the implementation of diversity
management strategies require not only good will and that changes be made only at a
human resource level but also at an organizational level, in order to provide the necessary structure to accommodate these changes.

To summarize this managing diversity concept, the following quote from Roosevelt (1991):

Managing diversity assumes that adaptation [including differences into the organizational culture and adapting the organization's structure to maximize these differences] is a two way street, a mutual process between the individual and the organization. "The breadth of the analysis an organization should undergo suggests that managing diversity is not a program or an initiative but rather a way of life". (p. 21)

Diversity: Specific Consideration

Cultural Diversity: Hispanics in the United States

The Hispanic population in the United States was in 1990 approximately 24.4 million. Demographic trends indicate that by the year 2060 this population will number 54.2 million (Valencia & Menchaca, 1993), thereby becoming the country's largest minority group. Estimates by the Bureau of the Census (1986) suggest that by the year 2080 Hispanics will have increased to 140.7 million, compared with 15.8 million in 1982. The largest Hispanic group in terms of size is that of Mexican origin, comprising nearly 63% of the total group. The rest of the group consists mainly of Puerto Ricans, Cubans and to a lesser degree of people from the rest of Central America and South America (Valencia & Menchaca, 1993).

The term "Hispanic" is generally used to describe individuals who live in the United States and who were either born or can trace their background to Spanish speaking
Latin America (Marin & Marin, 1991). In this way Hispanics are identified by their place of birth and common language. Hispanic is a term that has been governmentally and bureaucratically created; it had no colloquial or cultural significance prior to its formal introduction.

I intend to identify members of the Hispanic group through an alternative way proposed by Marin and Marin (1991): through their cultural values. Individuals of the Hispanic culture share values and beliefs that make them members of a group despite their country of origin, language, race and demographic characteristics in general. Some of these values include the importance placed on family, loyalty, trust, friendship, the belief in fatalism and in solidarity, and the power of and respect for hierarchy.

In sum, the Hispanic population in the United States is growing at a tremendous rate. This group can be analyzed in terms of cultural values and beliefs that will differentiate them from the rest of the population in the United States. The most important aspect of this growth is the fact that these individuals will constitute a large segment of the workforce of tomorrow. Employers and organizations will become ethnically diverse and it will be necessary for everybody to be familiar with the different cultures (Hispanic and Anglo) in order to establish successful personal and business relationships.
Communication: General Considerations

Communication Obstacles Towards Effective Diversity Management

Many organizations today have acknowledged the importance of managing their diverse workforce in ways that can be beneficial for both employees and organizations. Although they are willing to try new strategies that will allow them to capitalize on the potentialities of their workers, they are experiencing numerous concerns.

A study on 645 firms done in 1990 by Towers Perrin & Hudson Institute (as cited in Jackson, 1992, p.3) describe two primary concerns organizations have regarding diversity: 1) the belief that supervisors do not know how to motivate their diverse work-groups; and 2) uncertainty about how to handle the challenge of communicating with employees whose cultural backgrounds result in differing assumptions, values and language skills (Simons et al. 1993). Other authors like Cox (1993), Steiner (1972) and Fiedler (1966) describe communication as a main potential obstacle to performance in diverse work-groups. Cox states that "communication differences related to culture may become the source of misunderstanding and ultimately lower work-group effectiveness" (Cox, 1993, p.39). Differences in communication styles and in the meaning different groups attribute to specific communication events can influence and significantly shape employee-management relations. Misunderstanding may increase, conflict and anxiety may rise; and as a consequence, decision making can be more time-consuming and both
job satisfaction and productivity can be jeopardized. Deresky describes how "the ability of a manager to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries will largely determine the success of international business transactions or the output of culturally diverse workforce" (Deresky, 1995)

I believe that understanding communication practices becomes relevant in a heterogeneous organization where the negotiation of reality is acknowledged as a crucial factor toward effective diversity management. I intend to approach this study by rejecting the notion of communication as the mere transmission of information and by emphasizing communication as a negotiated process: a process that is built socially and completed in the interaction. In Deetz (1995) words, "communication is about transformation, not information" (p.81).

During a communication event many variables apart from the information itself should be taken into consideration -- especially contextual and cultural variables that will determine the way individuals code and decode the messages they give and receive. I intend to use the following conception of communication as a general guideline for this project, especially because it incorporates the key elements I believe are necessary to analyze communication in an environment of human diversity. For Deetz (1995) communication refers to the social processes by which meanings, identities, psychological states, social structures, and the various means of the contact of the organization with the environment are both produced, reproduced, or changed [emphasis is mine]. In both its constitutive and reproductive modes, communication processes are central to how perceptions, meanings, and routines are held in common. (p. 90)
Parting from this definition of communication it is easy to understand why communication can be the prime obstacle in an organization, particularly in one with a diverse work-force. Diverse employees all approach communication interactions armed with their own social perceptions of the world, their own ideas of how social structures should work, their own identities, their own language, their own emotional and psychological states (which includes different ways of expressing or not emotions, conflict, problems, etc.); yet they are expected to participate in communication events and organizational discourse in the same way. Many organizations are still attached to the "informational model" of communication, and as long as they still believe in this model, communication will remain an incomprehensible issue and an obstacle for employees, managers and the organization in general.

Issues of meaning and communication are never reducible to conceptions of information and information transfer; they are not just inadequate, they are contrary in intention. Information conceptions only work in situations in which consensus on meaning, identities, construction of knowledge, and basic values can be taken for granted. (Deetz, 1995 p.91)

In today's organizations it appears that this is not and will not be the case. Little can be taken for granted when working with such a diverse workforce like the one that currently exists in North American organizations, today and in the future.
Communication as a Set of Strategies in Diversity Management

If communication is one of the main obstacles towards effective diversity management, learning how to communicate effectively across cultures would be the solution. Understanding communication differences can be a powerful tool for managers wishing to implement diversity management strategies, especially considering the fact that 75% of a manager’s time is spent communicating with employees (Harris & Moran, 1981). The starting point for learning how to communicate inter-culturally is having the right mindset for communicating. According to Simmons et al. (1993) "... in a context created by diversity, a transcultural leader must be able to shift back and forth from the mindset that says that communicating means saying something to someone else, to one that sees communication as a collaborative effort between people to create meaning and action" (p.45). This is what Deetz calls "dialogic communication" and describes as the alternative to "informational communication" (which focuses on codes and means of transmission). This "dialogic communication" expresses negotiation, which is essential when dealing with a diverse group. "Dialogic communication suggests that meaning is always incomplete and partial, and the reason I talk with others is to better understand what I and they mean, hoping to find new and more satisfying ways of being together" (Deetz, 1995, pp.97-98).

It is important for managers to recognize that social experience is conditioned by each person's cultural background. "The expectations, perceptions, and experiences that
persons from different cultural backgrounds bring into social interaction situations sometimes create obstacles to effective and satisfactory communication” (Albert, 1986, p. 42). Therefore two people from different cultures although speaking the same language will be making mental associations and attributing to words meanings that are congruent with their personal experiences. “Misunderstanding occurs when the speaker and hearer do not work effectively toward congruent listening” (Simmons et al., 1993 p.46). They may be understanding each other’s words but losing the meaning behind them. This can be overcome by being aware of communication differences, by acknowledging the existence of different world views that may influence interpretation of messages, and by collaborating through active listening, effort and feedback in the production of an appropriate and effective message. Participants in an effective intercultural communication event need to have the necessary skills to create congruent messages. As Simmons explains: “congruence not only means that two people settle on the same meaning or direction, but that they are confident that this has actually taken place” (p. 48). This statement allows us to visualize two important dimensions of a successful intercultural communication event: appropriateness and effectiveness. These two dimensions were analyzed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984, as cited in Hammer, 1989) in their communication competence theory. They described how people use these dimensions to base their judgment of communication performances. Hammer (1989) analyzed and described this statement in the following way: “Behavior is appropriate when it meets contextual and relational standards or expectations and effective when it is functional in achieving desirable ends or goals or satisfying interactants needs” (p. 248).
Now, what is an appropriate behavior? Albert, posited that "because cultures exist in different ecologies, they differ in conceptions of what behaviors are appropriate and desirable. When individuals from two different cultures interact, they may find that their conceptions of behavior are incompatible". (p. 42) She continues describing how misunderstanding occurs for primarily two reasons: 1) because we expect the other person to behave differently from the way they in fact behave and 2) because we use different standards to evaluate their behavior.

This cross-cultural misevaluation is also discussed by Adler (1991), who argues that cultural conditioning and assumptions strongly affects evaluation. "Cross-culturally, we use our own culture as a standard of measurement, judging that which is like our own culture as normal and good and that which is different as abnormal and bad. Our own culture becomes a self-reference criterion" (p.83).

All cultural variables (expectation, perceptions, background, knowledge, cultural norms and rules, approved behaviors and language) and contextual factors can create "noise" in the communication processes and therefore lead to misunderstanding, confusion and miscommunication. Managers and employees from different cultures who are communicating with each other, must be aware of these variables; of the "noise" they can originate and how they will impact the communication event and its outcome.
Communication: Specific Considerations

Communication Differences between Anglos and Hispanics

I have just stated that there are cultural and contextual variables that can greatly influence communication. In the following section I cover some of the specific variables related to Hispanics in the United States and the ways this group differs from the Anglo group when it comes to communication. I am aware of many differences among Hispanics themselves (i.e., Puerto Ricans differ in many ways from Mexicans, and Mexicans differ from Chicanos, etc.) I feel confident enough to say (due to the literature reviewed and from personal experience) that the variables analyzed in this section can relate to most groups therefore can be taken as part of the Hispanic cultures in general.

The examples of this study all deal with Mexicans (and Chicanos). This occurs for several reasons: 1) six out of ten Hispanics in the United States are of Mexican origin or Mexican background; 2) most of the literature reviewed dealt with this population; and 3) the data for this research was gathered in an organization in Phoenix, Arizona, where all the Hispanic employees were Mexican or Chicanos (a situation mirroring the general population of the area).

To make this section more comprehensible, I have divided it into two parts. The first part deals with context variables (which are external to the individual and the Hispanic culture), and the second part deals with cultural variables (that derive directly from culture).
Contextual Variables

Although culture can be the main set of determinants for the communication style of a certain group, in some cases, there are also important contextual factors that any manager or employee should consider when communicating with them. These factors may produce in these employees internal conditions (e.g., feelings) that will negatively influence the way they communicate. This can be more pronounced if the other person in this communication event is from another cultural group, and in the United States especially if that person is Anglo. The most important factors which several authors agree on are discrimination, stereotyping, oppression and powerlessness (Sue Akutsu & Higashi, 1985; Casas, 1985; Valencia & Menchaca, 1993; Kaune-Wild, 1993; Maldonado & Cross, 1979 and Aguilar, 1979. Let me proceed by briefly describing these four variables and analyzing their implication in the Hispanic communication process.

Daniels and Kitano (as cited in Maldonado & Cross, 1979) describe how “members of discriminated groups, no matter what their social class or position, will manifest the traits of self-doubt, self-hate and negative self-concept.” A majority of Hispanics in the United States are the target of all kinds of discriminations, related to their race, immigrant status, poverty or illiteracy (Sue et al., 1985). Employment instability (e.g. seasonal farm jobs) is also a source of discrimination. For example, “within many communities farm labor continues to be one of the most undesirable occupations” (Valencia & Menchaca, 1993). In urban areas, many of the underpaid jobs or jobs that are commonly rejected by Anglos are filled by Hispanics.

According to Harris & Moran, (19981) “members of minority groups inevitably
find that no matter how good their credentials or past success, the prospect of identity
groups discrimination cannot be ruled out”. This group stereotyping was described in
1970 by Groebler et al., who gave a picture of the Mexican American that fitted the folk
culture as the following:

He is poor and proud. He cherishes a value orientation which emphasizes
interpersonal relations rather than ideas, abstractions, or material
possessions. He resents success, assimilation, and personal advancement.
He is very protective of his Spanish culture, he is Catholic, and he often
has an extended family. He is easily identifiable by his Spanish surname,
his inadequate or accented English, his lack of employable skill and social
graces acceptable to the dominant group; his dress, mannerism and food
habits. (Groebler et al. 1970, pp.138-139, as cited in Maldonado & Cross,
1979)

Twenty years later this picture does not seem any better. Poor, proud, family
oriented, stubborn, protective of the language, holding on to his/her culture, inadequate,
unacceptable, lacking, threatening. All these adjectives can still be used to describe the
way many people view Mexicans in the United States. The only difference (which also is
an originator of other problems) is that now we have second and third generations of
Mexicans who belong to a different group called Chicanos.

There are still many controversies regarding who falls under the label “Chicano”.
Mexicans themselves can many times not answer this question in one way. Some say that
one is a Chicano/a when born in the US from Mexican parents. Others say that it only
takes a Mexican father to make you a Chicano if one is born in the States. Whether it is
one case or the other Chicanos are a distinctive group who consider themselves very
different from their neighbors the Mexicans. However, no matter how hard they try to
separate themselves from the "over the border Mexicans," they still suffer great
discrimination and are heavily stereotyped. Dr. Martha Menchaca (Valencia & Menchaca,
1993) also analyzes the various stereotypes attributed to Chicanos and compares them to
the ones attributed to Mexicans. The following table shows a summary of these
stereotypes:

Table 2. Common Stereotypes Attributed to Mexicans and Chicanos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON STEREOTYPES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Chicanos are erroneously stereotyped as newcomer immigrants (in spite of the fact that Mexican settlements in the United States began as early as 1598).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They believe that Mexican American people can be measured by using a unilateral compendium where at one end of the scale are the Mexican immigrants and on the other the US-born, urbanized Chicanos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican immigrants possess the following characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they are farm laborers and agrarian in dress style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they are intellectually inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they are poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicanos posses the following characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they lead an urban lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they are not farm laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- they belong to the middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicanos are also stereotyped as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- drunks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- criminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- drug addicts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Dr. Menchaca (1993) also describes how “in a survey conducted in a central Californian city, [she does not mention which], one quarter of the Anglo American respondents stated that they would find it distasteful to eat with a Mexican, and 37% stated that Mexican were shiftless and dirty.” In addition to the stereotyping Mexicans and Chicanos often complain that Anglos cannot differentiate between these two groups and throw everybody in the same bag.

The color of skin is also an important basis for prejudice and discrimination and it can influence the life of the Hispanic worker from the moment he/she is born. For example in a study conducted by Daniels & Kitano they describe how “the minority groups child soon learns the negative value placed on dark skin by contemporary American Society and the darker Mexican American is a constant reminder to himself [sic] of the stigma of his [sic] ethnic background and accompanying feeling of inferiority” (Daniels and Kitano, 1970, as cited in Maldonado & Cross, 1979).

These external variables of discrimination and stereotyping are important to consider, because that have had or can have severe implications on Hispanic self-esteem. Many “Mexican Americans have developed a highly negative self-concept” (Maldonado
& Cross, 1979). This low self-esteem and negative self-concept will condition the way the Hispanic person approaches a communication situation and how they respond to it. This will be more evident if the person one is communicating with is a superior (e.g., a manager), and even more if this manager is Anglo.

The following quote introduces us to two other variables that will shape and determine the way Hispanics will approach and participate in a communicative event.

Power differences between groups in an immediate setting, are congruent with those reflected in the supra system. When there is an imbalance in the power differences between groups at the local level and those in the larger system, more dysfunctional relations will occur between groups. (Aldefer & Smith, 1982, as cited in Kossek and Zonia 1993).

The external variables of Powerlessness and Oppression also have great impact in the life of Hispanics and should be also taken into consideration by the organization. In addition to suffering continuous discrimination and stereotyping Hispanic groups are most of the times socially and economically disadvantaged with respect to other ethnic groups. These disadvantages produce in them stressful life conditions and little hope for improvement. They feel powerless and oppressed (Valencia & Menchaca, 1979). At work they can get only to certain positions and many times they don’t know if they are hired for their abilities in performing the job or to fill the required minority quota in the organization. Frustration also comes from the feeling that it will be hard if not impossible for them to be promoted or to succeed. The consequences are that they start expecting less and therefore actually achieving less. With regard to oppression, this variable is applied to several areas. Wodarski (1992) talks about oppression when describing the
ideology of the melting pot: "The melting pot has been a strong force in this country; there have been strong pressures to coerce people to discard their ethnic culture, and certain value systems have been presumed to be somewhat antithetical to the American way of life, such as their fatalism (perceived lack of personal control over environmental outcomes) and present-time orientation". Ramirez exemplifies how the "melting pot ideology" is the main source of justification for this oppression.

The underlying assumption, in addition to the one that Chicanos [Hispanics] are to blame for any prejudice and discrimination directed at them, is that these patterns of prejudice and discrimination would cease to exist if only Mexican Americans [Hispanics] would become more like Anglo Americans [stress is mine]. The ascribed values and stereotypes associated with Chicanos (e.g., present-oriented, mediate gratification, passive, low level of aspiration, non goal oriented, non success oriented...) serve as the rationalizations for the continued oppression, racism, and discrimination that is directed toward them. (Ramirez, 1988, p.139)

Economic oppression is also a big factor. Many Hispanics are getting paid much less than Anglos doing the same job. Why aren't there any complaints? Well, for one thing for Hispanics the crucial factor is to have a job at all. If they don't take it someone else will. Second as many of them say, they are a bearing culture: "We learn how to bear." They learn to bear with injustice in order to survive. Better an exploitive, low paying job than no job at all. When it comes to putting food on the table Hispanics can bury their orgullo and work for nothing, and in many of the cases the worst of the jobs here is probably better than anything they would find in Mexico. Of course the fact that they have learned to live and accept oppression does not mean they appreciate it and this situation will certainly condition the Hispanic’s behavior.
In sum, discrimination, stereotyping, powerlessness and oppression are four external variables that should be carefully taken into consideration by the organization when dealing which Hispanic employees. These variables should be not only acknowledged but also analyzed in the particular organizational environment to see what influence they are having on, and how they may be conditioning attitudes, communication processes and the work life of each employee.

Cultural Variables

I have just described how contextual variables can shape or modify communication practices. Although these variables are very important they are not the only ones that can influence communication events. There are cultural variables (in addition to personality factors which will not be discussed in this paper) that will also have great impact on the way Hispanics communicate.

Dodd (1995) describes how "culture inherently contains communication systems" and that "the communication systems we use are rooted in the culture where they are used" (p.23). The main implication to this statement is that the communication system we use (symbols, rituals, customs, formats, expectations, interpretation etc.) will depend on the culture we belong to. Anglo-Saxons and Hispanics belong to two very different cultural groups; therefore, their communication systems tend to be very different. "Cultural misunderstanding occurs when we fail to match the appropriate symbols and general communications system to the culture" we are trying to communicate with (Dodd, 1995, p.23). Speaking and understanding the language of the other culture is important
but not sufficient for effective communication. What also should be taken into consideration is "communication style." Brislin (1993) talks about communication style as one of the more difficult aspects of intercultural encounters (p.217). He describes how people generally tend to associate communication style with personality factors. For example, if a person is quiet, their behavior would be interpreted as shy or uninterested; or if that person is always interrupting their behavior would commonly be interpreted as rude. People usually don't associate communication style with cultural variables -- that a person's background provides guidance for conversing with others, that their culture encourages silence or encourages interruption. This can bring serious consequences because if we think a person is rude or is not interested in what we are saying our first reaction could be to terminate all contact with this person. Dodd also emphasized the importance of understanding communication styles derived from culture in addition to the culture's communication symbols. For example it is important to know the language of the other party but also how and when to use it.

Although it is understandable that not everybody from a culture will behave in the same way (due to personality factors), there are certain variables that can be considered as representative of a culture and that can help guide behavior and lead to a successful communication event.

First, I review some of the cultural variables frequently covered by literature on intercultural communication and that most scholars agree influence communication behavior. I have taken each variable and associated them either with the Anglo or Hispanic culture. Second, I add variables that are particular of the Hispanic culture and
that although not normally addressed in literature are in my eyes very important determinants of Hispanic communication style.

**Table 3. Variables Frequently Discussed in Research That Can Affect Hispanics' Communication Style**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANGLO CULTURE</th>
<th>HISPANIC CULTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUALISM</td>
<td>COLLECTIVISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POWER DISTANCE (LOW)</td>
<td>POWER DISTANCE (HIGH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE (LOW)</td>
<td>UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE (HIGH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONOCHRONIC</td>
<td>POLYCHRONIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOING CULTURE</td>
<td>BEING CULTURE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individualism Vs Collectivism**

Individualistic groups tend to put more emphasis on personal achievements and individual needs. Collective groups on the other hand place value on people being part of groups, and working toward their goals as group members. These two groups will have very different ways of communicating. Research by Kim, Sharkey and Singelis (1992 as cited in Dodd, 1995 p. 102) have confirmed the relationship between these variables and the way these groups would communicate. Some of the main differences they offer are the following:
Individualists emphasize:

- concern for clarity, directness
- truth telling, straight talk
- meeting personal needs and goals rather than group
- self-referent messages, more "I" than "we"
- more independent linear pattern of conversation

Collectivists emphasize:

- indirect communication
- concern for others' feelings, avoiding hurting others, saving face (not causing embarrassing situations)
- avoiding negative evaluation from a hearer
- less goal direction
- more interdependent, group concerned
- fewer linear patterns of conversation

The use of indirect communication is a major issue with Hispanics. Hispanics use this type of communication, called *indirectas* on a daily basis with two main objectives: 1) to save face (the other party's and their own) and 2) to avoid conflict. Saving face is very important and nothing can be more upsetting for a Hispanic than to be embarrassed in public. A manager used to criticizing employees in front of a group (so the message will be extended to all employees) should be very aware of this. Public criticism will lead not only to humiliation but to anger and resentment on the part of the Hispanic employee. Conflict is regarded as negative and destructive of relationships and through the use of these *indirectas* direct confrontation is avoided. Taylor and Sanchez (1991) describe *indirectas* as "stipulations against direct confrontation or aggression which requires that anger and other negative feelings be channeled and shown indirectly." Some of these ways are avoiding the other, refusing to talk (the typical "*no pasa nada*" or "everything is alright") or even physical ailments like falling sick. As a consequence, if an Anglo person
only evaluates or takes into consideration oral communication they may never be aware that a problem is taking place.

For a Hispanic, constructive criticism is many times harder to accept. The word *constructive* makes no difference. The emphasis seems to fall on criticism, and Hispanics are not very good and receiving negative evaluations. This situation changes quite a bit if the criticism is done in a way that it does not embarrass the hearer and does not blame them for the mistakes and if it comes from a person the Hispanic respects. For example, a person using the phrase "I told you this should be done in this way" (which is a common way used by many Anglos to point out mistakes), should re-word his/her statement to something like “I think I must not have been very clear with my instructions,” or “I think that maybe you misinterpreted what I wanted you to do” if they want to get a better reaction or result.

The use of different patterns of communication can also be frustrating. Hispanics do not use linear patterns so they are comfortable jumping around from topic to topic. When they are in a group it is very common for them to be holding different simultaneous conversations and many times not finishing any of them. This can be very overwhelming for someone not used to this way of thinking or conversing.

**Power Distance**

This concept refers to the "amount of distinctiveness among various groups in their access to power and in their relative status levels" (Brislen, 1993, p.254). Whether a group belongs to a culture considered "high" or "low" on power distance, several aspects of their communication behavior and expectations will vary. The United States rated 40
and Mexico rated 81 on Power distance. (Hofstede, 1980)

**Low Power Distance:**

- Individuals are guided by laws, norms and everyday behavior that make power distinctions as minimal as possible. (Brislin, 1993)
- Employees feel more comfortable disagreeing with their bosses.
- Manager is more of an initiator (Hofstede, 1980). There is respect for a consultative type of manager.
- More delegating managerial ideal with more de facto delegation (Hofstede, 1980). Individuals want to give their input on what has to be done.
- Communication is more horizontal. (Dodd, 1995)
- Less formalized rituals signaling respect, attentiveness, and agreement. (Dodd, 1995)
- People are more likely to entertain the possibility of being on a first-name basis with their boss and spending voluntary free time together (Brislin, 1993)

**High Power Distance:**

- Less comfort with disagreement.
- Employees may loose respect for a consultative type of manager. They believe a good manager gives detailed instructions about a task. (Hofstede, 1980).
- People expect hierarchy. An authoritarian style of communication is more frequent (Dodd, 1995)
- More formalized rituals signaling respect, attentiveness, and agreement (Dodd, 1995)
- Stronger ideological push toward models of formal participation (i.e. boardroom participation) but also resistance against de facto participation. (Hofstede, 1980).

Individuals want to participate, through for example committees, councils etc. but want to keep power distance high. They want to participate in decisions but be told what to do.

Power distance is an important variable to consider especially in an organization where power differences are more emphasized than in other settings (like home). Anglo managers have to realize that Hispanic employees are not only used to hierarchy but that most of the time they feel comfortable with it. They expect some kind of authority to guide them. Riding describes how the paternalistic and authoritarian structure of the family also prepare Mexicans to accept the hierarchical social arrangements that prevail
in the country at large (Riding, 1984). Hierarchy also helps reduce Hispanics anxiety if
they know exactly who to respond to, precisely what the orders are, and what they are
supposed to do. In addition, many times in situations where orders are not clear or there is
uncertainty of the task that needs to be done Hispanics will leave the job incomplete
rather than risking doing it wrong. That is why detailed instructions properly conveyed
are crucial.

Hispanics also use more formalized rituals to show deference and respect to
someone with more power and expect to be treated in the same way if they are the ones in
that situation. The form Usted is used in all situations even when addressing coworkers
and the use of Don or Doña when addressing an older person (i.e. Don José, Doña
Maria) is also very common. Although Hispanics in the United States are more
accustomed to calling other employees and many times their boss by their first names (a
US custom in many organizations) when referring to them in Spanish the word Señor or
Señora is generally added before the name.

Younger people say the single word that best describes the character of the
Mexican American is respeto, which means respect, but also has overtones of deference
and awe. Respeto is more than the tone of social relations; it is the relation of one person
to another, child to parent, student to teacher, citizen to police officer, worker to boss, and
neighbor to neighbor. Ideally, respeto does not operate in only one direction; ideally it
serves as a brake on the driving individualism of Anglo society and makes a person more
familial, more communal in his orientation (Shorris, 1992 p. 106). This notion of respect
can be a powerful tool for managers because once he/she gains the respect of his/her
employees they will have their total support and loyalty.

Being involved in social activities is very common among workers but not very well accepted with superiors. This is a major difference with Anglo employees who in many organizations are occasionally joined by their managers for a Friday happy hour. If a Hispanic is befriending their boss outside the necessary working relations, he/she will probably be viewed in a suspicious way by the rest of the group. The first reaction is that this person may be receiving favors or getting special treatment from the boss. Going out for a beer after work with your boss like buddies is not a regular custom for most Hispanics in the U.S.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This concept refers to the level of uncertainty or ambiguity that an individual or a group can live with. Extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety and cultures can be categorized in low uncertainty avoidance or high uncertainty avoidance according to the amount of tolerance they demonstrate towards uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980; Brislin, 1993; Dodd, 1995). The United States ranked 46 in contrast to Mexico’s 82 on Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance Index (p.165).

Low on Uncertainty Avoidance:

- Lower job stress
- Less emotional resistance to change
- Hope of success
- More risk-taking
- A manager need not be an expert in the field he manages
- Hierarchical structure of organizations can be by-passed for pragmatic reasons
- Preference for broad guidelines
- Rules may be broken for pragmatic reasons
• Conflict in organizations is natural
• Competition between employees can be fair and right
• Less structuring activities
• Fewer written rules
• Managers more involved in strategy
• Managers more interpersonal oriented and flexible in their style
• Managers more willing to make individual and risky decisions
• Less ritual behavior

_High on Uncertainty Avoidance:_

• Higher job stress
• More emotional resistance to change
• Fear of failure
• Less risk-taking
• A manager must be an expert in the field he manages
• Preference for clear requirements and instructions
• Hierarchical structures of organizations should be clear and respected
• Company rules should not be broken
• Conflict in the organization is undesirable
• Competition between employees is emotionally disapproved of
• More structuring activities
• More written rules
• Managers more involved in details
• Managers more task-oriented and consistent in their style
• Managers less willing to make individual and risky decisions
• More ritual behavior

Uncertainty is a very important variable to take into consideration because it is closely related to the external variables mentioned previously. Discrimination and powerlessness will make Hispanics have more anxiety than they normally would when working in their own country. High stress on the job and fear of failing is a common theme among Hispanics in the United States, and lead to some of the other characteristics mentioned in the previous list: to preference for clear requirements and instruction, to the fact that company rules should not be broken (and if they are, nobody should know about
it), to feeling that conflict should be avoided and to the belief that ritual behavior is very necessary. All these attitudes and behaviors give the Hispanic a sense of job security. If they follow the rules, do not get into trouble, and know exactly what is expected from them, they have no reason to worry about being fired.

Time Orientation

This concept was developed by Edward Hall, who used it to describe the way different cultures processed time (Hall, 1976). These internal views and conceptions of time can, according to Dodd (1995), have all kinds of implications on the communication climate and the consequent behavior. According on how cultures visualize time, they can be divided into two groups: those with a monochronic time orientation and those with a polychronic time orientation. The Anglo culture belongs to the first type while the Hispanic culture belongs to the second. Deep frustration and misunderstandings will take place if these variables are not acknowledged and taken into consideration. Hall describes some of the characteristics a monochronic or polychronic individual may have:

Monochronic Time Orientation:

- Think in a linear fashion
- Are punctual (Levine, West & Reis, 1980 as cited in Marin & Marin, 1991)
- Are future-oriented. Prefer to delay gratification.
- Individuals do one thing at a time
- Believe that accomplishments and tasks can and should be performed during each segment of time, one after another.
- Have a high need for closure (e.g. completing a task). They are dissatisfied with dangling ends.
Polychronic Time Orientation:

- Think in terms of pictures or configurations.
- Are often not punctual
- Are present oriented. Have problems delaying gratification
- Think about and attempt to do a number of things simultaneously.
- Experience at times high degrees of information overload. This can lead to frustration and procrastination.

This cultural trait can have severe implication not only on communication but on the relationship between employees. For example while lack of punctuality is very common among Hispanic culture, it is considered very rude in the United States. Thus, it can put the Anglo waiting person in a bad mood just before the communication situation. This flexibility with time can be even greater if the Hispanic person does not feel that a certain event or activity necessarily demands punctuality, for example a simply meeting with a friend (Marin & Marin, 1991 p. 16). “Hispanics feel they are on time even if they arrive 15 or 20 minutes after the appointed time (Marin, 1987 as cited in Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 16). So managers should emphasize the importance of being on time for a meeting and that a meeting will be starting at a certain time with whomever is present.

Planning for the future can also be a challenging task for any manager working with Hispanics.

It is impossible to know what time it is in the Latino world. So many theories have been advanced by philosophers and psychologists that no one knows for certain whether it is yesterday or today. The only assurance given by every scholar is that tomorrow is not under consideration. (Shorris, 1992, p. 111)

This quote by Shorris gives us an idea of where Hispanics set their priorities.
They are very present oriented and not very concerned about the far future\(^1\) This characteristic is one that Anglo managers should be very aware of because it is one that will constantly produce conflict, especially in such a future oriented culture and society like the Anglo Saxon.

**Being vs. Doing Culture**

This being-doing duality is a concept developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck to describe different ways of viewing the world (Dodd, 1995). Communication problems will take place when members of a Doing culture try to work with members of a Being culture. Generally speaking the Anglo culture belongs to the first group, while the Hispanic culture to the second. The characteristics these two groups have are described by Dodd (1995) in the following way:

**Doing Culture:**

- Prefer activity, productivity and measurable accomplishments.
- They often develop strategies to invoke guilt on its members for inactivity and loss of productivity.
- They emphasize goals, functional information and less interpersonal dimensions (Dodd, 1995 p. 110)

\(^1\) "In Spanish one says tomorrow morning as *mañana en la mañana*, and it is true that *mañana en la mañana es en la mañana*. That is, tomorrow morning is in the future. From this evidence it would seem that either the future is very close in the Latino mind or tomorrow is very distant. The distinction determines the moral sense of the culture. If tomorrow is so distant that is cannot be considered, actions have no consequences" (Shorris, 1992, p. 112)
Being Culture:

- Emphasize a meditative value, stressing personal thought, and discussion.
- They value interpersonal relationships, spontaneity and harmony.

Once again, the value that the Hispanic culture places on interpersonal relationships leads them to the use of face saving strategies like the already discussed *indirectas*.

In addition to the five variables I have just discussed, there are several other concepts I believe to be relevant to the understanding of Hispanic culture. These are the concepts of *confianza* (trust), *fatalismo* (fatalism), *orgullo* (pride), *simpatía* (has no literal translation), *espacio personal* (personal space), *solidaridad* (solidarity), *pertenencia* (sense of belonging), *aguantarse* (sense of bearing). These factors serve as guidelines under which most Hispanics live and behave and will certainly influence their communication style. I briefly discuss each of them for a better understanding because some of them don't have a literal translation or they lose their essence when being translated.
Table 4. Additional Variables That Can Condition Hispanics’ Communication Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADDITIONAL VARIABLES</th>
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<tr>
<td>CONFIANZA (Trust)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FATALISMO (Fate or destiny)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORGULLO (Pride)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIMPATIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESPACIO PERSONAL (Personal space)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOLIDARIDAD (Solidarity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERTENENCIA (Sense of belonging)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGUANTARSE (To bear or endure)</td>
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<td>MACHISMO</td>
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Confianza

This concept refers to the amount of trust you can put on a certain person. This is one of the most important factors for Hispanics because the amount of trust they have for someone will determine their attitude and behavior toward that person. When someone is really trusted he/she becomes almost like a member of the family and holds many privileges like the privilege of being confided in. Hispanics usually don't speak about personal problems unless they have reached a certain level of trust; and that level is much higher than an Anglo person usually needs to disclose information. Confianza (rather than
working relations or frequenting the same club) is the base for friendship.

**Fatalismo**

This concept is related to the Hispanic belief in destiny; to their belief in a lack of ability to control the future. They believe in good and bad luck and that a person's life is determined not by personal achievements but by whether that person was born lucky or not. "Nació con buena estrella" (he/she was born under a good star) is a common saying. This belief can create negative or positive results: passivity, pessimism, acceptance, endurance, pliancy and evasion when the person believes fate has failure destined for them; or good luck, ability to go on, new opportunities and new relationships when the person believes that their fate is success (Dodd 1995, p. 111).

**Orgullo**

This concept refers to pride and it can be analyzed at two different levels: at a personal level and at a social level. At a personal level too much orgullo can sometimes have negative effects because the person becomes stubborn, close-minded and can be also in a defensive position. When a Hispanic is muy orgullosa he/she has a hard time admitting being wrong and suffers a great amount for not being able to share his/her feelings. This jeopardizes personal relations tremendously, and this is very grave for Hispanics who place great value on these relationships.

On a social level I find the concept of pride fascinating to analyze because of its function and of the importance Hispanics give to it. It many times appear as if their survival and their unity has depended on it. They have pride in their race, in their language and in their culture, and this is what keeps them together. Hispanics see each
other as hermanos (brothers) and in conflictive situations will stand up for each other like real family. Even the name "La Raza" (the race) although a term used for political reasons is a self-identification label chosen by many Hispanics to describe themselves as one.

Simpatía

This is a term that has no literal or translation. A person is either simpático/a or they are not. It has no middle point. Marin & Marin describe simpatía as a concept that emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant social relationships (Marin & Marin 1991, p.12). A person who is simpático is socially more accepted and liked. Marin & Marin describe various behaviors that are related to this concept: overall preference for avoiding interpersonal conflict, use of socially desirable responses, low refusal rate and promises even though these may not be fulfilled.

Espacio personal (Personal space)

Hispanics are from contact cultures. They prefer closer physical space when they are interacting. They tend to stand closer, sit closer, and if someone (e.g., and Anglo) moves back it can be interpreted as lack of interest and dislike. This is a major problem between cultures who are dissimilar regarding space (e.g., Anglos and Hispanics). While Anglos may view Hispanics as pushy and feel uncomfortable by their insistence on closer contact, Hispanics in the same situation view Anglos and cold and distant.

Pertenencia (Sense of belonging)

This sense of belonging is crucial for Hispanics, and they cultivate it as much as possible. It is important for them to belong and consequently group activities are very frequent. Shorris (1992) describes this sense of belonging in the following words:
The Latino world builds outward from the life-giving center of home, church, and town. The person belongs to the group, relies on the group, is a person by virtue of belonging. Not that Latinos are incapable of self-reliance, but self-reliance would be considered loneliness. (emphasis added)

This need to belong can many times have negative effects in an organization. We usually group with those whom we identify with and with those who accept us (who we share the language, history, values and beliefs). Therefore, Hispanics tend to group in their workplace constituting a we-they dichotomy, where "they" corresponds to the rest of the organization. These types of coalitions can be beneficial if for example they encourage teamwork, but can also be negative during conflict situations if they are the basis for alliances.

Solidaridad (solidarity)

Group solidarity is very important for Hispanics. One should always help those who are in need (extend la mano a quien lo necesite or extend a hand to anyone who needs it). This value may derive from the Catholic religion which for many Hispanics is a key source of their moral values. It is very common for Hispanics to get involved in extended family or friends problems and try to resolve them. Many times problems are taken as own especially if the conflict revolves around family members. There is a saying that gives a clear picture of this: "Te metes conmigo/ con ella/ con él, te metes con toda la familia" (you mess around with me/ her/ him, you mess around with the whole family).

The next excerpt is from the book Latinos by Earl Shorris (1992). He describes the situation of a Chicana who had spent her childhood as a Mexican but had lived most
of her grownup life as an Anglo. Now, she has returned to her childhood culture. This woman describes the value of solidarity in the Mexican culture.

The cultural differences were apparent to her now. “Twenty years ago, if someone in my family was sick, I wouldn’t drop everything and go to their bedside; twenty years ago I was Anglo. The Anglo world thinks of what is practical. In the Mexican world, you do something because the other person wants you to. Immigration officials wonder why people go back to Mexico because of so many emergencies.”

She muses on herself, her life: “When I was growing up (in a Mexican family), I was much more generous than I am now. When I was Anglo, in Oregon, I remember berating a family for helping a sister when they could hardly feed themselves.”

Aguantar (to bear, endure)

*Aguantar* is still to many Mexicans a most important part of their world-view. According to Shorris (1992) the verb means “to bear, to endure, to stand, to tolerate, to put up with. The noun formed from it, *aguante*, means fortitude, patience, endurance, resistance to toil and fatigue”. (p. 105). When asked why certain life conditions, or work treatments are tolerated many Mexicans hold up their heads and simply respond “Porque nosotros somos así, nos aguantamos” (“because we are like that, we endure”). Most cannot give a clear explanation of why they accept injustices or why they are even proud they do. ²

*Aguantar* is not entirely Mexican; under certain circumstances it is Spanish as well. In the *mestizo* character of Mexico, the fatalism of the Indians combined comfortably with the Spanish willingness to endure danger and suffering. Thus, *aguantar*

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² Person of mixed races (i.e. Spanish and Native)
came to mean enduring one's fate bravely and with a certain style.

Older generations “who still promote the heroics of fatalism” (Shorris, 1992) attribute this quality to destiny and believe that one cannot fight destiny, one must simply follow its path. In contrast, younger people are less readily to simply accept their fate but more willing to help design it. They have a hard time believing in a philosophy of life that perpetuates endurance and self-resignation. This situation brings much controversy and confusion in their lives. At some point they have to decide whether or not they want to abandon their state of aguantar in order to succeed, because as Shorris clearly describes “in those Mexican-Americans who have succeeded best in the United States the quality of aguantar seems largely to have disappeared” (p. 108).

Machismo

This concept refers to the role of males with the Hispanic culture. As Padilla describes, in Mexican culture, gender roles are rather rigid and clearly defined with man being the authoritative figure and women the nurturing loving person who attempts to meet family needs (Padilla 1977, as cited in Kaune-Wilde, 1993). Many Mexicans who come to the United States although forced to make numerous changes to survive often have trouble accepting the authority of women, and taking orders from women in the workplace. This attitude is even stronger if the person with authority is a Hispanic woman.

I have just discussed some of the most frequent variables that can influence Hispanic behaviors and communication style. In an organization, managers, other Anglo employees and Hispanic employees should be aware of these variables and of the many
differences between their cultures in order to prevent conflict and ensure maximum effectiveness during communication interactions.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic Analysis of Organizational Culture

If there ever was a logical method-perspective fit, it is between ethnography and organizational culture. As a method, ethnography centers on the understanding and representation of people and their practices frequently focusing on localized cultures such as communities, organizations, and social groups. The organizational culture perspective focuses on how people collectively construct an organizational culture through their communicative practices. Thus, for both ethnography and organizational culture, understanding people's practices is the central goal. (Bantz, 1993, p. 107)

Given that the main purpose of this study the analysis of the communication practices (part of the organizational culture) of two diverse groups, Hispanic employees and Anglo employees, within an organization; I chose for this project the ethnographic approach.

Qualitative research (with which ethnography is usually associated) is encouraged today by many authors in the field of communication as a way of gathering rich and broad-based empirical data. Philipsen (1982) describes how until recently most of the empirical work done in the field has relied on quantitative methods, and that this work, although having led to considerable successes, has been the center of several concerns regarding a) heavy reliance on artificial contexts; b) constraints of hypothesis-testing and related operations that limit the researcher's freedom to provide exploratory answers; and c) the detached involvement in the social context of the research which precludes empathic understanding of behaviors and people which many scholars seek to systematize:
The gap between the lab and the real world is so great that one is hardly justified in the conclusion that what has been established in the lab constitutes a verified fact about nature. (Herbert Kelman, 1968 as cited in Phillipsen, 1982)

Considering that my goal as a research is to "watch people in their own territory and interact with them in their own language, on their own terms" (Kirk & Miller, 1986), in order to observe, describe and interpret patterns of behavior, and "structures of signification" (Geertz, 1973), as they emerge from the participants themselves, all this in a natural setting, I consider qualitative research my most appropriate and effective option. This is my intention and thus this project is of a qualitative nature.

Finally I have chosen this type of methodological approach for the following reason: In addition to the variety of methodological options that qualitative research offers (e.g., analytic induction, content analysis, elite interviewing, in situ observations, study of life histories), qualitative research is socially concerned (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 10). Phillipsen describes the advantage of qualitative research being a socially located phenomenon because "the investigator becomes personally involved or at least exposed to the phenomena of interest". "Socially concerned": those should be the key words for any researcher and they are very important ones for me. I have applied a qualitative approach in order to be close to my object of study (or subjects in my case). I am a true believer that being there, participating, feeling the events is the only way to come up with results that will be satisfying for everybody involved. As Phillipsen describes, "the quality case study writer is more interested in experience than in experiment" and this can make their findings more applicable to real life.
The specific methodology I have applied in order to conduct this study is ethnography. I have done ethnographic field research by having firsthand participation in the "social world I was observing and by later producing a written account of that world by drawing upon such participation" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995, p. 1).

Although I will not presume that this is an ethnographic study of the culture(s) of the organization where this project took place (this due mainly to time limitations), I have tried to capture in a multidimensional way how issues of managing diversity are seen with respect to communication practices by the two groups under study. This project is the result of approximately 90 hours of in situ observation, (including participation in organizational activities) over 50 hours of intensive interviewing and some analysis of the organization's written communication. Through the description and analysis of all the data gathered and the transcription of key excerpts from participant's interview responses, I have tried to represent reality as closely as possible.

Data-Gathering Techniques

During my research I collected data using three different techniques: general and selective observation in the workplace, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of organizational documents. Let me first describe the importance of in situ observations for this study.

In-situ Observations

The overall objective was to observe first hand communication events as they
took place in an everyday context. Goodall (1989) gives a beautiful picture of the importance of in-situ observation for a researcher who has this purpose in mind. He says:

"To understand the cultural life of an organization or a community as far as true understanding can be achieved a scholar must listen and watch: specifically, listen to stories and watch what happens when they are told" (p. xvii). He also states that in order to fairly represent reality we must experience it. That is exactly what I did during the five weeks I was present in the organization.

Fortunately, I was welcomed into this organization from the very beginning. I was invited to wonder around as much as I pleased and observe the different departments and sections of the place. I had permission to observe in the back where the delivery of products took place, the break room, the bakery, the main office, as well as the floor in general. The store manager gave me an official tour on my first day and from then on he told me to make myself at home. I felt very comfortable walking around, or sitting up front near the registers where although I did not know at first, but most of my data were going to be gathered. This freedom to wonder around and to have access to all parts of the store was very important because it allowed me to get close to key sites where I could observe social interactions. Emerson et al. (1995) describe how this getting close has another, far more important component:

The ethnographer seeks a deeper immersion in other’s worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important. With immersion, the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful and how they do so (p.2).

My observations covered the period from the 27 of December 1996 to the 24 of
January 1997. I observed an average of three to four times a week. I conducted most of my observations in one specific store (which I call store 83) but spent a day observing in a second store and four hours in the main offices of the organization. The total amount of hours I observed came to approximately ninety and this did not include time spent interviewing. Most of the days I started my observations at 8:00 a.m. and concluded around 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. On weekends the average amounts of hours spent in the store were less, but weekends were extremely busy days for the store and it was usually hard to wonder around without causing some kind of disturbance.

My observation notes were written mostly in first and third person. I decided to combine my points of view to match the situation I was witnessing. I had to constantly shift my attention from myself to others/and vice-versa. Emerson et al. (1995) suggest a “first person mode when the researcher wants to present the natural unfolding of experience as seen from her[sic] participant’s viewpoint (p.53). A first person is also used when the researcher wants to reveal how she/he felt and thought about her/his experience (p.54). On the other hand these authors suggest the use of the third person as an effective way for conveying other’s words and actions (p.55). The use of the first person was important to me because it was a way of reminding me of my presence in the social interactions I was observing. It was a way of not neglecting my reactions and feeling towards events and people. It helped me later on in the analysis section separate what was objective reality and what was my perception of that reality.

Lastly when putting together my field notes to produce final descriptions of events I was faced with the choice of writing real-time or end-point descriptions.
Emerson et al. explain how in “real-time description, the writer seeks to characterize events using only what is known at discrete points as the event unfolds” (p.60). In contrast, “field researchers may also describe events by making full use of what they ultimately came to know and understand about them” (p. 61). I have chosen to use for this thesis this second type of description incorporating in my excerpts facts gathered at different periods of time but that can help the readers make sense out of the situations or events I encountered.

**Interviewing**

The second important source of my information was my interviews. I conducted moderately scheduled interviews with representatives of different levels of the organizations. I interviewed all managers in store (store, relief and department managers) and representatives of all departments. I made sure that I talked to people from different shifts too because the experiences of the night employees was very different from that of the morning ones. I also interviewed employees from the main office: the regional manager, the chief of operations, the public relations representative and training instructor. By the time I finished, I had interviewed 100% of the managers and approximately 40% of lower level employees of store 83.

When I first started thinking about this project I had outlined my data gathering techniques including the idea of doing a non-compulsory stratified random sample to select my interviewees. The quasi random was due to the volunteer nature of the interviews. If a participant who was selected did not want to participate he/she would not be interviewed. This was the original plan. When I arrived I quickly realized I would have
problems applying this sampling method and that I would have to rely mainly on
volunteers. Although I began with a very organized list of employees by department and
position, and conducted a very appropriate random sampling, it soon become evident that
availability and willingness were going to be important criteria for interview selection.

The interview had to be conducted on the employee's free time, which meant
before or after their shift. This made the situation very hard because most of them lived
far, or took the bus (which required meeting schedules), had family and after working had
no desire to stay extra time (especially if they were not going to get paid for this extra
time). I could not count on lunches or breaks because there were no pre-arranged
schedule for these and the employees never knew when they were going to take one.
Many employees did not work full time; so, some of them came only twice or three times
a week and they never knew what their weekly schedule was going to be like until Friday.
All this made it hard to make appointments or plan ahead of time. However, with
persistence, flexibility and a lot of patience, I managed to convey the importance of this
project and to secure the collaboration of employees from all departments.

Interviews lasted between forty minutes and ninety minutes. Questions focused on
communication differences and similarities as perceived by the different segments of the
workforce; employees' understandings of how communication affects their everyday
activities, their job performance, job satisfaction and employee relationship. I started the
interviews with broad open ended questions taking care to not "lead" the respondent. An
example of these are: What are the main differences you notice in the way you
communicate and in the way Anglo/Hispanics employees communicate? I followed with
more specific questions. For example, a typical core question was: Are there management practices here that you find particularly difficult to adjust to or even to understand that might be explained by cultural differences? (See Appendix A for a complete list of core questions). At the end of each interview I would ask the respondents to cite a critical incident occurring within the previous 12 months at work that was memorable as an example of cross-cultural misunderstanding. The key to my interviews was that they contained moderately scheduled questions. I quickly found out that I was asking questions about issues that my interviewees had never thought about and therefore had a hard time answering. So, I changed the order of some questions but made sure we got back to the original ones later on. At this point they had had some time to think, and had also been talking about related topics and made some connections. I also included during my interview questions that came to me while observing, or I asked for clarifications of events I had seen or comments I had heard. In this way I was quickly getting a good sense of what was going on directly from the participants themselves. The employees I interviewed also offered a lot of information that I did not specifically request and after a while I realized that many of them were very happy to have someone listen to them. They had a lot to say and apparently no one to say it to.

To make things easier for me and to be able to convey in this paper a valid picture of what was going on, I tape-recorded all the interviews. I also took additional notes while listening to help organize my thoughts. Later, I transcribed all the interviews and identified the excerpts that have been included in this thesis.

In addition to these pre-appointed interviews, a lot of my information was
gathered though casual interviews done on the spot during observations. I constantly had the opportunity to talk to the employees. I usually came to the store very early in the morning (around 7:30 am) when there were hardly any customers. So, I stood by the registers and talked to the cashiers or walked the store talking to department employees. Most of them were very friendly and welcomed conversation. When I saw people in the break-room I also sat with them and talked. The laid back environment of the store allowed for a lot of these casual interviews.

An important point I had to consider was that many of the interviews were held in Spanish. For that reason I took special care in developing a culturally appropriate questionnaire. By this I mean that I asked questions in a "neutral" Spanish avoiding colloquialisms. For example instead of saying \textit{no le dieron bolilla}, I would say \textit{no le prestaron atención} (instead of saying \textit{they did not give you any marbles or little balls} [colloquial for attention in Argentina] I would say \textit{they did not pay you any attention}) I also picked up key words during my initial interviews and used them during my next ones. For example: employees called the store \textit{tienda} when I would have called it \textit{negocio} (common term for store in Argentina). I soon learned that \textit{feria} was change, \textit{manejadores} were the managers and \textit{camión} was the bus. Since Spanish is my mother tongue, I was not worried about misunderstandings or confusion with the questions taking place during the interview. But, I did take special note of local or regional expressions to help communication flow better. And, whenever someone mentioned a word or used an expression that I was not sure about I asked for explanations or examples. Fluency in the language allowed me to rephrase and explain question in various ways until the meaning
was understood by the interviewee.

Belonging to a Hispanic culture and understanding various Hispanic cultures and their world views also allowed me to interpret indirect answers or underlying arguments. This knowledge also permitted me to detect when a participant was giving me a true answer or instead a "socially desirable one." This is very important because a common characteristic of the Hispanic culture is the use of socially desirable answers (Marin & Marin, 1991). They are more willing to report that they carry out socially desirable actions and may avoid reporting less desirable attitudes or behaviors. The use of the "correct" answer many times can only be detected when there is a deep knowledge of the culture. According to Marin & Marin (1991) there are cases where variations due to mixing of English and Spanish take place and can be perplexing to the researcher. I did not find this to be my case since I was fluent enough in both languages, to the point where this was not a problem.

To avoid bias and the possibility of misinterpretation, I have transcribed the excerpts taken from the Spanish interviews in both Spanish and English. If an expression had several possible translations I transcribed the one I believed to be the most accurate taking into consideration the context it was said in.

**Content Analysis**

Finally, the third technique used was the analysis of formal communication media, such as corporate documents, employee handbook, store newsletter, although this part of the research did not play a central role in this project. The main reasons for this
decision was that I wanted to give priority to the two previous techniques and also because the store's formal media was very limited. Most of the formal store communication takes place through oral channels and the store manual (that was given to me at the training center), is actually a manual for the use of the register in particular. The rest of the written media consisted of a precarious compiled employee handbook with rules and codes that each employee received when they were hired and were requested to read (if they really did is hard to say). In addition to these rules, employees received a one-to-two page homemade newsletter that the store manager (with I believe all the good will in the world) handed to the employees with their checks every other month. The effectiveness of this newsletter was also limited because it was written only in English, which immediately excluded about 40 to 50% of the employees who spoke little English but who in my opinion were the ones who would have benefited the most from the contents of the newsletter. One of the employees for example told me how he took any papers that were written in English (this included the newsletter) and had his sisters kids translate them for him. The accuracy of these translations is hard to determine.

Dialectical Analysis

Qualitative research's contribution to theory comes in the form of a dialectic between the researcher's understanding of the social action as presented in the ethnographic text and the theoretical framework which is used to interpret the text for others (Anderson, 1987, p.264). I have put together an extensive, detailed research text by
including careful notations based on field notes, audio recording or interviews and
document analysis. Due to the many hours of participant observation and recorded
interviewing, I am confident about the quality of this ethnographic text. As Anderson
notes “when the work is shallow at that level [participant observation], few connections
are apparent and stories are hard to find” (p. 259). This was definitely not my case.
Stories, examples, recalled episodes, and critical incidents were the main features of my
field notes and interview responses.

I began this study with an extensive literature review that defined the area of
diversity management. Although this is a fairly new area of research, I have compiled the
most important concepts that have appeared in the field and organized them in a coherent
discussion.

In sum, through a combination of approaches (deductive and inductive), I have
applied theoretical concepts to reality while simultaneously grasping reality to validate
the set of theoretical concepts.

Anderson states how “the process of critical evaluation of the text through the
text and of the theory through the text examines the interaction between the
ethnographic text and the interpreting constructs” (1987, p.264). He continues explaining
how “the value of theory as an analogue of social action is given in the way in which its
constructs illuminate the action and in the way the social action illuminates the
constructs” (p. 264).

Throughout my results and analysis section, I have compared and evaluated my
text in relation to the proposed theories to see the value of these concepts when applied to
real-life situations. I have also used the theory as a framework for my text. The concepts chosen helped focus my observations, guided my research questions, and allowed me to make some sense of all the social action I was participating in. My main purpose for using this type of analysis is simply to test theory against reality and reality against theory. Or, in Anderson's terms:

In this analysis, the explanatory value of the terms and constructs of theory are tested in their capacity to interpret the scene. Terms of the theory may be re-oriented, dropped or enlarged. If nothing else, the theory now has a new empirical component added to it in the form of analyzed ethnographic text (p.264).

Reliability and Validity of a Qualitative Study

A common criticism in the scientific world is that qualitative research fails to adhere to canons of reliability and validity. This can be true if we use a traditionally positivistic approach to characterize these concepts and the elements they are supposed to include. In qualitative research we have to translate the essence of these concepts and adapt them to the nature of the work being done.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated by other researchers with the same outcome. LeCompte and Goetz, explain that taking the fact the "ethnographic research occurs in natural settings and often is undertaken to record process of change, even the most exact replication of research methods may fail to produce identical results". Their analysis goes on: "Moreover, because human behavior is
never static, no study can be replicated exactly, regardless of the methods and designs employed" (Lecompte and Goetz, 1982, p.35). From their description one can infer not only that pure replication (in the logical positivist view) is impossible but also that it may not be necessary if validity is strong: "generation, refinement, and validation of constructs and postulates may not require replication of situations" (p.35). However, in spite of arguments that social science has intrinsically different set of goals that call for an altogether separate collection of methods, they share with the natural sciences an aspiration to cumulative collective knowledge that is of interest on its own merit" (Kirk & Miller, 1986). This aspiration is objectivity, and one way to obtain it is through reliability of methods.

There are two types of reliability: external and internal reliability. According to LeCompte and Goetz, there are several steps a qualitative researcher can take to secure the best he/she can both reliabilities. I was very careful in taking most of these steps during my study.

**External Reliability**

This type of reliability addresses the issue of whether other researchers could reproduce the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same setting. Hansen (1979, as cited in LeCompte and Goetz, 1986), prefers to say that ethnographic research may approach rather than attain external reliability. In any case, recognizing and handling five major problems can enhance reliability:
Researcher status position

This aspect concerns the extent to which the researcher is a member of the studied group. In my case, I had no previous connection with the organization under study and no relation with the members of the various groups within it. I heard about The Phoenix Group from a professor from Arizona State University, whom I contacted about advice on where to conduct my research. This professor made the initial contact with the organization and set up a phone interview for me with the chief of operations of The Phoenix Group. After that I flew down to Arizona and had a formal interview with this person. After having a more in-depth discussion about my project, this person and I chose a store. The following week, I had started my field observations and interviews.

Informant choices

After having selected the store that would serve as my object of observation, I started to select my key informants. It did not take much time to find out which employees were more willing to talk, who had a better understanding of what was going on because of their tenure in the store, or who was in a key position and had access to the best information. Although I tried to converse and interview representatives of all departments and shifts, cashiers and employees from the meat department ended up being my best informants. The first group was important because of the daily contact they had with managers and customers, and the second because of the lack of this. Having informants from these two extremes allowed me to compare and contrast information I was gathering and situations I was observing.
Social situation and conditions

This aspect takes into consideration the context in which the observations take place. The majority of my observations took place in one of The Phoenix Group's stores. I have called this store “Store 83” after inverting the original number 38, which is the amount of stores this organization has. I also took a day and observed another store from this chain. This second store was selected because of its difference in location, personnel, clientele and managing style. More observations were conducted at The Phoenix Group’s training facilities in the Main office (headquarters).

The store chosen for the project (Store 83) was located in a predominantly Hispanic and Black neighborhood. It stood at a big intersection that also served as entrance and exit to a major highway. It was a busy area with several other commercial businesses around. The majority of this store's employees were Hispanic (Mexicans and Chicanos). There were a few African Americans, and several Anglos. The store manager was Anglo, and his group of managers came from a diverse background: Anglo, African-American, Chicano, and Mexican. The store's clientele was composed largely of Hispanic customers, with some exceptions. Blacks were the second largest group of customers; and Whites were the third largest group. Both Spanish and English were spoken in the store and were heard at all times. The majority of the customers appeared to belong to a low social-economic class and many relied on food stamps for their purchases. The level of education both in customers and employees in many cases appeared to be very low. This last observation is corroborated by a survey published by Hispanic Track about supermarkets of the Phoenix area. Under the title Demographic
Profiles of Shoppers they give a brief description of The Phoenix Group's clientele:

Clearly, The Phoenix Group supermarkets' strength continues to lie with the Spanish-dominant consumer, who most likely was born in Mexico, has a larger family and a lower socioeconomic profile. These consumers are also more likely than average to rent, rather than own a home. (Hispanic Track, 1995, p. 51)

The second store chosen for observation had different characteristics. First, it was located in an economically better neighborhood. It stood in a plaza where there were three other competing stores. The manager of this store was also Anglo but belonged to the opposite gender. Hispanics were not the majority in this store and this percentage was also reflected on the clientele. More English than Spanish was heard in the conversations. This store was also smaller in size than the first one.

Finally, observations were conducted in the Main Offices. These offices were located in a separated building in another area of the city. It was a large building where all the central offices and the training facilities were located. The regional managers, the chief of operations, people in charge of public relations, accounting etc. all held offices in this building. The training facilities consisted on two rooms: one with two cash registers, a variety of products, and toy money where future cashiers were being trained; and another room with some tables and a board for instruction.

I have offered here a brief overview of the context in which my observations took place. More details about the environment, and the social and psychological situation of the participants will be made available throughout this paper.

Analytic constructs and premises

LeCompte and Goetz (1986) describe how "even if a researcher reconstructs the
relationships and duplicates the informants and social contexts of a prior study, replication may remain impossible if the constructs, definitions, or units of analysis which informed the original research are idiosyncratic or poorly delineated" (p. 39). It is crucial for the researcher to extensively describe concepts, definitions, assumption, units of analysis, categories, relation between concepts. All theoretical aspects of the study should be clarified. In my study I offer an extensive literature review and I define all major concepts (e.g. diversity, culture, managing diversity, Hispanic population, and all cultural variables like uncertainty, power distance etc.). When I believed that ambiguity was taking place due to differences in participants' understanding of an issue or differences in interpretation I have put the distinctions in a footnote. For example, if I categorized someone under the label Chicano (because he/she fits my theoretical concept of who is a Chicano/a) but later I found out that that person did not consider him/herself a Chicano, I pointed this out in a footnote together with the reasons for their choice of label.

Methods of data collection and analysis

In order to obtain external reliability it is very important to specify methods of data collection and methods of analysis. This is a crucial step for anybody wanting to reproduce to extend this research. This description was offered in detail in my methodology section (see pp. 55-63).

In conclusion, in order to approach external reliability the researcher needs "extensive, explicit and perceptive field notes, self-analytical reporting of research procedures and research contexts, documentation of sources, documentation of the bases

Internal Reliability

Here the focus is on whether within a single study, multiple observers will agree on their observations. Concepts that are crucial to internal reliability are interrater or inter-observer reliability (LeCompte & Goetz, 1986). "Interobserver reliability is crucial to the extent which the sets of meanings held by multiple observers are sufficiently congruent so that they describe phenomena in the same way and arrive at the same conclusions about them" (p. 41). In this project I was the only observer, so internal reliability was obtained through other means. Two of the means suggested by LeCompte & Goetz included participant researchers and mechanically recorded data.

Participant Researchers

Throughout my informal and formal interviews I asked for the aid of local informants to confirm that what I had observed or recorded was viewed identically and consistently by other employees. I tried to include in every interview observations I had made during the day and had interviewees clarify them and confirm assumptions I had. In cases where the answers I was receiving were not very clear, I paraphrased or refrased that answer and asked the interviewee if I was understanding or interpreting the events in the correct way. Most of my observations and deduction of events were confirmed by participants during my interviews.
Mechanically Recorded Data

In addition to the above, I recorded all interviews and wrote detailed field notes during my observations. I also wrote down any non-verbal signs I received from participants during our interviews or conversations and any other paralinguistic information I considered relevant. This was done with the intention of recording and preserving to the greatest extent the raw data, so that other researchers may confirm the veracity of interpretations and conclusions. It also facilitated the transcription of the exact words of participants --words that became a fundamental part of this paper.

Validity

Validity is concerned with the accuracy of the findings. To what extent do my findings truly represent reality and can be generalized to other groups. In this project I will be more concerned with internal validity, which refers to the extent to which my observations and interpretations represent the participants’ experiences. LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p.43) describe four practices that can help achieve internal validity: living within the culture for extended time, informant interviewing, participant observation, and researcher self-monitoring. Based on the extent to which these practices were conducted I am confident about the internal validity of this study. This project is an ethnographic study, with observations in situ and personal interviews (see Data Gathering Techniques for more details). I observed for an adequate number of hours and my data, and categories derived directly from the participants and the natural setting. I interviewed representatives
of all departments of the store and of other important areas of the organization. I took
detailed notes of the context and of verbal and non-verbal behaviors, writing down
perceptions and feeling that were relevant to analyze a certain situation. I described the
participants’ interpretations of events. Finally I have tried to self-monitored my biases by
offering detailed descriptions of events, by including exact excerpts from interviews in
the language spoken by the interviewee, and by using first or third person in my writing
(and observation notes) depending on whether I was describing reality or describing my
perception of that reality.

LeCompte & Goetz (1982) also state that spending extended time in the field can
sometimes threat internal validity because the researcher can become exhausted or "go
native" (p. 47). Although I consider I spent a number of hours in Store 83, these hours
were condensed over a period of five weeks. This period although sufficient to offer
validity to the study was not enough to exhaust me or wear off the excitement I had for
this project. With regard to "going native", due to the characteristics of one of the groups
I was researching (Hispanics) in some way I was already a native (I am Hispanic myself).
However, I consider this to have benefited my project not threaten it. My proficiency in
the language and my knowledge of the culture facilitated tremendously my work. I do
recognize though, that an additional benefit was the fact that I had been living in the
United States for the past 18 months with hardly any contact with Hispanics and most
with Anglos. This allowed me to distance myself quite a bit and be able to observe this
culture also as an outsider or from an Anglo point of view.

The main limitation concerning internal validity of this project is the extent to
whether this study can be considered valid for the whole organization. This project was conducted in one particular store (Store 83) and validity here is very high. Due to comments received by informants about other stores, I believe similar situations to the ones described in this project might take place throughout organization. However, more studies conducted in other stores of this chain would be necessary to assure general validity.

Ethical Considerations

According to Johannessen (1990) "ethical issues may arise in human behavior whenever that behavior could have significant impact on other persons, when the behavior involves conscious choice of means and ends, and when the behavior can be judged by standards of right and wrong" (Johannessen, 1990 p. 1). In the study I conducted in The Phoenix Group, I had a freedom of choice concerning my behaviors (i.e., whom to interview, what documents to analyze, what to observe). However, I tried to be as fair as possible (within my time and accessibility limitations) as to gather data from all types of sources (see data gathering techniques, pp.55-63). Next, although my presence in the store could have had a slight impact on employee behavior, I believe that after a few days of observation my being there was not a conditioning factor. The way employees approached me, treated me, and freely talked to me about organizational issues or personal concerns is a reflection of their comfort with my presence. Nevertheless, I realize that my analysis of the data and my final conclusions can have great impact in the organization so I have tried to capture participants' points of view as
much as possible by supporting my analysis with excerpts from interviews containing the words of the employees themselves. I also have not made any statements or offered any judgments that could not be supported by my data and in some cases I have not even brought up an issue unless I had witnessed it occurring. Finally, I have abstained from producing “right and wrong” judgments and comments but have simply tried to paint a picture (describe behaviors) of what what was going on in this particular store. I have given reasons why I think these things were happening (specially based on my theoretical framework) and offered suggestions on how to improve these situations.

Punch also describes consent and confidentiality as two important issues that can produce ethical practical problems for the field researcher if they are not handled carefully (Punch, 1986, p. 35).

Consent

In her book *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*, Punch (1986) describes how a major element in the American Sociological Association code is the concept of “informed consent.” “Subjects of research have the right to be informed that they are being researched and also about the nature of the research” (p.35). Punch also states that research subjects should understand the reasons behind the research and sign an informed consent form, which must specify that the subject may withdraw from the research.

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ASA codes are professional codes of ethics that have been drawn up in order to protect vulnerable groups from research. They often follow the bio-medical model (Punch, 1986, p.35)
project at any time. In this study issues of consent were negotiated with each individual
since this was a voluntary participation project and was in no way imposed on the
employees from the organization. All participants were informed of the characteristics of
this project and of its voluntary nature. Every subject signed consent forms (written in
Spanish and English) before each interview, and I made sure they were very clear about
what they were signing. In several cases I went into lengthier explanations about
University policies and the characteristics of a thesis project. On these consent forms I
included a clause that stated that the interviewee could terminate the interview whenever
he/she pleased. However, even though I took all these previsions regarding consent forms
I found that most subjects were not so worried about the legitimacy of my being there,
but about confidentiality issues. Most of them were worried about who was going to
listen to my tapes and if their bosses were going to know what they said in their
interviews. The issue of confidentiality conditioned this project so much that I decided to
discuss it in another section.

Confidentiality

I knew from the beginning of my project that trust and confidentiality were going
to be key factors to obtaining any type of information from a group of Hispanics. Until I
made this group feel there was no risk in talking to me and had reassured them that I was
not working for management or any other authority that might jeopardize their jobs, it
would be hard to obtain in-depth information.

When I first began my observations, I noticed that many customers and several
employees would watch me with a certain discomfort. I would walk around the store with a little notebook in my hand taking notes, or I would sit by the registers and write some of my thoughts. Although I tried to be as discreet as possible, my physical appearance, the fact that I was not wearing a uniform (so I clearly wasn't an employee), and I wasn't carrying groceries (so I wasn't a customer) was somewhat disconcerting. I thought this discomfort was due to having a stranger observing their behaviors and that they would eventually get used to me. However, after being in the store a couple of days, I was having a conversation with one of the cashiers when she commented on how some of the customers had asked her in a worried tone if I was from Immigrations. I was quite surprised by this remark because this idea had never crossed my head. I immediately proceeded to talk to every cashier, explained them the purpose of my being in the store, the work I was doing and told them to explain this to any customer that may ask. The tension I had been experiencing seemed to disperse fast in the upcoming days. I realized how important it would have been to have a general initial meeting with all the employees explaining them the reasons for my presence in the store (I had been doing this on an individual basis during interviews). I had this type of meeting with all the managers and I had expected them to explain my situation to their employees. I had just found out this was not the case.

After I had reassured most employees that I had not been sent from the main office and that I was not there to evaluate their performance, conversations became more open and more revealing. In addition, I made sure that they understood that anything that was said to me would remain strictly confidential and that nobody else would know about
it. I explained clearly that all individual identities would be concealed in my report.

When conducting interviews I took my time to explain to each interviewee how confidentiality issues were going to be handled and how I was the only one who would have access to any information I gathered. I had all interviewees read and sign confidentiality forms, and for those who I noticed were not able to read very well, I proceeded to read all the information out loud and give explanations. Only a few employees asked me during my interview if their names were going to appear on my report. I assured them they wouldn't. For this reason all names have been withheld from this paper. A pseudonym was chosen for the organization, but this name was randomly picked and holds no relation with the real organization. I have also tried to omit the gender of employees whenever possible because in some store positions it is a factor of identification. Positions (cashiers, courtesy clerks, managers, etc.) are mentioned but only in cases when they add clarity to an example or analysis. In all other cases the general term "employee" is used to keep the level of confidentiality as high as possible. In my initial meeting with the Vice President Chief of Operations, (who gave me the consent to do this project in The Phoenix Group) I agreed to send the organization a copy of my project. I stated my desire that this document would be made available for any employee who might request it. I also offered to give an oral presentation of results (especially for those employees that might not speak English). I was told that somebody from the organization would let me know if this was necessary.

After all consent and confidentiality issues had been discussed employees had no problems answering all my questions and even offered information on their own account.
They seemed very willing to talk once I had established the legitimacy of my project, employees had overcome the initial fear barrier, and we had created a relation of trust.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

As described in Chapter Three I chose to analyze my data through a combination of approaches: inductive and deductive. During my research I used a set of theoretical concepts to guide my observations and interviews. I also used these concepts as a basis for my arguments. Now, in this chapter I have taken numerous pieces of data to support and guide my analysis and discussion. I have selected quotations and fieldnotes that I believe are the most illustrate of my points. I have included at least a couple of statements for most of the points in order to present a variety of opinions. I have tried to be fair and pointed out when my data did not completely agree with the theory presented as support. All the examples are offered within some context to add clarity to the material, and all information in Spanish has been translated. However, I have left the original Spanish version also in the text to enhance validity and allow potential Spanish speaking readers to enjoy the original expressions.

For purposes of clarity this chapter is formatted following the structure offered in Chapter Two for the literature review. First, I discuss issues concerning specifically diversity management and practices (e.g., awareness, advantages, disadvantages, implications, etc.); second I discuss the different context and cultural variables that can influence communication processes. I have also incorporated a third section on language and translation, which were
topics not covered in Chapter Two. I originally did not intend to analyze language variables because this would merit a study all on its own. But, due to the importance that language had in The Phoenix Group and how it was conditioning communication processes, I found it relevant and necessary to include this discussion.

Before entering into the core of my analysis, I want to offer some background information on The Phoenix Group and on how this organization came to be.

History and Company Growth

The organization where I researched my data has an interesting origin that dates back to 1980 when a husband and wife decided to open their first neighborhood store. The history and background of this company, including its tremendous growth over the last decade, was described to me by the Vice President Chief of Operations of the organization. This person not only knew the original owners but had been partly responsible for the expansion of the stores. I have decided to reproduce his story in order to make the history as vivid as possible.

The company started in 1980. It was owned by a husband and wife M. and H. [Last name]. They opened their first store at [address]. In about 1985 the neighborhood had really changed from going Anglo to going really Hispanic. So they listened to the wants and needs of their customers and started handling all the products that the neighbors wanted. It turned out to be a very smart move. The 10,000 square foot store was doing an annual sale of 15 million a year, which is phenomenal. I met with M. and H. in 1981 when I moved to Arizona. In 1988, M. and I were having lunch one day and he told me of his plans to expand the concept into other neighborhoods, and asked me to join him, work with him and help him grow his company. So in February of 1989 I joined The Phoenix Group and started our expansion plan that included catering to the
neighborhoods. We had a five-year plan to have ten stores. We had ten stores at the end of two and a half years. We currently have 38 stores and every store is patterned after the original store to cater to the needs and the wants of the neighborhood. With regard to the demographic makeup of our stores, when we look at a site, we look for a minimum of 30 to 35% Hispanic in the first mile. We look at the income levels and we look at the population. We want to see 20,000 people in the first mile radius, and with those key ingredients we know we can successfully market to that neighborhood. We add products and services that the community wants, such as financial centers in our stores that have check cashing, wire transfers, peso exchange, and actual Mexican money orders. So that's in a nutshell how the concept became.

We get very involved in community, neighborhood groups, neighborhood associations, we support a lot of the Hispanic organizations, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Chicanos por la casa, for the house. We do that financially. We work with a lot of world organizations such as Mothers against Gangs. We support them quite extensively. It's really a grassroots based organization. We hire all the employees, 90% of our employees are hired right from the neighborhood. We don't require that everybody be bilingual but it certainly is an asset in communicating with our customers. The stores are historically located in lower income areas. We find that a lot of the new arrivals from Mexico move into these neighborhoods. A lot of them are very Spanish dependent so we try to make the environment of our stores friendly places to come in. Something that they can be familiar with just by speaking the language and seeing the bilingual labels that we have on products. We design a private label program that you saw a lot of products under The Phoenix Group supermarket brand. Most of those labels are bilingual.

Most important from this description is the fact that this organization expanded and grew by responding to the needs of its customers, by listening to the neighbors, and by adapting its products and services to respond to that diverse clientele. For example, store employees have tried to create a friendly environment where their customers feel comfortable, where they feel almost at home. The organization has adapted their external communication to reach out to Spanish speakers. I noticed that in addition to the bilingual labels on the products all the major signs within their stores were also in English and
Spanish. This organization also produces bilingual advertisement that can be found in local newspapers or on Spanish-language TV channels.

The organization has shown it values its customers by supporting neighborhood associations and by contributing to Hispanic organizations such as Chicanos por la Casa or the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Phoenix Group has also included in all their stores financial centers that alleviates from many of their customers the pressures of going to a bank to cash their checks or wire money out of the country. One of the managers commented in an interview how many customers were afraid of banks and felt intimidated by such a formal environment. So they appreciate that they could cash their checks or change their money in the supermarkets where they came everyday and were familiar with the employees. Some of the stores in this chain also offered a servicio de cabinas telefónicas: long-distance phones where customers could call directly to Mexico. These booths always had someone in charge that made the calls for the customers and then connected them. This was an optional way customers could call to Mexico and not be dependent on having a phone or using a calling card. One of the operators told me this service was great because many customers were not familiar with calling cards, or they were here temporarily and did not own a phone. The store I was observing also had a Real State office and an Insurance office where the employees spoke Spanish, a booth selling Spanish music, and a clothes store that sold clothes imported from Mexico.

In sum, The Phoenix Group has tried to offer in addition to the products its clientele is demanding additional services responding to other needs of the neighborhood. It has listened to its customers, showed them they are valued and appreciated, and has
adapted its marketing and communication practices to accommodate such a diverse clientele. As the Vice-President C.C.O. stated:

It comes up to listening to our customers, and trying to fulfill their needs and their requests. Basically catering to the needs of our customers. The customer is everything.

I believe The Phoenix Group has found the best formula in order to grow and succeed by taking some basic steps in understanding and responding to its diverse clientele. No wonder in a study conducted by an organizational behavior research group located in Phoenix, researchers have declared The Phoenix Group the number one store preferred by Hispanics in the Phoenix Area (Hispanic Track, 1995). Now, the question is why has this formula been successful? If we take a moment to reflect on some of the arguments offered in the beginning of this thesis we will see that most of the steps or key behaviors that The Phoenix Group has performed and that has made them succeed with their customers can be narrowed down to basic diversity-management strategies. But let us briefly revisit some of these concepts in the following section and see how The Phoenix Group has applied them and succeeded.

Formula for Success

In chapter two I described the importance of managing diversity in an organization in order for this organization to succeed and grow. I talked about the changes in demographics and in the composition of the U.S. workforce, and about how crucial it is for an organization to adapt to those changes (managing practices,
communication styles etc.) to be productive and to survive. I discussed some of the key steps organizations should take to manage diversity successfully. Some of these were: 1) understand and value diversity 2) change structures or procedures to fully utilize the variety of talents within the organization and 3) adapt communication practices to assure accurate construction of meaning.

In the account of the history and growth of The Phoenix Group we can see how the original owners realized the changes in the demographics of their neighborhoods ("from Anglo to really Hispanic") and introduced changes in their stores to adapt to their new clientele. With this "very smart move" they were having "phenomenal profits of 15 million a year". Thus by adapting, this store was tapping into resources that otherwise would have gone untouched. The simple strategy of acknowledging diversity and accommodating to respond to it; transformed itself into one of the best business strategies this store could have developed. In addition to changing (including different products), the organization has also implemented services to make its customer's lives easier (e.g., phone, bank, real estate, insurance services). By offering these extra services the company is showing it values its customers, that it is concerned about their well being, and that is trying to help them out. Finally, The Phoenix Group has adapted its communication practices by having labels, signs and public advertisement in both languages. This strategy has helped The Phoenix Group reach out to a larger part of the community, especially newly arrived Mexicans and is another cause of its rapid growth.

All these steps constitute simple but effective diversity management strategies and they have helped The Phoenix Group succeed in a competitive market.
The second concept I would like to recall refers to the need for organizations to implement a new model during the socialization process of new employees. The model discussed in Chapter Two was proposed by Albrecht and Bach (1997). As previously explained, this model emphasized the entry process from the perspective of both individual and the organization. Let us imagine for a second that the newcomer is not an employee but the organization itself (The Phoenix Group). It is going to expand to a new neighborhood and therefore will go through an entry process. Following Albrecht and Bach's assimilation model, The Phoenix Group will be successful if during this introduction process the needs of both neighborhood and organization are taken into account (both parties). I have already described how The Phoenix Group admitted growing by listening to the neighborhood and by responding to those needs with products and services. I can say at this point that at least one perspective has been contemplated (the neighborhood's). What about the organization's perspective? According to the account offered by the Vice President C.O.O. before considering a certain neighborhood the organization reflects on its own needs. They study a neighborhood and look for a certain demographic makeup, they look for income levels and number in population ("we want to see 20,000 people in the first mile"). For The Phoenix Group these factors are considered key ingredients that will allow them to know if they can successfully market to that neighborhood.

In sum, during the process of incorporating a new store in a new neighborhood the needs of both active participants are taken into consideration. Taking the risk of falling into generalizations this can be translated into a successful partnership with two satisfied
Finally, the third theoretical concept I want to revisit, is the definition of diversity as opposite to the concept of sameness. In chapter two (under Defining Diversity) I argue that when we acknowledge that someone has characteristics, behaviors, values or beliefs that are not equal or similar to ours, we consider this individual “different”; and that therefore the word individual reflects diversity. Now what happens when this individual enters an organization and assumes the role of “employee”? Unfortunately, many times this individual is absorbed by the organization and the organization loses track of their diversity or their uniqueness. Let’s go back to the example of The Phoenix Group and of this organization being the one introduced into a new neighborhood. The organization as a whole has its own identity and characteristics that were given by the original founders. Now despite the fact that the stores have adapted to respond to the needs of the neighborhood (they have adapted to survive), they have not lost their original identity. As Vice President C.O.O. states in his description of the characteristics of this organization: “Every store is patterned after the original store”. In conclusion, although The Phoenix Group undergoes a socialization process every time a new store is opened, it brings to every encounter its identity and its uniqueness, and adapting or changing does not imply loosing those special qualities.

In sum, we can see how The Phoenix Group has applied to the outside some of the basic diversity management strategies discussed in Chapter two and has had great success with its customers. It has grown at a tremendous rate and has had very good profits. Shoppers are happy with the products and services they find in the stores and many of
them shop in The Phoenix Group on a weekly basis (comments obtained from customer
survey I conducted in Store 83). They feel comfortable with the environment and with
shopping in a place where they can speak and be understood.

What About Inside the Organization?
"Is The Phoenix Group Walking the Walk?"

The extreme concern for their customers has allowed The Phoenix Group to
succeed and grow. Their 38 stores cater mostly to Hispanics and have a majority of
Hispanic employees. Now, I was interested in seeing if the strategies mentioned in the
previous section (about listening to the clients, needs, valuing their customers, and
accommodating practices to accommodate diversity) were also applied when it came to
The Phoenix Group’s employees. I was sure that if this company applied these same
techniques they would probably obtain similar results. If a diverse clientele obliged The
Phoenix Group to adapt their marketing and communication practices, a diverse
workforce would oblige them to adapt their managing and communication practices too.
The Phoenix Group’s employees were also people with needs and desires, so the
company would also have to listen to them in order to find ways of fulfilling these needs.
Their employees were also human beings who appreciated compliments and being valued
like any other customer, so the organization would have to find ways of satisfying them
too. This organization has had proof of the value and advantages of these strategies
outside the organization (they believe their success in the marketplace is based on the use
of these strategies); therefore, I would assume they would apply them inside their
organization as well. With these ideas in mind I decided first to analyze the level of awareness the organization had concerning diversity issues. Did they realize that their employees were just as diverse as their customers and needed the same level of attention in order to be successful and productive? Was the organization aware of how these differences could impact their workplace environment and their bottom line? The following section offers an answer to these questions by giving a description of what is happening in The Phoenix Group’s store “83.”

Unawareness About Diversity Issues and Their Impact on the Workplace

Most of the employees and managers of store 83 were unaware of how cultural differences could affect the workplace. They all immediately acknowledged that they were from different cultures but could not describe exactly what was different about them nor point out differences that would be relevant enough to impact their work. They all noticed differences in food, and shopping habits but none made reference to any of the cultural variables researched in this paper (at least not explicitly).

When asked about cultural differences, several employees immediately associated this question with issues of discrimination. They advocated not knowing about differences or not thinking about them because they were not used to discrimination. The following are two of the answers I received from an Anglo and Hispanic employee when asked about cultural differences:
Well, here is where your interview might be dead end with me. I'm not prejudiced so I'm really naive when it comes to seeing differences...

I don't know. No, it doesn't have anything to do with that. Now we are all the same. I am not a racist.

No se. No, pero no tiene que ver. Ahorita todos somos iguales. Yo no soy racista.

I asked a third employee [Anglo] if he thought intercultural training would benefit the company. To this he responded: "No, because I don't think they discriminate in that area"

In general there was an unspoken assumption that there were relational problems going on among all levels of employees in the store (several employees were not getting along). The general assumption among these employees was that these problems were due to shortage of personnel (that produced stress), the reduction of working hours (that made employees be in a bad mood) or because of the negative attitudes of some of the managers. None of the interviewees attributed problems to cultural differences, communication differences nor ethnocentric reactions, and they also admitted not realizing those differences or reactions could impact the workplace. I decided to ask this last employee if he noticed any cultural differences between Hispanics and Anglos: His answer left me quite surprised:

No, because I pretty much keep my personal life distance from work. I don't come here to have a social life with the people I work.

After hearing this response I asked him if he believed that cultural differences could impact the workplace and if he thought intercultural training for the employees would be
beneficial.

I think they influence the working environment but not me, because it doesn't come to me. Like in the meat department everybody there is Spanish except for one or two guys. To them is might be a good class the cultural thing, but for me it's not.

Why? How could cultural differences affect other employees but not him? How could someone be so oblivious of this situation? I started to wonder if many others shared this belief. After hearing this comment I asked if he thought his job depended in any way on that of any Hispanic employee. If it did, then cultural variables one way or another would influence his work. Expecting him to answer in a negative way he responded:

Yes, in the same way that theirs depends on mine. They don't do their work our company fails, as long as we work together it doesn't happen.

This lack of awareness about the influence of cultural variables on working relationships can have severe consequences on the organization. One of the major consequences is the mismanagement of employees. This mismanagement will lead to numerous problems impacting directly the organization's bottom line.

**Impact of Diversity Mismanagement on The Phoenix Group’s Productivity**

I have mentioned above that diversity mismanagement can affect the organization’s productivity and workplace effectiveness. Many authors advocate cost saving, winning the competition for talent and business growth as the major reasons why companies should include diversity management among their top priorities. The negative effects of these factors can be translated in lower production, lower employee and
customer satisfaction, and lower profits.

Cost Saving

Robinson and Dechant (1997) explain how diversity mismanagement will produce high turnover rates, higher absenteeism rates and lawsuits on discrimination, and that all these factors will have great impact on the costs of the organization.

Absenteeism, like turnover, can rack up significant costs for the organization. The turnover rate for blacks in the U.S. workforce is 40 percent higher than the rate for whites, and turnover among women is twice as high as for men. The added recruiting, staffing, and training costs per person are estimated at $5,000 to $10,000. Absenteeism rates are often higher among women and non-white men than they are for white males (Robinson and Dechant, 1997, p.23). These authors also add, "how studies have tied employee's perceptions of the workplace to elements of productivity, which may help to explain the notable level of absenteeism among non-white men" (p.23).

In The Phoenix Group high turnover rate and high absenteeism appeared to be standard features of the organization. These problems were mentioned to me during my interviews. Employees described how these factors were very common not only in their store but also in others they had worked in for the same organization. However, none of the employees I talked to appeared to be concerned about cost-related problems this situation could bring the company. I think one reason for this attitude is the fact that most of the people interviewed were not in a position to evaluate the impact on cost this situation produced on the organization. But in addition to this, I believe one of the
greatest causes of this attitude was the lack of concern lower level employees had for The Phoenix Group as an organization. The general atmosphere in this workplace (with a few exceptions) was that nobody cared much for the store. As one employee described: "I don't plan to retire here". Employees simply came, did their jobs and left. This was for many of them just a job like any other and could have been easily replaced for one that paid more money. For many employees there were no other factors except the money factor that linked them to their organization. When employees were asked at the beginning of their interview why they had chosen to work for The Phoenix Group, if there were any special reasons that attracted them to this organization, most of them replied: "because I needed the job"; "I needed a job and they were hiring". "I couldn't find a job and The Phoenix Group took me". Later on, when I asked employees what they liked best about The Phoenix Group, answers differed between Hispanics and Anglos. Hispanics most of the times replied, "I like the people" which further explanation clarified that they were referring to working with other Hispanics and to being able to speak Spanish. Anglo employees had somewhat different answers. Out of nine Anglo employees who were asked this question, five of them responded the following:

It's a young company that is really expanding

I like working with people, dealing with people [to which I asked: customers or employees?]. Customers

I have no idea

The people. I enjoy working with [name], with my supervisor, and with [name] [This person was a department manager, but the strange thing is that he only mentioned other managers. He did not say he enjoyed working with the lower level employees].
I like the grocery business. If it was me I like either being management of frozen or dairy or deli because they leave me alone. I’m left alone. And I like to work solo.

Most Anglos employees did not mention their co-workers as the best thing about working in the store. They offered external reasons, for example liking the business or dealing with customers. There was one extreme case of an employee who simply didn’t know what the best thing was. What is surprising is that this employee was not a newcomer. This person had been working for this organization for over a year and a half. Hispanics mentioned their co-workers as reasons for them liking their jobs, but focused on other Hispanic employees and the fact they could speak Spanish.

In sum, none of the employees interviewed, Hispanic or Anglo, (and this included representatives of all levels) made reference to any factor related to the organizational culture, management of employees or the values of the store as motivators for them liking their jobs.

In a study done by Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro (1990) it was stated that there is a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of being valued and cared about by their organization and their attendance, dedication and job performance. According to the information obtained through my research (through interviews, direct observation etc.) being valued and cared about was not exactly what most of The Phoenix Group’s employees felt was going on in their store. In general, the whole store's working environment was in many ways the least adequate to foster relationships based on valuing
its employees. Effective communication was minimal. Most of the times there was a lack of relevant professional and personal conversation and only enough communication to survive the shift was heard. There were no regular staff meetings where concerns or suggestions could be interchanged. Some employees felt the company did not value their input and offered them no "formal" opportunity where to express their ideas. Informal opportunities were also very rare due to time limitations and work overload.

Furthermore, relations between some middle managers and some employees were greatly deteriorated due to misunderstandings or personal issues and a lot of resent and anger was being accumulated. Many employees could not communicate with others (apart from the basics) due to language barriers and those who could understand each other verbally many times had problems and misunderstandings due to cultural variables. There seemed to be no unified corporate identity in this store, only those identities of subgroups or individuals. The corporate culture appeared stained with racial issues and feelings of discrimination. There were a lot of unresolved underlying issues that the employees were living with on a daily basis, affecting their well being and their work performance.

In an environment like this, it almost appears logical that the company would be facing a high turnover rate and high absenteeism. Why would employees attend and be concerned about a workplace that does not take them into consideration or that doesn't make them feel valued. If employees don't feel they make a difference in the workplace and that they are an indispensable part of the company they will not care enough to be a valuable and productive employee. When I asked one of the managers if the store had staff meetings (thinking this would be the place for encouraging, motivating and maybe
complimenting employees) he responded: "No, but if I see a recurrent problem with an employee that I can correct possibly by just sitting down and talking to him, then I'll pull him aside and say; come into the office let's talk. The first thing this manager associated staff meetings with was with an opportunity to reprimand and correct a troublemaker. What about the main purpose of staff meetings? This manager continued explaining the type of conversation he would have with a problematic employee:

I tell them straight out. There is no guarantee that you are going to have a stable 40 hours. Because you are a courtesy clerk level, you an entry level; that's all you are. You are a dime a dozen, you are minimal wage. You know it's not really hard to find other baggers. So those that show the initiative, those that are going to be here everyday, that are going to work their butts every day, those are the ones that get the hours.

I was quite shocked with this comment especially because I had heard over and over how customer service was one of the core values of the store and the organization, and a big part of this customer service is done through the courtesy clerks. If this manager thinks so poorly of these courtesy clerks, tells them they are easily replaceable, and are worth "a dime a dozen" how is he going to motivate his employees to give the store their best? How are employees going to feel valued with this type of discourse especially coming from one of his/her superiors? I suppose one of the consequences could be an attitude I found very popular among many The Phoenix Group's employees, one of "I don't care, I just do my job, get my money and get out of here" or "I forget about my job the moment I step out that door, unfortunately I have to think about it the next day when I get here" (comments offered by two employees during their interviews).

The last issue mentioned by Robinson and Dechant (1997) that would produce
costly problems to an organization that would not manage diversity effectively is that of lawsuits for discrimination. Issues of racism and discrimination also affected The Phoenix Group's working environment. Although most of these were kept silent and partially covered by the parties involved, they were easily detectable by the behaviors and attitudes of some employees. Moreover, direct racist statements and descriptions of discriminating situations surfaced during some of my interviews. I do not know if The Phoenix Group has had any discrimination law suits filed by any of their employees, but the environment I encountered in the particular store I was observing was at a point where situations of this nature could appear at any moment. However, I believe racism and discrimination must already be costing the store in regard to productivity of their employees and customer satisfaction. It is deteriorating employee relationships and lowering the levels of customer service. And, unhappy customers are not returning customers.

Winning the competition for talent

Winning the competition for talent was defined by Robinson and Dechant (1997, p. 24) as the capability to attract, retain, and promote excellent employees from different demographic groups. They explain how attracting employees is easy for many companies but that failure takes place when it comes to retaining them. The process of attracting employees to The Phoenix Group is in some ways similar to the policies of other companies (they advertise, have signs that they are hiring on their windows, they use referrals). However, the contextual situation (characteristics of the community, of other
competing stores, and general beliefs of the population) in which this process takes place is a little different than for large organizations in other cities.

Most of the Hispanic employees that work at The Phoenix Group believe that they would not be well suited (due to their ethnicity) to finding jobs elsewhere. They say that very few companies will hire them because they are Mexicans. The Phoenix Group appears to be one of these companies and is willing to hire Mexicans due to their large Hispanic clientele. In addition, Hispanics feel protected and comfortable working in this company where they are majority. Many admit that they would feel uncomfortable in other stores where they might be discriminated against. When I asked a Chicano employee if Hispanics didn't apply in other competing supermarkets or if they did but weren't hired, she answered:

I think it's both. They don't apply there because they think that the selection process is filthy and they'd rather stay with who they know will hire them. They do their quotas that they call them, every job you have to have so many Mexicans, so many blacks... and that's basically what they do. Now Hispanics as far as other stores is concerned they think it's too richly of a store to apply at because of the people you see going in there. You hardly see Hispanics going into those stores. And they are high price stores.

Furthermore, Hispanics may find themselves without the appropriate documentation to work in the United States. According to the statement of one of The Phoenix Group’s employees, in cases where the employee can be a valuable contribution to the store, this company works around the legal requirements. One of the Mexican employees was describing a situation with a relative:

They protect you. If you are a good employee the company has to take
care of you. For example when my [relative] was working they [company] knew that he didn't have good papers [good as in legal]. In fact he cut his hand and they took him to the hospital. And you know that in the hospital computer they can tell if your social security is good. And it came out that it was not good and they took him out of the company. But then his supervisor said "listen you are a good employee, bring me some good papers, no matter who they are from, borrow them, and I'll give you work. And he brought some papers that somebody gave him and he got his job. He is a manager now. He has a another name but he is working. And the important thing is to work. And if you are useful to the company they are going to take care of you. His name is Juan and now he is working with papers from someone called Santiago [These are not the real names mentioned during the interview].

Ellos te protegen. Si eres un buen empleado la compania te tiene que cuidar. Por ej. mi [pariente] cuando trabajaba ellos sabian que mi [pariente] no tenia papeles buenos, inclusive, se cortó una mano. Y lo llevaron al hospital. Y tu sabes que en el hospital te sale el seguro en la computadora. Entonces le salió que el seguro no era bueno, y lo sacaron de la compania. Entonces dijo el supervisor "mira, tu eres muy buen empleado, tráeme papeles buenos de quien sea, pídelos prestados y te doy trabajo. Y traio unos papeles y le dieron trabajo y es manager ahorita. Se llama de otra forma pero esta trabajando. Y lo importante es trabajar. Y si tu le sirves a la compania ellos te van a cuidar. El se llama Juan y ahorita esta trabajando con unos papeles de Santiago [Estos no son los nombres verdaderos mencionados durante la entrevista].

On the other hand, the company has trouble attracting Anglo employees to work for them. Two of the main reasons are 1) the company's low wages (not extremely low, but lower than in other supermarkets in the area\textsuperscript{4}) and 2) their reputation of being a Mexican Supermarket.

\textsuperscript{4} I do not know specifically how salaries differ from one supermarket to another in the Phoenix area, but most of the employees I interviewed mentioned that they were getting paid less than employees in other stores.
The Phoenix Group can afford to pay lower wages because Hispanics who apply to this store don't mind working for less money. A great majority of the employees are Mexicans who have come over the border and who have many times been without a job for several months before they decided to come to the United States. In these conditions they are willing to work for a lot less pay than people from the United States, and they are not concerned with health benefits. All they want to do is work, make some money, and send some of that money home to their families. A male Mexican who had been living in the United States for the last 15 years describes how after all this time he felt he had changed in his attitudes towards getting a job. However, the attitudes of those recently coming from over the border still remain the same.

Well, the people who come from over there (he means Mexico) work even for three or four pesos, or even for two pesos. And the people that are established here, we want to earn more. Now I don't want to work for two pesos but for five or six. But those who come from over there come from several months of not working and take anything for two pesos.[although he uses the word peso he is making reference to the U.S. American dollar]

Pues sí, la gente que viene de alla [quiere decir México] trabaja hasta por tres o cuatro pesos, o hasta por dos pesos. Y las personas que estan aqui establecidas queremos ganar mas. Yo ahora no quiero trabajar por dos pesos, sino por cinco o seis. Pero los que vienen de allá vienen de varios meses sin trabajar y agarran por dos pesos

The store reputation is also a reason for rejection. Although I asked several Anglo employees to describe in detail what they meant by "reputation," all they would end up saying is that they had a reputation because it was a store that caters to Mexican clientele. These responses bring to mind the stereotyping, prejudice and racism that affect the Hispanic person on a daily basis. If there is a negative attitude towards Hispanics, and an
inherent racism against them, then people with these feelings would certainly not want to work in a place full of Mexican and Chicano employees. I asked an Anglo-Saxon employee about the store's reputation and he said the following. His response although somewhat contradictory concerning the state of the reputation, shows why it may be hard for The Phoenix Group to attract Anglo employees:

No, they have a good reputation. It's the supermarket that I would not put in comparison with [name of another supermarket]. You will find that the products are not the same. Now The Phoenix Group, that's why they bought all IGS, they already were catering to the Mexican clientele, and if you have a store that caters to this clientele and you fill it with a bunch of white employees, they are not going to want to come in there. They would feel very uneasy. In fact a couple of friends have asked me what the heck I was doing in this part of town cause me being white. Cause most of the people around here are either black or Mexican. There are very few whites around here.

Re-reading this statement I am not clear about the line, "They would feel uneasy." Who does he mean? Does this employee mean the Hispanic customers or the Anglo employees? Taking into consideration the consecutive sentence in that paragraph and this employee's general attitude during the interview, I believe it is the latter. White employees think they will be threatened working in an environment where they are a minority. White customers also appear to feel uncomfortable in such a place. As one cashier says:

I think Anglos are more uptight, they are not as friendly. They come in and try to leave fast. There was one lady in the store one night and she said: "I'd better get out of here before it gets dark". They have that kind of attitude. They are scared of people.

The first question that comes to my head is: Scared of people or of people who are different -- of minorities? I wonder if this customer would react in the same way if she
were shopping late at night in a Safeway or Albertsons. Another Anglo-Saxon employee confirmed this lack of willingness that whites have of working with Mexicans. When I asked him if The Phoenix Group had a vision for the future he responded:

A vision? Well, I think they hope to get a reputation that beats the one they have. It's not the most glamorous job and it's not the best company. And it's like the people I talk to from the outside if I go and say I work for The Phoenix Group, I don't like it very much, they'll kind of smirk with their nose up. It's got the same reputation everywhere you go. It's sort of a prejudice look at it.

I decided to ask this person if he could clarify me what he meant by reputation, to which he answered "because Mexicans shop there. The white people are the minority". Unfortunately the company might not be able to deal with the prejudice of their customers but having employees that think the same way can make working relations very difficult.

All these circumstances explain why the majority of The Phoenix Group’s employees are Hispanic and why the company has a tougher time recruiting Anglos. However, although the recruiting process of Hispanic employees is easy at the lower levels, the store still has a high turnover rate. So the problem in The Phoenix Group lies in retaining its employees.

Robinson and Dechant (1997) explain how a positive way of retaining employees is by offering them feedback on the effectiveness of their behavior. In The Phoenix Group, I witnessed a few situations where one of the managers would compliment an employee on a job well done, but these situations were minimal and usually involved the same managers every time. Praising employees did not appear to be a daily practice
among all managers. Formal situations like staff meetings where employees could get
together and receive feedback on their performance were also very rare. In the whole
month I was in the store I did not witness any staff meetings between managers and
lower-level employees nor heard about any of this type of meeting taking place.
According to several interviewees, they had never had any meetings since they started
working; the only ones who could recall a meeting were employees who had been
working for the company at least two years. However, these employees explained that
these meetings had more of an informative nature and had taken place only when changes
were going to be introduced (i.e. changes in policies, uniforms, etc.). Moreover, none of
the employees that were interviewed mentioned individual meetings with managers to
review their performance, which are common in other organizations after a certain period
of time (i.e., six months or one year).

Robinson and Dechant also state that another problem with retaining women in
the workplace occurs because they are more likely to be placed in unchallenging jobs
than men and to be limited by sexual bias in promotion opportunities (Robinson and
Dechant, 1997, p.25). In the store I was observing I did not encounter this problem.
Female employees seemed to occupy all positions including managing positions. The
second store I observed even had a female store manager. However, the belief that sexual
bias existed when it came to promotions and job selecting was present in at least two
employees I interviewed. The following is an excerpt from one of my interviews. This
employee was describing how a friend of hers who had been working in the meat
department of the store had been discriminated because of her gender. She also added that
she felt that she was not given the opportunity to prove herself in a more challenging job.

There are many women who are meat cutters. But what they are doing here, I told the supervisor, was putting them below their capabilities, and it shouldn't be that way. There was a girl who used to work here and she went to school and graduated as a meat cutter. She worked for three years as a meat wrapper and they didn't want to give her the position of meat cutter because she was a woman. I told them, why if we are all the same. I can cut meat. In the three years that I have been here they haven't allowed me to do it. They don't want to give me the opportunity. There are a majority of Latinos working for The Phoenix Group, the machismo, the fact that a woman shouldn't know more than a man. The girl I was telling you about, they have put her as a meat cutter only in the last three months, and only because she was fighting. She told them she was going to quit, she was going to leave and not work any more. But she was fighting with cause, she even had a diploma for meat cutting.

Hay muchas mujeres que son cortadoras. Pero lo que están haciendo aquí, yo le dije al supervisor, están poniéndolas abajo, y no debe ser así. Porque aquí estaba trabajando una muchacha que fue a la escuela y ella se graduó de meat cutter. Y estuvo trabajando tres años como empaquadora y no le querían dar el puesto de cortadora, porque es mujer. Es lo que yo le he dicho. Si somos iguales, yo puedo cortar. Yo en los tres años que estoy aquí no me dejan. Ya con el tiempo que yo tengo aquí, ya se lo que ellos hacen. Lo que pasa es que no me quieren dar la oportunidad. Yo le digo al supervisor, no me quieren dar la oportunidad. Entonces nos tienen, casi son puros latinos los que trabajan para The Phoenix Group, el machismo, que una mujer no debe saber más que el hombre. Y la muchacha que te estaba hablando hace solo tres meses que la han puesto de cortadora, que ella estaba peleando, ella iba a salirse, les dijo que no iba a trabajar más. Porque ella estaba peleando un puesto justo, tenía un diploma de meat cutter y todo.

Although this was only one piece of testimony, it makes me wonder how many more employees feel the same way in this or another store. Unfortunately, due to time limitations it was impossible for me to find out.

Finally, the third reason why companies should take into consideration diversity management is business growth.
Business Growth

One of the key steps towards business growth is improving marketplace understanding (Robinson and Dechant, 1997 p.26). The Phoenix Group, with its enormous number of Hispanic employees should easily be able to have the cultural understanding necessary to improve workplace and marketplace understanding. However, after talking to some of the Anglo employees and managers, I found that there seemed to be among them a general lack of knowledge concerning their co-workers and clientele beyond the basic knowledge which derived in many cases simply from stereotypes. Anglo employees seemed to know for example that Hispanics liked to speak their own language, that they lived in large families, that they spent a lot of money in food, that they bought a lot of meat and liked different types of cuts. Most people interviewed could not tell me specific characteristics of the Hispanic cultures and could not pinpoint differences in communication styles (even though we are dealing with a culture that is very different from the Anglo). The Hispanic employees interviewed were also lacking an in-depth knowledge of the Anglo culture. Some of them mentioned some “habits and likes” they believed Anglos to have but their comments were all superficial and many times also based on stereotypes (i.e. that Americans like power and to be in position of power where they can be ordering people around. They like the status that comes with these positions). The interviewees had a hard time defining communication differences or cultural differences that could impact the working environment. However, a few acknowledged the importance of learning more about the other group in order to better
working relationships and to serve better their customers. One manager for example described to me how this knowledge would allow him to help the clients and market their products better by having more effective displays. He added how he had no idea what a lot of the products they were selling were even used for, or how Hispanics combined their foods.

I find myself amazed when I did talk to Hispanics about a certain product. I am amazed at the items they use and what they are used for. And still to this day I don't know what many of them are used for. It would be very interesting if I had that knowledge, on that plate if there is chicken they are going to have the tortillas and they are going to have refried been. This would determine in many cases where we would put that merchandise in the store. So when they do come by they are able to pick up as much as is needed. Or we could say by looking at their merchandise "do you have enough tortillas today?"

This person mentioned several times to me that he would love to learn Spanish so he could converse with his employees and customers and find out about their needs.

I'm in a disadvantage because I don't speak Spanish and I find myself wanting to greet them [customers], but I am afraid I might use the wrong term. Or to say goodbye. I would love to be able to take a class, to do the numbers, to do the abc's and to be able to at least say goodbye. I want to be able to say it right.

A lot of this knowledge lies right here in the store, among the employees. Why not make use of it? Why not take advantage of the enormous amount of internal resources to enlarge the company's understanding of all cultural groups and use this knowledge to enhance working relations and customer service?

I also inquired of several managers if the store ever conducted surveys of their customers. The answer I received was that in the past this had been done-- that the organization had an employee going around stores interviewing customers-- but that this
had not been done for a long time (I did not get specific information on how long was a long time). I suppose that this kind of information gathering must have taken place during the initial opening stages of this chain of stores. Later on after a good number of them had opened, this surveying was discontinued.

In sum, cost saving, winning talent and business-growth are important reasons why The Phoenix Group should pay attention to the way it is managing its diverse workforce. An important key to this process lies on knowing your employees, on knowing how to communicate effectively and appropriately with them. Recalling the title stated in chapter one under Diversity: “A People-related Business Issue”, companies who have the ability to understand and tap the potentialities of every employee and to accommodate and adapt their managing styles to their diverse workforce are the ones who are going to make a difference. As Robinson and Dechant state "a consumer goods firm [i.e. The Phoenix Group] may need to improve it's understanding and management of ethnoculturalism" if they want to succeed (p.28).

Cultural Competence: Key to Communicating Effectively with a Diverse Workforce

As stated in chapter two, a main concern organizations have regarding diversity is uncertainty about how to handle the challenge of communicating with employees whose cultural background result in differing assumptions, values and language skills (Simmons et al. 1993). I also mentioned authors like Cox (1993), who states that communication
differences will cause not only misunderstandings but will definitely lower work-group effectiveness. These communication differences take place between diverse individuals (and by diverse I do not only mean that they speak a different language) because the way we communicate is the reflection of our culture. Differences in culture (background, beliefs, values, assumptions etc.) will condition the way individuals approach a communication situation; and because communication is created (or produced in Deetz’s, words) in every encounter that production will be shaped by each individual’s culture. Even in instances where two individuals are speaking the same language, miscommunication can take place unless a “complete consensus on meaning, identities, construction of knowledge and basic values can be taken for granted” (Deetz, 1995). I believe that in most communication situations that is definitely not the case. Gaining knowledge of some important variables that can affect this process is the first step towards cultural competence. The second stage is applying that knowledge in everyday interaction. As Joplin and Daus explain: "... diversity, as a relatively new phenomenon in the workforce, is not self-managing". (1997 p. 33) Managers must take a proactive stance and work together with employees to achieve successful communication.

In this following section I review some language obstacles and the cultural and contextual obstacles mentioned in chapter two. I also describe how these obstacles are affecting store 83\(^5\). Through my observations and interview data, I was able to verify how

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5 The context and cultural obstacles discussed in this section were previously mentioned in chapter two under “contextual and cultural variables that can affect communication situations"
these variables were continuously affecting communication among employees and were the source of misunderstandings and deteriorating employee-customer relationships.

**Language Obstacles**

Employees have shown signs of frustration for not being able to communicate verbally with several of the managers, while these have expressed the same concerns. However, they are not worried that this lack of communication can affect their workplace or their performance. They believe that there is always someone around to help translate, so lack of knowledge of each other language is neither a communication barrier nor a problem. Although most of the employees interviewed responded that language was not a communication barrier because there were many people in the store who could translate, personal observations and interview information suggest otherwise.

**Formality / Informality in Styles of Address**

In 1970, Robbins Burling described how Americans were usually puzzled with the different forms of address found in cultures that made a distinction between formal and informal situations. He quotes:

Even the relatively simple choice among the familiar *Tu* and more formal *Vous* of French or the similar pronoun choices in German or Spanish often make an English speaker acutely uncomfortable. He [sic] wonders how he should decide whether he knows a person well enough to use *Tu* or whether only *Vous* will do. (p. 88)

This confusion can produce on the part of the English speaker uneasiness and discomfort and make him/her worry about whether or not the communicational style
chosen is offending the other party. When this situation takes place one of two things can occur for the Spanish speaker. They might simply acknowledge they are dealing with and English speaker who has trouble making distinctions and may not care about the mis-
usage, or they may feel very offended thinking the English speaker is not only being disrespectful but treating them as if they were in an inferior position. More often the latter is the common reaction.

Mexicans and Chicanos are more formal in the way they address each other, even between employees that have known each other for a long time. The formal usage of the language is emphasized even more if the people involved in the conversation are strangers. The formal Usted (you) is used over the informal Tu (you). Diga usted or Mande usted (tell me or command me)\(^6\) are common expressions heard repeatedly in everyday conversation. One cashier responded like this when I questioned her about differences in communication styles between Hispanics and Anglos:

Well, yes there is a difference. In general Anglo-Saxons are always trying to make you laugh, everything like a game. And with us, the Hispanics it’s almost always serious, in the personal conversation more Usted [formal version of the second person that replaces the second person singular Tu] in the old fashion style. "I hope you do well ma’am, how are you ma’am [the you here is formal]. Always You [Usted], always respect, or at your orders. And the Anglos always You [tu = informal]. They are more informal.

\[Pues \ si \ que \ hay \ diferencia. \ Por \ lo \ regular \ los \ anglosajones \ siempre \ tratan \ de \ hacer \ reir, \ todo \ nomas \ como \ un \ juego. \ Y \ con \ nosotros \ los \ Hispanos\]

\(^6\) It is hard to find an exact literal translation for these expressions. The closest thing in English is the phrase “I am at your orders, at your command”.
almost always more serious, in personal more Ud. a la manera de antes. "que le vaya bien señora, cómo está Ud Señora. Siempre Ud., siempre respeto. O digame Ud., mande Ud. Y los Anglos siempre Tu. Son más informales.

*Usted* is used with superiors, strangers, parents, professors or any person that by his/her role, relationship or position deserves respect. Age is an important determinant of the use of *Usted*. Hispanics have great respect for their elderly, which are always addressed by *Usted*. If a young manager is dealing with an older employee, the use of *Tu* could be disrespectful even if the manager is in a superior working position.

With peers the use of *Usted* is also common between genders while two men or two women might use the informal *Tu* among themselves. Education is also a determinant for respect and the use of *Usted* among Hispanics. Most of the workers I interviewed addressed me in a very formal style although most of the time I was younger then they were. This type of address was chosen because of my role and position in the store and because of my education. I believe employees viewed me in a superior position because I was interviewing them, I was doing a study on the store, managers responded to my questions and my requests. However, I believe this respect came from the fact that I came from a university. Levels of education many time condition social levels and the style chosen for communication.

I also addressed most employees using *Usted* (a few exceptions were done with very young courtesy clerks who were very informal and much younger than I was). The first reason for the use of *Usted* was that I was younger than most of the people I interviewed. The second reason and in this case also very important, was that I did not want to appear as if I was putting these employees below me or treating them as if they
were inferior. My addressing them in 

\textit{Tu}, might have easily produced these feelings in

them because most of them seemed to have lower incomes and less education than myself.

Now the question is what would be the best way for a non-Spanish speaker to know what to use? Well, first they should start with \textit{Usted}, since very rarely one can go wrong with the formal style. Additionally, they should think of situations where in English the title (Mr., Mrs., Dr. etc) and last name is used. In these situations the \textit{Usted} would be the appropriate. Now, this last case has a small problem. Burling (1970) describes this problem in the following way:

The most common pattern, of course, is for two people [Americans] mutually to use first names. Americans are even a bit proud of the speed with which they get on a “first name basis”, although this does not really mean that Americans are friendlier than people of other nations but only that they use of first names [and a more informal tone] in situations where many Europeans [Hispanics in our case] would continue to use a more formal address (p. 88).

In these cases the main problem is not when to use the \textit{Usted} form, but when or if to stop using it. It is important for English speakers who attempt to communicate in Spanish to learn the “social rules” of addressing others. Politeness and respect are important values in the Spanish cultures and both are reflected in the use of these pronouns.

Formality vs. Informality in addressing styles is only one of the problems English speakers have to deal with when communicating in Spanish. Another problem arises with the level of formality or informality found in the content of the messages communicated.
Formality / Informality in Message Content

From personal observations, although English speaking employees used a relaxed and informal style to address themselves, when it came to the content and format of their conversations they were more formal than the Spanish speaking employees. When Mexican employees were discussing an issue, I would hear several times during the conversation "Ok, what were we talking about?" Interruptions were very common because someone in the group would make a joke or goofed around. I witnessed several conversations when employees from the meat department were having lunch (they were all Mexican), and it would be hard to believe that anything serious could have been said. They were always laughing at each other, telling jokes, trying to impress someone by making a fool of another person, but all this in a friendly, non-intimidating manner. As stated by Klopf (1995, p.173) "Mexicans delight in verbal play, inserting turns of phrases into otherwise ordinary conversation." He adds: "To a foreigner their speech may seem to lack seriousness of purpose, yet they just want to be gracious and friendly". The following description is an example of this situation. It is part of some field notes I took one Saturday morning:

I walk into the break room to look at the bulletin board. I sat at a table and a few minutes later six employees from the meat department walk in. They are laughing and joking. A woman is with them. I thought the woman might be an employee, but she is wearing a sweatshirt. [later I was told she worked for the Quick Cash]. She was teasing around with the other employees and joking about how she felt comfortable in that outfit because nothing was tight on her. The language they use is very familiar, as if they were all old friends. They are constantly teasing each other. The manager turns to me and asks me if I want to interview any one of them. He uses a joking tone, friendly and they all start laughing and teasing each other saying "you should go, no you should go". I decide not to say
anything about the questions yet and I just start chatting with them about other things. They are eating some tamales and they offered me one. It's very good. One of them says that his mother in law had made them. The others tease him about how big and fat they are.

I decide to mention my desire to interview them and ask who is willing to help me out. A lot of joking goes on about having the interview in "el baile" [the dance]. They keep inviting me to go dancing with them. A lot is joked around that issue. I follow their jokes but firmly try to get back to my interview recruiting. One of the guys comes over to me and says "so and so will go", he laughs and points to his friend. I laugh and add, "sure and why don't I interview you after him?" He laughs and says no, no, you can interview me at the dance. This person was rather short in height so his friends started teasing him on how he would have to stand on a stool to dance with me. I tried to get back to my interview project. At this point I had signed up three people. Someone asks me if I will be videotaping the interview. They all laugh and tease him about how he wants to know this so he can prepare and come pretty that day. "Wear you cowboy hat!" someone says" but take a bath first". They keep joking around, teasing with me, but all this in a friendly manner. They seemed to be trying more to show off in front of their co-workers than really flirt with me. At no point did I feel insulted or disrespected. My only thought was "ok guys, let's get on with arranging my interviews". Now I knew better than saying anything. I was starting to establish a sense of trust that would greatly benefit me in the future.

For someone not used to this kind of joking or very direct insinuations this conversation could have been taken very personally and in an offensive manner. Someone not used to the Spanish flattery and frequent flirting of men towards women may feel disrespected and sexually harassed. But knowledge of the culture can help understand how all this most of the times is an act put up to impress or show off more than to get something. In addition when the conversations takes such a joking level and a relaxed tone it means that one is accepted and that everyone is comfortable with the other person.

I collected numerous examples of this type of situations throughout my observations.

One Friday I was sitting by the bakery-deli section and there was one customer (a lady
with a little girl) being helped by one of the Hispanic employees. The lady was quite young and also Hispanic. There was a second Hispanic employee just standing by. He seemed to be taking his break. This customer was buying some deli items. I was so close that I could observe what was going on and record their conversation. I think this dialogue is another example of what I previously mentioned about how joking and flirting is introduced in daily conversations and considered quite normal by both female and male Hispanics.

There is a customer at the deli section (female). She has a little girl sitting in her cart. She is young, maybe mid-twenties. She seems pretty friendly, but I don’t believe she is friends with the employees helping her. She might be a regular customer. The employee helping her (Hispanic) appears to be having trouble with the electronic scale (I think he is new in the deli). He asks another employee who is standing by if he knows what to do. (This employee is also Hispanic and appears to be on break). At this point the customer has been standing at the counter for 10 minutes. However, she doesn’t seem very bothered at all. The two employees are talking to her about *el baile* or the dance (I guess this seems to be a very popular topic around here). They are smiling a lot and teasing each other. They appear to be flirting with the customer but in a friendly tone.

... do a lot of girls go there? (Employee #1)
Ohhh, yes, a lot. There are more girls than guys! (Customer)
Ohhh, there we go! Single and without any compromise?. (Employee #2)
Without compromises and with a car. And, we are hard workers too. (Employee #1)
And where are you from? (Employee #1)
From Chihuahua (Customer)
Ohhh, I know all the hits (music) from Chihuahua (employee #2)

... y van muchas chicas? (Empleado #1)

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This is a typical expression in Spanish that means that a person is not only single but that he/she is completely unattached to another person.
*Uuy, muchisimas. Hay más chicas que hombres! (cliente)*

*Uuy, ahi vamos. Solteritos que somos y sin apuro (employeado #2)*

*Sin compromisos y con carro. Trabajadores que somos. (employeado #1)*

*Y Ud. de dónde es?*

*De Chihuahua. (customer)*

*Ay, todos los temas de Chihuahua me se yo! (Employee 2)*

The employee at this point is trying to put some plastic cover over the container.

Twenty minutes have passed since the customer arrived.

I’ll put some tape on this (employee #1 referring to a piece of tape to seal the container)

Give me a pound of that sauce too (customer)

Give it to me I’ll put on the tape (customer)

What’s your name (employee #1)

Sandra (customer)

*Le voy a poner una cinta (employeado 1 refiriéndose a una cinta para cerrar el contenedor)*

*Deme una libra de esa salsa también. (customer)*

*Deme se la ponga yo a la cinta (customer)*

*Cómo se llama? (employee 1)*

*Sandra (customer)*

It has been almost 25 minutes before the customer leaves the counter.

As we can see there seems to be two conversations going on simultaneously during this dialogue: an official conversation regarding why this customer was at this counter in the first place (to buy some deli products) and another regarding *el baile* or a situation outside the store. There is an official topic and a personal topic, but both are as important to make this employee-customer relationship successful. In this case maybe the conversation became too personal, but it is very common to see this mixture of topics go on in daily conversations. Another reason why this happens is due to the importance of the concept *simpatía* in the Hispanic culture (see pp. 50/143 for details). Being nice,
personable, concerned for others, friendly, flirtatious makes a person more *simpático/a*. A person who is *simpático/a* is also better regarded and more likely to be accepted than one that does not have these qualities. Thus, making social interactions (even if they are business transactions) more personable and friendly is for many Hispanics the key for successful interactions.

The use of joking and teasing in conversations produces problems in the relation with non-Spanish speakers, however. As several Anglo employees mentioned, they felt angry because they would be sitting by two or more Hispanics who were talking and suddenly the Hispanics would start to laugh. The Anglo employees felt the Hispanics were talking and laughing about them and not being able to understand the conversation, they would get upset and many times leave. I heard from several English speaking sources how they disliked the fact that people were speaking Spanish in front of others who could not understand. As one employee describes:

> They speak a lot of Spanish, you could be standing there and they are talking in Spanish. Why can't they speak English too? And they can if they really want to. Because you think they are talking about you then. It bothers a lot of people. I just walk away.

The dimension of formality - informality in the content of messages is an important issue here. Both Anglos and Hispanics need to recognize that there are important differences in conversation styles among these two groups. For example, if these Anglo employees would be more familiar with the informality of content that I have just described, maybe their first reaction would not be to assume it was they who were being laughed at. They might still be bothered because they don’t understand what is going on, but they might
Language Barriers

Neither English (for Hispanics) nor Spanish (for Anglos) is required to be an employee of The Phoenix Group. The organization encourages bilingualism, but it does not exclude new employees on that basis. From my observations, I found that the store had few employees who were completely fluent in both languages. Spanish employees knew a little bit of English to get by and English speaking employees (mostly cashiers) knew Spanish words they had picked up from their clients and other employees. I observed how the lack of language skill produced numerous problems during the checking out process. It produces delays, misunderstandings, and confusion that frequently ended in a frustrating and upsetting situation. In the following excerpt, an English-speaking cashier describes her personal frustration because of language problems:

If they [Spanish speaking customers] don't understand something they stop me and ask. How much it is I can understand. But if they want to tell me about how they saw it or why it was on sale, or something else I don't understand and I have to call somebody over and then it's like confusing sometimes. Well, do they want it, do they want to void it, it takes longer trying to understand what they want before I can call management. That gets frustrating sometimes, frustrating because of the communication gap. A lot of frustration.

An English-speaking Courtesy clerk also describes the Spanish speaking customer's reaction when she can't understand what they are saying:

Usually they say something like forget it, and don't look very happy, and
they walk away, and I try the best to explain that I don't understand them, I
don't know much Spanish.

This lack of bilingualism among the majority of Store 83's employees makes
communication depend on a few translators. Unfortunately, this means that this
communication is based on third degree interpretations. This use of translators produces a
lot of problems and inconveniences all on its own.

Inconveniences of Translation

The problem with translating in The Phoenix Group is to find a competent
translator and to have this person available exactly at the time when he/she is needed. The
situation in this store is that the number of completely bilingual (Spanish-English)
employees is minimal, so translations are done by people with a very scarce knowledge
of the others' language. I was called during several opportunities to serve as a translator
while I was doing my observations near the registers, and at that moment there seemed to
be no one else available to help. During this situation, despite the fact that I spoke
Spanish very well, I had a hard time helping the customer because of my lack of
knowledge concerning the use of Food Stamps. I didn't know the procedures and lacked
the appropriate vocabulary. I saw how many times the courtesy clerks were the ones
doing the translations (they were mostly Chicanos), but they were not trained in the
procedures relevant to cashiers. I was certain that many times translators must encounter
the same problems I did. So in addition to inadequate translators, local terminology and
specific or even unique procedures makes the translating process that much harder. I'm-
still not very sure how satisfied the customer leaves the store after one of these translating sessions.

Translating situations also rely on availability of translators. The Phoenix Group has all their employees keeping busy, and it is hard for them to leave their work areas to translate without disturbing the working process. For example, when a courtesy clerk was called to translate, that effectively meant groceries piled up and that register line was delayed. Sometimes a delay in finding a person to translate produced inconveniences in the customers. The following situation was described by one of the employees from the meat department who spoke very little English. Although somewhat humorous, this situation produced much discomfort in the customer.

Sometimes we have lots of problems with customers. When I didn't speak any English, because now I can understand a little, something happened to me with a woman who came to me and asked for the bathroom in English. I didn't understand her so I told her "hold on", which was the only thing I know more or less, and I went and talked to a friend of mine who spoke English. Everybody was working but he was eating. I told him "come on, there is a lady who wants meat and I can't understand what she wants". And he was eating and didn't come down until he finished eating. And then the women told him she wanted the bathroom, "I need the bathroom" and she said it like this [he made gestures like someone who is desperate to use the restroom]. And the whole situation made me laugh because I had made her wait like 15 minutes. Hurry, hurry over there!

A veces tenemos muchos problemas con el cliente. Cuando yo no hablaba nada de inglés, ahora si entiendo un poquito, me pasó algo con una señora que vino y me pidió el baño en inglés. Y pues yo no le entendi y ahí nomas le dije "hold on", que es lo que yo sabía mas o menos y fui y le hablé a un amigo mío que hablaba inglés. Todos estaban trabajando y el estaba comiendo. Y le dije, ándale que hay una señora que quiere carne y no entiendo que quiere. Y el estaba comiendo y hasta que acabó de comer y ya bajamos. Y luego le dijo que quería el baño, "pues necesito el baño", y lo dijo así la señora [el empleado hizo gestos como de alguien
desesperado por ir al baño]. Y a mi me ha dado mucha risa porque la he hecho esperar a la señora como 15 minutos. Corra, corra pa' alla!

Some translating situations are not taken as lightly by customers and they not only result in angry clients but upset employees. This same employee described an incident involving an Italian customer who spoke English.

Many times customers get angry because we don't speak English. We had a problem with an Italian fellow who had a strong accent and he talked to a girl that was working on the floor. She didn't understand him. The girl came to me and y said "come outside". And you know I don't speak English. So here I come and the Italian starts talking to me and I tell him "hold on" because I also couldn't understand him. And when [name of manager who speaks English], the guy is angry and he tells him "four people have come out and none of them speak English". And [name] says "I speak English, what do you need?"

Another employee also described her encounter with an Anglo customer who was angry at her because she spoke little English:

Once I had problems with an American, an old lady. She said something, asked me about something that we didn't have. So I told her "we don't have any now but why don't you come back later and we'll try to get it for you". And she said "don't you understand me?" "Yes, yes I understand you but we don't have any now". And she answers "I don't know how they have you working here if you can't understand". And I got angry and told her "look, you know what, I don't need my mouth to work here because I work in the back, and I'm a meat wrapper, and I know the basics to work".
She didn't answer and she left. Sometimes they make me so mad. Everyone has the right to work. The worst is that I notice that when I get nervous the less I can speak English.

Una vez tuve problemas con una Americana, una viejita. Me ha dicho, algo me ha preguntado pero no teníamos. Entonces le dije no, no tenemos pero porque no regresa después y se lo conseguimos. Y me dijo "no me entiendes?" "Sí, sí le entiendo pero no tenemos, ahorita no hay". Y me ha contestado, "yo no se como te tienen trabajando aquí si no entiendes". Y me enojé y le dije "sabe que, yo no necesito la boca para trabajar, yo hago mi trabajo ahí adentro, soy empacadora de carne pero lo mas necesario lo se". No me contestó y se fue. A veces me sacan de quisio. Todos tenemos derecho a trabajar. Lo peor es que yo noto que cuando me pongo nerviosa menos puedo hablar Ingles.

Mexican employees also complain that Chicanos speak a mixture of languages that makes them at times incomprehensible. One employee stated in his interview that it was bad to have a Chicano manager because they were the hardest to understand. Their Spanish wasn't great and they spoke English with a very strong accent. He laughed and described a situation he had been involved in with a Chicana manager in another store.

Once in the other store where I worked something happened that now I laugh but that in that moment worried me a lot. I had to leave work at twelve thirty, and I was there with the person in charge of the meat who was a Chicana. She spoke half in Spanish and half in English, you know, like the Chicanos speak. And I remember that she said "you have to do four boxes of these and four boxes of those and then you can go home. Well, I did everything she said and then I went to the meat department to find the go home. Well, I couldn’t find it and only later did I realize that she had said, then go home. That made me laugh very much because I spent about three hours looking for the go home. I was reading all the boxes to see if one of them said go home. And I didn’t know until after a long time what go home meant. And there she had me looking for the go home. I was worried because I had left work without doing the go home because I couldn’t find it. Well, she said to me one thing in Spanish and another in English and I couldn’t understand her many times. Now the whole thing makes me laugh. I tell [name of a friend who also works in the store] "what, go home?" Yeah, bring me four boxes" he replies.
Una vez alla en la otra tienda donde trabajaba me pasó algo que ahora me río, pero en aquel momento me preocupó mucho. Yo tenía que salir a las doce y media del trabajo, entonces estaba la encargada de la carne que era una Chicana. Ella hablaba la mitad en Español y la mitad en Inglés, sabes como hablan los Chicanos. Y me acuerdo mucho que me dijo"tu tienes que hacer cuatro cajas de esto, cuatro cajas de aquello y cuando acabes go home". Y entonces yo hice todo y me fui a buscar el go home a la carnicería. Pues no lo hallaba, yo decía "que será eso, que será eso. Y ahora despues me di cuenta que me había dicho que te vas para tu casa. Pero eso me dio mucha risa porque duré como tres horas buscando el "go home". Yo me ponía a leer todas las cajas a ver donde decía go home. Y nunca supe hasta despues de mucho tiempo, yo entendí lo que quería decir go home. Y ahí me tenía la vieja buscando el “go home”. Y yo estaba preocupado porque me fui a casa sin hacer el “go home” porque no lo hallé. Pues me hablaba una cosa en Español y otra en Inglés y yo no le entendía muchas veces. Ahora me da risa. Yo le digo al [nombre de un amigo que tambieri trabaja en la tienda], "que, go home?". "Si tráete cuatro cajas" me contesta.

Problems occasioned by translations can obviously affect both employee and customer satisfaction. In the larger picture these problems can potentially lower productivity and business success.

**Linguistic Ethnocentrism**

Burling (1970) describes how language is always a crucial symbol of ethnic or national affiliation. He continues stating that “the difficulty of learning a new language gives continuity to linguistic traditions and it becomes easy to identify a language with a people, a nation, or even a race” (p.102). For this reason in a community, where two languages are spoken and different groups are faced with the dilemma of choosing one language over another, linguistic ethnocentrism can easily take place.

Linguistic ethnocentrism was a big factor in an environment like The Phoenix
Group's where different strong cultural groups co-existed. Each group was proud of their language heritage and defended it over the use of any other language. The Anglos thought they should speak English and the Mexicans thought they should speak Spanish. However, despite the fact that these groups were often angry and upset because they couldn’t understand each other, they appeared to accept and respect the use each other's language. Moreover the store’s upper management respected the freedom of languages and allowed his/her employees to speak in whatever language they desired. The major problem concerning linguistic ethnocentrism took place with Chicano employees, who although born in an Anglo English-speaking culture found themselves pressured by the Mexican groups to maintain their Spanish language and Mexican heritage. Ferguson (1964) examined situations where two varieties of a language co-existed throughout a community, with each playing a specific role in a specific context. He named this situation diglossia. (p. 429)

Diglossia

Diglossia means “between languages in Greek (Farb, 1970). When diglossia takes place individuals are confronted with two languages and must learn “as part of their speech strategy, the occasions on which the use of each language is appropriate” (Farb, 1973, p.152). Knowing when to use each language is crucial and cannot be overestimated. Farb describes how many Spanish-English bilingual of Puerto Rican descendent (and I can add that this extends to a larger population of Hispanics in the U.S.) regard English as the language of social prestige and advancement but identify
Spanish with the values of friendship and intimacy. In these cases they consider appropriate to use English at work or at school, but Spanish at home and with close friends. Many Chicanos have realized that in order to succeed (business, work or money wise) it was necessary to learn the “high language” or “more prestigious language” -- that is, the majority language, English.

During my observations, I met Chicano employees with very different levels of linguistic competency. Some were bilingual, some spoke a mixture of languages (Spanglish), and some spoke only English. I did not meet any Chicano employee that spoke only Spanish. The pressure most Chicanos suffer for finding themselves between two languages, and having to choose between one or the other, produces in many of them diglossia or in Farb's words, “linguistic Schizophrenia”. (Farb, 1970 p.151)

Major problems arise when they are confronted with members of one of the other two groups to whom the Chicanos appear as outcasts and are not very welcomed figures. I noticed that many Chicanos (especially younger generations) at The Phoenix Group spoke only English (unless they were asked to translate). Taking the concept of diglossia as a referent, this would make sense because they are using the language they consider appropriate for a working environment. But, when a Mexican meets a Chicano that does not speak Spanish he/she does not analyze this from a linguistic point of view. They think Chicanos don't want to speak the language because they want to become like the Anglos. They feel the Chicanos are trying to lose their most important tie to their Mexican culture: the language. This produces friction between these two groups, and in The Phoenix Group has provoked unpleasant encounters. The following excerpt exemplifies
this situation. It is part of an interview done to a Chicano manager. This manager explains how she has had problems with customers and some Sales representative of some Mexican products because of her lack of Spanish:

I speak just a little Spanish that I’ve picked up. But there are some customers that won’t speak to you if you don’t speak Spanish. I used to talk to quite a few in English that would answer me back in Spanish, and there are some customers and especially some sales representative that come in my department, they won’t speak to me if I don’t speak Spanish. Even though I speak to them in English. And then they’ll act as if they don’t understand what you are saying. But you know that they also speak English because they are answering other English people’s questions perfectly.

I inquired why they did that. To this question I got the following response:

Because of their heritage [she said this without any doubt]. I’ve seen this many times. You are talking in English and they get mad because they want you to speak to them in Spanish. The same with their kids. They want them to speak Spanish. Whether they were born here or not, they want their kids to make sure that that heritage still goes on, their language continues. They don’t consider the backlashes of when they are going to college and all that stuff where they have to speak English. I’ve gotten plenty of criticism because I don’t speak Spanish. Well, I don’t speak very good Spanish and whatever, deal with it. Even if you tell them "ok, I’ll speak to you in Spanish as much as I can", but they don’t understand that you were born here and that English is your language. If I go to Mexico they expect me to speak Spanish, the same should be here with English. And customers get mad at their kids if they speak English, or if you speak English to them.

Linguistic ethnocentrism functions in both directions. There were complaints that some cashiers who spoke English but knew some Spanish were not willing to speak Spanish to their customers -- not even when these customers had a question or a problem.

One cashier who was bilingual was telling me how she was upset because of the attitudes of these former cashiers.
I've had customers come up to me and complain, and want to try to talk to me in English. I respond to them in Spanish and they'll come back to me with "I didn't know you spoke Spanish". Cause they've had that attitude of some of the cashiers that won't talk to them in Spanish. They'll say "I don't understand to the customers, when in reality they do understand". The attitudes these cashiers have towards some of the customers could improve.

Analyzing this attitude under the lens of diglossia, it is easier to understand these employees unwillingness to speak Spanish. For them, it would be like a language for the wrong function or environment.

Communicating between languages can be a major obstacle in a diverse environment. It is important to learn not only the language itself but to have the necessary skills to produce congruent messages. Translation should be done with precaution and if possible through a credible source. Linguistic ethnocentrism and diglossia are phenomena that should be taken seriously by managers and employees because they can strongly condition and affect the way we produce and evaluate other's communication. As discussed in Chapter two (under Communication as a Set of Strategies in Diversity Management) language, norms, perceptions and expectations can creat noise in the communication process and lead to misundertanding and confusion.

**Cultural obstacles**

Lack of knowledge or lack of consideration of basic cultural variables can affect and jeopardize working relations. Our cultural and our worldview condition the way we communicate. It influences the way we perceive messages and the way we create them. In this next section I move beyond strict considerations of language to a treatment of larger
cultural patterns, habits, or customs that can influence communication processes.

**Individualism vs. Collectivism**

In Chapter two I discussed some of the characteristics of members of a comparatively individualistic culture (Anglos) and those of a comparatively collectivistic one (Hispanic). Concern for clarity, directness, truth-telling and straight talk were some of the attributes of individualistic groups. In contrast, collectivistic groups emphasize indirect communication, concern for others' feelings, strategies to avoid hurting others and for saving face (avoiding embarrassing situations).

Saving of face is very important in the Hispanic culture, and public embarrassment can deeply upset someone from this culture. Public criticism, directness and assertiveness, which are behaviors and attitudes commonly found in the Anglo culture, often produce very embarrassing situations for Hispanics. The following is an example of one of these situations. It is from one of the interviews I had with a Hispanic cashier. It involves her and an Anglo manager.

They tell us to be courteous and helpful to the customer. In our training they told us if you don’t have people in line and someone comes and asks you where something is, to go and help them try to find it. Well, I’ve done that and [name of manager] yells at me. There is nobody in my line and he yells “where have you been”! When I tell him I am going to the bathroom, I barely get there and sit on the pot and they are calling me to come back. I know we have our breaks but the thing is when you’ve got to go you’ve got to go. Of course I’m not going to go when I have a customer and say “Sorry I have to go”. I’m going to wait until I don’t have any customers. But the thing is it wouldn’t bother me so much if I would take off without telling them, but I always tell them. Maybe they forget how long I’ve been gone but they are calling me constantly and on the loudspeaker. The other night I barely got to the bathroom and they had called me three times
before I could come out. And everybody hears him and by the time you walk up to the register everybody knows who you are and this is embarrassing!

At the end of a situation like this we find ourselves with an upset employee (angry and embarrassed) who has to swallow her/his anger because they have customers in the line. This person might never even say anything to the manager because of his/her subordinate position; but the employee will need a venting outlet and might turn to other employees or family members. The manager might already be busy with other issues to give this incident a second thought and might not even notice the angry upset employee. Moreover, being Anglo he/she might not even assume something wrong was said. I use the word might because there are always exceptions to the rule, but in most cases, especially based on personal observations, this was the final outcome in this store. One of the Hispanic employees also commented on an episode that had upset him. In this case an Anglo Manager (this incident took place in another store) had applied a more severe "punishment or restriction" on him than he would have done on an Anglo employee. At least this is what this Hispanic employee felt. Now this Hispanic employee was more upset because he had been yelled at and embarrassed than because he had been discriminated:

If a Latin employee does something wrong, this manager would apply him stricter restrictions that if the employee was not Latin. I talked to him and to his supervisor about this and he apologized. But I was angry, not so much because he had made a difference but because he had yelled at me. He apologized but I told him his apology was not enough, that this should not happen again.

Si un trabajador Latino hace algo, este manejador (Anglo) le pone las
After hearing this answer I focused my next question on the “yelling part” (I was going to discuss discrimination in another part of the interview) and mentioned that Anglo culture was more used to very direct statements and to sometimes raising their voices when they were upset. To this he responded “Si, pero nos hacen avergonzar” (“yes, but they make us ashamed”). Clearly, avoiding public embarrassment is a priority for this employee who feels Anglos with their directness and confrontational style are not very considerate of their co-workers. Anglo managers should be careful with the tone they use when reprimanding or correcting Hispanic employees. They should be aware of the importance that face saving has for this culture and find ways of delivering their messages without offending or deeply hurting the Hispanic employees. One way is too never reprimand an employee in public. Another is to avoid the use of direct, confrontational style that will in most cases not be very successful and to explore more effective ways of conveying their messages. On the other hand Hispanics should also realize that assertiveness and directness are part of the Anglo culture and therefore should not take direct remarks personally. They should also consider that members of this group feel very comfortable using this assertive style and will often not realize they are using a loud tone, being confrontational or too direct.
Power Distance

The next important variable to consider is Power Distance. As discussed in Chapter two, power distance describes the degree to which groups make power distinctions, feel comfortable with hierarchy and have more formalized rules to signal respect. Hispanics rate high on power distance therefore they feel more comfortable with hierarchy, and with more rituals to show respect. That is why it is so important for Hispanics the use of *Usted* in everyday conversation (for details see Formal vs. Informal Addressing Styles). With regard to hierarchy, knowing exactly who to respond to, or who to take orders from helps Hispanics reduce their anxiety. The lack of knowledge creates uneasiness and discomfort. One employee explained to me during her interview how many times she was confused on whom to take orders from. She gets upset and frustrated because one manager tells her one thing and later another manager gives her a counter order. This situation came up when I asked her what could be improved in the store? To this she answered:

Communication between everybody. In management one tells me don’t listen to this one because he is stupid and the other one tells me “Don’t listen to this one because he is stupid.”

After hearing this I asked her who was her immediate superior. I asked her if she knew if there was a certain chain of command in the store that she could appeal to when a situation like the above took place. She answered:

Nobody’s ever told me anything of that. And one tells me don’t listen to him cause he’s stupid. And those are literally the words that they are using. At this point I just watch and keep my mouth shut, but I end up not knowing what to do.
For situations like this I believe an organizational chart defining all levels of management would be important for employees to have as a reference. They (all employees) need to know who to respond to for clarity purposes. However in this case, I also believe these two managers need to stop denying each other's authority through this childish behavior. They need to not only stop confusing their employees with counter-orders but also they need to stop modeling disrespect for their co-workers opinion. How can they expect employees to respect each other with the example they are setting?

Another important difference between Anglo and Hispanic employees is that when confronted with problems, Anglo employees don't mind going straight to the store manager, while Hispanic employees tend to prefer talking to their manager first and try to avoid the main office if possible. At first, I believed in The Phoenix Group this could be simply a question of language since the Store manager did not speak Spanish, after interviewing a couple of Hispanic employees I now think this attitude can has several causes. First, there is a fear of being singled out. A trip to the Store manager's office would bring out several questions among the other employees. They might be suspicious of the reasons for this visit. Second, is the fact that Hispanics are not used to complaining for fear of losing their jobs. They complain usually to family or friends and in the case of this store the meat manager was a common "ear". He was Mexican and appeared to be friends with and get along with his crew. Third, is the respect for hierarchy and the consequences of not respecting it. One of the Hispanic managers was describing this attitude when explaining how his crew was not happy with their salaries. To my question: Why doesn't anybody complain? To this he answered:
They complain among themselves, but as I tell you it's better if they bear with it. That's the way we Latinos are, we bear. Maybe it's because we are afraid that they will chase us out or maybe because we are this way, but we bear, I don't know. They complain among themselves or to me because I am their manager.

Se quejan entre ellos pero como le digo mejor se aguantan. Así somos los latinos, mejor nos aguantamos. Será porque tenemos miedo que nos corran o porque de por si somos así, nos aguantamos, no se. Se quejan entre ellos o conmigo porque yo soy manejador.

When asked if Hispanics respected hierarchy more than the Anglos he responded:

Yes, the American tries to go all the way up to the top. The Hispanic prefers to deal with his immediate boss and not go to this one or that one. In fact if there is some kind of problem they don't want to go to anybody's office.

Sí, el americano trata de irse hasta más arriba muchas veces. El hispano prefiere tratar con su jefe inmediato y no andar con este o con aquel. Inclusive si hay algún problema no quieren ir a la oficina de nadie.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree of uncertainty or ambiguity that a group can support. The higher a group rates on uncertainty the less this group can tolerate it. Hispanics rate high on an uncertainty scale. In a job situation this is reflected in high stress, fear of failing or being fired, the need for clear requirements and instruction, and the feeling that conflict should be avoided. An example of the need for clear requirements was just offered under the variable of power distance. The fear of failing or being fired appeared among several employee’s responses (during formal and informal interviews). These employees explained observing or having certain behaviors on the basis of this fear. One of the managers described differences he/she noticed between two of his/her
employees (a Hispanic and an Anglo).

There is a difference. You are Hispanic compared to Anglo people. Hispanics tend to focus more on what you tell them and they tend to get the job done faster than someone who is taking their job for granted. If I tell my Anglo employee to do something it takes her longer. Hispanics want their jobs, they want to keep their jobs. I think a lot of times people form America tend to take it a little more on the side as far as their jobs go. They think, “I’m perfect here, I’ve got my job, I don’t have to worry about anything”. Where as you no, those who aren’t American, who come from Mexico, they tend to focus more on their job, they tend to be harder workers. The main reason is the fear of not having a job. You have a family to support too.

Another example of fear of being fired was described by another manager. This person describes situations Hispanic employees put up with because of this fear or because of an attitude which this manager considers part of their culture: *aguantar*. I have discussed the attitude *aguantar* -- to bear or to endure in chapter two. However, these two factors are very interrelated: Many Hispanics “bear or endure” because of the fear of losing their jobs.

The Phoenix Group starts its entry level employees at a lower salary and people who come here are from a different social class [he means lower]. What I have seen, at least this is what I believe, is that the managers know that we come from a lower class compared to employees in other stores like Albertsons or Safeway. As a matter of fact in those stores to be a cashier one has to have a GED. They have a little more education. Well, with the excuse that here we are a little bit lower [have less education or come from a lower class] managers are more abusive, in comparison with other stores. This happens because they know they are dealing with people who don’t understand the laws that protect them and if they do understand them they are afraid to say anything. We Latins are people that prefer to bear than to make trouble. The opposite happens with Americans, who because of any little thing are immediately asking to speak to the manager. Hispanics prefer to endure. We complain among ourselves but we endure. Maybe it’s because we are afraid we might be fired or maybe because we simply are this way. And people [Anglos] are more abuse because we take it.
The Phoenix Group empieza con sueldos más bajos y aquí viene gente de otra clase social. Entonces yo he visto, creo yo que es así: los manejadores saben que somos personas de clase más baja comparada con otras tiendas como Albertsons o Safeway. Inclusive en esas tiendas si una es cajera ya le piden GED para entrar. Son de una clase un poquito más alta de estudio pues. Y con la excusa de que aquí somos un poquito más bajo, yo he visto que si toman un poquito más de abuso. En comparación con otras tiendas. Porque saben que son personas que en primer lugar no entienden muchas leyes que los protegen, y si la entienden no quieren hablar. Los latinos son unas personas que preferimos aguantarnos que hacer un lio. En comparación con el americano que cualquier cosita, ya pide hablar con el manager. Los Hispanos no, preferimos aguantarnos muchas veces. Nos quejamos entre nosotros pero nos aguantamos. Será porque tenemos miedo que nos corran o porque de por si somos así, nos aguantamos no se. Y por esto se toman un poquito más de abuso, porque saben que nos aguantamos.

Unfortunately in the most stable non-intimidating environment, this fear of losing their jobs can still be present in many Hispanic employees. These groups come from a long history of discrimination and their attitude and behaviors are many times a reflection of this past.

Time Orientation

Differences in time orientation between Hispanics and Anglos can be dramatic. Anglos stress punctuality, are future-oriented and tend to prefer doing one thing at a time. They are individuals with a high need for closure and are dissatisfied with dangling ends. On the other hand, Hispanics are more present-oriented, often not puntual, think about and attempt to do a number of things simultaneously (especially in terms or work, friendship and play). This overload many times leads to procrastination. With these two
opposite attitudes and behaviors it is not a surprise that these groups have a hard time working together or are complaining about each other. During my interviews and observations I heard numerous complaints which can be related to time orientation. The following excerpts exemplify some of these complaints. The first example is from a Hispanic cashier who complains how Anglos cashiers only want to do one thing and nothing else.

There are some American cashiers that don’t want to do anything else than be cashiers. If you tell them “can you please do this” they respond “no, because I am a cashier”. I can be arranging merchandise over there and if I have clients I return to the register. When the customer is gone I go back and keep arranging merchandise. I like to do that because it makes time go by faster. When management says “who can help with something” I say “me”. It gets me out of the routine. But with American cashiers its different. They only want to be cashiers, they don’t even want to pick up a piece of paper, nothing.

Hay cajeras Americanas que no les gusta hacer más nada que hacer de cajeras. Y si les dices “mira puedes hacer esto por favor” te dicen “no, yo soy cajera”. Yo puedo estar acomodando cosas allá, y tengo clientes, vuelvo a la caja y luego vuelvo a acomodar. Me gusta, así se me pasa el tiempo, me distraigo. Cuando dicen (management) “quién puede hacer algo?” digo “yo”. Salgo de la rutina. Pero las cajeras americanas no, casi no quieren ser cajeras nomas. No quieren levantar ni un papel, nada.

An Anglo employee also mentioned how his Hispanic co-workers many times just left without finishing their jobs while he always stayed until everything for the day was done.

They (Hispanics) start but they don’t finish. That happens all the time. The worst thing is that they don’t let the next person know where they left off. So you don’t know where to continue.

Another cashier (Chicana who mentioned she grew up in the American way)
complained about other cashiers coming in late. She didn’t specify whether they were Anglo or Hispanic, but I observed several times that the people who were supposed to replace her (and were late) were Hispanic. This cashier on several opportunities had to stay fifteen or twenty minutes over her shift because her replacement was late.

One of the things I’ve noticed a lot is that cashiers are late or calling in the last minute saying “I’m going to be late, or I’m not coming in”. This makes me angry because I have to be here most of the time by 7 in the morning. So I get here about 6:30 in the morning. If I can get up at 5:00 am, get my kids out to the babysitter, get myself ready and be here by 6:30 am, and I don’t have a car, why can’t they be here on time. They are late in the afternoon, 3:00 or 4:00 pm when they are supposed to come in. And they have a car.

Time orientation can be a serious obstacle in a workplace. The issue is more than simply having a few employees arrive late. Failing to show up on time or finishing the assigned tasks in very damaging in such a high paced environment like a supermarket. Especially in The Phoenix Group where employees were busy at all times and very dependent on each other’s work to be successful in their own.

**Being / Doing Culture**

The concept of a Being or Doing culture developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (allows us to understand the reasons behind certain groups behaviors and communication styles. As discussed in Chapter two, members of a doing culture (Anglos) emphasize productivity and measurable accomplishments therefore their communication and feedback is expected to be direct and specific. As Stohl describes "although managers [in the U.S.] recognize the need to occasionally tell a white lie to allow both people in the
relationship to save face, more likely the business person will favor direct confrontations, argumentations, and honesty with the other" (Stohl, 1995, p. 78). In contrast, members of a Being culture (Hispanics) tend to privilege interpersonal relationships and harmony. Stohl states that Mexican managers pay much closer attention to the relationship and avoid direct confrontation and negative interactions, and that a blunt no to a request, a direct countermand, or other blatant disagreements are seen as interpersonal rejections" (Stohl, 1995, p.78).

I was able to study the influence of these two variables (Being-Doing) in manager-employee communication because there were two managers in the store that fit almost perfectly with the two types mentioned above. There was one Anglo manager that was very direct and confrontational in his style of address. He was very assertive, spoke in a loud tone and most of the time issued direct orders. On the other hand, there was one Hispanic manager that was quieter, gave his orders in a requesting tone, and was more concerned with face saving. When I asked employees with which managerial style or communication style they felt more comfortable or appreciated most interviewees mentioned this Hispanic manager. Here, I would like to make a special note. The store manager, although Anglo was very much liked by all employees. I found this very interesting so I questioned employees about why this manager was so appreciated. I wanted to know especially what qualities or behaviors were more outstanding. I also asked interviewees to tell me which manager they felt more comfortable working with, which manager had for them a better communication style. These are some of the answers I received:
I like [Store manager] because he doesn't yell at me. I don't like [Anglo manager] because he bosses me around. (Anglo employee).

Well, I prefer [Hispanic manager and Store manager] because they take me seriously, they are very good at it. But [Anglo manager] like to goof around so there is not point. I really like [Hispanic manager] because he is always there when you need him and he is on top of the game (Anglo employee).

I realize that I get along with most of the managers, I adapt very easily. But, there is one [Anglo manager] who always gives you orders. Hispanic managers are more courteous: "please, if you want... or if you have a minute..." [this person means they request more than order]. And they do this even though they know that as employees you must do what they say. American managers are more: "I said so, so do it!" (Hispanic employee)

Yo me doy con todos los manejadores, me adapto fácil pero hay uno [manejador Anglosajon] que siempre te esta dando ordenes. Los manejadores Hispanos son más educados: "por favor, mire si Ud. Puede... si quiere..." Y esto aunque saben que uno lo tiene que hacer porque es empleado y no puede decir "no, no quiero". Y los americanos son más "ya dije y ya!"

I prefer [Store manager] because he doesn't order you around so much or is telling you all the time what to do. I haven't worked too much with [Hispanic manager]. The [Anglo Manager] orders you around all the time and is checking if you are doing your job. (Hispanic employee)

Prefiero a [Store manager] porque él no te manda tanto ni te está diciendo todo el tiempo que hacer. [Manejador Hispano] yo no he trabajado mucho. [Manejador Anglosajon], el también anda todo el tiempo viendo que haces y te está ordenando.

I prefer [Store manager, Hispanic Manager and African American Manager]. They are good people. When I arrive they always say hello to me. For example [African American manager] just came by and gave me his hand. (Hispanic employee)

Yo prefiero [Store manager, manejadores Hispano y African American]. Son buenas personas. Cuando llego siempre me saludan. Y el [African American manager] por ejemplo ahorita que entra me da la mano.

Although these are only a few testimonies most of the interviewees offered similar
responses (both Anglo and Hispanic employees). As we can see the communication style that employees found less desirable was one that appealed to direct orders, the use of a commanding tone, and strict control over tasks. The style employees appreciated most was one that valued personal relationships, harmony, and face-saving. Also, attitudes and behaviors that valued the employee and made him/her feel respected, heard and appreciated were also important to employees. It appears that the Store manager although belonging to a Doing culture definitely has many characteristics of a member of the Being one. The curious thing is that employees from both cultures (Hispanic and Anglo) seemed to appreciate these qualities better. Kras (1988), states how many Mexicans perceive their U.S. counterparts to lack personal sensitivity when it comes to reprimanding -- "the Mexican knows perfectly well when he [sic] has made a mistake, but verbalizing it puts him to shame and is liable to make him withdraw" (Kras, 1988, p. 65, as cited in Stohl, 1995, p. 78). From my observations and interviews I would like to add that this statement in The Phoenix Group could be applicable to Anglos employees too.

Additional Cultural Variables

In Chapter Two I discussed eight cultural variables I considered important apart from the variables commonly discussed in intercultural literature. These variables were confianza (trust), fatalismo (fate or destiny), orgullo (pride), simpatia, espacio personal (personal space), solidaridad (solidarity), pertenencia (sense of belonging), aguante (bearing, enduring) and machismo. Here, I would like to discuss those I found were mostly present among The Phoenix Group’s employees and conditioned relationships,
communication, and job performance:

**Confianza (trust)**

Trust is for many Hispanics the basis for disclosure. Contrarily to many Anglos who find it easier to disclose information with strangers, Hispanics have to reach a certain level of trust before personal matters are discussed. This can be critical for managers because they can find themselves dealing with an employee who is having problems but will not talk about them. These problems can be jeopardizing his/her performance and managers might not find out until it is too late. In Store 83, an environment where there was a lot of tension and disagreements between certain employees most of the complaints fell on one or two managers who were the most trusted. This is fine when we are dealing with one or two employees with problems. But when numerous employees turn to only two managers this can be an overwhelming situation. Managers in Store 83 all managers have to try to gain the trust of their employees. This can be done by talking to them more, learning about their personal lives (e.g., family, children), offering an "ear" they can turn to if they need to talk. Meetings where employees could talk about problems and feel their concerns are taken into consideration can also enhance trust. Often, it doesn't take much to build a relationship based on trust, only the knowledge that the other person really cares and is willing to act accordingly.

I want to end this discussion of trust with an example that touched me and is a clear example of what I have just discussed. I decided to transcribe it exactly from my field notes and tape recording so I can convey as truthfully as possible my feelings and thoughts at that precise moment.
I have just finished interviewing a cashier. She is a few years younger than myself and a Chicana. We have been talking for over an hour. I covered my usual interview questions. During our interview we also talked a lot about belonging to two cultures and the implications that came with this. We talked about how hard it was especially for women. I mentioned a book called *The Border Line Mestiza* that I thought could help her. I told her it might be interesting for her because it describes the situation of women like her (I added and me) who are living between two cultures and may often feel they don't belong to any. At the point she suddenly blurts out: "I'm pregnant". She giggles. I was surprised because this comment came out of the blues. "Really, when did you find out." "I haven't but I haven't started my period. I know, I just know." She laughs. She sounds very happy. "I don't have to go, I know." She sounds as if she is letting go of a secret. "So who knows?" "Only my husband. Nobody else." She laughs again. She seems really happy. I find it strange that she would confide in me and tell me something so personal that she hasn't told anybody else. I feel quite honored. But why me, why tell me when she hasn't told a soul? Maybe because I spent over an hour listening to her, encouraging her to tell me how she felt, what she thought and now she was thanking me by giving me her trust and by sharing something so important like her baby. (this excerpt was constructed from my recordings and from notes I wrote immediately after the interview)

**Fatalismo (fatalism)**

Cox (1993) defines fatalism a term used to label a variety of belief systems that embrace the predetermination of events and/or the control of events by God. From this standpoint individuals who believe in fatalism also believe that events in their lives are determined by external, often uncontrollable forces. I discussed in Chapter two how *fatalismo* (fatalism) is very strong among Hispanics. I also mentioned how results could be negative or positive according to whether the person believed fate had failure or luck destined for them. I am not sure how much The Phoenix Group's Anglo Managers and employees knew about this concept or if they were aware that it could be affecting employee performance. In the office I was offered to conduct my interviews (which used
to be the Store Manager's office) there was a list of successes on the wall. Among them I found the following:

**Destiny is not a matter of chance; it's a matter of choice**

This saying contradicts the Hispanic belief in fate, and their belief in how fate influences their destiny. This is one saying Anglo managers should not rely on as inspiration to guide their Hispanic employees. What is important is for managers to be aware of how this concept can affect employee performance and future expectations. In The Phoenix Group, managers should be clear about advancement opportunities describing specific behaviors that can be completed in order to succeed. Managers should be vocal about expectations, and ways of accomplishing tasks that can lead to promotions. Hispanic employees need to understand that advancement is in their hands but they also need to know what can be done to advance, and this is where managers play a crucial role.

**Simpatía (desire to please)**

In Chapter two I offered a definition of *simpatía* proposed by Marin & Marin which stated that *simpatía* is a concept that emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant social relationships (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 12). These authors also mention low refusal rate as an important behavior associated with this concept. The following excerpts show how this concept can influence employee behavior in a negative way. One of the employees was commenting on how he had difficulties finishing his own tasks because he was always called to help someone else. However, due to the importance he placed on personal relationships he had a hard time refusing his
help.

I work on several things. I might be cleaning a part of the store where something was spilled or broken and someone calls me: "hey, [name], we need you here up front to help with the packing. Well, I leave what I was cleaning because either I clean or I go help. But when they call me to help up front I don't have enough time to finish my things.

Yo trabajo en varias cosas. Ando limpiando unas partes donde tiraron algo, quebraron algo y me llaman "eh [nombre] acá te necesitamos que vengas a empacar. Pues ya dejo aquello tirado, pues limpio ahí o voy con ellos. Pero cuando me llaman a empacar el tiempo no me alcanza para mis cosas.

To this comment I replied: “Have you ever mentioned this to your managers?” By this I was asking: have you ever told your manager that you often don't have time to finish your duties because you are permanently called up front to help bag groceries? His answer did not surprise me at all:

Well, I have never said anything to them, to stay on their positive side, you understand. I leave everything there and later I figure out what to do. Sometimes when the mess is big, for example if someone spilled clorax, then I tell them, wait a second. They usually say, ok but hurry up because we need you up front. But, generally I leave my things and go when they call me.

Pues nunca les he dicho, según yo pa' quedar bien, me entiendes. Yo dejo las cosas ahí, y luego veo cómo me las averiguo. A veces cuando hay mucho regado, por ejemplo si tiran un galón de clorax, entonces si les digo, espérame. Entonces me dicen, andale pues pero apúrate porque aquí te andamos necesitando. Pero casi siempre dijo mis cosas y voy cuando me llaman.

It is very common for Hispanics to try to avoid conflictive situations or endangering interpersonal relationships. For this reason, this employee, almost never refused these calls. I also noticed that this particular person was very proud to admit that "everybody
liked him" and being always available helped this situation.

I like to work here because everybody talks to me, everybody likes me. The Store manager, everybody. They all treat me very well. When I come they say "hey [name]". (He is implying that everybody acknowledges him when he arrives)

_Me gusta trabajar aquí porque todas las personas me hablan mucho, todo me quieren mucho. El patron, todos. Me tratan muy bien. Ya ves que cuando vengo me dicen "eh [name]!"

The need Hispanics have to avoid a conflictive situations and their use of socially desired behaviors is understandable taking into consideration their culture. These behaviors are often even beneficial to maintain harmony in the workplace. The question is at what costs? During my observations I saw the employee of my example leave what he was doing and more than once come help bag groceries. Most of these times I kept thinking: "What if someone slips and falls on that floor that had to be left wet because the employee did not have time to finish drying it? What if someone gets hurt on glass from a broken jar that had not been picked up because there was no one available to do it?"

Unfortunately, due to their cultural background Hispanics might have more problems deciding whether they maintain a good relationship with their boss or they refuse an order. Due to the importance _simpatia_ has for this group many will probably opt for keeping their relationship in good terms, therefore it is up to the managers to be aware of this and act appropriately.

_Solidaridad (solidarity)_

This term denotes the amount of "willing interdependence, cooperation and help"
that individuals have towards others. Solidarity is a concept that can vary from individual to individual, and from group to group. This concept is often culturally rooted.

In The Phoenix Group solidarity took place in many ways. Employees were constantly helping each other out. (For example cashiers were bagging groceries for other cashiers, employees were helping others with translations, etc.). However, I wonder whether many of these behaviors were due to true solidarity or to the necessity of the moment --there was shortage of personnel and everybody had to help out.

Several Hispanic employees I interviewed mentioned solidarity as a cultural difference. They felt Hispanics were in general more solidarious than Anglos. This is one description I obtained:

Solidarity takes place a lot in Mexico and here between Hispanics. For example if one sees someone sick in the street and they are Hispanic many times one stops. Maybe sometimes one might not stop because of fear of being robbed or something. But an American will almost never stop. If there is an accident an American leaves and looks for a telephone. The Hispanic stays and tries to help and see what happened. In the store, Hispanics are also more solidarious among themselves. The American many times not even among themselves. They almost don't get along. I have seen more Americans get along with Hispanics than among themselves.

It doesn't appear illogical that Americans don't get along as well as Hispanics do. While
Anglos are often socialized to be competitive and perform individually, Hispanics generally grow up learning to be more interdependent and cooperative.

What is unfortunate here is that this Hispanic solidarity seems to be group oriented-- Hispanics help other Hispanics. I observed this attitude a few times with cashiers and courtesy clerks. If they were Hispanic they seemed more readily to help Hispanic customers (e.g., they were more ready to give further explanations or offered more quickly to help them with their bags). Of course, Hispanic customers often had three or four more times the amount of merchandise than an Anglo would have and this could have made a difference. However, I believe that customers should be treated the same and offered the same services whether they have one bag of groceries or ten. I also heard some Hispanic employees complain about some Anglo employees who just came, did their jobs and left, often not talking to anybody, or relating to any of the other employees. In sum, Anglo employees need to learn more cooperative behaviors and Hispanics need to learn how to extend their cooperative attitude and their "solidarity" to include all members of the organization.

In an organization like The Phoenix Group where many people depend on each other in order for business to get done, solidarity is a key factor for success. Managers should encourage more cooperative behaviors among all employees because as Kagan and Madison concluded, if the norm to compete is strong, people will often engage in competitive behavior even when the structure of the task makes it irrational to so do (Kagan and Madison, 1971, as cited in Cox, 1993, p. 116).
Aguantar (to bear or endure)

This concept is closely related to fatalism and the belief in a destined fate. Individuals with a lot of this quality are more willing to bear with situations even if they are in disagreement. In The Phoenix Group, I noticed this quality more on Mexicans than on Chicanos, and on older employees than younger ones. Several employees mentioned how many times they did not agree with the way things were being done or with orders given to them by their managers. However, they usually never complained because as many pointed out “el es el patrón y es el que manda” (he is the boss and the one who gives the orders). This situation was very different among some of the young Chicano employees (e.g., courtesy clerks). When these employees did not agree with the “communication style” of their manager, or with an order they usually were more vocal about it. They answered back, they challenged the manager or complained. The following is an example of this situation. It is part of my observation notes:

The manager grabs the courtesy clerk supervisor. This employee is young, probably around 18 years old. He is Chicano. “Go do the lots!” “It’s not my turn man! I did them ... (I couldn’t hear when). “Well, somebody’s got to go and do the lot!”

I heard answers like this one, or “go tell [name] to do it” several times from courtesy clerks. It is obvious that aguantar was not among the qualities of many of these employees. While this can be somewhat beneficial and help these individuals succeed in an Anglo culture, I observed that there was more than a loss of this quality going on. These employees had slide to the other extreme and become rude and disrespectful. They also appeared to permanently have a defensive attitude that could make them interpret the
slightest comment in a very personal way. Managers should be aware of this attitude and act accordingly. The worst they can do is a behavior I observed a few times from one of the managers. This person would become personally involved in the discussion and lower himself to the same level as his employees.

**Machismo**

Male Hispanics after crossing the border have to start adapting to the Anglo culture to survive. However, there are some cultural characteristics that are tougher to change or adapt. The problem derives if these cultural variables contradict values or beliefs of the Anglo culture and produce a serious negative impact on the working environment. One characteristic that can have these implications is "machismo", which appears as a natural quality of many Hispanic men. Throughout my interviews several female employees complained of the extreme machismo of several co-workers and described how that machismo was negatively affecting their workplace performance. In the following excerpt she describes how she has a tough time with male employees that she is supposed to train. She explains how she gets upset and frustrated when they don't want to comply with her orders simply because she is a woman:

I told [name of manager], that the new boys he was bringing in were men that..., and that I had to tell them what to do and they didn't like it. How is a woman going to give them orders! And they don't like it. I've had two problems with guys because I was telling them what to do. Because [name] is the manager but I am the [position in the store]. So if somebody new comes I have to teach them, because he [the manager] has other things to do. So he tells them [new employees] "she is going to tell you what you have to do". "Her?" "Why her?" And many time I tell them "do this, or do that" and they don't do it. So if I am busy with something else I tell [name of manager]: "You go tell them because you are the manager, and I don't have to put up with this". And the mister gets angry and tells
them "you have to do what she tells you", and the new guys get more angry and upset because they were reprimanded. Too much machismo.

Yo le dije a Don Lupe, los muchachos que estan trayendo nuevos son hombres que... y yo les tengo que decir lo que tienen que hacer, y eso no les gusta. Como les va a mandar una mujer!. Y no les gusta. Yo aqui tuve dos problemas con los muchachos porque yo les decia lo que tenian que hacer. Porque {nombre}es el manager pero la empacadora soy yo. Entonces si traen alguien nuevo yo tengo que ensenarle, porque el tiene otras cosas que hacer. Y él les dice, "ella te va a decir lo que tienes que hacer". "Ella? Porqué ella? y muchas veces les digo, "haz esto y no lo hacen. Entonces si yo estoy haciendo otra cosa o estoy ocupada en algo que más urge, yo le digo a [name], digale Ud., que es el manejador, yo no tengo porque hacer corage. Ud. digale lo que tienen que hacer. Y el señor se enoja "Tu tienes que hacer lo que ella te dice" y más se molestan porque ya le llamaron la atencion. Mucho machismo.

Another female Hispanic employee, this time in a managing position, also stated in her interview about having problems with male subordinates because of her gender.

She made reference to their "machismo" when asked about cultural differences between Hispanic and Anglos. This was her response:

Another thing is the men from Mexico don't like women telling them what to do. It's not a woman's place to tell them what to do. That's something I learned the hard way. It's not a place to tell a man what to do in Mexico, Here you can tell them whatever. This has affected me a lot because when they didn't want to do it. I had one man when I was working in the other store [a store from the same company] who did not like the fact that I told him what to do and he would not do it. Obviously he got fired [she laughs]. You are here to do a job no matter who your superior is, man or woman. It doesn't matter the race, it doesn't matter anything. And it gets very bad when it comes down to giving ultimatums in order for the man to do something otherwise the work doesn't get done. And you are the one that in the long run, as the manager, will take it down from your corporate. Why is this not getting done? So your supervisor is coming down on you.
Religion

Although I have not talked in Chapter Two about religion as a cultural variable that can influence communication, it is an important subsystem of the Hispanic culture (together with family) and can play an active role in shaping behaviors. A Hispanic person who is a true believer will feel angry if aspects of religion are taken lightly or used with disrespect. One cashier described a situation that completely changed her relationship with one of her managers. After this incident she was so upset that now she can hardly work with this person anymore. This manager I must say, was known for his out of place remarks and negative attitudes towards his employees. The following paragraph describes the incident:

Well, [name] one of the managers, I didn't have a problem with him, but he thinks he is so much better than everybody else. I'm sure you've heard that already from everybody. One day, I was checking, I don't even remember what was said before all this happened. The thing is, he turned around and said, "because I'm God". I'm serious. And I turned around and I'm catholic, and that hurt me, so I turned around and said "mira pendejo" (Look asshole!). I mean it wasn't right for me to say that, but it wasn't right for him to say that he was God. How could he? The majority of people don't think he is god. I personally was offended because I'm Catholic and I respect God. And he turned around and said "I know what that means, you could get in trouble for that". I said "then don't go telling me that you are God". And he turns around and told [name, who is a Hispanic manager] "did you hear what she called me?" What? "She called me a pendejo". [name, Hispanic manager] turns around and asks me why, because I'm a nice person. He told me once that he wished there were more employees like me because I'm on time all the time and I come on my shifts, I don't call in sick. I work two jobs and I'm not a baby. I don't whine. So he asked me why, because he was surprised that I would say that to someone. And I told him "because he just told me he was God". And [name, Hispanic manager] turned around and told [name, Anglo manager]. "well, then she's right".

The role religion plays in the Hispanic culture should not be overlooked by managers.
As we can see an episode like the one above can endanger employee-manager relationships. It produces problems because these people will have to continue working together despite the fact that they are both angry and offended.

All these cultural variables discussed in this section should be contemplated by managers and other employees in upper management. They should be discussed and analyzed, but most important of all, employees have to understand how they can impact their behavior and performance.

**Contextual Obstacles**

Under this category I have grouped variables that deal with context and that are external to the individual and the Hispanic culture. Under this category we find discrimination, stereotyping, oppression and powerlessness. These factors have been described by many authors as being the most relevant (see Chapter Two for more details).

**Discrimination and Prejudice**

Feelings of discrimination or prejudice can condition the communication process and affect the way the participants respond to this situation. Unfortunately discriminative behaviors and prejudice remarks appeared to stain The Phoenix Group's working environment. I was informed of some of these behaviors through my interviews, and I overheard many of the remarks during my observations. I was surprised at the level of prejudice and ethnocentrism among employees, together with the continuous feeling that discrimination was going on between all cultural groups (Mexicans, Chicanos,
African-American, and Anglos). The tension level between employees from different groups was so high that minor incidents were blown out of proportions. I have to add though, that the working conditions did not facilitate employee congeniality.

The area in The Phoenix Group where I noticed the maximum tension was at the check out stands. Here cashiers, courtesy clerks, and managers appeared overworked and stressed. There were always long lines, and not enough help. Very often cashiers were bagging their own groceries, while dealing with food stamps, WIC stamps, and customers that brought up the wrong products which had to be changed. Managers were running a register, bagging, responding to cashier calls, doing price checks and much more. Courtesy clerks were switching from one register to another as groceries kept piling up. To this picture we must add the numerous delays and problems that took place due to language barriers. These conditions helped surface negative attitudes and ethnocentric feelings provoking confrontations among these employees that would make any working environment unbearable. One Chicano cashier describes a conflictual situation she had with an African American cashier. This situation involved a Chicano courtesy clerk too (most courtesy clerks are Mexican or Chicano).

There is one night when there is just two cashiers. Myself [Chicana cashier] and [name, African American cashier]. She called for customer service, packaging. By the time they came I had customers and my line was full too. Well, [name of courtesy clerk] came and helped me [this courtesy clerk is a Chicano too]. Well, she got really mad. She got so mad that it made me mad. She goes "every time I call for packaging everybody has to go to her". "Why does everybody have to go with her". And her, and me and [name, courtesy clerk] were mad in the end. And I turn around and I looked at her like "what are you talking about" and she's says "those guys, I don't know why they like you more than they like me, oh I know, cause you have to speak to your own. You have to take care of your own
and speak to your own". And that made me so mad that I turned to [name] and said "go package for her, I can package myself". Then I turned around and said loud enough so she could hear "go package for her because she seems to need more help that I do, I'm more competent to do it". And she turned and told [name of courtesy clerk], "you're just a racist".

Apart from the every day deteriorating working relations between these cashiers (the Chicano cashier explained how she was so mad that she did not talk to the African American cashier during the whole evening) a second problem here is that this discussion is taking place in front of customers. Whether the cashiers admit it or not, these customers will be the natural target of all that anger and negative energy that cashiers are carrying with them at that moment. It is hard for anybody who has just had such a serious encounter and discussion to simply turn around put a smile on their face and continue as if nothing has happened. Customer service is greatly harmed under these circumstances and this in the long run can affect the store's sales.

Friction between customers and cashiers due to feelings of discrimination are also common. Cashiers have told me that Anglo customers have become upset because they feel they are being discriminated against. Being a minority in this store they feel they are sometimes not respected. The following situation was described by one of the Spanish speaking cashiers, who was very upset and hurt to hear her customer complain about her discriminating:

Well many times there is a client who is Mexican and he has only one thing. I am Mexican, right? Then there is another client standing in front of him that is Anglo-Saxon and he has his cart full of groceries. Well, for me it is better to say "excuse me, can I help the other cliente [the one in the back]. And the other person says "sure because he is Mexican". But for me there is no difference. And a lot of people get upset because of that.
This cashier continued explaining how she saw that Mexicans were much more flexible about giving up their turns or letting someone pass ahead. It makes much sense if we take into consideration that it is part of the Anglo culture to respect lines and turns.

Anglos considered it extremely rude to cut in a line. If we add to this belief the minority feeling that this customer might have felt, his first reaction was to say he was being discriminated against.

One cashier was telling me how she was angry and upset with another cashier (apparently Hispanic), because in contrast with the above situation, they were purposely discriminating against Anglo customers. She explained during her interview that this was a job and that all customers had to be treated the same way no matter where they came from. The surprising thing was that the accusing cashier was also Hispanic; but she had been born in the United States, and this could have made a difference in her attitude.

This is how she describes some of the cashiers’ expression of discrimination:

Some of the cashiers when they have an Anglo customer, and that customer is picky or complaining about something it's like "it's your problem". They ignore the customer. Now if that customer were Hispanic they would try to help him or say, "well, you could do this or that". They would try to accommodate him better, more than they would an Anglo. They wouldn't waste so much time on an Anglo.

Several of the employees interviewed mentioned that discriminative behavior was
also taking place with the salaries they were receiving. Several employees complained that they were not making the same amount of money as their Anglo peers. Many also felt they were underpaid.

In an interview with one of the managers I talked about equal treatment and asked this person’s opinion on the subject. To this he answered “it doesn’t happen here.” I asked for an example and this person answered: “i.e. an American cashier is not going to work here for less money, if she is here it’s because she came in for more” [I suppose he means she started with a higher salary]. I was surprised by these facts, but I guess more because it was someone in a managing position saying this to me. I decided to find out more, so I asked if this would happen even if we were talking about the same position, the same job. I also wanted to know if employees sign any contract where hours and stipend would be specified. I received the following answer:

They get paid differently even if it is the same job. We don’t have a contract, just a work application. But even the businessmen tell us not to tell our employees what each of them is earning.

An important issue here, whether this kind of salary discrimination does go on or not, is the fact that many employees believe that it is going on. And they talk about it among themselves and feel angry about the situation. They might even feel resent towards those they assume are making more money then they are and without justified reasons. We can be dealing with a group of pretty unhappy, angry and resentful employees in an environment like this, especially as this manager explained when “nobody says anything because they are afraid they might get fired”.

Prejudicial remarks were also not uncommon. I recall an episode one afternoon
that I was doing some observations by the cash register. There was a long bench at the
end of the registers where customers could wait for others or where they could just sit
down and rest. There were two little Mexican kids on this bench eating candies or
chocolates or something of the sort. When they got up to go they left the wrappers on the
bench. One of the Anglo cashiers who were standing nearby looks at the wrappers and
says to me A see that? Why do they have to be so dirty? [I immediately knew she was not
talking about the kids but about Hispanics]. I carefully pointed out that there were no
trashcans around where to throw papers. To this remark this person answered “Well it
makes no difference, they wouldn’t use it even if we had any.”

Another prejudicial remark came from one of the conversations with one of the
managers. We were walking in one of the departments and this person finds some open
packages. He turns to me and says:

I just don’t understand these women [he means these Hispanic women],
they come in here with three or four kids and then they let them go free in
the store. They don’t control them and the kids tear the place up. At least
when we go to the stores we control our kids. We don’t let them run
around everywhere.

Discriminating behaviors that take place in The Phoenix Group could be a
reflection of what is going on a larger scale, within the community. I asked several
employees during my interviews if they thought their community was open to different
cultural groups or was in someway discriminating. Although I received different types of
answers most of them leaned towards discrimination. One Mexican employee related the
following story. This situation occurred to her brother when he attempted to get his
driving license.
Many times they look at you and see your Mexican face or Latin or whatever and they think "those are smaller than we are". My brother went to get his driver's license and he passed the written part. They told him to come back with a car that had insurance. He came with my other brother who lent him his car. When he was out driving, he was in the street and the examinator asked him a question that he didn't understand. And you know what she told him "park the car and you can't have a license because you don't speak English". And he said to her "but why? I understood all the other things, only that one question I didn't understand. Say it again". And she said "NO". And she wrote on his paper "you have a month to learn English and if you don't learn you won't get a license". And she wrote it on his paper. That's pure racism. How can it be that if you haven't understood one question and you don't speak English they're not going to give you a licence. And it's written in the paper. I told my brother to make a photocopy of this paper and take it to a judge. My brother talked about this situation at his work and two people there told him that the same thing happened to them with the same women. But the others haven't done anything because they are illegal. That's what they are always thinking. That if you don't speak English you are illegal and that you aren't worth anything. So I told him, if I were you I would get a lawyer and start a law suit because she is discriminating against people. If I were in your place I would do it because if not, she will continue to abuse people. And wherever you go you see it. The good thing is that I don't let them abuse me. If I loose my job, I loose it, but just because they are Americans I'm not going to let me be stepped on.

Muchas veces te miran y ven tu carota de Mejicano, o Latino o lo que sea y piensan "esos son más chiquitos que nosotros". Mi hermano fue a agarrar su licencia y pasó el escrito. Le dijeron que viniera con un carro que tuviera aseguranza. Vino con mi otro hermano, mi hermano le prestó su carro. Cuando lo sacaron a manejar, ya está en la calle y la conductora le hizo una pregunta que el no entendió. Y sabes que le dijo "parchegiate el carro y no puedes tener licencia porque no hablas inglés". Y él le dijo pero porque? Todas las demás cosas te entendí, solo una pregunta no entendí. Dímelo de nuevo". Y "NO" le dijo la mujer. Y le puso en el papel "tienes un mes para aprender Inglés y si no lo aprendes no tienes licencia". Y se lo ha escrito en el papel. Eso es puro racismo. Como puede ser que porque no has entendido una pregunta y no hablas Inglés no te va a dar la licencia. Y está escrito en el papel. Yo le dije a mi hermano, sácele una fotocopia y llévesela a un juez. Y mi hermano va a trabajar y comenta esto en el trabajo y dos personas dicen que a ellas les ha pasado lo mismo con esta misma mujer. Pero los otros no han hecho
An Anglo employee explained during his interview that there was a lot of discrimination going on between Mexicans and African Americans. According to him these two groups aren't in very good relations with each other and Mexicans are getting along better with whites. From his description it appears that there were problems in the store, although there were hardly any African American employees (I believe only two and one was a manager). The following excerpt is his answer to my question about discriminating behaviors:

Oh, that happens all the time. The Mexican graffiti in the bathrooms towards blacks, they don't get along too well. And they just swear it all over. I don't know how to read it but I know it's getting serious. I don't know who writes it. They are not going to write too much about whites from the standpoint that [name of store manager] is white and they are messing with their paycheck [this person is assuming the graffities are done by employees when this restroom is also used by customers]. They are not going to be stupid. But as I said the Mexicans do no get along with the black for the most part, no in this area anyway. They get along better with the whites. That's what I've seen.

Discriminative behaviors and prejudice remarks might not be at the point of causing law suits or legal problems in The Phoenix Group, but they are certainly producing other types of problems. Working relations between some employees are deteriorating and anger and resentment is being accumulated. Many employees are keeping their concerns to themselves for fear of the consequences if they speak.
Underlying issues that have not been properly dealt with are building up and problems can take place any moment. As Joplin and Daus (1997) describe:

Members of diverse subgroups may choose not to engage in conflict and may fail to voice their concerns for fear of sanctions. This will result in less manifest conflict and present the illusion of agreement and cooperation. If conflict does emerge, it will do so when there is a punctuation mark or triggering event, and it is likely to be more pronounced (p.38).

**Stereotyping**

Stereotyping takes place in The Phoenix Group at different levels and between all cultural groups. There is an unresolved dislike between Mexicans and Chicanos. The former accuses the latter of having betrayed their culture by rejecting the language and many of the Mexican customs. They also believe that the Chicanos are lazy, they are problem making, and that they are always in trouble with the police. Mexicans are angry because when confronted with this situation Anglos seem to not be able to distinguish between a Mexican and a Chicano and they end up throwing them all in the same bag. The Mexicans pride themselves in their work and consider themselves very hardworking and responsible. "It's the Chicanos that is always calling in sick or not showing up and then giving all of us a bad reputation". I heard comments like this in several of my interviews. The following excerpt supports this statement:

The Mexican never calls in to say he is going to be late, and the Chicano and the American all the time.

I have been told that the store has problems with employees arriving late or not showing up (interviewer)

Those are the Chicanos! All the time they are calling saying they are going to arrive late or that they are not coming. And then they are not people that
call... [pause] he calls at the time he has to come in. If he has to come in at 6, at that time he calls and "you know I can't come today". All the time it has been like that in all the stores I have worked in.

And do people distinguish between a Mexican and a Chicanos? (Interviewer)

No! Just imagine! And many times because of the Chicano we all have to carry the blame! Or any other Latino because he looks alike. And all the time for example regarding police matters, there are many Chicanos here that are in trouble. Where I lived before, all the Chicanos would destroy things, but since they believed they were Mexicans, then they are seen as Mexicans. Because of them all of us carry fault.

El Mexicano nunca habla de que va a llegar tarde, y lo que es el chicano y el americano todo el tiempo.

A mi me han comentado de que en la tienda hay problemas de que la gente llega tarde o no aparece?

Esos son los Chicanos! Todo el tiempo están llamando de que van a llegar tarde o no van a venir. Y luego no son de los que hablan... [temprano] el habla a la hora que va a entrar. Si va a entrar a las 6 a esa hora habla y "sabes que no puedo ir". Todo el tiempo ha sido así en todas las tiendas que he trabajado.

Y la gente distingue entre el Mejicano y el Chicano?

No! Y fijate que muchas veces por el Chicano la llevamos nosotros los mejicanos. O cualquier otro latino porque es muy parecido. Y todo el tiempo por ejemplo con la cuestión de la policía hay muchos Chicanos aquí que las hacen. Por donde yo vivía antes, todos los Chicanos hacían destrozos, pero como hacían cuenta que es mejicano, entonces lo ven como un mejicano. Por ellos la llevamos todos.

Mexican men also stereotype about Chicano women. They think that Chicanas are mean and that they are going to treat you bad. This behavior is believed to be based on the fact that Chicanas want to pass as liberated women who will not be subservient of a macho husband who orders her around. They are fighting to free themselves of the
characteristics and roles attributed to Mexican women by their culture and by doing so have gained the reputation of not suitable for marriage. One of the cashiers who is a Chicana was describing this situation in the following way:

The thing is that people call me a Chicana and I don't like to be called a Chicana because of the way they talk about Chicanos, is that we are bad, that we are not intelligent, that we are stupid. That we don't know everything, that we are inferior to the Mejicanos. That is why I consider myself a Mejicana [she says this in a perfect Spanish]. I've been around my husband, I've been around my mom, and I'm not... like the girl I'm living with. She was born in Nogales, but she was brought up here, and she is with someone from Mexico and she treats him like crap. The majority of the Chicanas don't let them be more macho than they are. They have to help you. You are not going to do for them like they want you to do for them, cause you are not going to get stepped on. I'm not like that. I'm submissive but I'm not disrespected, and I'm not beaten. Everybody thinks that the Mejicanos are going to beat you, that they are not going to help you, that you have to clean, that you have to make them food. Well, I do it because I want to do it. And people that I know say "I can't believe that you do that, I can't believe that he won't eat until you get home.

I'm white, a lot of people don't think I'm Hispanic. First because I don't have the accent and I'm very light complexed. And my mom is very dark. It's just my dad that is very light. A lot of my husband's friends used to say "oh man you are getting married with a Chicana, she is going to treat you like shit, she is not going to feed you"... and I'm nothing like that. The only thing I don't know how to do is make tortillas [she laughs], but I'm learning.

Mexicans also see Anglo employees as not reliable and as less hard working than the Mexican. They also believe that Anglos prefer status and power over hard work. This was the description a Mexican employee was offering me of how he viewed Anglo workers:

In this company they love Mexicans because Mexicans want to make money all the time. So if they give him 50 hours, he works 50 hours. The American doesn't. Only his 40 hours, or even 35 because he is on food
stamps or welfare. And the Mexican isn't. That's why they fight in this company for Mexican employees. In their stores they have more Latin people than American. Because the American tells his wife that he doesn't want to go to work tomorrow and he calls and doesn't come to work.

he continues:

Americans only want to be managers because it is a position where they can be sitting around giving orders. And Americans like that. It has more status. Americans like to sit around ordering but Latins don't. You see them there, with their cup of coffee. We have another way of thinking. I am not interested in being a manager. If I work 50 hours I can make more money than a manager and I wouldn't have any responsibilities.

Discrimination, prejudice and negative stereotyping are powerful obstacles to building trust and healthy employee relationships. Managers should try to eliminate these attitudes and behaviors but not by avoiding these issues, but by discussing them with all employees.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Implications for the Organization

To successfully manage a large organization in the U.S. today is not an easy task. The mix of cultural backgrounds and different ethnic groups at work brings together a variety of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that are rooted in those different cultures. In addition, managers who are willing to work together with culturally diverse employees will often find language and communication styles a barrier, too. However, although, managing diversity is a tremendous challenge it is one with many rewards.

The Phoenix Group has accepted the challenge of managing diversity since its very beginnings. It has effectively worked with its diverse customers to adjust its practices to respond to their needs. It has reached out and attracted clients, has found ways to satisfy them, and has made return. The company is in fact highly regarded by its customers. As reported in Hispanic track, "The Phoenix Group continues to hold the dominant position as the store shopped by the most Hispanics on a weekly basis" (Hispanic track, 1996 p. 49). Applying diversity management strategies has been something of a factor in The Phoenix Group's success.

The contradiction is that The Phoenix Group's clients and employees are very similar and in many cases the same individuals (most of the employees are also customers). However, many of the people interviewed responded they were satisfied as customers but not happy or completely satisfied as employees. How can the organization
resolve this problem? Well, The Phoenix Group should first start by asking itself a few questions: What strategies have helped us be successful with our customers? What are we doing for them that we aren't doing for our employees? Are we seeing and treating our employees in substantially different ways than we are our customers? Have we put all our emphasis on expanding and satisfying our customers and lost track about the value of our employees? Is our organization a customer driven firm only? I believe the discussion and analysis of these questions should be the first step taken by The Phoenix Group.

So, what is The Phoenix Group doing for the outside that isn't doing for the inside? In Chapter Four I discussed four fundamental behaviors that have helped the organization succeed with its customers:

1. listening to its clients needs,
2. valuing customers,
3. accommodating practices to respond to their needs, and
4. adapting communication to reach their customers effectively

Listening, valuing, accommodating and adapting are also highlighted in the diversity literature as key behaviors towards successful diversity management. In Chapter Four I describe how these behaviors, although relevant and proven elsewhere, were lacking within this organization.

First, the level of awareness of cultural issues was very low in Store 83. Most employees interviewed did not realize that or know how culture could influence their workplace. Several even associated diversity with issues of discrimination and used this as a justification for not thinking about culture. It's interesting how making cultural distinctions can be considered "good business strategy" for outside the organization (with
customers) but a "discriminative attitude" towards the inside (with employees).

Second, interview data and informal conversations all pointed to an environment where employees felt they were not heard, they were not valued, they were not individually important. Some employees found management's attitude towards tardiness and absenteeism inappropriate and not severe. Others believed the company thought they could easily be replaced, and several Mexicans in particular feared for their jobs (Chicanos did not seem to have such a problem with this). Communication was also a problem. Hispanics felt limited by their lack of English and frustrated at not being able to communicate effectively with all the employees. Many recognized it would be important for themselves to learn English but also believed that this was a "different type" of organization where due to their customers characteristics (majority Mexican), the knowledge of Spanish was even more crucial. Thus, they thought managers and other English-speaking employees should also make an effort and learn Spanish.

Many of the employees I interviewed were grateful with the company for giving them a chance to work. Several recognized they might not be working if it weren't for The Phoenix Group. But, employees need to be more than grateful to be happy, successful and a powerful resource for the organization. They need to be heard and valued; they need to feel they are a crucial part of their store; and they need to be recognized for their work. And, this is where store 83 seems to be failing. Of course, in large, quickly expanding organizations it is hard to listen to every employee and to fulfill everybody's needs while taking care of the business part of the organization. However, store 83 isn't very large (approximately 65-70 employees at the time of this study), and it has several
managers and employees with years of experience in the grocery business. This would make implementing some basic changes to help employees overcome these feelings not an unrealistic goal that would affect or interrupt the flow of business. In Store 83 a few basic changes in practices could greatly help:

- **CREATE MORE STAFF MEETINGS**

  Here I mean something as simple as having staff meeting where all employees could talk about their work, problems they may be facing or even positive situations that can encourage others. The point here is to have a legitimate setting where to share opinions, suggestions and comments among employees and where someone from management can be present. The store manager’s or assistant manager’s presence gives more value to these meetings, and employees will feel their opinions are important too. A lot of this “venting”, complaining or talking about problems currently does go on but in informal settings like the breakroom other parts of the store and most of the times some or all of the main participants are not even present. However, store 83 is not very big, so at one point or another problems surface and complaints are heard, but not in the most appropriate or effective way.

- **OFFER MORE EMPLOYEE EVALUATION MEETINGS**

  Another easy situation to implement and that would help employees overcome their anxiety and fear of losing their jobs would be personal assessments or evaluation meetings. Here I mean individual meetings with the store manager to discuss the employees’ current working situation. These meetings would allow employees to know if they are meeting the organization’s expectations, if they are performing as they should,
and if the managers are happy with their work. It would also be a chance to discuss areas of improvement and change in a private environment that allows for "face-saving." I have discussed the importance of face-saving in Hispanic cultures and how it is a crucial part of relationships. It is important to re-state this point as often as possible because as Stohl describes "many managers from the United States (a low-context culture), for example, tend to be less concerned with face-saving than managers from high-context cultures" (Stohl, 1995, p.78). Anglo managers favor directness, straightforward arguments and plain truth. Other researchers like Fairhurst, Green, & Snavely (1984) discovered that many U.S. American supervisors when addressing a problematic employee or someone with poor performance would initially attempt to use problem solving approaches but would soon change to a punitive approach, reverting to criticism, reprimands, threats, or orders (Fairhurst et al., 1984, as cited in Stohl, 1995, p. 78). A case like this was well exemplified on pages 94-95 in chapter IV.

- DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING, INCLUDING SOCIALIZATION AND ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Another necessary practice that should be adapted is organizational training. In The Phoenix Group there is a lack of a general orientation meeting or training for new employees. Employees fill out a job application and most of them (except cashiers) immediately started work in the respective store. Cashiers were first sent to headquarter for a two-day register training. Most of the people interviewed only received on the job training and this was specifically related to tasks or duties to be performed. I was
surprised that an organization that had such a unique origin, that had done so much work
and grown so fast, and that originally had strong values and commitment to their
community did not share this information with their employees. I was also concerned that
a company with such a diverse population did not have any sort of cultural training that
would facilitate employees' and managers' work. As mentioned before, the level of
awareness and knowledge of employees regarding cultural issues and their impact on the
workplace was minimal. Employees were unfamiliar with basic characteristics of each
other's cultures or how those differences could affect their work. They were aware they
would be dealing with employees that spoke a different language but were never told
their nonverbal communication could also be a problem (which might have been the case
if they had had cultural training). Many of The Phoenix Group's employees are also more
likely to come from a lower socioeconomic class and are more likely to have little
education (high school or less), so they will probably not be aware of or even think about
how cultural differences will affect their jobs. It is the organization's responsibility to
help them understand this. It is the organization's responsibility to develop a training
program or other forms of learning that can help employees be successful given their
work situation. In the case of The Phoenix Group, this means not only helping employees
gain the necessary skills to perform their jobs but also assisting them in communicating
more effectively across cultures.

• ENSURE CONSISTENCY IN APPLYING NEGATIVE SANCTIONS

Another practice that could be improved concerns sanctions for tardiness and
absenteeism. This issue came up several times during interviews from employees who
were in general punctual or never absent. Employees who were normally on time complained that managers were not strict enough with those who were always late or who did not show up. This made things complicated especially for those employees with families who had to pick up their children or with those employees who took the bus. Employees told me how managers gave lots of warnings, but that these warnings did not seem to be very effective. Some people told me that after three warnings the person was supposed to fired, but that this rarely took place. One manager even confirmed that many times if it did happen, the fired person was often hired again. So, managers need to be more consistent with punitive actions because they are angering employees who make an effort to be on time or who always show up

- CUSTOMIZE COMMUNICATION TO MEET EVERYBODY'S NEEDS

With regard to adapting communication practices several things can be said. First, The Phoenix Group’s employees (especially managers) should stop believing that language isn’t a barrier because there is always someone around to translate. This is not true, as discussed in Chapter Four. I witnessed many situations where there wasn’t a translator available (as a matter of fact, I took on that role during many of these situations), and I witnessed several opportunities where the translator helped but the communication process was not completely efficient. Second, memos or any written communication should be sent out in both languages. If possible it should also be repeated in an oral version in a meeting. One type of information that I consider was very important was the newsletter the store manager wrote every now and then. Although this
was not an "organizational newsletter" it appeared to be in fact the only document that employees received that came from management (e.g., other than memos from headquarters). Through this letter the Store manager informed his employees of things like changes, expectations, what was going well, what needed to be improved, how he appreciated their work, how they should all work together as a team etc. Although the two newsletter that were distributed during the period I was observing were written in a rather dry tone and mostly referred to the need to improve customer service, they also contained "other information" like births, deaths, extra benefits, and a call for team effort.

While it seems ideal to inform, encourage, and motivate employees this newsletter was written only in English. So many of the employees never had real access to these. Some employees could translate them or had them translated but in translations the essence of a lot of things can be lost. The paradox is that in one of the newsletter the Store manager included the following statement:

Several benefits have improved for the employees of The Phoenix Group as of the first of the year. You have received memos about the, but I know not all of you read them or understand them. I am going to recap a few for you. [Then he begins talking about the benefits.]

Does he believe that employees will understand better if he summarizes the benefits even though it is in English (I don't know if the original memos were also in Spanish, but I saw other types of memos that weren't). I wonder how many employees actually understood the term "recap". This reminds me of people who travel to foreign countries and think that if they speak really slowly and loudly they will be understood! Anyway, if
this person is aware that employees are not understanding information, he should find more effective ways of communicating it. In addition to writing this newsletter in both languages I believe it would be very effective if the employees heard these words straight from the Store manager's mouth in a meeting. It would mean more than a slip of paper stapled to their checks.

• DEMONSTRATE RESPECT FOR ALL LANGUAGES USED IN THE ORGANIZATION

It is also important for employees to feel their language is valued and considered important. Spanish was used in the store all the time, and employees were allowed to speak freely in Spanish. However, when analyzing the Handbook employees receive when they were hired (manual that contained rules, codes etc. and that was the only official document they received from the organization) it was full of mistakes. There were spelling and grammar mistakes throughout the entire text. Some sentences were hard to understand and not very clear (i.e., the welcome letter signed by the president of The Phoenix Group had over 25 errors). I find this unattentiveness a lack of respect towards Spanish speaking employees, and my first reaction is to think that this company does not care enough about its Spanish speaking employee to justify finding someone who can do proper translations. If I received a handbook like this, I would not even feel like reading it. Appreciation and respect for Spanish has to be shown through more than simply allowing it to be used in the workplace.

Effective change, although needed in situations like that of The Phoenix Group, require much more than goodwill. Even in situations where organizations understand the importance of adapting to respond to diversity, there are two main factors that can be
obstacles to the success of these changes: economic considerations and personal resistance.

Economic considerations may condition the implementation of these changes. These changes may require appropriate structures, re-organization of personnel, or the hiring of outside consultants to develop and perform training programs—all things that imply expenses. However, some organizations (i.e., The Phoenix Group) can start with less aggressive changes; they can start with minor changes that would gradually facilitate bigger transformations. In the case of The Phoenix Group most of the changes mentioned above could be made possible with resources already available in their stores.

Store 83 has lower sales today than in the past. However, many employees mentioned that the cause of this was that The Phoenix Group had opened another store very close by which it had re-oriented part of the customer flow. So, the store had lost customers, but not the organization. Moreover, I heard many times how The Phoenix Group was still growing and how they were expanding to other states. I heard how they were going to open a store here and a store there. Maybe it's time for the organization to slow down its expansion process and concentrate more on the stores it already has. This seemed to be a shared opinion among many employees, including some managers.

Personal resistance might also condition whether changes take place or not. Jameson and O'Mara give the following reasons for why Manager and employees might resist change: fear of personal loss, lack of understanding or information about the changes, lack of trust or respect for the change initiators, resent for not having had input into the change, fear of being criticized or blamed for the way things were being done
before. (Jameson and O'Mara, 1991, p. 175). In The Phoenix Group I do not think resistance would be a major problem though, because I found most employees open to new ideas. Most of the interviewees agreed that some kind of cultural training would be helpful and would better relationships between employees. In addition the organization was slowly putting together a training program. Only a couple of years ago, they did not even count with cashier training or training facilities (it was all done on the job). Now, they have the required two-day training at headquarters. Hopefully, someday they'll be able to have organizational training for all employees. All the other suggestions for changes came from the employees themselves; thus, I would not foresee much resistance to their implementation. Several requested staff meetings or formal setting where they could voice their opinions and also find out what was going on in the organization. A couple interviewees even mentioned the possibilities of having the organization offer language courses so employees could learn some elementary English or Spanish. Some lower-level employees thought these courses should be required for mid and upper management. I encountered very few people who might be somewhat resistant to one or more of the changes mentioned above. I believe in these cases the main reasons for possible resistance would be fear of losing power over the employees or fear of being criticized about the way things were being done in the store. However, resistance can many times be overcome if the process is developed with care, taking into considerations the causes of resistance and finding ways of responding to them. For example in the case of The Phoenix Group, these potentially resistant employees should not only be informed about the change process but have an active role in the implementation of changes.
Implications for Theory and Research

As mentioned in Chapter One, this study is of an exploratory nature, conducted with the intention of adding empirical data to an emerging body of theory. It also has the purpose to give practical assistance to a specific organization. Throughout this project I have tested new concepts regarding diversity management and have found them to be accurate and valid. In addition, I have been sensitive to the distinctive characteristics of the organization under study. I have shown how the organization has applied several of these concepts in working with their customers and has been very successful. Further research would be necessary to see if these strategies would be successful once implemented inside the organization.

I have also explored concepts in the field of intercultural communication and measured them against this case. Most of these concepts dealt with cultural variables pertinent to the Anglo and Hispanic cultures that could influence communication and the workplace. Without fear of falling into excessive generalization, I can say that I found these concepts to be valid when applied to Mexicans and U.S. Americans. However, I found I had much more trouble including Chicanos under the available categories. This particular group merits separate treatment from the Mexicans, and I think it would be important in the future to conduct specific research on differences between Mexicans and Chicanos. These two groups consider themselves very different, but as several Mexican employees told me "people can't distinguish us so they throw all of us in the same bag".
And, that is part of the problem in "diversity management" in The Phoenix Group and in many studies of Hispanics in U.S. organizations. It is important for researchers not to commit that same mistake. Overall, I found the available theory on diversity management useful and valid as a framework from which to study organizations. Especially, I want to highlight definitions and concepts that were the most applicable to my case study:

(1) **Definition of managing diversity** (Roosevelt, 1992). This definition assumes diversity management as a two way process where both individual and organization have to work together in order to succeed.

(2) **Description of advantages and disadvantages of managing diversity in organizations** (Cox & Blake, 1991; Golembiewsky, 1995). This is an overview of areas that diversity could affect in an organization. Some of the perspectives covered are legal, costs, inter-group conflict, attractiveness to potential and actual employees, attractiveness to clientele, creativity–problem solving, legitimacy, etc.

(3) **Description of an assimilation model** (Albrecht and Bach, 1997). This model incorporates perspectives of both the individual and the organization during the socialization process.

(4) **Descriptions of today's changing workforce and corresponding implications** (Simmons, 1993; Jameson & O'Mara, 1991; Fernandez, 1991). These were detailed descriptions of how new breeds of employees are no longer passive and they are no longer likely to accept decisions, policies or practices without questioning.

(5) **Definition of dialogic communication** (Deetz, 1995; Simmons, 1993). Definition that describes communication as transformation and opposes it to the informational model traditionally used by organizations.

(6) **Description of dimensions for successful intercultural communication** (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). These dimensions are appropriateness and effectiveness and they are important factors to take into consideration for a successful intercultural communication event.

(7) **Description of variables that can influence communication processes** (Valencia & Menchaca, 1993; Kaune-Wild, 1993; Maldonado & Cross, 1979, Brislin, 1993; Dodd, 1995; Hofstede, 1980; Shorris, 1992; Marin & Marin, 1991). List of contextual and cultural variables that can condition communication. Some of the variables included discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, time orientation, uncertainty avoidance,
collectivism/individualism, being/doing, trust, solidarity, sense of belonging, *simpatia, machismo*, fatalism, etc.

(8) Description and definitions of linguistic ethnocentrism and diglossia (Burling, 1970; Ferguson, 1964). The first concept describes how language is a crucial sign of ethnic affiliation and gives continuity to traditions. The second concept describes problems individuals or groups may face when confronted with two languages and the need to make a decision on which to use.

While reviewing the literature, I came across different training programs, techniques, and models for diversity management. Most of them promise successful results if followed carefully. Putting aside the potentialities or special features of these programs or models, I would suggest great care when thinking about implementing any of them. I think many organizations (including The Phoenix Group) still have a long ways to go before implementing extensive formal programs. They should first start with minor changes like the ones suggested above and obtain input from their employees.

Organizations should first assess levels of awareness and tolerance among employees, or resistance to change could be strong. Changes have to be introduced gradually and the processes should incorporate everybody that will be affected by those changes. Employees should not feel like they are being "managed" (in the sense of manipulated for business-economic reasons), but that they are co-creators of change and are valued in themselves.

Finally, I would like to say that although I strongly believe that managing diversity in organizations is a necessary business strategy that goes "beyond race and gender" and that can help businesses grow and capitalize on their employees diverse characteristics and behaviors; I also believe that diversity management is about people.
It's about realizing that employees are unique individuals with enormous potentialities that many times are not tapped into because of ignorance and fear for the unknown.

Diversity management in organizations should exist for economic reasons but above all it should exist because of human, social and ethical imperatives. It should exist because behind each de-personalized employee there is a unique human being with needs and desire. Today, many employees are realizing this more and more, and are fighting for their uniqueness and their right to be different. As Frederick Lynch states in his book *The Diversity Machine*, diversity is about people that are still alive and well -- people who didn't melt into the melting pot. (Lynch, 1997, p.xi)
References


Appendix A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT'S INTERVIEWS

Hello, my name is Yudit Buitrago and I am a graduate Student from the University of Montana. I am working on my Master's thesis which explores communication differences between cultures. I am trying to assess how these differences can affect the life of an organization and what strategies can an organization use to overcome these cultural differences. I am planning on studying the internal communication (between employees) and the external communication of the store (between the store and its customers). I have chosen to do my research in SouthWest Supermarkets because this company appears to be doing a good job of integrating Hispanic and Anglo (American) mainstream cultures in their stores. They have been successful at training their staff so that it is sensitive to cultural issues and therefore offers an environment that works well for the totality of the workforce. They have also been successful at adapting their services and products to respond to the needs of their clients.

My research work within this company will involve at least ten to twenty hours of observations in addition to interviews. My individual research will start the 27th of December and continue until May 31st, 1997. I hope to interview 25% of the total of employees in the stores (this includes employees from the main office). Interviews will last 30 minutes to an hour and questions will revolve around communication differences and similarities and how communication styles can affect everyday activities. In addition if time allows, I plan on doing some on site interviews to clients.

I will keep confidential the name of the organization, names of employees and any characteristic (like location of company etc.) that may help identify the company. Positions will also be disguised. I will assign pseudo names to the organization and to all employees participating in formal and informal interviews. Gender differences will also be disguised if considered necessary to ensure confidentiality. I will request the audiotaping of interviews but will only do it with your consent. No one will have access to the tapes, observations notes or notes taken during the interview besides myself. The audio taping is only for the purpose of ensuring that the data I use in my final paper is as accurate as possible with reality.
After I transcribe the tapes into fieldnotes, I will erase each tape. If you are uncomfortable with the interview or the audio taping, you may ask to stop one or both at any time. I may use part of, or the totality of any information that has been given to me during interviews. If you do not want me to reproduce some part or all of your responses you must let me know as soon as the interview is over. If nothing is mentioned it will be understood that I have permission to use this information. I will keep all information received during an interview secret and I will not make reference to one interview while conducting another.

In signing this consent form, you agree to what is stated above and make no financial claims for Southwest Supermarkets, its main office, administrative office or any members of the staff for participating in interviews and audio taping. Although this project implies minimal risk, the University requires the following statement be included in the consent forms "In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or of any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims Representative or University Legal Counselor".

I, ____________________, have read this document and agree to allow myself to be interviewed and audiotaped, given what is stated above.

________________________
Participant's signature

________________________
Researcher's signature

01/18/97  2:00 - 3:00
Date of interview
FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO PARA ENTREVISTAS

Hola, my nombre es Yudit Buitrago y soy una estudiante de la Universidad de Montana. Estoy terminando mi Master en Comunicaciones y como trabajo final tengo que presentar un proyecto de investigación. El trabajo que quiero realizar trata de explorar diferencias en las formas de comunicarse de diferentes culturas. Estoy tratando de ver como estas diferencias en estilos de comunicación pueden afectar la vida de una organización, y que estrategias puede utilizar una compañía para que estas diferencias no sean una complicación. Voy a estudiar tanto la comunicación interna (entre empleados) como la externa (del negocio con los clientes). He elegido recoger datos para este proyecto en SouthWest Supermarkets porque esta compañía parece estar haciendo un buen trabajo de integración entre la cultura Hispana y la cultura Anglosajona. Aparentemente están teniendo éxito con el entrenamiento de su personal para que este sea sensible a diferencias en cultura y de este modo parecen haber logrado que todo el personal se sienta cómodo en su ambiente de trabajo. También han logrado adaptar sus productos y servicios para responder a la necesidades de sus clientes, lo que los hace ser muy competitivos.

Mi investigación en esta compañía va a incluir por lo menos diez a veinte horas de observaciones en el puesto de trabajo además de entrevistas personales. Este trabajo va empezar el 27 de Diciembre and continuar hasta el 31 de Mayo de 1997. Espero poder entrevistar a 25% del total de empleados en uno de los negocios (en esto incluye algunas entrevistas con empleados de la oficina principal). Las entrevistas van a durar de media hora a una hora y las preguntas van a estar orientados principalmente hacia diferencias y similitudes en formas de comunicarse entre el personal Hispano y el Anglosajon, y en como estas diferencias pueden afectar la vida diaria en el trabajo. También, si el tiempo lo permite hare algunas preguntas a clientes.

Toda la información que reciba va a ser tenida confidencial. Voy a cambiar el nombre de la compañía y de todos los empleados. También voy a evitar usar posiciones como manager o supervisor y eliminar el género de los participantes (mujer u hombre) para que no haya manera de identificar de quien estoy hablando. Les voy a solicitar grabar las entrevistas pero solo lo voy a hacer con su consentimiento. Nadie va tener acceso a estas cintas, a las notas de observaciones o a las notas que tome durante las entrevistas except yo. Para mi es muy necesario poder grabar sus respuestas así puedo garantizar que lo que yo escriba vaya a ser exactamente lo que ud. me diga. Las cintas también me van a ayudar a recordar sus respuestas así no me olvido de nada importante que me pueda haber dicho. Tan pronto como transcriba mis notas voy a borrar los cassettes para garantizar confidencialidad.
Si Ud. en algún momento se siente incomodo con la entrevista o con el grabado, me puede pedir que lo apague o que terminemos la entrevista. Es importante que sepa que algunas de sus respuestas o todas, pueden ser usadas en mi trabajo final. Si Ud. no quiere que reproduzca alguna parte de la entrevista o toda me lo tiene que hacer saber apenas terminemos de hablar. Si no me dice nada yo voy a tomar por sentado que tengo su consentimiento para usar la información que me ha dado. También quiero decirle que toda la información que me de durante una entrevista va a ser secreta y que no voy a hacer referencia a una entrevista mientras conduzco otra.

Si Ud. firma este formulario de consentimiento, está diciendo que esta de acuerdo con todo lo mencionado anteriormente, y también con el hecho de que no puede hacer ningún reclamo de tipo financiero o monetario a SouthWest Supermarkets, a su oficina central, a su oficina administrativa o a nadie de su personal por haber participado en este proyecto (a través de entrevistas, grabaciones etc.) Aunque este estudio no trae aparejado ningún riesgo, la Universidad exige que se incluya la siguiente cláusula: "En caso de que resulte perjudicado de alguna manera como resultado de este proyecto Ud. deberá buscar tratamiento médico por su propia cuenta. En caso de que el problema haya sido causado por negligencia de la Universidad o de alguno de sus empleados, Ud. puede tener derecho a una compensación bajo el Plan de Seguros Comprensivo Estatal (Comprehensive State Insurance Plan) establecido por el Departamento de Administracion bajo la autoridad del M.C.A., Titulo 2, Capítulo 9. En caso de que tenga lugar algún reclamo por daños, puede conseguir más información a través del Representante de Reclamos de la Universidad o el Consejero legal de la Universidad.”

Desde ya le agradezco muchísimo el que acepte participar en este proyecto. Su opinión es muy valiosa y me resultaría imposible producir un trabajo de valor real sin su ayuda.

Gracias!!

Yo, ______________, he leído este documento y acepto ser entrevistado/a y grabado/a durante mi entrevista. También acepto las condiciones concernientes a reclamos monetarios y daños y perjuicios.

____________________________
Firma del participante

____________________________
Firma del investigador

____________________________
Fecha
Appendix B

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For general employees

Position:
Time in the store:
Time in this position:
Gender: Age:
First language you speak at home:
Language you prefer to speak in the store:
Cultural group:
Self denomination:

1. Why did you choose to work here? What is the best thing about working in this store? What could be improved? **

2. Can you describe the training process you went through when you started working here. If it was some time ago ask: Has it changed in any way now? **

3. Are there any rules or norms you have to follow and that you find hard to adjust to. Give an example. Why do you find it hard?. **

4. What are the store's core values? How are they put into practice? Give an example.

5. How are orders imparted? If you have a suggestion or complaint what do you do?

6. Do you observe any differences between the way you communicate and the way Hispanic/Anglo employees communicate? If yes, what are they? Give and example. **
7. What do you think are three main cultural differences between Hispanic cultures and Anglo cultures? Do you think these differences can influence the work environment? If yes, how? If no, why not? **

8. What do you think are some similarities between these two groups.

9. Have you ever worked in another store of this type (supermarket)/with coworkers from other cultures? Was your experience the same/ was it different? Give an example. **

10. What are some of the problems you encounter on a daily basis?

11. Can you describe a critical incident that occurred in the store and that could be an example of cultural misunderstanding. **

12. If you were promoted to manager, would there be anything you would do differently? What? Why?
GUIA DE PREGUNTAS

Para empleados generales

Posición:
Tiempo en el supermercado:
Tiempo en esta posición:
Sexo: Edad:
Idioma que usa en su casa:
Idioma que prefiere usar en su trabajo:
Grupo cultural:
Autodenominación:

1. Porque eligió trabajar en este supermercado? Que es lo mejor de trabajar aquí? Que podría mejorarse? **

2. Puede describir el proceso de entrenamiento que recibió cuando empezó a trabajar aquí? Si fue hace mucho tiempo: Ha cambiado de alguna manera el entrenamiento que reciben los empleados nuevos ahora? Hay alguna diferencia? Cual? **

3. Hay regla/s o norma/s que Ud. tiene que seguir y que le resulta difícil de hacer? Deme un ejemplo. Porque le resulta/an difícil de seguir? **


5. Como se distribuyen las ordenes aquí? Si Ud. tiene una sugerencia o una queja que hace?

6. Ve alguna diferencia entre la forma en que Ud. se comunica y la forma en que los otros empleados Hispanos/Anglosajones lo hacen? Me puede dar un ejemplo? **
7. Cuáles son según su opinión tres diferencias culturales entre las culturas Hispánicas y la cultura Anglosajona? Cree que estas diferencias pueden afectar el trabajo? Si cree que sí, como, de qué manera? Si cree que no, porque? **

8. Cuáles cree que son algunas similitudes entre Hispánicos y Anglosajones?

9. Ha trabajado alguna vez en otro supermercado donde halla habido menos Hispánicos? Cual fue su experiencia ahí? Fue igual o diferente que ahora? Me puede dar un ejemplo?**

10. Cuáles son algunos problemas que Ud. enfrenta día a día?

11. Me puede describir algún incidente que haya ocurrido en el trabajo y que puede ser un ejemplo de un malentendido causado por diferencias en las culturas?**

12. Si Ud. fuera manager, haría algo diferente de lo que hacen los managers ahora? Que? Porque?
SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For store managers / supervisors

Position:
Time in the store:
Time in this position:
Gender:
Age:
First language you speak at home:
Language you prefer to speak in the store:
Cultural group:
Self denomination:

1. Can you describe the training process you went through when you started working here. If it was some time ago ask: Has it changed in any way now? **

2. Are there any rules or norms you have to follow and that you find hard to adjust to. Give an example. Why do you find it hard?. **

3. What are the store’s core values? How are they put into practice? Give an example.

4. Do you observe any differences between the way you communicate and the way Hispanic/Anglo employees communicate? If yes, what are they? Give an example. **

5. What do you think are three main cultural differences between Hispanic cultures and Anglo cultures? Do you think these differences can influence the work environment? If yes, how? If no, why not? **
6. What do you think are some similarities between these two groups.

7. Have you every worked in another store of this type (supermarket)/with coworkers from other cultures? Was your experience the same/ was it different? Give an example. **

8. Are there any managing practices in this store that were specifically developed/implemented to respond to the characteristics of its workforce (Hispanic/Anglo).

9. Are there any specific communication strategies used in the store to ease or overcome communication problems that may occur (e.g. due to language barriers, cultural differences etc.) and that would not be applied in other stores where these differences don't exist.

10. What are some of the problems you encounter on a daily basis?

11. Can you describe a critical incident that occurred in the store and that could be an example of cultural misunderstanding. **

12. Why do you think this store is rated #1 among Hispanic shoppers?

13. How does the store respond to their clients needs?
Appendix C

CAPITALIZING ON DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT
Executive summary

I. Introduction
Today, more and more corporations and organizations are understanding that a
diverse workforce can be one of their greatest resources if it is managed adequately.
Organizations are realizing that diversity is not merely a question of Equal Employment
Opportunity, as it has been in the past, but rather a much broader set of organizational
issues. Because diversity is a reality in organizations in the United States and elsewhere,
it is necessary for organizations of all types to learn how to manage diversity of the
workforce and to offer sound means to accommodate that diversity as an integral
dimension of the organization. Diversity and its effective management is more than a
social, moral or ethical imperative; it is an effective business strategy that will greatly
benefit those who take advantage of it. In this project I concentrate on ethnic diversity
and focus on communication processes that can be primary obstacles to effective
diversity management

II. Brief Review of Study
A. Nature of Study
This study is of an exploratory nature. It takes the form of a case study with two
principal parts. The first part discusses the importance of and the need for diversity
management in today’s organizations across the United States, and the second part
focuses on communication obstacles that can prevent an organization from managing
that cultural diversity successfully.

B. Research Questions
Through my main research questions I analyzed the level of awareness existing in
The Phoenix Group concerning diversity issues and the specific practices that were taking
place in order to manage that diversity successfully. Second, I studied the communication
practices that were taking place in the organization and analyzed to what degree they
were the most appropriate and effective for taking into consideration the cultural
differences of the various groups of employees. Using feedback from the participants in
the study themselves, I also determined what communication options could be
implemented if the current communication situation in the organization proved to be an
obstacle to productivity, job performance, and employee relations.

C. Methodology
I conducted this project through a qualitative approach in order to have in-depth
first hand information from the employees of the organization. This study is the result of
approximately 90 hours of observation in Store #15, over 50 hours of intensive interviewing and some analysis of the organization’s formal written communication. In Store #15, I interviewed 100% of the managers, and 40% of the lower level employees. In addition I had an interview with the Vice-president Chief of Operations, the Regional manager, the Public Relations representative, and the organization’s trainer. I also observed for a few hours in Store #19 and interviewed the Store manager and two other employees. I used a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to analyze my data. I applied theoretical concepts to events I was observing in the organization and I used my observations to test my concepts.

D. Key Findings

The major key finding of the study is the notable contradiction between diversity management practices practiced toward customers and diversity management practices directed toward employees. Diversity management strategies such as 1) acknowledging and valuing diversity, 2) changing structures and practices to accommodate differences, and 3) adapting communication processes to ensure accurate construction of meaning were all evident in The Phoenix Group’s dealings with its customers. In part through these strategies, this organization has been very successful in attracting and retaining their clientele.

However, such practices were not so evident with respect to employees, despite the fact that employees belonged to the same cultural groups as customers. Inside the organization managerial practices and communication were not in fact being adapted to its diverse workforce. Here are some of my most significant observations.

Generally speaking:

• There was a lack of awareness of how cultural differences could affect the workplace.
• Many employees associated cultural differences solely with discrimination issues, demonstrating a lack of knowledge about diversity issues.
• There appeared to be a high turnover rate and absenteeism, especially in certain employee groups. This can often be associated with a lack of identification and loyalty to the organization.
• Employees felt there was a lack of formal policies (i.e. staff meetings) where they could voice their opinions or discuss problems. Many employees expressed their desire for more opportunities where they could express concerns or offer input into policy making.
• Employee relationship and work performance often appeared conditioned by language, cultural and context obstacles, due to the diversity of the workforce.

III. Recommendations

A. Reasons for Change or Further Development of Practices within the Organization.

• Many employees are also customers. They would react to effective diversity management practices in the same positive way clients are doing. Some employees in
fact said they were satisfied as customers but somewhat unhappy as employees.

- Making employees feel valued and appreciated would lower turnover rate and absenteeism. There are studies that prove there is a positive relationship between employee’s perception of being valued and cared about and their attendance, dedication and job performance (see Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-Lamastro, 1990).

- Improving the organization’s reputation among employees would better the company’s image in the community. Hispanics rely a lot on referrals when considering job opportunities. This positive image would not only attract more Hispanic employees but would also encourage them to apply for managing positions (which seemed to be a problem in The Phoenix Group today). A more positive reputation would also attract employees from other cultures who are looking for a more comfortable environment to work in.

- Implementation of certain practices like monthly staff meetings and regular performance appraisals would help deal with unresolved underlying issues that are currently affecting employee performance and as a consequence often diminishing customer service. These practices would also help reduce costs (money, time, energy) of training new employees due to turnover. Studies show how a positive way of retaining employees is by offering them feedback on the effectiveness of their behavior (see Robinson and Dechant, 1997).

- Diversity management practices would also help with business growth by improving marketplace understanding. The Phoenix Group is already doing this with their customers by finding out the products they want; it would be important that they know what their employees need, too. Through effective diversity management The Phoenix Group can take advantage of its tremendous in-house talents and sources of information.

B. Specific Programs That Could be Implemented

- A socialization program that includes cultural awareness training. This could be as simple as a meeting with new employees to discuss the challenges of working with a diverse workforce and clientele.

- Interactive problem solving meetings where employees and managers could get together, discuss issues and come up with solutions that satisfy all parties involved.

- Two-way performance appraisals. In this way, all behaviors can be evaluated, and lower-level employees can feel their input is valued too.

- More effective communication among managers. Managers should support each other’s decisions and orders. They should set an example of respect for other employees.

- Greater consistency in applying negative sanctions towards tardiness and absenteeism. Inconsistency in punitive actions angers those employees who make an effort to be on time.

- More customized communication to meet everybody’s needs. It is important for employees to understand that language and culture are barriers towards effective communication and that translations are often not accurate and can produce problems.
Most employees in The Phoenix Group expressed that language wasn’t a problem because there was always someone around to help translate. I witnessed numerous situations where this was not the case. In addition, most employees had little knowledge of the culture of others groups working in the store. Most of their knowledge was based on stereotypes and was not sufficient to facilitate communication and employee relation. Employees were in many cases also unaware of their own culture and how this culture could affect their behavior.

- Survey the level of English/Spanish of employees. I observed that the level of English of many Mexican employees was much lower than what some English-speaking employees believed. This can lead to false assumptions about levels of comprehension and communication effectiveness.

Economic considerations may limit the implementation of some of these changes. These changes may require appropriate structures, re-organization of personnel, or the hiring of outside consultants to develop and perform training programs—all things that suggest substantial expenses. However, The Phoenix Group can start with smaller changes; they can start with minor changes that would gradually facilitate larger transformations. The Phoenix Group has also a very important advantage and that is that most of the changes mentioned above could be made possible with resources already available in their stores.

IV. Acknowledgements
There are several people I would like to thank who made this study possible. First, Mr. Jerry Miller, Vice-president Chief of Operations who reviewed my proposal and authorized the execution of this project. He also helped me select the most appropriate store. I also want to thank all employees of store #15 for their willingness to be interviewed and participate. Their friendliness and generosity made everything much easier. Moreover, I want to thank Dave Lingle (manager of Store #15) for making me feel so welcomed and for always showing concern for my well being.

Although this is a very brief summary of a project that took over a year to conclude, I hope I have given The Phoenix Group some insights that will allow for further development and success of their stores. I am willing to discuss my findings further if you like. Thank you once again for all your support.

References
