1999

Latinas' order of talk : talking about diversity

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LATINAS' ORDER OF TALK: TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Yvonne L. Quevedo

May 1999

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Varona', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Federico Varona

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucia V. Varona', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Lucia Varona, University of Santa Clara

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wen Shu Lee' in English and '李文淑' in Chinese, written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Wen Shu Lee

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Fiske', written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

LATINAS' ORDER OF TALK: TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY

by Yvonne L. Quevedo

This thesis addresses the topic of how latinas' order of talk constructs social worlds of diversity within their high technology work place. Five latinas with a minimum of two years of work experience in high technology corporations engaged in dialogues based upon a participatory research (PR) methodology. The PR dialogues gave rise to four generative themes: team membership, desire for recognition, perception as one of the few latinas in the work place, and co-constructing social worlds of diversity. Only one of the five latinas felt accepted as a member of a team. Four latinas talked of feeling excluded from team membership which negatively influenced their perceptions of work place diversity. The latinas conclude that diversity is occurring within the professional categories among female and male employees with the requisite technical degrees and work experience. A recommendation for future research is a need to challenge how "managing diversity" classes are taught by corporate training departments.

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I thank also the co-participants: Tina, Delia, Veronica, Betty, and Melanese. Their willingness and excitement to share their lives in this project will always be truly appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

*"What would our days be like
if we came out of hiding
and brought
our fears, loves and dreams
directly into the workplace?"*

*David Whyte
The Heart Aroused: Poetry and
the Preservation of the Soul
in Corporate America*

Introduction

"The personal *is* political" has long been a rallying cry dating back to feminists of the 1970s. Should my opening statement raise an eyebrow or two, rest assured—my thesis is not about the body politic. And yet politics, whether overtly or covertly, is evident vis-a-vis discussions on diversity in a multivocal society. Therefore, at the outset I stake a position that my thesis reflects the intersection of the personal and the political, the public and the private (Quindlan, 1993). Discussed within are personal experiences and assessments about a political topic—*diversity in the workplace*—discussed in private with other latinas so that our perspectives may contribute to a public understanding on the need for diversity.

I make no claim of "objectivity" for my "fingerprints" are visible in the choice of topic, the studies approved and/or rejected for the literature review, the selection of the co-participants, and by my engagement in numerous conversations with the co-participants relative to the Guide for the Dialogue. I would disagree also that my position as a graduate student researcher privileges my "knowledge" above that of my co-participants. As a latina with 15 years of

experience within the corporate work environment, I, too, possess *lived experience* of diversity in high technology, therein my desire to study the topic via dialogues with other latinas. Simply put, my desire is to vocalize a silence (*which I have experienced*) that permeates the working lives of many (but not all) latinas who negotiate sense-making within high technology cultures. Last, I will explain how three factors merged and gave impetus to this thesis.

Factor number one, the graduate program, represents the slow unmasking of my public self and the birthing of my latina voice. The process was slow in part because of my main focus upon organizational communication. My initial quest was to understand the dynamics of organizational culture and how organizational culture influenced various modes of communication. And yet in scrutinizing organizational culture I encountered the subterranean cultural groups often ignored in many texts relative to organizational communication. By subterranean cultural groups I refer to the support staff whose cultural boundaries crossed ethnic, class, age, gender, and sexual orientation lines. Their skill sets and contributions, often unnoticed, support the projects of various groups labeled as professionals: engineers, information technology specialists, MBAs, marketing and advertising types, and mid- to senior level executives. In other words, these individuals are credited as the innovators and creators of corporate wealth. Not surprisingly, college-educated males constitute a large percentage of employees within the professional classes. However, it was within the subterranean cultural groups that I found a "home base," a sense of belonging that I never experienced with other corporate professionals. And yet, I, too, was employed in a professional capacity. But why did I feel such a sense of estrangement from other colleagues within the division?

Another reason that my voice was slow in emerging is that five years ago ³ I was simply unaware that organizational communication dealt with such politically and personally challenging topics such as ethnicity, racism, sexism, homophobia and a host of other “isms” that diversity studies now attempt to address. I qualify the prior statement with “attempt” because there is still a long road ahead before companies willingly address and achieve true diversity.

Therefore, to gain a better understanding of how I as a latina fit into the corporate world of high technology, other classes were necessary to provide a different perspective of organizational life. In succeeding semesters I enrolled in seminars dealing with interpersonal and intercultural communication, postmodernity and its effects on an information-driven society, the impact of computers and technology on communication, and diversity within the workplace. And always I tried to understand how my latina-ness bridged school knowledge with the workplace. Of equal importance was whether or not the workplace validated theories and knowledge gleaned from books and classroom discussion.

Unfortunately, too often I stood facing a chasm which literally represented the boundaries where my graduate studies, my latina-ness, and my daily work experience simply could not intersect to provide a stable homeland. In a few instances the boundaries were sufficiently close so that by planting one foot in school, another foot in the workplace, and bending forward to firmly *retain* my latina-ness, I was able to straddle three worlds. But eventually these contortions proved to be painful and disillusioning.

To those who would question how I could separate ethnic identity from the “work self” and the “graduate school self” the answer is simple. Neither environment has been particularly amenable to people of color. Or, perhaps it was

just my personality which prevented me from feeling comfortable in either arena. In the corporate world, the stakes are high to adopt the values of the company and display competence of corporate citizenship. Perhaps even more disconcerting, however, were the challenges I encountered in the graduate program. As an older graduate student I established satisfying relationships with some professors. Yet, it was jarring to face the lack of acceptance or indifferent responses from fellow graduate students whenever I raised issues of ethnicity, especially within the workplace. I often wondered whether these students, both male and female, ever reflected upon how their mid-West, Caucasian upbringing influenced their views of diversity. 4

I remember well two seminars in particular where some fellow graduate students repeatedly interrupted my comments as I explained my perspective as a latina working within the “dominant culture of the workplace.” To be accepted meant to censure lived experiences and express myself solely through writing. A self-negotiated agreement emerged to speak my convictions knowing the response from classmates could be indifference or even hostility, which often times it was. Furthermore, to somehow incorporate ethnicity and socioeconomic class as relevant topics in my research papers became paramount. And it was during a semester interrupted by a medical leave of absence that I had time to read articles and books on various critical theories which discussed the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, and gender. It is ironic that while much critical theory appears oppositional to my very pragmatic *business* mind, it has helped to illuminate why I’ve felt such an outsider at both work and school. Furthermore, the readings have also underscored why critical theories relative to race, class, ethnicity, and gender should be discussed within the context of organizational communication.

In effect, the past five years of graduate school have been somewhat lonely, occasionally rewarding, and at times plainly painful. Yet the conversations and social worlds that enveloped my life over the past five years *have* left their mark. Anzaldua (1990) in her powerful indictment of “traditional” scholarship and theory-making quotes Mitsuye Yamada “Over my mask/is your mask of me” (p. xv). “My mask” served a purpose. As a coping strategy it allowed me to gain lived experience of diversity and learn to negotiate in the conspicuously affluent and highly-educated workforce of Silicon Valley. I argue that my *lived experience* (and that of the five latinas) is as valuable as any anthology on the topic of diversity. Therefore, this thesis is written from a first-person perspective and I place myself in the social worlds of conversations, dialogue, lectures, on-the-job experiences, and published works that co-created this project.

Factor number two is reflected in the words of Goodall (1990) who chided the communication community that too much communication research “look[s] like scholarly research, [and] follow[s] the scientific method or its derivative formulas” (p. 284). Words used to describe standard research, i.e., “unbiased, scholarly, appropriate” are words premised upon research and language from privileged individuals (by virtue of their skin color and social class) within the dominant culture. I concur with Lee (W.S. Lee, personal communication, April 11, 1999), that “the” way of doing research privileges few but silences many. Scholars working in feminist perspectives, specifically third-world feminist perspectives (and I include myself with this group), continue to undertake research, present papers at conferences, and publish our findings by constructing “organic” or “contextualized” methods. In the process we (re)form and (re)shape the discourse with *alternative* and *legitimate* ways to write papers for scholarly publication. Our styles, our voices, and ways of expression may be *different* from traditional

research, but being *different* should not be equated with *inferior* or *insufficiently rigorous* for publication.

Many third-world feminists have formed communities of support in what is variously termed “writings from the borderlands” and “writing from the margins,” among other terms. It is here that I find myself *being pushed* by some graduate students or business colleagues simply for wanting to discuss issues they do not consider of primary relevance. And yet it is within the margins that I find the voice to speak my experiences and to talk back to those who would attempt to silence my views.

The third factor is that the thesis represents an integration of scholarship from various disciplines: anthropology, business management, communication studies, cultural studies, history, psychology, and anthropology. The thread weaving among and linking the various fabrics of my response to the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) research is postmodernity. And later I will explain a specific strand in postmodernity called postmodernism of resistance. In their introductory comments the authors state their research has been informed by a “...postmodern constructionist approach...congruent with the requisites of our culturally-diverse and information era society” (p. xvi). I feel it is appropriate to respond in kind via reflections by bell hooks (1990) on her position of postmodern Blackness. This is a theme expanded upon by Edelstein (1998) via her argument for a postmodernism of resistance. If we truly desire to co-create more just social worlds, then we should make use of *past* research and “repurpose” the findings to co-create a more inclusive future.

Last, I believe it is only fair that I comment on why I decided upon this particular topic as a thesis project.

The genesis of this research was planted during the 1997 Fall Semester at ⁷ San Jose State University while enrolled in a class entitled *Seminar in Diversity and Communication in the Workplace*. One of the required texts, *Reflexive Communication in the Culturally Diverse Workplace*, (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997) purported to advance a culturally sensitive communication paradigm to dissolve barriers between individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Initially I was enthusiastic about the authors' approach and willingly volunteered to a class presentation of what the authors termed the "Hispanic¹ communication paradigm." I rationalized that I could incorporate my *lived experience* with the authors' findings. However, during several readings of the chapter there was very little information with which I could relate. How could I incorporate my "lived experience" with the authors' information when I could not position myself within the text that purportedly described my communication style and paradigm?

What occurred during the following weeks was a flurry of conversations with other latinas, family members, and friends. We discussed many of the values which the authors stated were reflected through and in our particular communication paradigm: collective interdependence (especially for and within the family), personal dignity, greater acceptance of age/gender hierarchy, collectivism, affiliation, and cooperation (Kikoski & Kikoski, p. 141). Despite numerous conversations, few if any acknowledged that the findings described our workplace relationships as constructed through conversation and dialogue. It was then that I truly reflected upon the implications of the authors' research and planned to take action. I am not a powerless woman. Furthermore, my

1. Chapter 2 presents a discussion on privileging the term Latina over the term Hispanic. However, since this is a direct quote, the term Hispanic will be used in this instance.

words would argue for new thoughts because society could no longer abide by old thoughts as rehashed by the authors.

Within a few days I stood before class and refuted a great deal of the Hispanic communication paradigm as discussed by Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). Much to my chagrin, many classmates were taken aback by my point-by-point refutation of the data as well as my “perceived anger” at the authors’ findings. Two classmates in particular were borderline antagonistic. The reactions from the class, though troubling, were understandable. With the exception of a female Taiwanese graduate student, Dr. Varona and myself, the class was comprised of graduate students of Caucasian ancestry with little to no lived experience in a latina/o community. Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen (1997) argue that scholars from the dominant culture often display “unfamiliarity with the specific practices that lend significance to the general cultural categories or dimensions that are created” (p. xii). Therefore, I believe my critique of the communication paradigm created cognitive dissonance with most classmates.

Further, my criticisms stemmed from a sense of disappointment that, with only a year away from a new millennium, reputable scholars continue to use sweeping generalizations, i.e., “...she [the Latina] should be submissive and tolerant (of alcohol and mistresses)” (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997, p. 142); or, as a result of a hierarchical upbringing, “they [adult Latinas/os] may appear deferential to a superior and accept instruction unquestionably (even if they do not understand clearly)” (p. 143); or, relative to the construct of *machismo*, “...one should be aware not to intentionally or unintentionally attack his manhood, ...appear to engage in a public humiliation or insult” (p. 144).

As a latina, as a conscious-thinking adult, and as a manager, the first two statements are unacceptable perpetuations of stereotypes. It is significant that

neither statement was supported with specific citations from the original research. The final example regarding *machismo* appears ethnocentrically ludicrous in light of an American culture that glorifies guns, objectifies females in liquor, sports, and automobile advertisements geared toward males, and where domestic violence against women and children remains an everyday occurrence. *Machismo*, as Castillo (1995) would remind us, is a cross socio-cultural phenomenon representing the inability of males to channel anger and frustration in a constructive manner and is therefore not the sole province of latino males.

Perhaps the divide between the authors' *published research* and my *lived experience* results from their almost exclusive interviews with Puerto Ricans to fulfill their qualitative data needs. Perhaps the chasm is the result of problems endemic to "insider/outsider" research (Mirande & Tanno, 1993). Perhaps many of the interviewees were non-native born and still rooted in old world traditions (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 4). By failing to contextualize the lives of their interviewees, the authors added to the universalizing of a Hispanic subject.

Regardless of how, where, and why the material was collected, one fact remained irrefutable: the book was part of the public, academic, and management literature discussing how cultural values influence the communication paradigm of a vast, and growing latina/o population. Yet, I argue that the book contained misrepresentations that needed to be addressed. It was within this context, as a critical response to the research by Kikoski and Kikoski, (1997), that I visualized the beginnings of this thesis.

In Chapter 1 I discuss the personal, and thereby the political events that served as the impetus for this thesis. I discuss also how demographic changes are changing the face of the American workforce. Specifically, I address some of the steady gains experienced by latinas as we make our presence known in the

American workplace. Additionally, there are discussions on the purpose of the study, the type of methodological framework used for the thesis, and a discussion on a postmodernism of resistance. 10

Chapter 2 incorporates a review of literature on diversity research. It also introduces the construct of the cultural communication paradigm and two corollaries: the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male cultural communication paradigm and the latina cultural communication paradigm. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the construct known as “order of talk.”

In Chapter 3 I present a discussion of participatory research methodology and how this methodology can be used as an act of empowerment for social change. Chapter 3 also discusses a process for conducting participatory research in addition to providing biographical snapshots of the latina co-participants. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the generative themes that arose from the participatory research dialogues and Chapter 5 presents a summary of the major findings and suggestions for future research.

It is my hope that this thesis can provide the impetus for research that is committed to personal and social change.

*"In the middle of the road of my life
I awoke in a dark wood
where the true way was wholly lost."*

Dante, Commedia

Statement of the Problem

Today, the United States has the largest immigrant population of any nation in the world (Mendieta, in press). Not surprisingly, the demographic changes occurring within the broader American population are making their presence known within the workplace. The shift from a fairly homogenous work force to an increasingly heterogeneous work force presents us with many challenges and opportunities to evolve into a more inclusive society. Since the 1970s the American workplace has witnessed a steady influx of employees that have literally changed the face of corporate culture. For example, during the mid 1980s, people of color accounted for approximately 13 percent of the total work force. By the year 2005, they are forecast to comprise one-third of the total work force. By the year 2005, native born white women will comprise 34.9 percent of the workforce, while native born white males will see their numbers decrease to 31.4 percent and continue to decline. Once the first wave of the baby boomers (1946-1964) begin to retire, the changes in the workforce will shift to an ever more noticeable level (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997; Loden & Rosener, 1991).

The diverse voices arising from this vast population present challenges and opportunities for the American workplace. It is within this context that diversity, its supporters and opponents are redefining the parameters of the workplace and the politics of inclusion. Therefore, two questions spring to mind: 1) Is diversity the same as affirmative action; and 2) If not, what do opponents fear in workplace diversity? Both questions are the result of countless interactions with present and

former colleagues and managers. Many individuals consider diversity and affirmative action as one and the same. On the opposite end of the spectrum are individuals and corporations that fear government intrusion into private affairs that might require setting “quotas” for specific groups or face a penalty for not achieving specific goals. While both diversity and affirmative action can effect similar results in the workplace, namely greater inclusiveness, *legalistically* they are viewed differently. 12

In response to query number one, Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that affirmative action and diversity are two discrete entities. Affirmative action programs evolved from three separate governmental laws: a) the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (outlawed discrimination in employment and forced companies to create timetables to reduce ethnic and gender discrimination in the workplace); b) the Executive Order 11246 of 1965, (prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and national origin); and c) the Executive Order 11375 of 1967, (prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex). All three laws required that companies provide timetables detailing how staffing needs would result in workplace parity (p. 186). To be sure, there have been impassioned arguments for and against affirmative action programs. However, the fact remains that all three laws specifically *prohibited discrimination* across various dimensions. This indicates the lack of an even playing field requiring affirmative action-type programs to assist groups historically marginalized.

In response to query number two the authors are forthright. A once fairly homogeneous workforce fears the change and potential discomfort of working with others whose colors and cultures are new to the American workplace.

If diversity is *not* affirmative action, what does it represent?

Thomas (1995) argues that diversity a) encompasses differences and similarities; b) refers to dimensions spanning race, gender, sexual orientation, age, functional specialization; and c) represents a collective mixture of differences *and* similarities along a given dimension (p. 247). *Implicit* within his definition is the understanding that an *established order* of behaviors and communication patterns exist in a workplace. Additionally, he argues that the different dimensions of diversity will act upon the established order of behaviors and communication patterns. Can communication patterns be part of an established order of behaviors? According to Kikoski and Kikoski (1997), the answer is “yes” and offer the “order of talk” construct (Shotter, 1993) to support their position.

“Order of talk” refers to a commonality of, or sensitivity to values, both verbal and nonverbal, that are a necessary part of social competence within a cultural group. They advance that White Anglo-Saxon Protestant males, long represented in the ranks of American business management, have cultivated an “order of talk” enabling them to interact with other management colleagues and smoothly run their business affairs (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997, p. 13). Further, due to the hierarchical nature of most workplace environments, this “order of talk” has been privileged above that of other groups. Yet, with the sea change of diversity, the authors believe each of us is responsible for shaping a new “order of talk” to enable us to “talk” past stereotypes so we can all communicate effectively and work together (p. 14). However, recognizing and respecting different “orders of talk” is but part of the solution. Of equal importance is an awareness of how the values of different cultural groups shape communication.

Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) suggest a cultural communication paradigm that explains how cultural values shape communication. They posit that individuals who share commonalities tend to communicate more effectively in contrast with

individuals who do not share the same commonalities. The challenges faced when merging these two factors, demographic changes introducing new cultural values upon an established order of communication cannot be overemphasized. This challenge is heightened when we focus on the impact of the latina/o population, their immigration rates, and entrance into the American workplace.

Currently, latinas/os number 29.2 million, or 10.9 percent of the total U.S. population; while 12 million represent foreign-born latinas/os (Fisher, Perez, Gonzalez, & Njus, 1998; Suro, 1998). Overall they have advanced in terms of workforce visibility, business ownership and purchasing power. These gains are also reflected in an increased middle-class (Fisher, et al., 1998; Rodriguez, 1998). Yet, in spite of these gains, fewer are getting into white collar jobs, are moving up in corporations, or are succeeding in big business (Sosa, 1998). What factor(s) could account for this perceived lack of representation in corporate white collar jobs?

Fortunately, the outlook for latinas appears to be headed in a more positive trend. Since 1990 latinas have established 350,000 new businesses and are the fastest-growing segment among all ethnic groups in the American business community (Andrade, 1998). However, even the most charitable manipulation of statistics: 350,000 latina businesswomen marching into a baby boomer “bulge” of approximately 78 million workers, cannot mask the paucity of their numbers within the corporate workplace. As a result, it seems probable that latinas (*and I include myself*) might experience diversity-related issues and contemplate: how *do* we negotiate through and among the hierarchies of corporate culture; how does our latina-ness shape team membership and sense of belonging in the corporate culture; who are the “Others” by which we construct a sense of ethnic identity; how many of us experienced what Chow (1998) refers to as “invisibility” vis-a-vis

our ethnicity? How many colleagues do not view us as “latina”, meaning that to them we are not “white” but we are also not “not-white?” (p. xvii). How many of us have worked toward advanced degree programs and/or immersed ourselves in the cutting edge of high-technology, only to awaken, much like Dante’s protagonist “in a dark wood where the true way was wholly lost”? These are some of the musings that stoked the passions for conducting this research. Therefore, how might a communication studies approach shed light on diversity issues faced by latinas who work in the corporate culture of high-technology?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to engage five latinas working in high technology corporate cultures, in positions other than housekeepers, janitors, and cooks, to dialogue how their “order of talk” constructs perceptions of diversity in talking with their managers and colleagues. Order of talk (Shotter, 1993) refers to a commonality of, or sensitivity to, values, both verbal and nonverbal that are a necessary part of social competence as an adult. Therefore, the values are a necessary part of social competence in corporate America. The order of talk construct is discussed in Chapter 2, Review of Literature.

Co-participants are employed as managers (2), an executive assistant, an HR representative, and a secretary. They work for various high-technology companies located in the region known as Silicon Valley. The companies include a semiconductor chip design and manufacturing company; a computer game software company, and one of the largest chip production facilities in the western United States. It is my desire that participatory research (PR) enhance their awareness of diversity constructions within the workplace. Second, it is hoped also

that the latinas will gain a better understanding of their role as co-creators of diversity within the workplace. 16

Any number of methodologies could have been used to dialogue with the latinas. However, PR was selected for its ability to articulate women's ways of speaking; specifically, latinas' ways of speaking (Varona, 1996). Not surprisingly, my initial interest in the use of PR was a result of reading *Cultural Stereotypes and Their Impact on Hispanic Women College Students: A Participatory Research* (Varona, 1996). As I read her dissertation I found myself reflected *within* and *connected* to the text and experiences of the Hispanic women college students. Equally as significant was my lack of connectedness with the research from Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) due to their universalizing of cultural groups.

I empathized with Dr. Varona as she wrote of her struggles to speak and write in the language of academic circles. Furthermore, I could understand comments by her co-participants on their reluctance to participate in class discussions, much as I remained silent through my undergraduate years. In graduate school I was made well aware of my shortcomings relative to knowledge of critical theory. But I had work and life and everyday survival experience that few graduate school peers or professors could ever imagine. Furthermore, I was attracted to PR as a methodology that enables co-participants to contemplate *then* act as change agents in their own behalf (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997). It also was the hope of this researcher that my thesis contribute to the *proactive* findings (a pittance if any) relative to *positive* advances by latinas within an organizational context.

At this point it is necessary to explain the exclusion of latinas employed as housekeepers, janitors, and cooks within the scope of this study. Unfortunately, this cluster of words as work role descriptors was interpreted as a sign of class bias against "housekeepers, janitors, and cooks." This was never intended to be a slight

against individuals employed in these work categories. Yet for lack of better descriptors of their *work roles* within Silicon Valley companies, e.g., manager, typist, receptionist, these three work role descriptors, housekeepers, janitors, and cooks, were adopted for use in this study. During many months of reading and researching prior to the actual PR phase, the role descriptors were used in conversations with other latinas and latinos. Perhaps its because the conversations revealed that so many of us have relatives and/or friends who work or have worked in similar occupations that comments didn't arise that the study was biased against a particular class. 17

Research Questions

The Guide for the Dialogue was created with an eye toward eliciting how latinas' "order of talk" enables them to negotiate sense-making in their workplace environment. Also, it will act as a guide of their talk relative to issues of diversity. If management realized how latinas "talked" about workplace diversity, perhaps management would bolster efforts to create a harmonious environment for all employees. Additionally, by critically reflecting upon their narratives and via our face to face discussions, perhaps the latinas would attain a better understanding of how they can bring about a genuine sense of diversity in the workplace. The latinas will be asked questions relating to the following questions:

Guide for the Dialogue

1. As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your "order of talk" when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?
2. As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?
3. As a latina, how do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?
4. As a latina what would you do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?

Kikoski and Kikoski, (1997) identified several culturally-specific values relative to latinas' communication paradigm. Three of the values were discussed at length with the co-participants to contextualize the Guide for the Dialogue. The three values are collectivism, hierarchy, and high-context culture. However, during the course of the dialogues two interesting facts began to emerge. First, it became evident that the latinas were describing more the use of non-verbal skills and not a high-context culture orientation. The construct of non-verbal skills, therefore, will replace the construct of high-context culture orientation. Second, the latinas did not readily identify the values as separate items. With the occasional exception of references to the "management culture" typical of their respective organizations, the latinas focused more upon *examples* of how they fit or did not fit as team members within a group. This issue will be addressed further within the section entitled "Team Membership" in Chapter 4, Generative Themes. Yet, the reflexive nature of participatory research necessitates that the give and take of this interaction be documented for future participatory research collaborators. The following definitions are the three values that served to contextualize the process, along with definitions for latina, management culture, and "order of talk":

Collectivism: refers to behaviors that attend to the needs of in-group members before taking action to satisfy individual needs (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997).

Hierarchy: refers to acceptance of and deferential behavior toward those who hold greater power (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997).

Non-verbal skills: refers to a combination of attending skills that includes eye contact, body language, gestures, vocal qualities, and verbal tracking. The authors assert that between 65 to 90 percent of our face-to-face communication is transmitted via nonverbal communication (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997).

Latina: There is little consensus on which label, Chicana, Hispanic, Latina, Mexican-American, is most appropriate. Generally speaking and placed along a

continuum, "Hispanic" is used in more conservative circles and "Latina" is used by more liberal-leaning individuals (Stavans, 1995). 19

Management culture: refers to Anglo-Saxon Protestant white males who created and continue to influence guidelines for managerial fit in the United States (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997).

"Order of talk": refers to a commonality of, or sensitivity to, values, both verbal and nonverbal that are a necessary part of social competence as an adult. Therefore, the values are a necessary part of social competence in corporate America (Shotter, 1993; Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997).

Methodological Framework

For the purposes of this research, participatory research (PR) was considered *an* appropriate methodology for dialoguing and interacting with the co-participants. Central to the research is that all co-participants requested their participation in the study not become public knowledge to their peers or managers. Therefore, direct observation of co-participants was not an option for this study. Each of the co-participants felt that their jobs or careers would have been compromised had they agreed to be observed or interviewed within their workplace. Their concerns are valid based on their experiences with the workplace dynamics. Therefore, PR with its emphasis upon face-to-face dialogues in safe and private locations of the latinas' choice as to time, place, and day was considered an appropriate methodology.

Much of what has been written about latinas has been generated from outside the communities of women who comprise the various latina communities. I consider this problematic. Research by hooks (1981), an African-American feminist who writes on issues of race, class, and gender indicates that she, too, finds this problematic. She critiques that even though white women traditionally have received grants to study African-American women, African-American women are not receiving funds to study white women. Mirande and Tanno, (1993),

address the quagmire of “insider/outsider” research. They do not accept the argument that “insiders” only qualify for conducting culturally sensitive research. But, they rightfully assert that “historically, ‘outsider’ research has tended to produce caricatures of ethnic communities...” (p. 386). They offer as a possible remedy to caricaturization that the group under study *validate the conclusion and findings* of the research. This suggestion also persuaded me to accept PR as appropriate for dialoguing and interacting with the co-participants.

Participatory research is a collaborative effort between and among researcher and co-participants. It can be viewed as a three-phase study in reflexivity. In the process of back-and-forth dialogue *and* reflection upon their words, co-participants a) *name* the problem at hand; b) *create* the who, when, why, how and where queries; c) *voice* an array of possible solutions to meet specific needs; and d) *move* ahead in terms of social action. Central to PR is that it is for the benefit of the co-participants as much as it is for the researcher. Furthermore, the lived experience of the co-participants is highly valued. PR has been defined as a “systematic approach to radical social transformation grounded in an alternative paradigm” (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997). Yet, I believe it necessary to qualify “radical social transformation.”

One of the benefits of doing PR-based studies is that in the process of “doing” research, a space is created for voices that might not otherwise be found in scholarly publications. Therefore, it is understood that the researcher/co-participant is very much an advocate for the topic under study. This stance echoes a belief of Lincoln (1995) that an aspect of any interpretive research reflect “passionate participation.” Yet, sensitivity should be exercised by the researcher/co-participant that “passionate participation” *not* define *what is* and *what is not* radical social transformation! Goodall (1990) concurs that it is easy for individuals

with job security to advocate change. It is, he states, quite another matter when an individual feels lacking in job security, financial support, etc. to move ahead for social change. There are numerous potentialities in PR. Yet, this author believes that one of its greatest benefits is the capacity to engender a positive sense of Self that leads to increased self-esteem and social action *as defined by* the co-participants.

Conceptual Framework

As I stated earlier, this thesis project began as a critical response in the form of a seminar presentation to research from Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). Since the authors positioned their research and findings within a "...postmodern constructionist approach...congruent with the requisites of our culturally-diverse and information era society" (p. xvi), I positioned my response within the same critical orientation. Yet, an initial critique to the thesis by a thesis committee faculty member elicited a sharp response: a postmodernist view was an elitist, exclusionary, and Eurocentrically biased position. This posed a dilemma. How could I remain true to a critical response which appropriated significant aspects of the authors' research, i.e., cultural communication paradigm, order of talk, and a postmodernist framework, yet honored my research which was slowly revealing different perspectives which would lead to different conclusions? An answer was soon forthcoming via the writings of Edelstein (1998) and hooks (1990) in their discussion of a postmodernism of resistance.

In her opening comments, Edelstein (1998) questions whether or not postmodernism and feminism can be "good allies." She acknowledges that postmodernists have rarely if ever acknowledged gender issues, much less race, ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation issues. Yet she believes that critical

theorists have begun to open a space for a "...revitalized and repoliticized postmodernism" (p. 86) that can serve as a guide for individuals working toward social change. 22

The term "postmodernism" originally referred to certain forms of literary texts of the late 1950s and early 1960s. During the ensuing years, the term was more broadly applied to cultural and artistic expressions. Yet, it was not until the decade of the 1970s that critical theorists began to discuss postmodernism as a "cultural, historical, and social" marker (Edelstein, 1998, p. 88). She cites the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard as one of the first authors to discuss postmodernity as a philosophical concept. While Edelstein does accept his description of our cultural times, i.e., a post-atomic era influenced by high technology and multimedia within a globalized world of late postindustrial capitalism, she also notes two major weaknesses. First, she states that the term "postmodernity" is itself too unstable and ill-defined a term and that it may always be heavily contested by this instability. Her view echoes an argument forwarded by Tress, (1988), who posits that at least six trends can be identified within postmodernism. These various trends and some of their theorists are: hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer), deconstruction (Jacques Derrida), French feminisms (Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous), critical theory (Theodor Adorno), psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), and power and knowledge claims (Michel Foucault) (p. 197). Admittedly, these categories are highly contested but the list does set parameters for the study of postmodern issues.

Second, Edelstein (1998) takes issue with the imprecise historical boundaries of *modernity* and *postmodernity*, challenging where modernity ends and postmodernity begins. Regardless of the blurred boundaries, she does embrace major tenets (or ideals) of postmodernity studies, namely, a critique of traditions,

tensions between margin and center, an emergence of difference, a rejection of 23
a universal subject, exposing power relations, and time/space distancing.

Despite acknowledged criticisms from feminists within various fields, Edelstein argues that postmodern theories that incorporate a multiplicity of differences can truly champion for broad emancipatory politics. And here she credits the writings of hooks (1990) for raising the issues of race, gender and socioeconomic class within the context of postmodernity.

In 1990 hooks published *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. A chapter on postmodern blackness assailed the exclusionary discourse of postmodern theorists for appropriating the experience of "difference" and "otherness," while theorizing very little on either issue. Yet she also pointed out that few black intellectuals (with the exception of Cornel West) have dealt with the issues of postmodernism as the issues related to contemporary black experience. This she cited as unacceptable as it perpetuated a view of black experience comprised solely of lived experience without connection to the construction of critical theory. Furthermore, she argued that in spite of her reaction to the *language* of the discourse, a "coded familiarity" between "white male intellectuals and/or academic elites" she was compelled to join the discussion. She speaks a legitimate complaint. How else can the discourse reflect "difference" and "otherness" if theorists from "otherness" perspectives do not join the larger theoretical debates? Therefore, she accepted the challenge to enter the debates, knowing that "...there may be no ready audience for my words, no clear listener, uncertain then, that my voice can or will be heard" (p. 25). In the course of her argument were identified several reasons of how she perceived postmodernism to be an appropriate theory or *could* become an appropriate theory by which to "...recognize a critical black presence in the culture" (p. 24).

First, hooks (1990) cited works of the few black males writing on the subject of postmodernism. She was critical of the men for not including the voices and/or making reference to the works of black women. She explained that black power movement of the 1960s critiqued very little the patriarchy within the movement. Furthermore, it was necessary to amend this exclusion to honor the contributions of black women to the production of black culture. Second, she critiqued the entrenched voices of postmodern theorists that occupy central positions within the debates. She criticized their claims of embracing a “politics of difference” when she felt it was evident that the discourse was directed toward a specialized audience using a similar language. To address this “sadly ironic” state, she argued that postmodernist theorists had to open a space for different styles of writing as well as different subject matter. Third, she applauded postmodernist critiques of essentialism relative to identity politics. She argued that it opened the possibility of rethinking outdated perceptions of black identity constructed from within and without black culture along too restrictive notions of blackness. She discussed, for example, the impact of class mobility upon a collective black experience that changed the way racism was felt within black culture. Furthermore, she argued that a critique of essentialism enabled:

...us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally...(p. 28).

She also addressed black folks’ apprehension of critiquing essentialism in fear that the critiques might cause some to lose sight of the oppression that is part of the history of black culture. To this she replied quite simply: black folks should never cease to emphasize the “authority of experience” (p. 29). She believed this to be an adequate response to those who would accuse her of speaking of a black

“essence” since her position recognized how struggle constituted black identity.

In effect, hooks (1990) identified several ways that she felt postmodernist theories could be appropriated to be “oppositional and liberatory” as well as continue the struggle for radical black subjectivity. In many ways, her approach is a reminder to “other” theorists that they need not be “condemned to the margins.” Yet, her argument requires that theorists critical of postmodernism intervene to help shape what she terms a “postmodernism of resistance” (p. 30). By joining the debates she has positioned herself to raise issues of class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. In this manner she hopes that black and “other” intellectuals, both academic and “public” and with *shared sensibilities* will continue to foreground conditions:

...more tragically expressed under current postmodern conditions... characterized by continued displacement, profound alienation, and despair...(p. 26).

I view the entry by Edelstein (1998) and hooks (1990) into the postmodernism debates to be a crucial point. First, they highlight the need to discuss race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and gender within the context of postmodernism and its effects, a glaring omission in the research by Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). Second, they encourage postmodernist critiques of essentialism relative to identity politics. Such critiques enable the emergence of multiple identities, i.e., multiple latina identities. As I stated earlier, my initial enthusiasm to the Hispanic cultural communication paradigm was eventually muted when it became apparent that I could not fit my latina experience into the one-dimensional portrayal of Hispanicism within the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) research. There is not one way to “be” a latina but a multiplicity of ways to “be

latina.” Whether or not one accepts any of the current labels in vogue: Latina, ²⁶ Mexicana, Mexican-American, Tejana, Chicana, Puerto Ricanya, Hispana, Hispanic or a multitude of other labels is a very personal choice. Hopefully, though, each of us in our own public and private ways is working toward dismantling oppressive barriers. The postmodernist perspectives of Edelstein (1998) and hooks (1990) challenge the postmodern constructionist perspectives of Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). Edelstein (1998) and hooks (1990) raise political issues that Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) chose to ignore. Yet, all four authors position themselves *within* postmodernist debates. The research of the latter authors does little to dispel the notion of white males and females (as depicted in their research examples) as “normative.” The writings of Edelstein (1998) and hooks (1990) serve as initial (if imperfect) steps to move postmodernist debates to a more inclusive place. For these reasons as listed, I find a postmodernism of resistance an appropriate place to situate this research in opposition to a postmodern constructionist perspective.

Significance of the Study

The study is a first on two fronts: it adopts the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) construct of a cultural communication paradigm relative to how latinas perceive diversity in the workplace. Additionally, this study examines the applicability of the cultural communication paradigm within the cultures of cutting edge high technology corporations. Furthermore, this study has been conducted as insider research by a latina with a similar working class/blue collar background as the other co-participants. The fact we all entered this thesis project with years of experience working in high technology companies fostered a healthy rapport during our dialogue and follow-up sessions. This allowed for much frankness in

the dialogues, some of which we agreed would be misunderstood within the 27 larger context of the thesis. For this reason, numerous pages of the dialogues and our telephone conversations were considered too sensitive for publication. However, the dialogues attest to our honest reflection and analysis of our daily experiences as we tried to make sense of our positions within high technology cultures. This study is also significant in that it offers management individuals the option of looking beyond binary issues of diversity, i.e., black and white, an issue that plagues too many high technology diversity programs.

Scope and Delimitation

This PR is based upon dialoguing with five latinas to enhance understanding of how they negotiate sense-making and create social worlds of diversity within high-technology corporate cultures. Others may find that five co-participants is a particularly limited number for a research thesis. However, Dr. John Kikoski (personal communication, September 17, 1998) addressed the issue by stating that the cutting edge in diversity research is not at the macro-, political, and legal level but at the *micro- and interpersonal level*. Also, this study is not meant to generalize findings to a larger population. It should be read with what Chen and Pearce (1995) refer to as "its ability to explicate the richness and particularity of what it describes" (p. 141). Furthermore, years of research have constructed "latina" within social worlds of limited educational attainment, limited financial mobility, single mother, absent mother, drug-addicted female living within an abusive relationship, steeped within old world traditions of the madonna-whore complex (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Vasquez, 1994). This has become disheartening to latina and latino scholars alike.

Rodriguez (1998) also angrily rebuts with a similarly held belief as to ²⁸ how Latinos, in general, are constructed in academic literature. He posits that this population deserves a reassessment from various social institutions in light of current demographic realities. Furthermore, he charges that academics in particular have focused with tunnel-vision precision on perceived pathological behaviors that traditionally have precluded latina and latino entry into the middle class. I am a latina with 15 years experience in high-technology corporate cultures. Five years were spent as an independently employed software consultant. The path presents challenges and trade-offs. Yet, it is undeniable that careers can be created and then used as a springboard to future mobility, entrepreneurship, to act as a mentor or to form a bridge with other parts of the community. The possibility is here.

My desire is to add this study to the literature on the achievements and successes by latinas as we venture into the exciting, but demanding world of high technology. My purpose is to construct the presence of latinas as skill-savvy contributors to the profitability of the company.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*"I have come to believe over and over again
that what is most important to me must be spoken,
made verbal and shared, even at the risk of
having it bruised or misunderstood."*

Audre Lorde:
*The Transformation of Silence
into Language and Action*

Introduction

Life in Silicon Valley is a paradox. In spite of a 25 year existence, few individuals can agree upon the physical geographic boundaries of the region or where to place the "heart" of the Valley. Quite often, the respective mayors of San Jose, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Palo Alto good-naturedly proclaim their cities as the "heart" of Silicon Valley. The Valley also represents extremes in terms of lifestyles, educational achievement, and living conditions for the have/have nots and those somewhere in between. Furthermore, it is very diverse, home to immigrants with little to no education but home also to immigrants arriving with advanced degrees in the hard sciences and cutting edge computer-driven technologies. These immigrants are the life-blood of Valley companies. Simply put, whether or not individuals work within the high-technology workplace, or try to shield themselves from different peoples and cultures, diversity and its attendant issues involving language, communication, and multiculturalism are an unavoidable part of life here in Silicon Valley.

Diversity Research

According to Ronald Takaki, (1998), a fellow of the Society of American Historians and an internationally recognized scholar, the next century will be a

time “when we will all be minorities” (p. 5). Yet, we’ve but to look at the composition of today’s workforce to observe that diversity is a challenge of today, not tomorrow. Patricia Cross (Cutler, 1993), a leading diversity consultant, argues that diversity and change are upon us, as reflected in a workforce that is 60% *other than* white male. This is due in part to the globalization of markets and migration into regions of the world where both high and low-technology jobs are plentiful (Triandis, 1995; Chen & Eastman, 1997). The sea change in the demographic composition of the workforce places significant demands on an organization’s ability to succeed in a globalized climate. These trends have created the need for diversity research within an organizational context.

Studies about diversity and diversity theory construction remain a fairly young area of academic inquiry (Ragins, 1995). The publication of *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, cited in Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997), provided executives of all industries the first glimpse of how demographic changes were poised to reshape the workforce. Yet in slightly more than a decade research exists that discusses various aspects of diversity such as the influence of diversity management on organizational effectiveness (Chemers, Castanzo, & Oskamp, 1995); diversity as a civic culture for multicultural organizations (Chen & Eastman, 1997); the interplay between the dimension of culture on race, gender, and ethnicity (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Varona, 1996; Wood, 1994); the pursuit of person-organization fit and diversity (Powell, 1998); and diversity, power, and mentorship in organizations (Ragins, 1995). Few studies have exclusively focused on the intersection of culturally-specific values on race, gender, and ethnicity. One study (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997) researched culturally-specific values and the influence of the values on the communication paradigms of five distinct cultural groups: African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, white females and white males.

A large portion of the existing literature on diversity is culled from the fields ³¹ of social psychology, organizational psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Guzzo & Salas, 1995). Mumby (1993) argues that within the field of organizational communication much research has “suffered from the slings and arrows of those who saw it as an atheoretical, method-driven domain of study” with its emphasis upon empirical research (p. 19). The research of Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) integrates the existing studies and disciplines, and moves the focus on diversity *toward* communication and its effects upon people of different races, ethnicities, gender, and age cohorts within an organizational context. Within this framework, they advance the notion of a “cultural communication paradigm” to assist co-workers communicate effectively within a diverse workplace.

Cultural Communication Paradigm: A Kikoski and Kikoski Perspective

As corporate cultures grow increasingly diverse, interpersonal communication skills become central to effective team membership. Most managers and employees lack the ability and skills to be effective communicators. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) assert that interpersonal communication remains “one of the least effective activities of organizational life” (p. 16). They cite culture¹ as a probable stumbling block to effective communication. They concur that few people are truly conscious of the influence culture plays upon verbal and nonverbal communication. Whereas a generation ago the American *corporate* workforce was fairly homogenous, today’s diversity is unraveling the notion of a monolithic corporate culture (Loden & Rosener, 1991, p. xvi). Whereas a generation ago an American *corporate* workforce comprised largely of white males was more likely to follow corporate norms of

1. For the purposes of this study, culture is defined as a pervasive, shared, and unwritten consensus that helps pattern and make predictable the lives of people who interact and achieve together (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997, p. 19).

communication, today's diversity calls for an awareness and respect of how 32
different cultural values influence face-to-face communication (p. 81).

To address these growing tensions, Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) forward the construct of a cultural communication paradigm. A cultural communication paradigm is comprised of "the cultural historical background, the culturally-specific central values, nonverbal communication behaviors and verbal communication behaviors of each major demographic group in the workforce—African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, white females, and white males" (p.xii). Individuals who share commonalities, i.e., gender, ethnicity, culture, tend to communicate more effectively in contrast with individuals who do not share the same commonalities. Therefore, an awareness of culturally-specific values could assist in understanding when communicating across cultures. More important, I believe that only through face-to-face communication that is sensitive to *differing cultural values* can we effectively overcome gender and ethnic stereotypes.

Not surprisingly, central to their research is the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant "white male" communication paradigm. The cultural communication paradigms of the four remaining groups that make up the bulk of the workforce; African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics, and white women, are compared and contrasted with the communication paradigm of white males. It is not the authors' intention to privilege the communication paradigm of this particular group. Yet, historically it has been overwhelmingly represented in the ranks of senior level executives and has dominated American business for much of the past 350 years (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997, p. 56). Therefore, with the roots of this paradigm entrenched in the fabric of this nation long before it was a confederation of colonies, it is essential to gain an understanding of its particulars.

We live in a country whose culture, values, and social institutions have been shaped and influenced primarily by one cultural group: white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997). Cultural anthropologists explain that when writing about American culture, it must be understood within the larger context of American-European culture (Hall & Hall, 1990). Further, despite millions of immigrants who live in the United States and have contributed to its growth, the core culture maintains its roots in northern European Anglo-Saxon culture (pp. 139-140).

The power and influence of this group cannot be ignored—up until the 1950s, 65% of the top executives were of WASP ancestry, while 85% were Protestants (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997). Therefore, it is not surprising that American businesses and management hierarchies reflect the cultural values of this group.

The white male cultural communication paradigm is based around core values of individualism, work, achievement, self-reliance/self-sufficiency, emotional self-control, doing vs. thinking, and privileging pragmatism over theorizing (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997; Hall & Hall, 1990). Although there are an increasing number of executives who are not ethnically WASP, Kikoski and Kiskoski (1997) argue that the WASP influence will remain for years to come due to a) their overall size within the population and representation in management positions and b) of all American subcultures, it remains the most influential group (p. 63).

The WASP cultural values influence the management styles of white males and/or of individuals who reflect the values of white males. Management practices are described as impersonal rules (e.g., competitive); direct communication; avoidance of silence during communication; monochromatic view of time; and preference for verbal over non-verbal communication (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997, p. 68).

Research in the field of linguistics lends credence to the influence of the white male communication paradigm. Tannen (1990) posits that gender communication needs to be viewed as intercultural communication. Throughout her works Tannen argued that same-sex friendships in childhood teach men and women to use different conversational styles, and that these different styles are carried into adulthood. Women's styles tend to focus on taking into account the effect of the exchange on the other and on maintaining the appearance of equality often by downplaying women's own authority. Further, she argued that men's styles tend to focus on ritual opposition and efforts to avoid the "one-down" position. Tannen stressed that neither style is best, and that neither has an advantage relative to interpersonal connections or achieving status. Despite this belief that neither style is better, she acknowledged basic cultural beliefs that view men as superior to women, the reality of power issues inherent in those beliefs, and the limits of communication and understanding of different communication styles in resolving those issues. Her work is based upon research by Gumperz (1982), and Maltz and Borker (1982).

Gumperz (1982) coded and analyzed conversations among British speakers of English, speakers of English from India and Pakistan, and African-American and Caucasian speakers of English from the United States. He demonstrated that people in conversation identified speech activity by means of contextualization cues such as intonation, loudness, pitch, and word selection. He argued that these cues both signalled and created the context in which communication takes place. However, he posited also that people from different cultures used different habits for contextualizing their conversations—meaning they used different ways of signalling *similar* speech activities. Therefore, during intercultural communication the cues were more apt to be misinterpreted or missed altogether.

Maltz and Borker (1982) expanded upon his work. Their research found that males and females learned distinct styles of talk in sex-separate peer groups: during childhood, boys and girls played in *different* cultural environments and developed *different* habits for signalling intentions and understanding. Consequently, the *different* conversational styles of boys and girls are carried into adulthood. In sum, research supports the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male cultural communication paradigm as a force to be reckoned on two fronts: as a communication paradigm comprised around values historically associated with the power elite of this country and as a component of intercultural communication vis-a-vis its female counterpart. This is not to state that every white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male manifests these values. Rather it is to show there exists empirical research within communication studies that has identified various clusters of values. It demonstrates also how researchers have traditionally interpreted the influence of the values upon communication practices.

At this point it must be acknowledged that part of the conceptual framework foundational to this thesis is research based upon values attributed to unique cultural groups. A postmodern stance would argue against universalizing. On an intellectual and affect level I very much agree with this perspective. However, my 15 years tenure in the corporate environment has led me to understand the desire for traditional/empirical research and the necessity of postmodern/interventionist work. The latter takes great pains to contextualize human beings within a sociohistorical period. Therefore, an explanation is required to show how these perspectives can co-contribute to an understanding of an environment as complex as the corporate world of high-technology.

Mumby (1993) asserts that much of the research within organizational communication has a decided emphasis upon empirical (positivistic) research.

Aspects of the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) study fall solidly into the category ³⁶ of empirical research with references to universalizing themes, i.e., cultural values such as family, collectivism, and dignity of the individual. I concur with scholars who argue that research should move beyond universalizing and contextualize issues as they relate to specific sociohistorical events (Lee, Chung, Wang, & Hertel, 1995). Yet, the contribution of traditional empirical research is as building blocks that allow researchers to “repurpose” old knowledge into new ways of understanding, to verbalize the flaws and politics inherent in empirical research.

Last, Flores (1996) acknowledges the benefits of commandeering existing texts: “Reclaiming and sharing insulting texts may have other purposes besides therapy...the activity gives shape and meaning to group experiences... marking the group’s normative boundaries and reconfirming its convictions and commitments” (p. 148). This political tactic is akin to that found within the queer community with its commandeering of the word “queer.” When heterosexuals began to use “queer” as a pejorative term against members of the homosexual community, elements from *within* the community responded by co-opting the word into identity statements such as “we’re queer, and we’re here,” and “queer nation.” The term “queer” now encompasses bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals (D. Akamine, personal communication, December 21, 1998). Within this context of understanding, and inspite of critiques on the Kikoski and Kiskoski (1997) study, my postmodern perspective *builds upon* and *reclaims by redefining* a Eurocentric perspective with my insider knowledge as I move the discourse toward an interpretivist paradigm.

Therefore, empirical research that supports universalizing perspectives, e.g., white male cultural communication paradigm, must open itself to scrutiny from others voices that strive to be recognized. And, as we head into the next century

latinas will play integral roles as decision makers and managers. Not surprisingly, the cultural values central to the latina community do not reflect a direct mapping, or fit, with that of white males. The following sections detail the specifics of the latina cultural communication paradigm. However, prior to discussing the latina communication paradigm there is a need to explain privileging the term "*latina*" over the term "*Hispanic*."

Latina vs. Hispanic: What's "in" a Label?

Kikoski and Kikoski's (1997) research identifies Hispanics as individuals residing in the United States native to or those who can map their geneological roots to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, any one of 17 Latin American Spanish-speaking countries and/or to Spain. Despite the approximately 27 million individuals subsumed under this moniker, what unites this heterogeneous group is their Spanish heritage and common migratory experiences. The authors justify the use of Hispanic since it is the label chiefly used by the Bureau of Census which coined the term in 1978. Yet, in addition to the label *Hispanic*, the authors also acknowledge the existence of two other popular *self-descriptive* terms: *Latina* (*Latino* for male) and *Chicana* (*Chicano* for male). By positing that the label *Latina/o* is used by individuals "somewhat less acculturated to the United States," and the label *Chicana/o* denotes a "sense of militancy" (p. 137), the authors side-step the politics surrounding the use of a government created and imposed term, *Hispanic*. Postmodern research demands that this issue be addressed.

According to Romero (1997), the reduction of Chicanos, Colombians, Costa Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Peruvians, Puerto Ricans, Salvadorans and others to a single category of *Hispanic* has met with resistance. This is due to homogenizing into one amorphous group

issues of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, levels of education, length of residence in the United States, native/non-native born; de-emphasizing each groups' history within the United States; and emphasizing Hispanic (European) culture at the expense of African and indigenous groups.

Other latina/o scholars of the critical theorist generation posit that only by negating the diversity and scope of the *latina/o* population can individuals be lumped together as Hispanics (Hernandez-Truyol, 1998). Saragoza, Juarez, Valenzuela, and Gonzalez (1998) argue that the term *Hispanic* is problematic "given its peculiar history and the complex patterns of racism and prejudice against that group in the United States" (p. 44). Oboler (1995) argues that central to the creation and use of *any* ethnic label are the surrounding politics and the state's financial support (or lack thereof) based on the use of the label (p. xv), while Stavans (1995) attempts to place individuals along a continuum, arguing that *Hispanic* is used in conservative circles and *latina/o* by more liberal-leaning individuals.

Within these arguments on race, ethnicity, class, and gender, I support the argument for the term *latina* by rhetorical scholar, Dolores Tanno (1997). She writes that ethnic consciousness is (re)formed in several ways: symbolic themes (shared rituals, practices, common language(s)); historical consciousness (the histories of the United States and the history of individual ethnic groups pre-United States); social consciousness (cultural connectedness, a sense, a feeling of membership in an inclusive cultural community); and strategic consciousness (a conscious acceptance of membership into a smaller, exclusive group that signals "political becoming"). Within this continuum, *latina* is constructed as a statement of social consciousness. It is also a political act of empowerment from within *la comunidad*, not a resigned acceptance to a label imposed by the government. It is

in this space that I position myself and privilege the use of *latina* instead of *Hispanic*. Therefore for the purpose of this thesis, the focus will center on the *latina* cultural communication paradigm. 39

Latina Cultural Communication Paradigm

Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that foundational to the latina cultural communication paradigm are the values of family (collective interdependence), the dignity of the individual, acknowledgment of hierarchy, collectivism, affiliation, and non-verbal communication (p. 141). The latinas' communication paradigm also is influenced by the construct of *marianismo*, which has traditionally defined the latina's gender role as daughter, wife, and mother (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997). However, as more latinas enter the workforce and/or increase their acculturation levels, they embrace new roles and identities beyond what many Latin patriarchal-based societies have allowed in the past.

According to the authors, the latina cultural communication paradigm is characterized by indirect, tactful, but courteous interaction typified by more physical touching than is present within the white male communication paradigm. It favors the delivery of pleasant over negative information, and places a high emphasis on the relationship at hand or on the collective needs of the group. Also, it foregrounds the importance of hierarchy such as age and gender, and tends to display the use of two "voices;" a public voice for formal functions and a private voice for informal functions with family and friends.

Other research exists that supports different aspects of the latinas' cultural communication paradigm. Gomez and Fassinger (1994) state that depending upon level of acculturation, acculturation successfully predicted three achieving styles

for latinas. The achieving styles were categorized as contributory-relational (achievement by contributing to anothers' task); social-instrumental (achievement by using networks of relationships); and entrusting-instrumental (achievement by delegating responsibilities to others to achieve on their own behalf (p. 205). They argue also that latinas with a positive sense of ethnic identity reported a positive view of the contributory-relational achievement style (p. 211). Further, latinas' preference for contributory-relational and entrusting-instrumental achievement styles supported cultural norms of contributing to the achievement of others and entrusting their achievement to others (p. 213). Last, Ferdman and Cortes (1992) reported that as managers, latinas and their male counterparts were more likely than Caucasians to make time to nurture relationships in- and outside of the office; be sensitive to the needs of the relationships of the individuals in their office environment; and show a preference for a collaborative style of leadership.

In sum, these findings consistently describe values relative to the latina community and how the values influence their cultural communication paradigm. This is not to state that every latina manifests these values. Rather it is to show there exists empirical research within communication studies that has identified various clusters of values. It demonstrates also how researchers have traditionally interpreted the influence of the values upon communication practices.

Unfortunately, information regarding cultural communication paradigms, whether that of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males or latinas, addresses merely the "What is" factor. To gain an understanding of how both cultural communication paradigms can co-create social worlds, it is necessary to study the "fit" between cultural communication paradigm and "order of talk." This will be discussed in the following section detailing the more salient points of the

rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism, or the construct known as “order of talk.”

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Order of Talk: A Rhetorical-Responsive Version of the Social Construction of Knowledge

As a child I would sit at the dinner table and read aloud from my *Little Golden Book* series of books for children. Most of the time I was kept company by my father who read the *San Jose Mercury News* every evening once the noise of washing and putting away the dinner dishes had subsided. To this day I still can hear his commentaries as he engaged in animated conversation with the newspaper editorials and/or articles. Often he would remove his reading glasses, wave the rolled newspaper in the air and exclaim “If only I knew how to talk well, if I could speak like an educated man, I would write to the paper and tell them so and so...”. Then his voice would trail off and he’d resume reading the paper. Invariably, my response which was based on the totality of my five years of age, would be “But *Papi*, you are talking!” Now, three decades later, five years of which have been spent in graduate school, I realize that my father was verbalizing his understanding of the “order of talk” construct.

“Order of talk” (Shotter, 1993) refers to how a) we develop and foster ways of relating to each other *through our talk* and b) how from within these different ways of talking with one another, we *co-create social worlds* out of the situation. Central to his framework is that an order of talk exists and is entrenched in all social institutions, including higher education, to the exclusion of other less powerful ways of talking. Order of talk, therefore, is a part of one’s “social competence as an adult” (p. 4) as we navigate our way through our social worlds. He acknowledges also that different ways of talking must be recognized as equally

valid but that problems arise when connecting new orders of talk with an established order of talk.

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He asserts that despite our everyday efforts, much of what we say in conversation is not understood. Shared understandings arise only when we check and recheck each other's comments. Accordingly, order of talk is not a theory. He sets as primary the conversations that surround our everyday lives. Therefore, we should not focus our studies on how we talk to one another about the objects and entities in our lives. What should be primary, he argues, is how people first create, then foster ways of understanding one another through their talk. Neither is he concerned so much with the conclusions reached through conversation. What he does valorize are the terms in which we construct new arguments and thereby construct new social worlds (Shotter, 1993, p. 9). Once we understand how to relate to one another through our talk is when we begin to create sense-making from our new ways of being in our surroundings.

At the heart of the order of talk framework is a perspective steeped in the social construction of knowledge. The social construction of knowledge states that we construct our social worlds through the continuous flow of communication between human beings (Pearce, 1994). A social approach to the understanding of communication is a needed alternative to the traditional methodology of empiricist social science (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995). Shotter (1993) does not valorize empirical studies that support the existence of overarching models of communication. He argues that empiricist social science strips conversations of social, historical, and psychological contextual meanings of difference. Order of talk focuses upon events occurring between people in conversations and upon the processes and products of communication. It is within this intersection of "words in their speaking" and *not* the "already spoken words" (Shotter, 1993, p. 6) that he positions the order of talk

framework. He argues that his framework is *rhetorical* since “talk” can effect people to move forward or take action; it is *responsive* in that a speaker’s comments are directed in response to an Other. In this manner each of us in conversation checks and tests the talk, meaning, and sense-making of the other. The result of this dialogical process is the construction of different social worlds.

This position parallels arguments set forth by Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) that one of the best ways to promote inclusion is to create a new “order of talk;” a new way of communicating with each other that does not privilege the voice of any particular and powerful cultural group. They claim that due to the overwhelming presence of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males within management, white males have established their own “order of talk” which until now has decided the appropriate “fit” of an individual to hold a management position (p. 14).

Appropriate management fit has been an issue since Barnard (1968) released a guide to management entitled *The Functions of the Executive*. The book has remained popular reading for university level management seminars. The popularity of his teachings on appropriate fit for management are so entrenched that annual business conferences are held to discuss his management practices. Issues related to appropriate management “fit” are authority, executive morals, responsibility, formal and informal organizations, organizational purpose, and decision-making as fundamental to the understanding of human behavior within an organizational setting.

Yet, as we push toward the millennium, women and other ethnic groups are redefining the parameters of appropriate “fit”; in particular the prerequisites for management positions. And, as Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) argue, part of the redefinition of “fit” will be to develop a new common “order of talk” that enables us to know each other beyond stereotypes so that we mutually understand and

respect one another (p. 15). Not surprisingly, the Shotter framework is very 44
much in keeping with tenets of postmodernity. The new orders of talk will arise from
different people in different positions, at different moments in time living their
different realities all attempting to create sense-making and new social worlds from
their conversations (Shotter, 1993, p. 17). Giroux (1995) acknowledges that
conservative and liberal thinkers are alarmed by emerging claims to difference.
The differences are viewed as threats to a national American identity. Yet, he
posits that differences help to destabilize the *status quo* in terms of institutions,
histories, languages and theories of pedagogy. By openly challenging institutions,
racist, sexist, and hierarchical underpinnings are exposed that marginalize people
into the Other.

The Shotter (1993) order of talk challenges the politics within established orders
of talk. It dovetails with the goals set by the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) cultural
communication paradigm: the creation of a new order of talk that reflects the gender,
racial, and ethnic components enabling us to move forward in the diverse social
worlds present in today's workplace.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, power to retell it, to rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts.”

*Salman Rushdie:
Vein of Gold: A Journey to
your Creative Heart*

Participatory Research

According to Deshler and Ewert (1995) the term “participatory action research” is an umbrella term that includes several traditions of theory and practice. A myriad of other terms also describe this methodology: action inquiry, action research, collaborative inquiry, cooperative inquiry, participatory inquiry, participatory research, and praxis research. Participatory research (PR) approaches have been used successfully in several different arenas: community development; evaluation; farmer and technology generation; organizations; and schools. Of these five areas, the PR methodology used for my graduate research project has been most used in community development. Therefore, the research and writings of Ada and Beutel (1993); Hoglund-Kettmann (1997); Maguire (1987, 1996); and Varona (1996) played a role in informing the methodology of this project.

The very words that identify the umbrella term “participation,” “action,” “research” represent a social construct (Deshler & Ewert, 1995). The word “participation/participatory” represents a grass-roots alternative for social science research. PR privileges as equals all co-participants: practitioners,

community members, citizens, employees, and volunteers as vital to the creation of practical knowledge regarding the issue under discussion. The word “action” foregrounds the research as contributing directly to transformation on the part of the co-participants in specific situations. Last, the term “research” refers to (in theory) a systematic effort to generate knowledge; practical, useful knowledge accessible to all co-participants involved in the project. Of equal importance is that the new knowledge(s) focus on specific change that has been identified, negotiated, and agreed upon by the co-participants in the project, in specific, often unique, situations.

Participatory Research as an Act of Empowerment

Social justice, worldwide transformation, and emancipation are words no longer in vogue within governments that lead us to the 21st century. Nowadays we are more likely to hear President Clinton’s intonation of American’s “social responsibility” or hear the Republicans speak of “compassionate conservatism” instead of a call to social action as was heard during the civil rights and social movement decades of the 1960s and 1970s. And yet, the heart-felt desire to bring about critical awareness, transformation, and emancipation, whether personal and/or community-based, continues in pockets of resistance around the world and here in the United States. There are those who would smirk at the use of “pockets of resistance” as mere hyperbole. But, we live in a society that seeks to shape each of us to *become* like everyone else. By consciously creating the context of our lives and our surroundings, asserting ourselves as *thinking* human beings with valid lived experiences, we contribute to the betterment of our collective future(s). This is the promise of PR.

Premised on the belief that knowledge and the *construction of new knowledge* should not be co-opted by a privileged educated elite, PR is a search for knowledge as a path for bringing about social action and emancipation (Ada & Beutel, 1993). PR has roots deep in Latin American communities, strongly influenced by concepts such as critical thinking, critical consciousness, conscientization, and empowerment as discussed by Paulo Freire during the late 1960s (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997). It was during the 1960s that Freire led a hugely successful education-based campaign that brought literacy to thousands of illiterate Brazilian peasants. And, through the power and knowledge that comes from reading and writing, formerly voiceless and marginalized peoples found that “to say the right word is to change the world” (Freire, as quoted in Ada & Buettel, 1993, p. 3).

Not surprisingly, many scholars and researchers within the various feminisms camps have found PR the best available methodology for research with women whose voices have heretofore been silenced, marginalized, or both (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997; Maguire, 1987, 1996; Varona, 1996). Maguire (1987, 1996) points out quite rightly that although PR purports to liberate all human voices, women’s voices and concerns have not always received an equitable amount of attention from the early group of predominantly male theorists and practitioners. She writes that “gender was rendered invisible by supposedly inclusive terms such as the people, the oppressed, the campesinos, or simply the community...in many cases “the community” was actually only the male community” (1996, p. 111).

And yet, Maguire (1987, 1996) and Hoglund-Kettmann (1997) present only an obligatory nod toward issues concerning women-of-color from the feminists camps. Only Varona (1996) addressed this issue satisfactorily. And, because it constitutes such a large part of my social identity, as a latina *and* a feminist, it created an emotional

response in my soul. The emotion was not of anger (i.e., why did it take so long 48 to find another brown woman and scholar that felt and voiced herself in such a similar fashion)? Nor was it a sense of exhilaration (there are only a handful of latina scholars being published in the field of communication studies, I foresee the road ahead to be, at times, quite lonely).

The feelings represented the knowingness there existed at least one other latina scholar in the United States that I have met who has struggled with similar issues and realized that our brown-skin perspectives were not necessarily understood or welcomed by the middle-class Anglo feminists (Varona, 1996, p. 143). This position was demonstrated several times during the past year.

For example, a long-time friend has offered women's spirituality classes in the San Francisco Bay Area for several years. I met her almost 8 years ago during a six week course where, along with the other exclusively female participants, and the only latina, we learned of Greco/Roman/Celtic goddess cultures and practiced their rituals and traditions. With the exception of Pele, the goddess of fire, not one dark-skinned goddess was discussed. During a recent conversation on the status of my research, she and I hotly discussed my decision to privilege the word "latina" over her preference for the term "Hispanic." She viewed the word "Hispanic" as the more politically-correct linguistic term that could not be co-opted by males and was thereby more acceptable to feminists (personal journal, September 8, 1998). My objections to "Hispanic" as a term imposed by the U.S. government with too close associations to "Hispano" (referring to the Spaniards from New Mexico who discriminated against Mexicans and Mexican-Americans) were considered peripheral to the overall feminist cause.

Another friend in a graduate program in counseling psychology at Santa Clara University recently confided that she finds it hard to accept that I place myself

alongside the latinas in my study because “I see you as an educated Italian or 49
Middle Eastern woman, not as a latina, not like the women that work at the
[family-owned] machine shop” (personal journal, December 22, 1998). These are
both loving, highly-educated, intelligent women who have provided much
support throughout our friendships. And yet, they do not realize how their
white, middle-class status skews their standpoint perspectives of feminism, and
of how my feminisms perspective is different as a result of my brown skin and
mestiza features.

Therefore, I take very seriously the advice given to bell hooks (1997), the
African-American scholar and poet, by her one-time mentor and lover “If you
want to read books that focus on black women, *you* better start writing and keep
writing” [italics mine] (p. 99). To this end, my writings are so that other latinas can
read of insider community research on diversity and use the information as it best
meets their individual needs. I appreciate the fact that Varona (1996) through her
research and writing, as well as Anzaldua (1990), Castillo (1995), Tanno (1997),
Mirande and Tanno (1993), and Flores (1996), undoubtedly marginalized due to
their gender, class, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation, have helped pave the way
for us as we struggle with our own research and desire to be published.

Admittedly, not all of these latina scholars write or teach within the field of
communication studies. For example, Lucia Varona, born and raised in
Guatemala, is a Spanish professor at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara,
California. She conducted a PR study on cultural stereotypes and their impact on
Hispanic college students. I could *feel* her frustration as she struggled to write in
the language of the academy and build her scholarly arguments throughout the
dissertation. Similarly, when some co-participants in her study reflected upon
how they felt not belonging to American culture because they were not white, nor

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did they feel completely accepted in Hispanic circles because as native-born Americans they were not fluent in the Spanish language, I *knew* how they felt for I lived the experience, too. Therefore, Dr. Varona's PR study, while not primary as a communications studies resource, helped to guide my PR study and allowed me to learn of other latinas' similar struggles within an academic setting.

The work of Anzaldua (1990), a chicana, tejana, lesbian-feminist poet, provided many thoughtful insights into how other women-of-color expressed their lived experiences and how these women came to voice. *Hacienda Caras* (making faces/making masks) is not a primary communication studies resource, per se. However, it opened a space to discuss some of the ways that women-of-color expressed their perspectives and resistance, i.e., through poetry, narrative, and scholarly papers. An entire section discussed how women-of-color argue for their methods of theory construction and use their lived experience to speak as subjects rather than objects. Anzaldua's metaphor of the mask emerged as central during the writing of the thesis. During the past year I encountered the mask I wear as a good corporate citizen for a high-tech company. The company's diversity efforts are weak at best. But my office mask has allowed me to experience and critique first-hand how the company professes diversity on the one hand and practices subtle discrimination on the other hand. Therefore, by combining my lived experience with the awareness gained from researching and writing the thesis, I can become a force for change from *within* the organization.

Writings by Tanno (1997) and Flores (1996) provided interesting discussions on the terms they chose by which to self-identify, i.e., chicana, latina, Hispanic, etc. Although I identify more closely with the rhetorical arguments for self-labeling as discussed by Tanno (1997), the arguments by Flores (1996), a chicana, of establishing a homeland in the border are not lost to me. It was also a pleasure

to read their writings since they both work as professors within the field of 51
communication studies. At the beginning of the thesis project, it became
absolutely essential that I not only read some of their works, but also that I speak
with both women. During the course of our conversations (October 28, 1998, and
February 18, 1999, respectively), I was intrigued that both women acknowledged
using different labels (*latina*, *chicana*) in different social situations. The
conversation with Dr. Tanno provided an awkward moment when she
complimented my “wonderful articulation.” In past conversations with *latinas*
from various countries, such coded phrases have usually led to discussions of
“how/why did you lose your accent;” tension-filled conversations on who is
more authentically “ethnic.” When it became evident that we were both English
dominant, the conversation shifted smoothly to my questions of how she felt as a
latina/chicana scholar working within a predominantly white communication
studies field. In the discussion with Dr. Flores, we discussed her privileging of
“*chicana*” over “*latina*.” When I informed Dr. Flores that my parent’s generation
considered *chicana/o* a pejorative term, one of the main reasons I do not feel
comfortable with the term, she quietly admitted that her parents held similar
views. It was a relief to find commonalities with two *latina/chicana* scholars
working within the communication discourse. Each of these feminists in their
unique ways enriched the research process of the past year.

Therefore, research combining the goals of emancipatory knowledge,
influenced by a *latina* feminisms perspective seemed best suited for this thesis
project. By reflecting upon feelings, observations, and experiences shared through
face-to-face dialogues and transcripts, the *latinas’* awareness of diversity was
foreground. It was hoped that by understanding the larger picture of the

surrounding milieu, they would take social action to improve the workplace diversity or invest in themselves and move beyond their current situation. 52

A Participatory Research Process

Participatory research is as much a methodology as it is a process. Various researchers have written about its strengths as an alternative methodology to positivist-based social science research (Ada & Beutel, 1993; Deshler & Ewert, 1995; Kieffer, 1981; Park, 1989; Reason, 1994). Yet, this is a type of research that privileges co-participants as creators of knowledge. Within this perspective, researcher/writers (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997, Maguire, 1996; Varona, 1996) accept that *contextualizing* the project may slightly influence the overall process. This said, what follows is an outline description for conducting a participatory research project.

The process begins first with a problem that has been identified from *within* a specific, and often unique, community. Often the community residents have been systematically excluded from having a voice or interaction with the academic, political, and power elites of society (Park, 1989). Once the problem has been identified and defined, the researcher/co-participant should learn “about the community and its members historically and sociologically” from available resources (p. 9). Further, he posits that researchers who are members of the community, (such as myself), will find this phase a more natural transition in contrast with researchers who are not members of the co-participants’ community. Insider research premised on *similar* lived experience and a *heartfelt alliance* with the co-participants is necessary to foster a communicative rapport that can be loving, trusting, yet critical (Hoglund-Kettmann, 1997, p. 40).

The next step focuses upon tentative questions for guiding the dialogue(s). 53

The incorporation of four phases of critical pedagogy influenced the construction of the Guide for Dialogue (Ada, Beutel, & Peterson, 1990). The four phases are: descriptive (receiving the information); personal interpretive (analyzing the information from one's feelings and emotions); critical (reflection and analysis); and creative (action) (p. 4). Inherent at this stage is the understanding by the co-participants that they may revise the questions as needed. Additionally, the researcher/co-participant must remain vigilant that the focus of the project is a deeper understanding of an issue that can lead to social action for the community, *not* to collect information to support and/or not support a pet hypothesis.

The process then advances to the researcher/co-participant and the co-participants engaging in face-to-face dialogue. Park (1989) describes this phase as simultaneously a process of recovery and discovery because through dialoguing and reflecting the co-participants "...maintain their collective identity, express their feelings, and affirm their connectedness" (p. 17). Additionally, he argues that PR serves to counteract the hegemony of a dominant culture that marginalizes the lived experience of those outside the academic, political, and power elite spheres.

Through the ebb and flow of dialogue, the co-participants express their feelings and voice the realities that influence their lives, either positively or negatively. Via a continuous process of dialogue and reflection, the co-participants (including the researcher/co-participant) hopefully gain a deeper understanding and heightened awareness of the problem that leads to sense-making and social constructions of new knowledge. As Deshler and Ewert (1995) argue, the primary purpose of the socially constructed knowledge is to generate power, and power is central to social change which leads to a more just society.

Throughout the process the researcher/co-participant keeps notes on the 54 evolution of the project, personal interactions with the co-participants as well as observations of non-verbal behaviors during face-to-face dialogues, minor victories and setbacks, shared frustrations, moments of excitement on new possibilities, etc. Co-participants also are encouraged to keep journals in which they reflect upon feelings, insights, suggestions for changes to the questions, examples of personal change as a result of participating in the project, or feelings of frustration in the face of *named* oppressors.

The taped conversations are transcribed verbatim, as close as possible to the actual day of the dialogue. Print-outs of the transcripts are delivered to the co-participants which allow them to reflect upon their feelings and ideas, and to edit the text as they deem necessary. The task of the researcher/co-participant is to analyze the transcripts for emergent themes. Park (1989) advocates that qualitative data should be allowed to “speak for themselves as manifestations of different aspects of the problem” (p. 14). Ada and Beutel (1993) suggest that analysis of the data proceed by making multiple copies of the transcripts, followed by color-coding of generative themes. A generative theme is defined as an idea or concern that appears frequently in the text (p. 110). During proceeding dialogue sessions the intent is to reflect upon identified generative themes, further probe the problem by questions influenced by the identified generative themes, and the social construction of new knowledges. By combining problem posing and problem solving within a community-based analysis and critique of the identified problem, PR has provided a forum for oppressed, marginalized people to move in solidarity and engage in collective action that can lead to a more just society.

Finding co-participants for this research project was problematic. As I explained at the outset of this chapter, the genesis for this research stemmed from reading a required text on workplace diversity. For the past 15 years or so, my workplace of choice has been the environment of high-technology. Currently, I work in the high-technology culture of a major semiconductor design and manufacturing company located in Silicon Valley. Through various professional and personal interest networking groups, I've met only a handful of latinas who are also employed within this very stimulating, exciting, but at times frustrating workplace environment.

One of the five co-participants is a colleague, one co-participant is a former colleague, and three co-participants are members of a poetry group studying the works of latina/o poets. Part of the problem in recruiting latinas with experience in high-technology workplace environments is there simply is not a "critical mass" in terms of representation. Whether or not this low representation of latinas within the field of high-technology is due to 1) a sense that we simply aren't welcomed in this largely Anglo, male-dominated, middle class environment or 2) lack of educational achievement that hampers our entry into an information-driven/computer-based industry were issues that hopefully the co-participants would address. A second challenge emerged when some potential co-participants accepted promotions within their respective companies that "proved" to them that diversity existed within their organization. These latinas declined to participate. Another, supportive of my educational goals for quite some time, eventually declined to participate. She feared that she would be identified via her experiences and could then be terminated.

As each latina expressed an interest, we discussed PR and the time required from their already too-busy schedules. Each woman was asked to “name” herself via a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality in the study. They were asked also to keep a journal. The co-participants kept in regular contact between dialogues via telephone conversations, voicemail and email. It was obvious that these three modes offered them greater flexibility than writing their thoughts in a separate journal. All input from these various modes of contact were typed or recorded in my private journal. This information plus excerpts from the transcribed texts served as a basis for the generative theme analysis. Last, a minimum of demographic information was collected to flesh out unique composite sketches of each woman. The conversations generated by our disagreements with the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) study provided the information for our initial dialogue questions.

Questions to Guide the Initial Dialogue

1. As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your “order of talk” when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?
2. As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?
3. As a latina, how do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?
4. As a latina what would you do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?

Questions to Guide the Second Dialogue

During this phase some co-participants suggested refinements to Second Dialogue phase questions. This was not a surprise since by the time we met for one-on-one talks, each of the co-participants had read, edited, and reflected upon their typed transcripts for weeks. Therefore, second dialogue questions varied

between co-participants depending on what she felt most important to her workplace reality and her overall emotional response to the transcripts. 57

One woman selected a particular theme from the transcript and gave voluminous examples, others spoke about the emotional response of seeing their “talk and feelings” reflected back via the transcript. One woman found it difficult to accept that she had actually withstood so much hostility from a former manager, but yet, through her own words she relived her own reality. Except for one co-participant, the remaining four women indicated that upon reflection of the text, they had a better understanding of why other latinas might shun the high-technology environment. Last, none of the women recorded information in a journal, choosing instead to keep in touch via numerous telephone conversations, voicemail and email.

The following were common questions asked during the second dialogue:

1. I realize that I show a lot of team skills—then why is my credibility questioned? Why do I have to constantly prove my worth to the company?
2. My manager looks at me differently, (speaks/treats me differently), than my co-workers. Why? Am I that different or that foreign looking?
3. Why are we so invisible within corporate cultures?
4. What could the company do to create a more sensitive workplace for ethnic diversity? Do we have ethnic diversity?
5. Do we have a mission, vision, value statement to help co-create diversity?

The Dialogue Format

The initial dialogue with three co-participants was conducted in one-on-one sessions. Two of the latinas, employed at the same company and very close friends, requested to be interviewed at the same time. They were comfortable knowing each would hear the other’s responses, so I honored their request.

All dialogues were tape recorded and locations for the dialogues varied 58 from individual homes, restaurants, and cafes. One latina asked to be interviewed at my house saying that she found it a very peaceful place to chat. The dialogues were recorded between September through December of 1998, at a day and time convenient for each co-participant. Several of the dialogue sessions were cancelled on numerous occasions due to schedule conflicts and/or family matters. Each dialogue session lasted a minimum of one hour. The session where two co-participants were interviewed on the same day lasted almost four hours. It is interesting to note that all the dialogues were prefaced by "breaking of bread," meaning, I volunteered to provide snacks and drinks for the dialogue sessions and my offers were accepted. Several of the dialogues took place during dinner-time conversations at which time I picked up the dining tab. The one exception was a co-participant who had been coaxing me to drink a *bebida de Mexico* at a restaurant near her place of employment. She treated me to a corn-based sweetened juice which I found interesting but decidedly different from my standard fare of Diet Coca-Cola.

Our "pre-warm up" phase of the first dialogue consisted of eating snacks along with soft drinks, swapping stories about personal activities, and simply enjoying each others company. Each latina then talked a bit about herself, her personal interests, her present day career and comments about participating in the project. We then proceeded to the actual dialogue session where a large part of the discussion focused on how they felt as one of the few "different faces" in a predominantly Anglo environment. At first, each had difficulty relating actual events and/or experiences on how ethnicity shaped their perception of workplace diversity. Eventually comments such as "God, you know what;" "I never realized that...;" "you know, I just remembered something..." or facial expressions that

revealed an “aha” moment of revelation became common. Last, each commented on how their latina-ness directly shaped their perceptions of workplace diversity.

Each tape was transcribed word for word by the researcher/co-participant. The transcription time averaged 5-6 hours per tape and generated on average 20 pages of double-spaced text. The printed transcripts were delivered in sealed envelopes within sealed envelopes. Each latina was asked to read, edit, alter, clarify, remove text as she deemed necessary to express her reality. They also were asked to keep journals or jot down notes on additional comments, images, dreams, conversations that might arise as they reflected upon the dialogue.

The second dialogue session was less structured since not all the latinas expressed similar themes. Unique themes as expressed during the first session were used as a basis for questions in their second dialogue. Although most of the co-participants indicated little time to meet as a group, a few of them expressed curiosity about comments and feelings of the other women. This led to suggestions for a group meeting in January or February of 1999 once the hectic pace of the holiday season was laid to rest. The women also were asked to comment on whether or not PR helped their own sense-making and understanding of their social worlds in the workplace.

The second set of tapes were transcribed and returned to the women for their editing, clarification, and reflection. Some of the women asked for face-to-face interaction for follow-up while two of the women preferred to conduct follow-up via telephone conversations.

The questions guided the dialogues to four major themes regarding team membership (collectivism, acknowledgment of hierarchy, non-verbal communication); perceptions of being the one or one of the few latinas in a high technology culture workforce; a desire for recognition of the skills they bring to the workplace; and constructing diversity in the workplace.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Each of the tapes was transcribed word for word exactly as the dialogue occurred, without cleanup of the text for grammatical correctness. Once the initial transcript was completed, the entire transcript was read while re-listening to the tape. Two copies were printed of each transcript: one for the co-participant and a copy for the researcher/co-participant. The co-participant read the text for corrections, clarification, or deletion of text she no longer felt comfortable sharing with the public.

As the researcher/co-participant, I made a decision to allow a minimum of one day between the typing phase and commencement of the *first* reading. Each transcript was read a minimum of five times, with one reading done out loud. Subsequent readings elicited comments that were written along the margins and/or recorded for follow-up clarification. After the fifth reading, large white newsprint sheets were taped on the living room walls. Transcripts with similarly highlighted themes were taped on or near the newsprint sheet. Whenever I noticed that three or more pages of transcripts were taped on a sheet of newsprint, I stopped to assess the commonalities and tentatively label the emerging theme. For instance, each co-participant shared how it felt to be the one or one of the few latinas in the organization. During individual dialogue sessions, I was not conscious of this as an emerging theme. Yet, after reading the 120+

pages of transcripts, it became evident that each of the co-participants was keenly aware of her “Otherness” relative to the males (predominantly Cacaasian and Asian-American/Asian) and females (predominantly Cacaasian and Asian-American/Asian). This process of taping similarly coded themes in clusters allowed the transcripts to “speak for themselves” instead of adhering to a conscious political agenda. Each reading of the transcript revealed unique generative themes, supporting statements or entire passages of text as supporting statements. The generative themes will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Profiles of the Co-Participants

The following profiles are offered as a way to contextualize the lived experience and social realities of the five latina co-participants. Each co-participant selected her own pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Delia, of Mexican-American ancestry, is assistant to the vice-president of a multi-media division for an off-shore corporation. Her boss reports directly to the president of the company located in Singapore. Not only does this reporting structure allow Delia to avoid a hierarchy emblematic of most U.S. corporations, it also enables her to work in an environment more conducive to diversity.

Delia is a relatively recent transplant to Northern California. She was born, raised, educated, married, and raised her two children in Southern California. By her own admission, she experienced a fairly comfortable upbringing—she had a piano and was enrolled in piano lessons, was enrolled in modeling school, her family was the first family in an all middle-class Anglo neighborhood to own a television, and her wardrobe was “second to none in my all Anglo high school.” However, she stressed constantly that her life-style was the result of a hard-working father whose gnarled and burnt hands attested to his “blue collar

background but with middle class sensibilities.” She enjoys literature and is 62 one of the co-founders of a San Francisco bay area poetry group based on the works of Pablo Neruda. The poetry group, mainly comprised of women and a sprinkling of men, has performed a number of “poetry readings as performing art” events well received by the larger public. These performance venues have enabled her to share with others her passion for fine wines, international cuisine, flamenco inspired-world music with people from different cultures and members of the local *literati*. In addition to her love of Neruda’s poetry, she is well versed in poetry and plays by Shakespeare and has performed various passages from Shakespeare’s plays in her drama classes. In summary, Delia’s dignified and diplomatic demeanor, coupled with her love of the arts, people, and events with an international flair, attest to her cosmopolitan outlook, a necessary component for survival in the diversity of the coming years.

From her current vantage point Delia acknowledges company wide diversity as manifested in a workforce predominantly Anglo, Chinese, and Filipino. She also does not foresee a major shift in hiring a large number of latinas/os. To this end she is currently a member of a community-based forum of men and women working toward understanding race relations and removing barriers between cultural groups. We encountered one another at the forum the day following our initial dialogue session. “I spoke out,” she said “I shared my story with the group” (personal journal, October 18, 1998). She lives in a serene, wooded community in the foothills of Saratoga and maintains rental property in Southern California.

Betty, also of Mexican-American heritage, is a secretary in one of the largest submicron facilities located in California. For the past two years this facility has produced computer chips 24 hours a day to meet the exploding demands of

technology in our everyday lives. Within this context, she works alongside 63
some of the most gifted minds in the technology industry, engineers continuously
designing and testing faster and smaller chips, and engineers maintaining the
equipment producing the micro-sized, but delicate, chips.

Currently, she is in the throes of deciding where to invest her energies now
that both children are out of the house. Betty prides herself, and rightly so, that
despite an incomplete high school education and the endless demands of single
motherhood, she has proven to be an apt on-the-job “pupil” and valuable point-
of-contact resource person for her colleagues.

From her vantage point Betty believes that sensitivity to diversity is basically
asked *from her* for the non-native Asian engineers who make up the bulk of the
workforce along with the engineers of Caucasian ancestry. She reports to two
bosses and therefore navigates between two work teams. The number of
employees in her two workgroups total slightly over 40+ individuals, yet, only
two latinas are employed. As of January, 1999, she is sorting through continuing
education catalogs and on-site training programs to prepare for a new career. She
credits the desire to “invest in myself” a direct outgrowth of participating in this
project, referring to the PR process as “an omen that really caused me to think and
realize what I DON’T want in life, so I have to create a new life” (personal journal
January 8, 1999). She lives in San Jose, enjoys music, reading, the luxury of living
alone, and visiting with her two sons and grandchildren.

Melanese is manager of Corporate Security for a semiconductor design and
manufacturing company in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her parents migrated
from Mexico to Texas when she was five years of age. Although they did not have
any formal education, they instilled in their children the importance of education,
hard work, and establishing professional and personal goals. One of her most

personal and vivid experiences is of her father working in his garden when they lived on a farm. She recalled that he was picking tomatoes to provide sustenance for the family, and in an equally vivid manner, she recalled the owner of the farm driving a white Cadillac, and stopping to converse with her father. The image of her father as a humble, hardworking, and good provider for the family has been a constant inspiration for Melanese. It came as no surprise, therefore, that in spite of a local social tradition to marry upon high school graduation, Melanese wanted to attend college and did so with full support of her parents. She received an undergraduate degree in psychology at a private Catholic university in Texas. 64

From her current vantage point, Melanese is very optimistic about diversity in the workplace. She is the first to admit, however, that it is more prevalent within her own department than in the larger corporate environment. Yet, she does see positive change on the horizon. She is an outdoor enthusiast and enjoys tennis, exercising, jogging, and camping. During her more private times, she enjoys fine wine, cooking, reading, and spending time with her husband and son.

Tina is of Mexican-American descent and is a 12-year veteran of high-technology corporate culture. Currently, she is employed as an HR representative for a fast-growing networking start-up company located in Mountain View, California. Prior to this, she was employed as an HR assistant for a recruitment firm based in Palo Alto, California. She left the position when it became evident that the company was recruiting illegal but highly educated immigrants with computer and technical skills from Asian and Southeast Asian countries to work for top dollar contract wages within Silicon Valley engineering job shops. Due to the divisive rhetoric from conservatives columnists such as Patrick Buchanan and California governor, Pete Wilson, on the issue of illegal immigration from

Mexico/Central and South America, Tina found the hypocrisy of this company particularly galling and left within less than seven weeks.

During the past 12 years Tina has journeyed far from her position as an order entry clerk. She developed software skills and worked as a desktop publishing specialist, worked as a PR assistant travelling around the United States setting up tradeshow, to her current position where she assists in the recruitment of highly trained engineers in the competitive field of computer hardware networking. In addition she is gaining on-the-job skills and confidence by setting up 401K investment plans, helping to create the company's affirmative action policies and procedures, and conducting the exit interviews of employees who leave the company.

Tina does not believe that the company values diversity with the exception of highly educated Asian and Southeast Asian engineers. She doesn't believe that affirmative action policies will alter the workplace ethnic make-up since most of its workforce has been hired and the affirmative action policies won't be implemented until early 1999. As of this writing, Tina is studying two job offers as an HR representative and is preparing to give her two week notice. In the meantime, she divides her energies between work and settling down in a newly purchased home with her husband and baby daughter, Ciera.

Veronica, of Mexican-American ancestry, is a public relations manager for a Singapore-based software company with a facility in Milpitas, California. She has worked at the company for six years and reports to the Director of Public Relations. Her management reporting hierarchy is comprised of all native born white males, fairly typical of management structure in Silicon Valley.

Veronica was born, raised, and educated in California. She has credits toward an undergraduate degree in English literature and acknowledges that one day she

will return to complete the degree. A self-described bookworm, her love of literature sparked interest in co-founding along with Delia (her friend and colleague) a San Francisco bay area poetry group based on the works of Pablo Neruda. In addition to literature, she enjoys walking, playing the guitar, and music (she used to sing in a choir). Of recent interest is the music of Hildegard of Bingen, the mystic, visionary, playwright, poetess, and music composer. In 1998, she was thrilled to attend a world premier performance of music from the Middle Ages honoring Hildegard of Bingen's 900th birthday. Not surprisingly, one favorite movie which she has seen "over and over again" is "The Piano!"

During one dialogue session Veronica described herself as the "odd-bird out". I would agree to the extent that she is a beautiful woman to behold, sophisticated but trendy in appearance, with wide luminous eyes and a ready smile. She holds the distinction of being the only latina employed as a Public Relations manager that I've ever met in my entire career. Therefore, she is the "odd-bird out;" she's a dark-eyed brunette in a sea of blue-eyed and blonde hair individuals. It was a pleasure to learn that her latina beauty was not wasted writing news bulletins. Instead, she enjoys a very public but demanding job of travelling throughout the U.S. and Canada as a spokeswoman for her company.

From her vantage point, Veronica does not believe that diversity is possible at the company until senior level executives embrace a "diverse vision." The current "diverse vision" is a predominant workforce of Caucasian and Asian males and females, with two latinas and a few African-American women.

Within the next five years she hopes to establish her own public relations agency. Also, she is mulling over the possibility of launching an internet commerce-based company. In the meantime, she enjoys whatever free time

possible with her family, fiancée, and close friends such as Delia. She lives and relaxes in a wooded community tucked away in the mountains of Santa Cruz.

As for myself, I am of Mexican/Spanish heritage, born and raised in the city of San Jose, California. I am one of eight children born to two tenacious parents who touted the value of a formal education ever since we were quite young. My parents, migrant farm workers from Texas, were born, raised, and entered young adulthood during the 1940s and 1950s when Mexican-Americans were classified legally as “white” (to distinguish them from African Americans) but were denied the rights and privileges of American citizenship due to the racism prevalent in the pre-civil rights era. They pushed the value of a formal education in many ways, but none so poignant as in an often repeated phrase: “*queremos que agarren su educacion pa que no trabajen como nosotros, como animales.*” (We want you to get your education so that you don’t have to work like we do, like animals.)

Money was often in short supply in our household therefore every summer “vacation” we picked prunes and walnuts in order to buy school clothes and purchase school supplies. It was while doing such back-breaking labor in the torrid heat of the fields that I realized our family life was different from that of my classmates, that life *could* be better and that *education* was the key. I obtained an undergraduate degree in U.S. history at San Jose State University during the mid-1970s, made my way through several careers, including a five-year stint as an independently employed software consultant before returning to obtain a master’s degree in Communication Studies at SJSU. I enjoy music, reading, vacationing at Sea Ranch, and spending time with family and long-time friends.

Currently, I manage a publishing group for a semiconductor design and manufacturing company in the San Francisco Bay Area. Because of my work experience, I am well aware of the issues that prevent many latinas from

succeeding within the field of high technology. Yet, the lure of higher-than- 68
average paying jobs in high technology will continue to absorb a growing number
of employees, including other latinas. It is hoped that this paper, which focuses on
how latinas perceive diversity in the high technology workplace, will assist
latinas yet to join the workforce.

CHAPTER 4

GENERATIVE THEMES

"...I remember that I was so prepared to create my future and stake my financial success within the gleaming halls of high tech and yet one of the first pair of eyes I encountered when I walked into that building...jolted me back to las senoras grandes who walked up and down the neighborhood streets of my youth... she was one of the hundreds of domestic workers employed by high-tech corporations to keep the environment clean for us."

*Personal Journal,
August 24, 1998*

"You know people say "Delia you don't look Mexican!", and I say "This what a Mexican looks like..."

*Delia
Dialogue session No. 1
October 17, 1998*

Introduction

Long before PR entered my life, journal writing has been a way to record life-long dreams, heartfelt victories, and bitter defeats. Therefore, it was fitting that my first PR journal entry of Fall, 1998, reflect upon a journal entry of August 15, 1988. On that date, giddy with excitement, I signed my first contract as an independently employed software consultant with a leading giant in Silicon Valley mythology. When I entered the corporate headquarters of the company, located in Cupertino, California, my very *soul* realized the opening of a new life chapter. Even while registering at the receptionist's desk, the vibrancy of the people mingling near the front doors spoke of the dynamism emblematic of high tech cultures. Yet, when I saw *la senora grande*, the latina grandmotherly-type polishing the gleaming front doors, she and I smiled at one another, *perhaps* in recognition. Eventually she walked over and very quietly asked "*eres Mexicana o*

Americana?”, to which I answered in my pocho Spanish, “*soy Mexicana-Americana—naci aqui en los Estados Unidos.*” Soon, a purchasing agent emerged and whisked me away to sign contract papers. From that day forward, it became a personal crusade to establish myself as a software-savvy latina and create a client base to sustain various financial needs as I pursued personal goals. My parents couldn’t understand why, with my college degree and work experience, I preferred the risk of self-employment versus the reliable income of a bi-weekly paycheck.

From my perspective, every time I signed a new contract or negotiated a higher salary I paid homage to the sacrifices my parents endured so that their children could enjoy a better future. Furthermore, by working at various corporations during a five year period, I chipped away at stereotypes that latinas (and latinos) simply did not have the background (educational and/or work experience) to flourish in the dynamic realm of high technology. My efforts to chip away at stereotypes were intensified after a particularly galling incident.

While employed at one contract, the company was fine-tuning a market advertising campaign. The centerpiece of the campaign was a glossy magazine ad featuring several twenty-something female and male power brokers in a brainstorming session huddled around a computer. I was thrilled to find a brown face model in the ad. However, during a telephone conversation with the advertising agency, the director of the ad campaign requested modifications to the photograph. One of many suggestions that he asked for was to “change the look of the Hispanic guy...let’s put him in working class clothes.” He lowered his voice when he noticed my presence in the hallway. When the advertisement eventually went public, both the female and male Caucasian models wore the trendy attire of the hipster computer crowd. The Hispanic male was depicted in a pull-over

sweater and khaki pants. Such are the stereotypes and powerful gatekeepers ⁷¹ that perpetuate skewed images of our potential. Such are the dynamics that have propelled me forward.

Within a few months of the first contract, I signed an agreement for software training at the rate of \$100/hour. Later that evening I mused that, like my parents who followed the path of the migrant workers picking cotton, I, too, had become a migrant worker in the field of high technology. And yet, while Mom and Pop picked cotton for \$0.75 per 100lbs., and while we as a family of eight worked in the fields and picked prunes averaging four to five tons a day at \$10/ton, I now trained people on publishing software at \$100 an hour. I have journeyed so far from my original roots, but yet the ties of the heart remain strong.

Years ago I read a book by essayist and poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1986) entitled *Letters to a Young Poet*. In Letter No. 8, he wrote to a would-be poet:

...many signs indicate that the future enters us in this way in order to be transformed *in us*, long before it happens...And that is why it is so important to be solitary and attentive...and gradually come to realize that what we call *fate* does not come to us from the outside, but *emerges from us*... [italics mine] (pp. 85-86).

Rilke argues that the seeds to our future are planted along our life's path. He states also that the "new paths" that we encounter have been, in actuality, growing *within us* all along, patiently awaiting for us to ripen and physically birth our creation. The encounter with the latina housekeeper planted a seed long ago—why *are* there so few of us in the high-technology industry other than housekeepers, janitors, and cooks? My studies of the past five years have prepared me to probe this question and physically birth this thesis project.

The generative themes that emerged from the transcripts are: team membership; a desire for recognition; perceptions as the sole or one of the few latinas in a high technology culture workforce; and how diversity is constructed within the corporate culture. Excerpts from the dialogues and personal journal entries are provided to contextualize each theme.

The research questions for each generative theme are as follows:

1. As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your "order of talk" when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?
2. As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?
3. As a latina, how do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?
4. As a latina what would you do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?

For this generative theme, the first research question:

As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your "order of talk" when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?

will be answered from their perspective of team membership with the group.

First, I discuss the team membership efforts demonstrated by the latinas in the workplace environment. Second, I discuss how they felt in knowing that their efforts were ignored or not appreciated by their management culture and/or their peers. Third, there follows a discussion of the latinas' reflection and analysis of how they viewed themselves within the organization as valued team members. Fourth, the actions the latinas took in relation to this generative theme are also discussed.

Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) argued that three values foundational to a latina communication paradigm are collectivism, hierarchy, and nonverbal skills. From the outset my management training viewed this constellation of values intriguing—they appeared laudable traits for every mature adult and prospective team member of any organization. Yet, how could talking about the values, either as discrete items or as a constellation, i.e., team membership, reveal whether the values were of importance to the latinas as expressed through their talk? What is important is that four of the five co-participants expressed the values as “team membership,” “team work,” “team skills.” They did not view the values as separate, but rather as *parts of a whole* relative to team membership. This presents an interesting argument not addressed by the authors. I would argue that values foundational to the latina communication paradigm are *instrumental* to creating successful, cohesive work teams.

Descriptive Phase

For this generative theme, the latinas talked of very specific ways they manifested team membership skills:

- They demonstrated sensitivity to different ethnic cultures, belief systems, and ways of reaching understanding with others
- They consciously changed the way they talked to comply with other team members’ and management cultures’ expectations in order to be accepted
- They accommodated the lack of interpersonal skills on the part of many engineers, one of the largest cultural groups within high-technology cultures
- They accommodated the lack of intercultural sensitivity and/or lack of responsiveness from their respective human resources departments
- They relied upon nonverbal skills to forge a sense of cohesion with an established group, especially when they embarked upon a new job
- They learned new software skills on-the-fly in order to achieve project completion
- They tolerated inquiries about various work projects from individuals in high-level management positions who would critique their work but would not directly speak to them on a one-on-one basis

- They acknowledged working on projects that others were unwilling to accept, producing on-time results with little to no support from management

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The various examples expressed a perception by the co-participants (with the possible exception of Melanese) that despite their best efforts, they did not completely feel accepted as team members. This is a crucial awareness for the latinas since most large organizations spend thousands of training dollars and resources on fostering a sense of “belonging” to the organization through team building efforts (Mitchell, 1997). Ironically, it is within these micro-units of the organization that team members have the opportunity to know each other as individuals, move beyond stereotyping, and give rise to the possibility of diversity. Research on teams and team building bears this out.

Cross-cultural research on values in the United States supports that the dominant culture is more individualistic as opposed to collectivistic in nature (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). And yet, management research of the past decade indicates that teams consistently outperform individual contributors specifically when results depend upon multiple skills, judgments, and work experiences (Childress & Senn, 1995; Katzenbach & Smith; 1993; Larson & LaFasto, 1988; Wells, 1997). Research from the field of organization behavior (Cox & Finley, 1995) indicates that teams outperform individuals in terms of innovation, creativity, problem solving, and overall financial performance. These findings parallel the changes currently in vogue within many high-technology cultures, including my work environment. Individuals are more likely to contribute their expertise via participation in teams. For the individuals who do not experience a sense of team membership, the workplace poses many challenges. When I dialogued with Veronica it became evident she felt it necessary to change her personality in order to be accepted by the group:

I have to change my attitude, change the way I am, change the way I talk to comply with the other team members' expectations and my manager's expectations in order to be accepted.

Betty acknowledged similar frustrations. She discussed how she viewed herself as a valuable contributor in meeting the needs of the team. Yet, she found little reciprocity when she asked for assistance:

...but its only when they want something that they'll listen to me. When I need something, I mean forget it. Sometimes they tell me *exactly* what they want me to do and make me feel, not all of them make me feel this way, that I am not a part of the team...

For Betty, her talk seemed of no avail when it was not directly meeting the needs of her team members. When her talk signalled a need for assistance from team members, she was tuned out from the group.

Melanese seemed most satisfied with her work situation and interaction with team members. At the outset of our dialogues she stated that "I don't have to do anything different for my department, my immediate colleagues and supervisor..." However, she also gave a hint of the dynamics that allowed for the team members to function so effectively:

...do we conform to the needs of our group, definitely...there has to be sensitivity to the needs of others and their cultures, their beliefs and ways to come to an understanding with others.

Melanese appears to be highly aware that her talk must link with the talk of her team members to ensure a harmonious, inclusive and respectful work environment. Unlike Veronica, Melanese does not appear to resent the fact that she at times does change her order of talk to achieve necessary goals and maintain good work relationships.

Delia and Tina commented on the nonverbal communication skills in their discussion of team membership. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that nonverbal communication refers to a combination of attending skills that includes eye

contact, body language, gestures, vocal qualities, and verbal tracking. They 76
cite research which asserts that between 65 to 90 percent of our face-to-face
communication is transmitted via nonverbal communication (p. 46). Pearce
(1994) argues that nonverbal communication fulfills four needs: expresses
emotion; conveys attitudes; presents one's personality to another; and manages
the communicative acts of turn-taking, feedback, and attention (p. 133). He asserts
also that nonverbal communication is important in evoking and responding to
relationship issues. Yet, he does caution that nonverbal communication patterns
differ across cultures and that there exists many exceptions to each generalization.
It is within this context that Delia and Tina "listened loudly" to the nonresponse
of team members to their nonverbal communication signals. Furthermore, they
discussed how nonverbal communication signals assisted them when they
entered a new group.

Delia's frustrations were based on the fact that most of her team members are
male engineers whose interpersonal skills are lacking, "...they just can't pick up
on nonverbal behavior, they don't get it, so they take things very literally." She
described one male engineer who would continually yell his requests at her over
the cubicle wall or walk into her office and address her as "Hey!", even while she
was on the telephone. The situation eventually changed only when she directly
confronted him about his inappropriate behavior. But she was surprised that he
could not pick up on her nonverbal signals of disapproval which forced her to
demand that he become aware of his inappropriate behavior. It's unfortunate that
Delia had to leave her zone of comfort to address the issue. However, by directly
confronting the offender, she *linked* her order of talk with his style. He realized his
mistake and ceased the offending behavior

(HR) employee in a fast-paced networking company start-up. As a new employee in a chaotic environment, Tina felt it best to acclimate to the new culture by "reading people, doing things like my manager, learning to talk like my manager, you know, like HR buzz words, and making lots of mental notes." Through this example, Tina demonstrated that she was linking her order of talk with that of her manager. And yet, she soon realized that in learning by observing in an environment where few procedures were documented, she was not keeping in touch with team mates and her various levels of management. Much to her dismay, Tina also admitted that despite her direct involvement on highly visible projects, senior level managers ignored her efforts and discussed the projects with her supervisor. This eventually became problematic since one of her direct managers was the chief financial officer, (CFO). He eventually stopped talking with Tina and instead discussed the projects with her supervisor, Cecelia. In effect, Tina was denied the opportunity to link her talk with that of the CFO. Without direct lines of communication, the relationship spiraled downward.

Tina, along with the other co-participants offered comments, both positive and negative, about management (hierarchy). As a result of an experience with a former manager, however, Tina was acutely attuned to this value. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that observance of hierarchy is one of the values foundational to the latina cultural communication paradigm. Hierarchy refers to acceptance of and deferential behavior toward those who hold greater power (p. 147). All individuals in a corporate environment are subject to dealings with management hierarchy. Even a company CEO must be responsive to stock holders or face possible ouster from office due to inept management. Therefore, it was interesting to note that despite some misgivings about management, the co-participants did

not advocate removal of management tiers to achieve a more flat organizational structure. Each of them looked to management for advice, expertise, and for recognition of jobs well done.

According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), hierarchical structures are a necessity within large organizations. Yet, they also stated that all members of a team essentially become “leaders” of a project at different times of the project’s life cycle. What is of interest within my various cross-functional teams is that most individual contributors acknowledge the benefits of working with management staff. In many instances, managers are able to provide information that helps to contextualize the project as it relates to the employees’ department and corporate goals. Most individual contributors are accepting of the concept of management hierarchy. They merely wish to be recognized as competent contributors to the success of the team.

Melanese was the only co-participant to voice drastic change vis-a-vis management. She suggested that the vice-president of the HR department “should be fired.” In her assessment he was a bottleneck in hiring a more diverse workforce in addition to his unwillingness to bring about change within the HR department. Yet, she was supportive of her own direct management levels and indicated that she as a “...Gen X’er have a lot to learn from my boss who is much older and experienced, he’s a baby boomer.” Comments by Veronica, Delia, and Betty, although critical of behaviors and decisions made by their management, did not suggest doing away with management.

Interpretive Phase

In this phase of the study, the question: “As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally

acknowledged?", will be addressed by how they feel as not quite accepted team members in their organization. 79

One of the many reasons that organizations emphasize team work is that teams tend to outperform individual contributors. Another reason is that employees gain the ability to work with people whose skillsets, backgrounds, ways of thinking, etc., are different but equally valuable to the team's success. Therefore, employees who are estranged from acceptance by their team peers are at a definite disadvantage in terms of promotion opportunities or in terms of leading highly visible corporate projects. Loden and Rosener (1991) state that employees who do not perceive their membership skills acknowledged tend to become isolated within their departments. The isolation can lead to strained and artificial work relationships. While they acknowledge that isolation can be politically detrimental for any employee, they stressed that individuals perceived as others can find the process particularly unnerving.

Some of the latinas perceived lack of acknowledgment of their team efforts. This lack of acknowledgment led some co-participants to cut back on their efforts. Unfortunately, this had the effect of causing them to lose out on choice assignments. Research by Loden and Rosener (1991) support this outcome. They write that lack of contact with individuals from the dominant group can "...lead to exclusion from key committees and decision-making groups, as well as social isolation at higher levels of the organization..." (p. 47). Sessa and Jackson (1995) state that within the context of a work team, those who "look different or have different backgrounds are often viewed as less able or less qualified" (p. 151).

In my dialogues with Veronica, she talked of how she felt being the "...odd bird out because I don't feel that I am now much of a team player...". She focused specifically on interactions with her manager:

...I don't really respect my manager and his recommendations. He really seems to be in way over his head at times and talks about ridiculous recommendations that put me, at times, in very uncomfortable positions...

During the dialogue sessions with Tina it became increasingly evident that in addition to a heavy workload, she felt it necessary to gauge her work relationship with the CFO. She sensed a breach between the two of them that she could not attribute to any one incident. However, she "felt" excluded as a valued member of the team by the different way he talked *around* her:

...whatever I'm working on he always goes *above* me to speak with her [Cecelia] to find out how *I'm* doing! So I feel, gosh, am I doing something that he doesn't trust my judgment, my decisions, my input, but I'm doing everything I know how.

Unfortunately for Tina, this lack of interaction with the CFO appeared to spiral out of control. The more that she reflexively responded to *his* lack of acknowledgment of her contributions, the more he in turn ignored *her* by speaking with her other manager. The situation continued to deteriorate throughout the course of the thesis project.

In a dialogue session with Betty she indicated a growing sense of isolation from and frustration with her manager. She repeatedly stressed one of their interaction patterns that would end with her manager stating "would you keep quiet, you're not listening!" Or, he would accuse her of being too emotional which would then cause Betty to feel reluctant to ask further questions, some of which were essential to task completion.

Veronica, Betty, and Tina all felt estranged from their immediate work teams. In most instances, the sense of isolation or of not belonging was directly attributed to unsatisfactory interactions with management. Veronica stated that she no longer respected her manager; Tina felt ignored by the CFO; and Betty repeatedly cited how her manager asked her to "keep quiet!" Regardless of

whether the three had ever enjoyed a mutually respectful relationship with management was a moot point. By the time of the dialogue sessions, Fall of 1998, all three working relationships had experienced a serious breach. 81

The latinas' frustration with management was instrumental to not feeling valued as team members. That employees experience heightened frustration in being at odds with their direct level management is supported by the literature. Research by Barrett & Leudecke (1996) argues that most employees prefer to hear company information from their immediate management, and Ray and Miller (1991) found that there was a strong relationship between supervisor and employee supportive communication that helps alleviate situations during stressful times. In the absence of these strong supportive ties, employees are forced to find other support networks or feel cast adrift from the team. Melanese and Delia talked of enjoying very supportive relationships with their managers that were duly reciprocated. Of the five co-participants, Melanese and Delia felt most respected in their work environment due to the strength of the relationships with their managers.

Critical Analysis Phase

In this phase of the study, the question: "How do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?", will be addressed via the latinas' reflections upon their level of inclusion as team members.

In the final chapter of their book, Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) assert that during the past two decades much has changed in the social landscape of the workplace. They cite the inherent worth of the individual, the progressive unfolding of equality, coupled with the need to hire the best workforce in today's global economies have created a more inclusive environment. Yet, a reflection upon the current status of most of the co-participants would elicit a "not so fast" response

to the rosy assessment as stated by the authors. This is to be expected. Not one of the co-participants was willing to concede that true diversity existed within the organization. The one exception was Melanese who from the very beginning indicated that her immediate work environment was very diverse and inclusive. But even she acknowledged that once outside the confines of her work group, workplace diversity changed markedly in a negative direction.

Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that for diversity to flourish, we must get to know each other as individuals *and* value our differences. And yet, few comments from the latinas' dialogues relative to team membership indicates that this awareness is present in the workplace. In dialoguing with Veronica she indicated that she must "...change my attitude, change the way I am..." in order to gain acceptance by team members. Betty has been silenced by her manager who wants to change her inquisitive nature into a person who does not threaten him. Tina is kept so busy running around the office fulfilling team member and management demands, that she hopes this strategy will "buy" team membership. Or at the very least, enable her to cope until she finds a new position outside the company. In many ways, what the co-participants face is the power of the dominant culture attempting to shape them into the norm of a traditional corporate employee.

Loden and Rosener (1991) assert that one of the most powerful forces affecting diverse employees is the pressure to conform to the organizational norms. Their research cites that diverse employees often change their dress style, presentation style, or adopt behaviors of mainstream culture to meet group expectations (p. 45). They state also that most efforts to conform fall flat because from the very outset diverse employees are viewed as being different and therefore not an appropriate fit. hooks (1989) reflected upon similar pressure to conform but in the academic world. She wrote that her English professors and peers of both genders

required of her a transformation out of her culture and into someone they recognized. In this manner, she argued, their recognition of her *transformed* self signalled the opportunity to control her. It was within this context that the latinas critically reflected upon social worlds of workplace diversity via how they felt (or did not feel) accepted as team members.

As it has been noted earlier, Veronica felt pressured to change her behavior and way of talking to feel accepted by the team. Due to her tenure in the group coupled with the fact that she no longer respected her manager, she became visibly angry at revealing this information. She was well aware of her growing isolation with her immediate and senior levels of management. She believes that she was pegged a “troublemaker” by the president when she complained that her immediate manager made disparaging remarks about the management culture in Brazilian companies. As a result, she feels that she lost the opportunity to represent her company in a major trade show in Sao Paulo, despite being fluent in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. She also revealed that a monolingual Caucasian woman without prior knowledge of working with South American companies was selected to attend the trade show. A large part of our second dialogue session dealt with Veronica retelling these episodes, trying to make sense of the company’s decisions and actions as she tried to make sense of her workplace predicament.

Initially she was hesitant in naming the issue, musing out loud “isn’t that interesting?” as she stared into the distance. But eventually she did name her frustration:

...Well, the organization is culturally diverse but it is mainly made up of Asians and the predominant culture is Anglo. There are very few latinas/os if at all, so it is predominantly Anglo and Asian...

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Once she was able to identify the root of the problem(s) that plagued her at work, Veronica was then open to offer suggestions for change. Betty made several comments throughout the dialogue sessions where she refused to consider her ethnicity as an issue. She was even willing to concede that her manager was “right” in charging she was too emotional and that she would have to “work on stop getting so emotional” to become more acceptable. Apparently, Betty had encountered situations where she was charged with being insensitive to ethnicity, therefore she avoided the issue. Yet, during one dialogue session when we discussed a *hypothetical* situation of an African-American woman performing Betty’s job, she acknowledged that the woman would be treated *differently*. This critical consciousness seemed to jar her very much:

God, what am I saying? In other words if she was black they wouldn’t tell her anything...Maybe because in her case they’d say that she’s stronger, maybe they can’t *control her* like maybe they *can control me*, because of my nationality they feel that they are more dominant!

Betty’s awareness eerily reflected hooks’ (1989) sentiments that others sought to change her in order to be able to control her. It was gratifying to know that after hours of dialogue and follow-up sessions, Betty was finally able to acknowledge ethnicity as an obstacle to team membership. Further, she was able to “connect the dots” and assess her workplace situation then make plans for her future.

It was interesting to note that Tina, the most harried of the co-participants, readily acknowledged ethnicity as a reason impacting her team membership. During the very first dialogue session she revealed how the one African-American woman in the company was referred to as a “black token.” Tina was well aware of the dynamics at work in her company environment. During one of our sessions she commented “...Do you know why there aren’t more of us in high-tech? They don’t help us feel welcome, they want us to be “white” to work here,

and we're not, we're brown!" Her statement reflects the literature as stated 85
by Loden and Rosener (1991) that employees are forced to conform to corporate
norms of behavior and being.

At this point it cannot be emphasized how differently Melanese and Delia felt
about their workplace environments due to strong relationships with their
management. Throughout the course of the dialogues, both latinas took great
pains to stress that their direct managers were very supportive and that they
enjoyed mutual respect in their relationships. Therefore, it is not surprising that
Melanese was able to list specific reasons why she felt genuinely accepted as a
team member, and how this influenced her positive notions of workplace
diversity. When Delia voiced negative comments about senior level management,
she normally did so when speaking about Peter, Veronica's manager. Delia
considered her dialogues part of a larger process of reclaiming her ethnic identity,
"it was latent within me, it was coiled, and it had to come out." Due to her
growing awareness of ethnicity issues and its attendant ramifications specifically
in the workplace, Delia was able to cite specific courses of action for change. It
was satisfying to know that both latinas, Melanese and to a lesser extent, Delia,
were optimistic about the viability of workplace diversity.

The critical analysis phase was probably the most difficult for all of us. When
we were initially discussing the project during the spring and summer months of
1998, there was the excitement of discussing issues relevant to us as latinas. As we
entered the dialogue sessions, describing workplace interactions was relatively
straightforward. It was also a relatively smooth transition to talk about how they
felt in reading their words from the transcripts. Yet, once we passed the
descriptive and interpretive phase, the demands of the critical analysis phase
seemed "bumpy" to each of us. Each of us had to move beyond identifying,

complaining, and commiserating with one other and begin analyzing the issues at hand. It was at this phase also that two of the members suggested meetings with the other co-participants to have a round-table forum. But after several attempts at scheduling a meeting, the holidays and conflicting business schedules prevented any such meeting until well after the beginning of the new year. Nonetheless, by reflecting upon and questioning their words and feelings embedded in the transcripts, the latinas provided keen insights into their own situations and how their identity as a latina shaped their workplace interaction.

Planning for Action

The fourth research question: "What would you as a latina do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?", will be answered from their critical reflections and analysis as not quite accepted team members.

In many ways the slogan "Think globally, act locally" can benefit the six of us in our workday world. There are some actions that we can take straight away, and there are other steps that require some planning before making a change. As the researcher/co-participant, I have access to company issued information, discussion groups, and classes that could assist each of us in our professional development. This is not to enroll in classes for the sake of transforming ourselves into good corporate citizens. There are many company sponsored breakfast and brown bag lunch meetings where employees can discuss their views and offer input on topics such as workplace diversity. For some of these meetings we are allowed to bring a guest. This can be one avenue to offer my input and allow a co-participant as guest to observe changes she can then take back to her own company. I could also discuss or submit my recommendations to the training department that offers the team building classes. In this manner solid reasons can

be substantiated as to why effort must be spent on training the managers to be more sensitive to diverse employees. 87

Yet I also must accept that perhaps not all the co-participants are ready to make change that does not demand too much of an emotional commitment. Three of the five latinas are self-supporting and I do not want them to feel they are jeopardizing their jobs to become the “pioneers” in advancing diversity. However, we can help one another by remaining in contact (which we have), and continue to network, exchange ideas and strategies that work/don’t work, and support one another to bring about change. I also must remain pragmatic and realize that I cannot change the world on the basis of one PR project. I remembered how dismayed I felt when a few latinas refused to cooperate since they had “made it” in the corporate environment. Another latina who is an acquaintance of a colleague, was quite disappointed with the research project. From her perspective she had succeeded on the merits of her skillsets and experience. Perhaps this is true. Yet, because of her Spanish ancestry she looked quite European and not mestiza. I often wondered if she ever reflected upon the possibility of being accepted because she had the required work experience *and* looked Caucasian (Personal journal, February 6, 1999).

In the dialogues with the co-participants and in rereading of the texts, it became evident that the comments focused on the need of appropriate training for management level people. Most large corporations budget generously for training of people entering management positions. Yet, too often it is the soft skills, the interpersonal people skills that are most needed when coordinating large teams of people (Loden & Rosener, 1991; Mitchell, 1997). Each of the co-participants made comments regarding some level of management within their organization that they perceived as “not fit” for management duties. Two of the

co-participants, Melanese and Delia, were very happy with their immediate 88 managers. However, there were other division managers they felt should be removed due to incompetence or that they could not inspire or lead teams.

Betty was forthright in explaining that she was in a “holding” pattern until she moved into another job. Adopting this attitude was a survival strategy since she felt that she had already proved her team member worthiness several times but to no avail. Rather than expend energy trying to be accepted, Betty elected to push her energy into on-site career development classes and return to night classes to earn her General Education Diploma. In this manner she could then leave the company for a position that offered promotion potential and more control over her workplace environment.

Comments from both Tina and Veronica targeted their frustrations at direct level management. Tina believed it necessary for the company to hire an EOE officer with the authority to enforce policies. She also felt strongly that the HR department (her own department) needed to “train the managers on how to recruit...most of the time they just hire usually within their own ethnic group...”. In our first dialogue session Veronica projected an image of enthusiasm for her career but she was definitely burnt-out with the company. Based on her experience she advocated training for managers that stressed not only intercultural communication but also embraced a diverse vision of a workforce. She believed that the company’s vision of diversity was of a workforce comprised predominantly of “Anglos and Asians.”

None of the co-participants appeared to harbor ill-will toward the predominant Anglo and Asian employees in the workplace. Yet, each latina noted the heavy favoritism toward hiring predominantly Caucasian and Asian (Chinese, Vietnamese, and Southeast Asian, native and non-native born) male

engineers. Perhaps working with a preponderance of male engineers accounted for the number of interpersonal issues voiced by the latinas. Yet, in the issue of fairness, during the past seven years I've attended many company-sponsored seminars on professional development. Invariably the classes are attended by a healthy number of Asian-American and Asian male engineers because they constitute such a large part of our workforce. What is ironic is that these engineers seek *me* out to be on their teams. Some of their questions are "How did you get ahead, how do you like it here at the company?" In effect, they are probing how I "made it." A few of them were willing to share quite angrily that they will never be promoted beyond that of design engineers because they aren't perceived to have "people skills" or that they speak "with a heavy accent." I was stunned to realize that they felt I had an advantage because of my ease with the larger culture and that I could speak without an accent. For each of us, then, our personal wounds shape the filters we use to make sense of our realities.

For most of the co-participants this was a somewhat painful exercise because we had never truly reflected upon our many efforts to belong to the team and the different ways the efforts were ignored. I, too, considered myself within this context. In 1993 I was invited to join a task force to identify weak spots in the organization's channels of distributing information to employees. I was so excited to be asked to join a team! It was while investigating communication problems at other organizations that I entered graduate school. However, our lack of awareness does not imply that we consciously ignored coming to terms with issues of ethnicity, team membership, and diversity. It's simply that few of us had questioned "the way things are." But now that we do have this knowledge, (some of the co-participants may term it a burden), we cannot turn back. The very process of reflexivity has created in the six of us new ways of perceiving and of

understanding our situations. We have a choice to move ahead to bring change, or retreat and remain passive participants of our own choice.

For this generative theme, the first research question:

As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your “order of talk” when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?

will be answered from the perspective of their desire for recognition of their contributions to the group.

First, I discuss some of the latinas’ major accomplishments in their workplace environment. Second, I discuss how they felt in knowing that their achievements were overlooked or downplayed by their management culture and/or their peers. Third, there follows a discussion of the latinas’ reflection and analysis of how they viewed reactions to their accomplishments within the organization. Fourth, the actions the latinas took in relation to this generative theme are presented.

Descriptive Phase

Three of the five co-participants (Betty, Tina, and Veronica) talked of what they felt were oversights of their major contributions to the company. Not surprisingly, the two co-participants who did not cite this generative theme as a significant issue (Melanese and Delia) were both satisfied in their immediate work area. However, Melanese admitted to feeling uncomfortable discussing accomplishments with her manager or colleagues. Delia cited lack of recognition from HR to her many suggestions of how HR could create a more inclusive atmosphere through thoughtfully worded company newsletters, emails, memos, etc. This situation only increased her sense of doubt that the company truly valued all employees. As a group, however, they talked of very specific incidences that occurred in their respective positions:

- Establishment of affirmative action policies and procedures for a start-up 92
Establishment of a 401K program (employee investment plan) for a start-up company
- Achievement of task level and role responsibility equality with the senior member of a group despite the lack of career/educational training
- Creation of the most highly attended and most widely publicized product launch in a company's history
- Publication of a company's name and product on the cover of several different prestigious trade journals
- Positive reviews of a company's product published in a technical journal which was normally highly critical of the company
- Itemization of a list detailing how messages from the HR department could be written to be more inclusive of the cultures represented in the workforce

For many managers and HR representatives, a generative theme of employees desiring recognition for their efforts would hardly be noteworthy. Yet, the co-participants in this study are not representative of just any group. The latinas represent an uncommon demographic group of employees in high-technology corporations.

What emerged from reading the transcripts is that the latinas were not asking for recognition perks such as dinners at four-star restaurants; bottles of fine wine; floral/balloon bouquets; tickets to movies, theater productions, etc. These are quite common recognition perks at many companies in Silicon Valley. The co-participants usually desired for their manager to say "good job, you did a good job!" and to be able to *articulate* the project. Literature from business and team management support this position. Nelson (1994) asserts that the greatest influence on employee job satisfaction is the supervisor. Therefore, feedback and recognition from the supervisor serves a dual role of enhancing employee/supervisor relations and provides recognition of the employee's achievement. Wilson (1994) notes that recognition of employee accomplishments must encompass certain criteria: recognition must be specific to the project; it must be

personalized to the employee; it must be sincere on the part of the manager; 93
and it should occur immediately following the accomplishment.

During the dialogue session with Betty she discussed several detail oriented projects geared to her highly linear-oriented colleagues, the engineers. In spite of performing many functions for the group, she believes her manager is slow in recognizing these achievements. Also she feels that her manager is merely going through the motions of recognizing and praising her achievements as he learned from a career development class:

Lately for some of the stuff I'm doing for my manager I'm getting praised like "Great job Betty", "Good for you". Its like he just picks up some thing, anything, just to say "good job". I don't want that! Praise me for what I actually did! That tells me you actually know what I do for you and the group!

She also cited an incident where she had learned of an Atlanta-based television station producing several segments of her company's chip-making technology. She watched the reports, jotted down pertinent information, and then handed over her comments to one of the marketing directors. Later that afternoon the marketing director shared her comments, verbatim, with the rest of the division; the employees were excited over the nation-wide television exposure. Yet he never credited Betty as the source of the information. Instead, he was praised by the vice president for "staying on top of company events" in spite of his "crazy schedule." Many companies reward employees for finding story leads in the media because the stories serve as valuable public relation tools and free publicity. Betty cited several such incidences but was unable to articulate why she never received the praise and recognition due her efforts.

Veronica's dialogues revealed also the consequences of not receiving recognition and praise from direct management. One of her many responsibilities as a public relations manager is to ensure that the company's products, image,

and culture constantly receive positives reviews in the Valley's trade magazines and newspapers. During 1998 she coordinated the most highly attended and widely publicized product launch of the company's history. It created a great deal of "buzz" within their industry. As a result, she successfully negotiated with several different prestigious trade journals that agreed to publish the company's name and product on the cover of the respective journals. In addition to these two achievements she was able to gain a positive review of a company product in a technical journal normally highly critical of the company. Veronica was proud of her accomplishments and rightly so. Very few companies enjoy the megaresources of a corporate giant such as Intel that budgets millions of dollars for advertising and PR per quarter.

For example, as of Quarter 1, 1999, Intel announced a \$330 million campaign for its newest product, the Pentium Processor III. For one product the company was able to budget \$330 million for a three-month nationwide advertising blitz. Few other U.S.-based companies, with the possible exception of software giant Microsoft, have such deep pockets for media advertising and public relation campaigns. Instead, smaller companies rely on the creativity and savvy of their PR staffs to obtain as much free publicity as possible.

In spite of Veronica's stellar achievements, she never received recognition from her direct manager. In fact, he took credit for some of her accomplishments:

If I accomplish something that is very visible to the entire company, then instead of him saying "Well that's great", sometimes he takes the credit for what I do. For example just most recently something happened that was just great...and I was *really* excited about it, and WOW!, I was wondering what *he* would say, and he looked literally disappointed!

Organization consultant Boyle (1995) states that "...personal and immediate recognition is an employee's inalienable right. (p. xvi). He asserts also that praise

and recognition from immediate supervisors is a far more emotionally fulfilling motivator than a paycheck. This appeared true in Veronica's situation. Never once in the dialogue sessions did she complain that she felt insufficiently *monetarily* compensated in her career. Although in the aforementioned situation she acknowledged receiving recognition from the company president *and* founder, it was the approval from her direct manager that she most desired. She was visibly angry when she admitted that "He just didn't want to discuss it, he dismissed it, oh yeah, he tried so much to downplay it."

Unlike Betty, Veronica did consider ethnicity as a factor for not receiving her due recognition. She did not clamor for recognition as a latina who achieved valuable publicity for the company. Veronica viewed herself as an employee who had achieved impressive *performance results* for the company—she merely desired her manager to acknowledge the results. Her stated desire for recognition is supported by Loden and Rosener (1991). They argue that companies should recognize and reward employees based on performance results, not on factors such as personality styles, good corporate citizenship, etc. They believe that with increased diversity, managers might feel comfortable in recognizing only those employees willing to assimilate into the larger culture. Therefore, if companies stay focused on performance results, they expand the range of acceptable styles from diverse employees while rewarding quality performance.

Melanese viewed talk about recognition from a different perspective. She stated at the outset that:

I think that once you are in a managerial position, you don't get a lot of positive feedback, you just do what you have to do, its very rare that we get recognition, but then its not something that I strive for, look for, I just have to do it and go on.

In many ways, her style mimics the no-nonsense approach of an investigations officer. Melanese does not believe that positive feedback and recognition are necessary elements of her workday world. Yet, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) state that all individuals, from high-level chief executives to prison inmates respond positively to recognition from a direct supervisor. The authors cite the team-building practices of David Rockefeller who used to publicly recognize each member of his executive-level volunteer workforce in the New York City Partnership program. Each of the chief executives privately confided that they were overwhelmed by his knowledge of their individual efforts. Apparently, even the strongest of egos respond to personalized and sincere recognition. Yet, at a certain level, Melanese does long for recognition of her contributions. As we continued with the same dialogue session, she revealed that:

You know, latinas and latinos, like Asians, we don't abstract things out and talk, we do with our hands. I think that is one thing that is holding me back. I don't know how to "toot" my own horn, how to "sell" myself, I notice that Caucasians do it all the time...

Whether or not people admit to it, "selling" our abilities is a way to receive recognition from our peers and management. Melanese is aware that the inability to sell herself is in her own words "holding me back." In addition, she realizes that "Caucasians do it [promote their accomplishments] all the time," and gain recognition for their accomplishments. Another interesting insight is that in her workplace environment she tailors her order of talk when working with security personnel, a good portion of whom are men. Her talk emphasizes detail but cuts short elaboration. In this manner, *she creates sense-making* with her peers. Yet, her presence as a *female*, her role as a *manager*, and her adoption of the *jargon* enables sense-making communication with her peers that reflexively creates a *new* order of talk for the entire work group. To this end I would credit research that argues

for a new order of talk (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997) because Melanese's experience supports that it is possible. It allows individuals of diverse backgrounds to feel validated for their unique ways of talking (Shotter, 1993).

Whether or not the co-participants stated explicitly that their managers did/did not recognize their achievements, they all inferred a desire to be recognized. Some of the co-participants achieved very impressive results within chaotic environments with little to no positive feedback. Tina used as an example the 401K employee investment program which she researched and eventually tailored to the needs of the company. Afterward, she spearheaded the drive for the creation of affirmative action policies. Tina reports to two managers, but one of the managers is the company's chief financial officer (CFO). In neither instance did the CFO talk directly with Tina, instead he interacted with her other manager, Cecilia. Tina felt that his attitude conveyed lack of respect of her and for her accomplishments. She realized also that she could not build credibility with the CFO if he continuously overlooked her achievements. Loden and Rosener (1991) speak of this frustration on the part of employees perceived as others by the dominant culture. Too often employees perceived as others accept new jobs or projects with little to no credibility in the eyes of their dominant culture peers. Regardless of their level of seniority or abilities, they are expected to "prove" themselves anew with each successive task. Most of the co-participants fell into this category since each believed that on-the-job accomplishments went unnoticed. As for Melanese, she admitted to not knowing how to promote her accomplishments and gain recognition from her peers and manager.

In this phase of the study, the question: "As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?", will be addressed by how they feel knowing that their workplace accomplishments are not recognized by their peers/management.

According to Wilson (1994) many of the reasons accelerating the demands for a diverse workplace are the same reasons driving the need for companies to develop new methods of recognizing employee achievements. The reasons include global competition, the creation of new technologies, a highly diverse workforce, the emergence of strategic alliances, and a renewed focus on customer service. He argues that far too many of today's managers are using yesterday's criteria and methods for recognizing and honoring individual achievement. By this he refers to the congratulatory praise that travels down the chain of command until it reaches the recipient. Unfortunately, there are some managers who do not even make the attempt to recognize employees' achievements because they view the tasks as "part of the employee's job."

In Tina's chaotic environment, the hectic pace has brought about feelings of frustration and fear of being told she's not performing up to standards. These feelings are particularly acute when she deals with the CFO since he doesn't even talk with her, much less take the time to recognize her efforts. For example, within a two month period, she helped to recruit and hire over 20 employees. This commitment required extra long days on her part:

The perfect example is all this week I've been spending time here until 8 or 9pm at night. I don't want to, but I'm afraid he's going to say that I don't know how to handle it or point to someone who could. But here again, if he wants to know about something, like the 401K plan, he talks to Cecelia, not me, but I'm doing the work!

It was difficult to assess whether or not Tina was working for a manager 99 with low emotional intelligence. Several times during the course of the dialogue session she stared out the living room window, silently repeating to herself "I don't know, I just don't know what's happened." It was obvious that talking about the CFO caused her visible upset. However, as we continued the dialogue she reached a breakthrough in analyzing their interaction: "I don't know what it is, maybe the things that come out of my mouth he needs in more detail. He really is a very detail oriented person." Her talk about the situation led to an awareness that different personality styles could be part of the problem. It was a possibility she had never before considered. Another of her frustrations (and sense of indignation) was the CFO's visible and verbal reaction to the awareness of her ethnicity:

What do you mean, Tina—you're Mexican?" and I said "yes" and he said "wow", that fast, like wow, you're kidding me...From there on out, you know what? He's been treating me differently.

His reaction deeply hurt Tina. At a certain emotional level she believes that her ethnicity blocks his comprehension of her talk. Anzaldua touched upon the intersection of ethnic identity and linguistic identity:

So if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity...and as long as I have to accommodate...English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate (Anzaldua, as cited in Varona, 1996, p. 171).

By reflecting upon how she and the CFO interacted, Tina realized the differences in their talk and how it possibly affected their work relationship. By summarizing her projects, she was not fulfilling the CFO's need for details. By talking directly to Cecelia and not to Tina, the CFO was not recognizing Tina's contributions. I was very troubled to read and reflect upon Tina's comments and her manager's reaction to her ethnicity. Therefore, it was a relief to record in my

journal that eventually she demanded to be paid for the overtime necessary 100
to finish her work projects. Plus, she credits PR in helping her make the decision!
(Personal journal November 23, 1998).

In the dialogue session with Veronica she seemed to be more vexed than angry with her manager. She appeared to have developed a “wait-and-see” attitude of how and when her manager would recognize her accomplishments. For example, she took great pride in talking about the company’s most successful product announcement which was her project. Yet as she relayed the story, it was interesting to note her comment: “...and I was *really* excited about it, and WOW!, I was wondering what *he* would say!” Despite her past experience with her manager, she was expectant about his feedback and recognition. Unlike Melanese who complained that she didn’t know how to “toot my own horn,” Veronica struck a different attitude. It is evident that she’s learned how to use her public relations skills to her advantage. When she did not receive recognition from her manager, she proceeded to share her accomplishments with the president and the founder of the company! In discussing her triumph with the two most powerful men in the company she received the recognition she deserved. Afterward, she once more sought her manager because “...when he does things like that I do like to needle him about it!”

Veronica’s attitude demonstrates one of the most effective tools of a public relations manager: persistence in the face of rejection. It was also with a sense of pride that she talked of her interaction with the company president:

I think he’s always had a difficult time crediting me with credibility. He could not look at me in the eyes for many years and now he can speak to me on a certain level, I don’t know...maybe he’s developed respect for me finally and he can at least engage me in conversation.

Throughout our dialogue sessions Veronica seemed quite detached from 101 work. Perhaps this was due to her occasional musings that she was ready to seek employment elsewhere. Yet her dogged persistence to obtain recognition did eventually bear fruit. By persisting in this manner, she exemplified the comment by Boyle (1995) that most companies don't really need incentive systems. What companies should do is show "recognition of unsung heroes who slog it out week after week, year after year." (p. ix). Of equal importance to Veronica is that through her dialogue sessions, her talk constructed a better understanding of the president and of the company's founder who were both supportive of her work.

While dialoguing with Betty, she admitted that work options have been hampered somewhat by not completing high school. She is very proud, however, that she is a "quick learn" and adopts quickly on-the-job skills. For Betty, a desire for recognition "proved" that she had moved beyond the stigma of an incomplete high school education:

One thing that I used to have to repeat over and over again when I finally became Nora's *equal* was "let me handle this responsibility before you go to Nora!" I was proud of myself, I was supporting Nora and in doing so I *became her equal*.

After listening to the tape and reading the transcript several times, I became aware of her emphasis upon the word "*equal*," therefore, the italics for emphasis. Betty remembered Suzy, her former supervisor, talking of Nora in glowing terms which planted the desire to emulate Nora's abilities. Her efforts were either ignored or not recognized:

I can't really say that I've received a whole lot of praise, not really. Nora's gotten awards, certificates, you name it. She says its just part of her job, but to me she didn't spend a lot of extra time on any of those projects...and it just seemed like she was praised more than I was for the same things.

One of the more painful aspects of not achieving recognition dealt with the fact that her manager and peers were all women. She felt this to be a particularly difficult oversight. Another issue is the fact that many high-technology corporations have raised the bar to at minimum a bachelor's degree for entry into higher paying jobs. This is especially true for positions with greater responsibility and higher salaries. Yet, despite an awareness of this she remains adamantly opposed to returning to school.

I'm proud because even without finishing high school, people ask me like a lot of questions, like what does this mean, or even how do you spell this, and they are always asking me questions and I usually have the answers and I feel good!

Through her talk, Betty constructs and reinforces an understanding of social worlds where a formal education is not a necessity. In some ways she echoes sentiments voiced by Melanese, "latinas and latinos, like Asians, we don't abstract things out and talk, we do with our hands." Unlike Betty, Melanese holds an undergraduate degree from a private Catholic university in Texas. Betty voluntarily quit high school in her sophomore year. Rodriguez (1998) discusses this phenomenon in his white paper, *The Emerging Latino Middle Class*. He studied native and non-native born latina/o families located in a five county region of Southern California. The majority of his subjects either eschewed obtaining a high school diploma, or received a diploma then found work in the retail and garment industries. By grouping together salaries of entire family members, many of his subjects were able to purchase homes with combined wages of over \$50K a year.

Yet, a salary of \$50K cannot purchase much real estate in Silicon Valley. We live in one of the hottest housing markets in the nation. Silicon Valley doesn't have a garment industry base to employ non- to low-skilled laborers. However, it does support a rapidly growing service industry base that employs housekeepers,

does support a rapidly growing service industry base that employs housekeepers, janitors, and cooks. Furthermore, wages paid in the retail industry are inadequate to purchase a home and send children to college. Another observation is that perhaps not all of Betty's work-related woes are a result of an overbearing boss or insensitive colleagues. Perhaps through the review process, Betty's managers are aware that she lacks a high school diploma and are hesitant to entrust her with high responsibility projects. I truly desire for Betty to advance to another position. Yet, to advance in her position and receive a higher salary, she will eventually have to accept the values of Silicon Valley and complete her education.

The value of education was recently highlighted in a report by the Public Policy Institute of California (Reed, 1999). Over the past 30 years the value of a high school diploma and a college degree has increased markedly. For example, in 1969 high school graduates earned 9 percent more than non-graduates. Today they earn 37 percent more than non-graduates. There appears an even greater increase in pay differences between high school graduates and college graduates. The financial benefits of a college degree over a high school diploma has increased from almost 50 percent to almost 70 percent. The trend appears to be nationwide. As the frontiers of technology push ever farther, the demand for employees with technical savvy skills also increase. Unfortunately, low-skilled workers will find themselves barred from a lucrative job market due to lack of education, skills, or both. At the moment, Betty has managed to avoid falling into these categories. But, to remain competitive in the job market, she must complete her education. Otherwise, she is at risk for the next downsizing of employees with redundant skills.

As a group, the co-participants were not overly satisfied with the recognition from their peers or managers. Specifically, they were not satisfied with their manager's recognition of their achievements. As a co-participant, I too, understood their levels of frustration. For many years I worked under the belief that at some point in my career, management would notice my accomplishments and give due recognition. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In many instances this is a result of insufficient training of managers to lead diverse groups of people. Another factor is that not every individual feels comfortable discussing their achievements, much as Melanese felt uncomfortable promoting her accomplishments. This situation can be exacerbated when most colleagues and/or peers are of the dominant culture. And yet, to retain the few latina employees who have embraced corporate life as their workplace, companies must learn new ways of recognizing employees.

Wilson (1994) states that for an organization to succeed, management needs to create a sense of responsibility and ownership of the company within each employee. For this to occur, new methods must be implemented to recognize the efforts of diverse groups of people. Unfortunately for the co-participants, this level of change requires time to train managers and implement new recognition programs. And with three of the five latinas voicing criticism of this generative theme, they will probably move to different companies before their management addresses the issue.

Critical Analysis Phase

In this phase of the study, the question: "How do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?", will be addressed via the latinas' reflections of how their achievements are not recognized by their managers and/or peers.

Ever since the publication of *Workforce 2000*, the American business sector 105 has busied itself with creating a more inclusive workplace. Books, seminars, education programs, and diversity consultants abound to help guide our way toward this goal. Yet, the experiences of the co-participants indicate that much more structural change needs to occur before diversity within the high-technology arena is truly achieved. Three of the latinas voiced disappointment that achievements they considered significant were not recognized by their managers. And all five of the co-participants, not only the three mentioned, denied that true diversity existed within their organizations. Relative to this generative theme, the comment from Melanese was probably the most troubling, "...I think that is one thing that is holding me back. I don't know how to "toot" my own horn, how to "sell" myself...". Her reflections left me wondering whether she was too introverted to seek external recognition or whether over the years she had *learned* not to seek external recognition. In light of the fact that Melanese's workplace was the most diversified of all the latinas, I acknowledge that the other co-participants might face similar obstacles.

In dialogues with Delia it became apparent that she viewed Human Resources as one of the core problem areas of the company. Normally HR or one of the departments under its aegis are pivotal in driving change within a company. During dialogue session number two, she gave examples of how she had very gently "corrected" memos, email, etc., from HR to all company employees. The corrections were always intended to give the impression that the company "voice" was representative of all its employees and not merely dominant sectors. For example, she informed HR constantly that not all company employees were involved as a "couple." Yet, company invitations to events suggested employees bring "their spouse or significant other." Delia and many of her contemporaries

are not in a “couple” situation. Therefore, she and others felt excluded from these events. For Delia, it also served as a constant reminder of being a single woman in a couple-oriented society. 106

Another frustrating example was that she had to remind HR that not all employees were Christian or that not everyone celebrated Christmas. Therefore, not all employees felt it necessary to respond to the company’s call for charity during the Christmas holiday season. She stated also that by displaying Christian religious symbols and not the religious symbols of the other faiths, HR was supporting Christianity as the *de facto* religion of the corporation. Another issue that she addressed was that the HR group decorated various work groups for the holiday season. Unfortunately, many religious symbols were mixed together with secular symbols of various non-Christian feasts and holidays. This upset individuals of diverse backgrounds. Many companies take great pains not to commit such *faux pas*, yet, Delia’s company appeared blithely ignorant of their actions.

During our second dialogue session she admitted to contributing a gift for a child whose name was listed on one of the holiday trees in the front lobby. She acknowledged that this was her last gift in a company-sponsored drive. She felt this way because “*You*, the representative of the company, of HR, didn’t have the courtesy to email me back” in response to one of her email inquiries. For Delia, the moment had arrived when she no longer cared to enable the corporate voice to convey a sense of inclusiveness. She was aware of the importance of her contributions even though HR never called or sent a word of thanks. Unfortunately, without such culturally sensitive feedback as Delia supplied to HR, the company would not have bragging rights to an inclusive and diverse social atmosphere.

within a larger context. Delia inquired whether or not the company intended to assist the victims of Hurricane Mitch which devastated Guatemala in 1998. She never received an answer to her email. For Delia, the silence on the part of HR, the corporate voice for the company spoke volumes. She felt that "...To me, your non-response told me that because they are poor, brown-skinned people, uneducated, living in shacks, that they are of less value than someone else!" Whether or not Delia's assessment of the company's nonresponse is fair is a moot point. She has witnessed management's snubs of Veronica's achievements. She is also aware of the paucity of latina employees in the company's workforce. Therefore, it was not too much of a stretch on her part to associate the company's indifference to the "brown-skinned" people of Guatemala to the few latinas working for the company. Delia cannot be faulted for making such an assumption. To be sure, she was taking a "giant leap" and indicting the entire company with an ethnic bias based on a few observations. But within the larger framework, she was also working her way closer to verbalizing and aligning herself with her ethnic identity in contrast to those of the dominant culture. And, in her own words, this was an area she rarely discussed in public but because of this project, it could no longer be ignored!

Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) assert that diversity must reach beyond the pat phrase of "honoring differences" in the workplace. They concur that organizations must realize that inherent in diversity is the tremendous potential for creativity. By virtue of her many outstanding successes, Veronica rightly felt snubbed for not receiving recognition for her achievements. First of all, she was very aware of the amount of publicity she brought to the company. This achievement in itself should have garnered recognition from her manager. The

fact that through her efforts she was able to change an adversarial critic of the company into a positive advocate of the company was not lost to her. However, instead of basking in the glow of praise, she was left to muse whether other colleagues in the PR group received financial perks for their achievements. Also, because her manager was either unable or unwilling to recognize her achievements, she was forced to seek recognition from the president and founder of the company. Yet, the first time she attempted this maneuver it was fraught with risk. According to Veronica, the president had for the longest time been unable to engage her in conversation, much less acknowledge her contributions. Had the president not responded in a positive manner, she would have been twice rejected in her desire for recognition. Therefore, it was not surprising that Veronica viewed inept managers as obstacles to diversity. 108

Tina's comments, too, pointed to inept managers as the primary reason why diversity was absent from the workplace. Tina was unable to forget how the CFO reacted to her statement that she was of "Mexican background." Whether or not it was intentional on the part of the CFO, from the time that he reacted with such surprise to her announcement, Tina *perceived* that she was treated differently. At many times during the second dialogue she was at a loss to discuss diversity in the workplace. Yet, within the context of talking about diversity, she inevitably brought up her interactions with the CFO. And, whenever she talked about the CFO she visibly retreated into herself to reflect upon the situation. Therefore, her stinging critique of why latinas don't feel welcomed in the high-tech community "...they want us to be "white" to work here, and we're not, we're brown!", makes a great deal of sense in her situation. Her assessment based on her lived experience is as valid a finding as is the research by Loden and Rosener (1991)

that employees are forced to conform to corporate norms of behavior and being in order to achieve acceptance and recognition. 109

Betty's dialogue sessions revealed that she carried a sense of shame for not completing her high school education. Therefore, it was very important for her achievements to be recognized. The recognition was especially relevant when she felt her achievements were on the same level as a woman who was recognized for her outstanding contributions as a Premium Performer. When she realized that the recognition was not forthcoming, she felt hurt and became cynical. Wilson (1994) states that when employees realize that only a select few are singled out for recognition by the company, the motivation to contribute is removed and the employee is left without *extrinsic* rewards to attain. The concept of extrinsic rewards is important for Betty. Intrinsically she felt rewarded by the fact that she had the know-how to perform her tasks on par with such an outstanding colleague as Nora. Extrinsically, the recognition or reward for outstanding achievement somehow would compensate for the high school diploma she never received. During the dialogue sessions she repeatedly stated with a sense of pride that she had become "Nora's equal". When she eventually learned that Nora herself was also a high-school dropout she responded "...God, and she can do all of that!?...". This critical awareness emboldened Betty that one day she, too, could attain the same type of recognition. However, she was aware also that her political differences with her manager, Suzy, meant that she would have to seek management approval elsewhere.

In essence, the desire for recognition was an issue not only for the three co-participants who felt most estranged from their managers, Tina, Veronica, and Betty but also for Melanese and Delia. It is only human nature to desire recognition for our achievements. The co-participants showed themselves to be

no different in this respect. Yet, it must be reiterated that as a result of the small representation of latinas in the high-technology workforce, it is crucial that the women feel their outstanding achievements are recognized. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The world of high-technology, as much as it touts its younger-than-average workforce, retains much of the “old school” of management relative to corporate culture. Managers in many high-technology companies tend to be drawn from middle-class White Anglo Saxon males with backgrounds in technology and not management training. In many instances, these males are promoted because they have successfully managed high-profile projects to completion without draining the company of financial resources. These are young men eager to make their mark, leverage their stock options, and move on to more lucrative positions. Therefore, there is little time or incentive to acquire the appropriate management skills. Without requisite management skills, few managers will know how to honor the differences inherent in diverse groups whereby all members of the team feel welcomed.

Planning for Action

The fourth research question: “What would you as a latina do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?”, will be answered from their critical reflections and analysis of not receiving recognition for their contributions to the company.

One of the axioms that I’ve learned during many political campaigns is “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.” This is not meant as a slap at the latinas. What I mean to convey is that the co-participants, and I include myself, need to involve ourselves to help bring about structural change in organizations. In many ways this ties in with the sentiments expressed in my final sentence of Planning for Action relative to team membership. The very

process of reflexivity engendered by this project has created in the six of us 111
new ways of perceiving and of understanding our situations. We have a choice to
move ahead to bring change, or retreat and remain passive participants of our
own choice.

After several rereadings of the texts, I realized that while some of us may not
have immediate managerial support, each of us has an ally within our division.
This is a crucial awareness. When any individual needs to risk a move that could
jeopardize a job or their acceptance by a group, it does help to have some type of
internal support system. Research by Loden and Rosener (1991) bears this out.
The authors are organization change consultants helping many organizations
manage diversity. They note that informal networking of employees from similar
ethnic backgrounds can help stave off the pangs of isolation often felt when there
is lack of mainstream support. Therefore, each of us can work with our ally to
signal to management 1) suggestions for changing the company's recognition
programs, and 2) the reasons why we believe a more diverse workforce
necessitates this change. Wilson (1994) argues that companies must continually
reassess the needs of their employees, company goals, and update their
recognition programs on a regular basis. Without this type of reflexivity, many
employees lose the incentive to perform but the most basic tasks. We can also use
this as a forum to document our achievements and inquire why the achievements
did not merit recognition. It has been my experience that inquiries from
employees, combined with supporting documentation, usually results in a
positive response from the human resources and/or employee relations
department.

Melanese suggested that latinas need to learn to speak up, to make themselves
more visible in the organization, "For one, be more vocal, especially when we

attend some of these team meetings about diversity with our peers and within the company...". Three of the co-participants, Tina, Betty, and Veronica, suggested that change must begin with proper training of management. I believe this is one of the top priorities. However, in the meantime each of us is caught up in the complexity of life here in Silicon Valley. Each of us have mortgage payments that are due every 30 days, etc. In other words, training of managers is not a change that will occur overnight. That is why as a group we must focus on change that helps us directly in our workplace worlds. Therefore, while training of managers may not be an immediate help, each of us can invest in ourselves to become more politically astute in the office. Each co-participant had several responsibilities that she felt she "should" cover on a daily basis. As a result, she enjoyed little to no time to enroll in personal development classes. These classes are specifically geared to enabling employees to gain more control in their everyday workplace. This is a crucial awareness for any individual desiring change in their career.

Long before entering the ranks of management, I belonged to a much larger group of employees known as "individual contributors." The term individual contributor is a fancy name for an hourly employee who can be discharged at a moment's notice. When I realized that I was not gaining recognition or being promoted, I began to watch how others in the organization succeeded. It became apparent that my colleagues were gaining networking and political skills by enrolling in on-site personal development classes. Many of these classes require up-front one-on-one meetings with direct managers. During these sessions, the employee states why they desire to enroll in the class, the benefits the class will provide to the group via the employee, and how the manager factors in as a *success factor* for the employee. The upshot is that basically the manager is put on

notice: your *first responsibility* is to groom the employee to succeed for the company. In this fashion, the manager is made aware through feedback from the class instructor of the goals the employee hopes to achieve within an agreed upon time schedule. Many of the workbooks used for such classes stress that achievements should be “celebrated” as helping overall corporate goals. This is one win-win situation that allows the employee to be recognized. Furthermore, the manager is required to stay abreast of the employees’ achievements as agreed upon during the one-on-one session. No longer can the manager feign ignorance of the employees’ achievements. The workbook serves also as a document that can be shown to human resources, employee relations, etc., if recognition or promotion is not forthcoming.

I offer this suggestion as a tool that is as valid as research cited throughout this project. I have seen this particular suggestion work for many individuals. It is also true that it requires time on the part of the co-participants. Yet, an honest assessment of their various situations indicates that the routes they have tried this far have shown little to few results. There is a risk inherent in any new endeavor. Should the co-participants embark on this or a similar route without any positive results, their efforts will still not have been in vain. They will have gained practical political networking skills to use in their new place of employment.

For this generative theme, the first research question:

As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your
“order of talk” when speaking with peers as opposed to your
management culture?

will be answered from their awareness as the sole or one of the few latinas
working in high technology culture.

First, I discuss some of the latinas’ comments that reflect their sense of
otherness within the corporate environment. Second, I discuss how they felt
knowing that their ethnicity was a factor in the workplace. Third, there follows a
discussion of the latinas’ reflection and analysis of how their ethnicity played a
role in constructing workplace diversity. Fourth, the actions the latinas took in
relation to this generative theme are presented.

Descriptive Phase

In the final chapter of their book, *The Communication Paradigm of the United States in the Twenty-first Century*, Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) present an interview with Peter Norton, president of Norton Utilities. Mr. Norton, whose company is a major Silicon Valley success story, states that inclusiveness in U.S. companies represents Americans’ ability to work with others who are different. Furthermore, he compares today’s inclusiveness as akin to the acceptance between Christian sects, i.e., Methodists and Lutherans, that he witnessed during his adolescence. Finally, he asserts that there is a “...whole lot of cultural mixing going on among people who aren’t making a big stink about it...” and then pats himself on the back for being “...the white half of an adventuresome interracial marriage...” (p. 185). It is indeed ironic that the authors chose to present the voice of a corporate executive white male as a signifier of the advances made relative to workplace diversity. Fortunately or unfortunately for Mr. Norton, he cannot step

outside of his “whiteness” and his gender to experience firsthand the latinas’ 115 perspectives. Perhaps if he could, he would not describe those who raise the difficult issues of ethnicity as “...making a stink about it...”. Just as significant is that neither can the latinas perceive their worlds without their ethnic filter. Perhaps if they could, some of them would be preparing affirmative action lawsuits instead of considering different jobs.

The purpose of this generative theme is not to discuss the process of ethnic identity formation, per se. The age range of the co-participants varies; most are thirty something and one latina is in her 50s. Betty and Tina are English-dominant who understand little to no Spanish. Melanese and Delia are bilingual since early childhood, and Veronica is fluent in English and Spanish and learned Portuguese in high school and college. As for myself, I understand the Tex-Mex Spanish of my parents, and can also speak the language but simply not as rapidly as I converse in English. In essence, each of us has been raised in the American dominant culture. Four of us were born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. (Delia was born in Mexico but her parents moved to California when she was nine months old. Melanese parents moved from Mexico to Texas when she was five years of age.) During the time of this PR study, it cannot be said that we experienced an identity crisis characterized by confusion, resentment or avoidance of discussing our ethnic roots. This could be the result of our age group or the fact that we were raised in regions of the country that contained large populations of other latinas/os. This should be viewed as a crucial difference from other research dealing with latinas. Often when latinas/os are discussed within the academic literature or popular culture, the issues of immigration and being labeled “an ethnic” must be addressed. This was not the case with our small group. We identify as American women who are aware of our ethnic difference as

latinas. We do not contest the fact of our Americanism. And, as evidenced by 116
our similar age range, most of us were born to the baby-boom generation (1946-
1964). Therefore, for better or worse, we have all been exposed to similar
American pop culture images, music, fads, fashion, etc. And yet, within our
respective workplace we are aware or *have been made aware* of our difference.

Each co-participant discussed her perception as the lone or one of the few
latinas within the context of a particular work-related situation. The following
incidents provide context for their work environments:

- For Tina, she entered a company that had only two other latinas on staff. Within two months, both other latinas had left the company. Her ethnicity also became a focal point with her manager, the CFO, who reacted forcefully to her ethnicity "...what Tina, you're Mexican...?"
- For Delia, her ethnic awareness was birthed at her prior company where her colleagues, not knowing of her ethnic background, made derogatory or disparaging remarks about Mexicans and illegal immigrants. Her colleagues were startled when Delia, very much a white-skinned woman with teal blue eyes, lashed out and told them that she was born in Mexico.
- For Veronica, issues of ethnicity arose when she became aware that she and Delia represented 66 percent of the latina population for their current employer. Furthermore, in her constant travels to trade shows and product launches in her role as a public relations manager, she observes few other latinas in public relations at other high-technology companies.
- For Betty, she was constantly made aware of her ethnicity in her previous position where the majority of colleagues were of Caucasian background. She felt that being a latina didn't "...hold you back but it didn't get you ahead either..."
- For Melanese ethnicity became an issue when she moved to California from Texas. She says that it is "...visibly obvious, Silicon Valley companies are predominantly white...". She also states that she finds herself walking about the company wondering "...why aren't there more latinas in professional positions..."
- During my various careers in the high-tech industry, ethnicity has been a constant issue because there are so few latinas on staff. Therefore, my experience always foregrounds the question: Why are there so few latinas/os in high-tech except in positions of janitorial service or manual laborers?

It was interesting that awareness of our latina-ness was normally experienced fairly soon after beginning a new position or by a comment made by another employee. In regards to the latter, most of the latinas realized their solitary status merely by walking around a new company unable to recognize few women that “looked like me.” Or, their awareness of ethnicity was the result of a conversation or comment by another employee. Regardless of how we became aware of our otherness, with the possible exception of Betty, the rest of us sensed an aloneness.

Interpretive Phase

In this phase of the study, the question: “As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?”, will be addressed by how they feel as the sole or one of the few latinas in their organization.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the emotional response to my first meeting with Lucia Varona. Up to that point, my research felt a pretty solitary endeavor without a latina graduate student or latina professor in my life. After meeting Lucia, it felt that at least one other person could understand my passion and desire to carry out the research. Ironically, this is how I’ve navigated much of my professional career within the halls of high technology corporations. As my daily interactions unfold, my brain is “programmed” to seek out brown faces in a sea of Anglo others. Yet, every time that I ponder this issue, the metaquestion returns: why *are* there so few of us in the high-tech industry other than housekeepers, janitors, and cooks?

One simple but empirical approach to brainstorming this question might be to check the advertisers for magazine(s) geared to the larger Latino population, i.e., *Hispanic*. All twelve issues of the magazine for 1998 were stacked neatly in the

corner of the living room. Yet, only the December, 1998, edition showed a number of advertisements (specifically, five ads) from high-technology corporations. It was disappointing to see that beer, hard liquor, the armed forces, and automobile companies purchased the majority of advertising space in this magazine. Corporate MarCom teams spend millions of dollars per year gathering industry research, targeting key demographic/psychological audiences, wording and positioning their messages against competitors' messages, then purchasing advertising space that will provide the greatest return for their research dollar investment. As a member of a corporate MarCom team and as a latina studying why there appear so few of us within the high-technology industry, the significance of the type of advertising in *Hispanic* is not lost to me. This issue will be expanded upon in Chapter 5. Yet, lack of high-technology industry advertising in this magazine (and others geared to latinas/os) might be part of the reason why so few from within *la comunidad* choose to enter the field. The level of awareness of the high-technology industry as a career option is simply not there.

It was painful to listen as the co-participants talked about this aspect of their career, being the only and/or one of the few latinas employed in her respective company. It was also of interest to note that each latina knew the name, and in some instances the department where the other latina(s) were employed. Therefore, it made sense how Melanese "found me." First of all, we both work for the same company. During 1998, our company co-sponsored a nation wide women in technology conference. We met when she approached the table where I sat and took the seat next to mine. I've often wondered why she chose to sit with me, a stranger, rather than sit at one of the other tables. In any event, Melanese is well aware of the shortage of latinas working at the California facility:

...there are definitely more brown people employed by our Texas facility, but why there and not here? Makes a person wonder whether or not California is really that open to diversity as it claims to be. (Personal journal, September 17, 1998).

Ever since, Melanese and I have shared our views regarding the invisibility of ethnic people within the environment, latinas in particular. During our initial dialogue she talked in a fairly confident manner that her particular department was very well integrated. Yet, she noted that during her walks outside of the department that “just by *seeing* employees like in HR, they don’t have any latinas, they don’t have any and I don’t know why this is so...”. Due to her relative newcomer status in California, she is hesitant to offer a definite answer but she does feel the imbalance:

...in truth I tend to think that there is some issue here because I know that there are latinas/os who are capable of doing the job, and I just don’t know yet what the corporate culture is. Maybe there is some type of status requirement, education, years of experience, but I don’t know about that yet.

This was a very significant issue for her. She had worked for six years at our Texas facility where she saw more latinas in the workforce, “...the Texas HR workforce is about 40 people, but five of them are latina HR representatives plus a latina group manager...”. Melanese made the comment that from the very beginning of her employment within the California facility, she noticed the lack of latina employees. According to a year-long diversity research project conducted by the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Angwin & Castaneda, 1998), her observation may not be too off the mark.

In October of 1997, the *San Francisco Chronicle* requested information from 54 of the largest high technology government contractors in the Bay Area. The *San Francisco Chronicle* requested information relative to the racial makeup of a company’s workforce (an EEO-1 document) and also affirmative action plans. Of

the 54 companies, three companies protested the release of their affirmative action plans and 17 protested the release of their EEO-1 documents. In effect, the information gathered from the remaining 33 companies represents one of the most current snapshots of the hiring of people of color and the positions they occupy within the workforce. The information shows that the overall latina/o population represents seven percent of the total workforce in high technology. In terms of their overall presence within the Bay Area, latinas/os represent 14 percent of the total workforce. The study found also that latinas/os who work at these companies are far more likely to be employed in factory and/or support jobs than white workers. 120

Our company voluntarily submitted information to the *Chronicle* study. The information shows that of the company's total U.S. workforce of 6,840, latinas/os represent three percent of the official/manager category; 10 percent of the professional category and 12 percent of the factory/support staff labor. Latinas/os are not represented at the director and senior executive levels. Melanese and I discussed these depressing statistics. We both agreed that the majority of latinas/os classified as "professionals" in all probability worked at the Texas facility. We have based our decision on the fact that neither of us have encountered more than two or three other latinas outside of the factory/support category at the California campus.

During a follow-up session she noted that our diversity officer had been transferred to the Texas facility. Melanese talked of the seemingly senseless transfer of the only African American male in upper level management to a facility that didn't need his expertise, "I think his transfer was a mutual agreement otherwise he would have received more than just a lateral move." I made several attempts to gain clarification on the statistics supplied to the *San*

Francisco Chronicle report and the reasons for the transfer of our diversity officer. The company was unable or unwilling to comment on either topic.

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The dialogue sessions with Melanese were probably the most insightful relative to this generative theme. She had first hand experience working for a high-tech leader with corporate campuses located both in California and Texas. She noticed immediately the lack of latinas within the California facility. Furthermore, she refused to accept that the Texas facility hired a larger proportion of latinas simply as a result of their proximity to the Texas/Mexico border towns.

In spite of pessimistic observations, Melanese's talk continues to construct the outlook for a positive future. First, she is confident that the tide will change in HR. Second, she attributes some of her pessimistic observations to the fact that she is a relatively new transplant from the Texas workplace culture. She believes also that despite some disparities in the workplace, she will continue to make Silicon Valley her home.

Throughout most of the first dialogue session with Betty, she downplayed her role as a latina working with mostly Anglo and Asian men. At times she seemed to be especially proud of the fact that she was able to detach herself from ethnicity as a workplace issue. I did not completely understand this position until I re-read her transcripts:

I really try to avoid ethnicity since it seems to work against me but I have had some issues with it. When I say something, or react to something people will say "oh that's their [Asian] culture, they're like that you know...that just blames it on ethnicity, people never *stick up for me* ...

Apparently she encountered lack of support from her direct manager during a discussion of a co-worker's performance. She recalls couching the issue in ethnic terms. Yet, Betty does acknowledge that during her quarterly review, her manager used the opportunity to discuss Betty's insensitivities to her Asian colleagues.

From that point, Betty decided not to discuss ethnic issues in the workplace 122 because it could be problematic. Her position is supported by the literature. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that workplace discussions of race, ethnicity, gender, and culture are toxic topics. They state also that employees can easily be labelled as racists for even suggesting that subcultures are treated differently and/or that the dominant culture reacts differently to people of color.

Yet, she also admitted to being singled out by an engineer of how she was different. She talked about the incident as a cultural difference. Betty had assisted a co-worker on a project, and her co-worker invited her to share their morning break together as a "thank you" gesture. She was surprised when the co-worker bought her a soda and candy as they chatted in the breakroom. Unfortunately for Betty, a Vietnamese co-worker approached them and said to "Betty, no wonder you're so fat, look at you eat candy bars." Betty recalls dousing him with her glass of soda and "...I stood up and told him to keep my culture out of it...". Betty was either unwilling or unable to articulate how many times she had ever resorted to using her ethnicity as a factor in interactions with colleagues. This is understandable. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that for many of us, issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and culture are hidden from us in the unconscious and emerge during times of conflict or stress.

After an especially heated exchange with her manager, a colleague suggested a coping strategy. He suggested that in future meetings with her manager that she mimic the behavior of a African-American woman when she's upset or challenging authority. Yet, this example raised an additional question: why would her manager treat an African-American woman differently than he would treat Betty? She stared at the crumpled napkin in her hand and was visibly bothered:

God, what am I saying? In other words if she was black they wouldn't tell her anything, or she would tell them, *don't even tell me that or don't even go there*, know what I'm saying???

When we talked about what this meant about how *she* was viewed as a latina she angrily responded that her manager probably thought that he couldn't control the actions of the African American woman but "maybe they *can control me*, because of my nationality they feel that they are more dominant!" As we walked to the car, she turned to me, smiled a very wistful smile and said "You know, I never thought about it from that perspective before." Perhaps Betty would have reached a similar realization on her own. It is likely that this new knowledge will add to the filters she now uses to parse the reality of her workplace.

I believe that two reasons block Betty's ability to discuss issues of workplace ethnicity. First of all, in her longest held job she reported to a female manager of a different ethnic background who ignored Betty's comments relative to ethnicity. Second, Betty dropped out of high school at the age of 15. At that time, many of her baby boomer high school cohorts in the San Francisco Bay Area were reaping the rewards gained by the Chicana/o activities of the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, at the time that she stopped attending school, many high schools and colleges were offering a plethora of classes on ethnicity and ethnic pride. I doubt that Betty had ever given serious thought to this fact. This is not to dismiss any intrapersonal thoughts she has experienced on the topic. Yet, to make an in-depth analysis of her ethnic identity awareness based on our dialogue sessions would take this project into the realm of psychology or sociology. This is not to be the case. But I cannot deny that some of her comments such as "...blondes have more fun..." and "...ethnicity didn't hold you back but it also didn't get you ahead..." points to a not-so-positive perspective on ethnicity. Furthermore, her wistful

comment "...I never thought about it from that perspective before..."

underscores an awareness that she has not been looking at the entire picture.

Phinney (as discussed in Varona, 1996) would argue that Betty is advancing from stage one to stage two of ethnic identity formation: ethnic identity search. The author argues that there are three stages involved in the process of ethnic identity formation:

- Unexamined ethnic identity
- Ethnic identity search
- Achieved ethnic identity

Sadly, at the age of 37 Betty finally appears poised to advance from her unexamined ethnic identity to an ethnic identity search. This does not imply that Betty's world will suddenly become different as a result of questioning the values of the dominant society she apparently has accepted wholesale. What it does signal is a desire to examine a more holistic approach to understanding how ethnicity might influence the workplace dynamics in her life.

Tina, Veronica, and Delia acknowledged early in their dialogues that there were few latinas in their organizations. By the third day in her new job, Tina's co-worker referred to the sole African American woman as the "black token." Tina noted that she and two other latina colleagues represented 100 percent of the company's latina workforce. Veronica and Delia represent 66 percent of the company's latina workforce.

By the time Tina began the new job, she had already experienced different treatment by various levels of management at other companies. A few years ago she worked for an especially insensitive manager. During a team meeting when she was unable to find one of his faxed emails he brutally questioned her in front of the team "What's the matter, you stupid or something?" In her current

position, she noted somewhat embarrassed that her manager reacted very strongly to the fact that she was a latina "...What do you mean, Tina—you're Mexican, and I said "yes" and he said "wow," that fast, like wow, you're kidding me...". Ever since that interaction Tina believes he has treated her differently from the rest of the employees. She states that most of the different treatment is in the form of being ignored by the CFO in spite of her contributions.

Veronica identified what she considered an especially painful slap in the face as the sole latina PR manager. For years she was aware that her company intended to establish a presence within the South American marketplace. Veronica lived with the belief that since she was fluent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese she was a natural fit for the PR manager role. Unfortunately, she did not receive the assignment. Instead, a Caucasian woman who referred to Peter, Veronica's manager, as a "stud" received the assignment. In retelling the story, Veronica appeared more puzzled than angry.

Interesting... She doesn't even know Spanish!...She uses agencies to represent us in different countries, but even if you are using an agency, you need to know something about the country and the culture, the language...I get a lot of emails from editors in Mexico...maybe they are attracted to my last name. They send me emails in Spanish and I forward them on to her, and she has the emails translated off-site!

Veronica readily admitted that she is no longer willing to play the role of the team player. This appears to have hurt her chance for this coveted assignment. This is supported by the literature. Loden and Rosener, (1991), state that lack of informal contact with those from the dominant culture can lead to exclusion from choice assignments and high profile corporate projects. Unfortunately, Veronica's disdain for her manager is impacting her ability to land these assignments. As a result, she cannot create a PR portfolio necessary to advance to higher levels of management in other PR departments.

Delia appeared exasperated by the situation. She was angry that the only latina PR manager had been denied what others in the corporation viewed as a “natural” match: an experienced PR manager, a latina with multilingual abilities for a South American account: 126

I mean we’re talking about business here—who better than someone who knows and speaks the language; English, Spanish, and Portuguese because it is so similar to Spanish. There are *ways of thinking*, there are *formalities*, the little simple things like when you sit down to do business with Latin Americans, you do not launch into business, *you talk*, and they like to test you about what you know about literature because it is so important in their country, stuff like that...

While the dialogue session proved to be passionate at times, Veronica and Delia’s talk validated aspects of the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) research that I initially discounted. Specifically, that the American style of business which is based on “getting down to business and figuring out the bottom line” is not practiced in all parts of the world. Veronica and Delia have travelled to Latin American countries, and Veronica has been preparing herself to manage the company’s Latin American accounts. They both acknowledged differences in workplace cultures that Americans must understand to effectively conduct business in Latin American countries. For example, both realized that simply having fluency with Spanish does not guarantee open lines of communication. Their “lived experience,” knowing that language does not necessarily constitute communication, especially intercultural communication, is supported in the literature (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997; Hall & Hall, 1990; Samovar & Porter, 1995).

As a latina born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, most latinas in my social worlds are U.S.-born. Therefore, Veronica and Delia’s comments based upon their “lived experience” required that I revisit some of my earlier critiques of the Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) work and give credit where credit is due. However, I would argue vociferously that future research on latinas/os should

research those of us born, raised, and educated in the U.S. who are English dominant. Such is the reflective nature of participatory research methodology. It exposes political agendas, creates new knowledge, and requires that we, as researchers, privilege the information from co-participants much as we privilege information from published scholarship. 127

Critical Analysis Phase

In this third phase the question: “How do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?”, will be addressed via the latinas’ reflections upon their awareness as the sole or one of the few latinas in the organization.

On February 28, 1999, the Reverend Jessie Jackson brought his Rainbow Coalition/PUSH agenda to a packed house audience in San Jose, California. The focus of his speech was what he termed the “Digital Divide,” the growing economic chasm between the highly paid technical workforce of high technology and the non-technical workforce of the service industries. In the week following his discussion, letters to the editor in the *San Jose Mercury News* excoriated Reverend Jackson for what some termed his desire to use “race baiting” to divide the Silicon Valley community. Unknown to many of the letter writers, a divide already exists within the “community” and everyday the latina co-participants must straddle the growing chasm.

One of the letters was written by T.J. Rodgers, the chief executive officer of Cypress Semiconductor Company of San Jose, California. Mr. Rodgers has established himself as a darling of Wall Street due to his bullish attitude on the free market and his belief that Silicon Valley represents the epitome of a meritocracy. He was interviewed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for its series on diversity in the high tech workforce (Angwin & Castaneda, 1998). Mr. Rodgers stated that the lack of Latinos and African Americans within high technology

companies is “not a problem.” Furthermore, he stated that “we hire the best 128 people for the job, regardless of race, color or creed.”

If we accept Mr. Rodgers’ statements on hiring as true, we would still require additional information to understand the relative lack of latinas/os in his workforce. A survey of the statistics for his company shows that 82 percent of his officials/managers are white in contrast with Latinos who only comprise two percent of this category. For the category of professionals, 64 percent are white in contrast with Latinos who only comprise five percent of this category. But yet Latino factory/support staff, nine percent, is almost double that of the Latino professional category. In effect, if we were to visit Mr. Rodgers’ company, we would encounter a workforce that is predominantly Caucasian in the official/managerial/professional categories.

In many ways this is what Melanese referred to throughout her dialogues. Much of her analysis of the two corporate environments, Texas and California, were based on her empirical observations. Simply put, the California site contained fewer latinas in professional and managerial roles. Furthermore, it was her opinion that the company sent a strong non-verbal message by reassigning our diversity officer, the lone African American male, to the Texas facility. She also noted that the HR recruiting department was comprised solely of Caucasian individuals. It was her belief that until a major shake-up occurred within the organization, our company would not hire individuals of diverse backgrounds. This is not to imply that our recruiters are racists. Powell (1998) addressed this issue in a discussion of hiring people to “fit” the organization. He argues that most managers tread dangerous waters as they approach the final days of the recruitment process. On the one hand, they are rewarded for hiring a person who will “fit” into the organization and reinforce the organization’s core values. On

the other hand, managers are pushed to hire individuals of diverse backgrounds whose presence is perceived to erode the company's cohesiveness. He argues also that many company recruiters view themselves as "good" employees. He reasons, therefore, that company recruiters look to find job candidates who are similar to themselves. This is very possibly the dynamic at work in our organization. Melanese does not believe that we will hear of more latinas hired for managerial/professional positions until the HR recruiting department is itself reorganized to include latina recruiters.

By the time of our first dialogue session, Tina's interactions with her CFO had been impacted by the "disclosure" of her ethnicity. Yet, in many ways Tina was not entirely surprised by his reaction. Prior to her job as an HR representative, Tina had worked for a high technology recruiting firm in Los Altos, California. Within less than a month, she became aware that the company was hiring illegal Chinese and Southeast Asian engineers and computer scientists to work in the lucrative contract jobs of Silicon Valley. These foreign nationals were willing to pay top dollar in exchange for illegal papers, entry into Canada, and then journey along the West Coast to Silicon Valley. Tina saw the treatment afforded these individuals as a result of their highly technical knowledge. Yet, she could not dismiss the fact that every year, thousands of illegal and nonskilled Latino workers were deported on a regular basis back to Mexico, Central and South America. During one of her first days as an HR representative, she overheard an exchange between a manager visiting from the company's southwest facility and her manager, the CFO, "...I learned to speak with the rep from Mexico after my wife bought a book on how to talk with your maid...". Tina believed that these and other experiences exemplified the sense that companies in Silicon Valley might need our skills and services, but we are not as welcomed as equals.

In summary, the co-participants sensed the relative lack of other latinas in the workforce by comments and actions of their colleagues and peers. Yet, the very fact that we have established a “beachhead” in the company indicates that our presence has changed the work environment. It is also a truism that salaries for jobs in high technology pay on average more than careers within the academic, service, and non-profit sectors. There are several reasons why we will not be chased out from our careers in high technology; not the least of which is earning a decent salary and sense of self-worth. To abandon our dreams would be to abandon those who wait in the wings waiting to join us. 130

Planning for Action

The fourth research question: “What would you as a latina do to have your company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?”, will be answered from their critical reflections and analysis as the sole or one of the few latinas in the workplace.

One of my first memories of high technology is of an interview that was arranged by one of my former business professors, Dr. James Harper. He knew that I was considering different career options right after graduating with my baccalaureate so he arranged an interview with one of his former students. Even though my portfolio was quite sparse, I was following the same path of his former student who was now an HR manager. When I approached the company’s HR department, I encountered a sea of bloneness. After my initial request for an application, one woman asked “Were you sent by CET?” The CET is a local and nationally funded Center for Employment and Training. Hundreds of low-income, marginally skilled, and or education limited women have benefited from their basic skills development and work experience classes that have enabled the women to qualify for stable jobs. The receptionist saw my name on the list for a

2:00pm interview, and inferred that I must be a CET candidate. I did not get a 131
job offer because I did not stay for the interview. A company that makes an
assessment of my abilities based upon my mestiza appearance is not a company
that values diversity. That many of the women were bleached blondes also
brought to mind whether they felt compelled to bleach their hair blonde in order
to fit in with the rest of the group.

Many individuals upon hearing this experience would say “that was then, this
is now.” But can we be so sure that attitudes and belief systems have changed all
that much? It is common to find newspaper articles on a weekly basis discussing
sexual and racial harassment lawsuits. Regardless of whether others have
changed, I know that I have changed as a result of my experience in the high
technology world. I have also changed as a result of this participatory research
project. Not only am I more confident with my skills, my knowledge and work
experience, I am also more confident as a woman, a latina woman. I do not regret
foregoing the interview, regardless of my desperation for a job and in spite of
having to explain the situation to Dr. Harper. But the woman I am today would
challenge the comment by the receptionist and write a letter of protest to the
receptionist’s manager, Dr. Harper’s former student.

It was this memory that pushed me to obtain from Tina the name of the Los
Altos-based company that is hiring known illegal nationals to work for high
technology firms. Initially, she was hesitant to reveal the company’s name. But
after a series of discussions and telephone conversations, she realized that in
“protecting” the company from disclosure, she was also perpetuating a racist
based view on which illegal aliens were deserving of American rights. Therefore,
one step that I can take is to report the company to the federal authorities to
investigate the firm. If safe passage into this country is obstructed, if jobs and

citizenship are denied to the illegal immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, then so should these rights be challenged of all individuals seeking a better life in America until the immigration laws of this country are reviewed and amended. This is, admittedly, a politically explosive admission and action step. However, maybe if high technology companies were forced to openly discuss why immigration laws must be amended or relaxed for computer and engineering elites, then a proactive dialogue could commence on the entire issue.

Another step is that I joined Reverend Jackson's growing list of people nationwide who are pooling their investment money to buy stock, and thereby a voice to lobby at corporate shareholder meetings and demand change at the executive level. Furthermore, Melanese and I have teamed together to create a strategy whereby we investigate some of the statistics reported by our company that were included in the *San Francisco Chronicle* report. I made several solo attempts to gain clarification of the numbers shown in the report. Several times our company spokeswoman stated that "we shouldn't really be talking about this kind of information." When I questioned whether we "shouldn't be" talking versus we "cannot talk" about the issue, she became visibly angry and refused to comment. Melanese and I both understand that we can obtain this information via the Freedom of Information Act, similar to the strategy used by reporters for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Yet, Melanese has a much closer relationship and rapport with our HR management. She is now committed to opening a dialogue with HR on the topic. She then plans to invite me to participate and discuss the reasons why we both are interested in how the company compiled their numbers for the diversity report.

Another step where we can all participate is in questioning why there are so few people of color within our organization. This can be done within the context

of many of the ethnic celebrations or heritage celebrations in which most companies participate. Black history month, Cinco de May, and Asian New Year festivals are prime examples of opening the discourse to why the workforce remains predominantly Anglo. And last, we cannot underestimate the power of networking with one another. During the course of this participatory research project, all of the co-participants appeared stymied as to why so few latinas are represented in the high technology workforce. Many companies offer their employees opportunities to participate in community development projects. We can use these opportunities to practice our networking skills and encourage other latinas to apply for open job positions. Companies also request suggestions from employees on projects and services that the company can provide back to the community. Outreach to local schools would be one way for children and adolescents to gain awareness of high technology careers as a possibility. Outreach and networking with the local schools is of critical importance. Without educating the next generation of the possibilities, latinas will always feel the discomfort and huge responsibility of being a "trailblazing pioneer." Without our combined pioneering efforts, those waiting in the wings to join the high tech workforce may decide to look elsewhere. And if this happens we will all lose.

For this generative theme, the first research question:

As a latina how do your team membership skills influence your "order of talk" when speaking with peers as opposed to your management culture?

will be answered from the perspective of their awareness of constructing diversity in a high technology culture.

First, I discuss comments that reflect their awareness of diversity goals within the corporate environment. Second, I discuss how they felt in knowing that true diversity has yet to arrive at their workplace. Third, there follows a discussion of the latinas' reflection and analysis of how diversity should be constructed within the organization. Fourth, the actions the latinas have committed to pursue relative to this generative theme are presented.

Descriptive Phase

In this final section of generative themes, attention is focused on the latinas' discussion of constructing their version of diversity. In the previous sections I summarized how their talk constructs perceptions of whether or not they felt like team members; how their talk constructs whether they were recognized for individual achievement; and how their talk constructs how they felt as the sole or one of the few latinas in an organization. This process of deconstruction, i.e., separating team membership out into "this space;" organizing their talk as the sole latina into "this space;" assessing their talk of how they've experienced recognition into "this space," has enabled the six of us to separately analyze attitudes, feelings, and direct observations that shape our understanding of social worlds of diversity. I felt this process akin to ripping apart a Rubic's cube to understand how the pieces were initially assembled.

At one of our follow-up sessions Melanese alluded to a major HR reorganization to take place at our company. As of the writing of this thesis, the reorganization is now in full swing. However, the reorganization is not merely limited to the HR department. Between the months of February - June, 1999, the company anticipates that between 300-500 people must be laid off to achieve corporate financial and market goals. The downsizing is considered a necessity if the company is to remain viable in an international market. To escape the notoriety of bad press that results from any massive layoff of employees, the layoffs will occur by downsizing small numbers of employees on a weekly basis. Therefore, on a weekly basis it becomes easier to observe the lack of adherence to diversity goals. Some departments have reverted to an all Anglo group. Most of the "surviving" employees are quite young. Not only does this reflect the ageism inherent in high technology, but younger employees are also at the bottom or midrange of the pay scale and thereby save the company dollars via lower salaries. A downsizing is also a highly political process. Within the past month or so, it has become commonplace to meet an employee initially targeted for layoff but has been "reabsorbed" by another department. Thus far, the only reabsorbed employees are Caucasian. This may not be an intentional act on the part of the company. However, the fact remains that employee demographics are returning to a more homogenous nature: young, educated, Caucasian males and females.

And yet, Melanese remains optimistic about the possibilities of workplace diversity. Moreover, she questions why diversity needs to be *constructed*. She believes that diversity should be part of the process and that "talking" diversity does not equate with "doing" diversity. However, she does admit that diversity at our company has been hampered due to a more traditionally oriented HR department:

And this takes it right back to HR, their managers, and their VP. One point brought up in the focus groups is some employees talked about the latest technology announcement and our new partner had three male minorities on the panel, there was a Latino, a Chinese, and a Frenchman, and we had the president and two other white guys...they were all white and our employees noticed that!

One reason that she remains optimistic is that her department, corporate security, appears to have a better handle on the diversity issue. From the very beginning of our dialogue process, Melanese has professed the belief that corporate security departments both in California and Texas are much more diverse than the rest of the corporation:

...diversity has always been part of our organization, our department's vision, or mission, and we don't think about it. Looking back because I did reflect on this question, we have a diverse staff not only in the managerial positions but also the supervisors and also the security officers...We have people from different countries, cultures, beliefs, as managers, supervisors, and security officers as well.

To an outsider, her talk gives rise to a fairly obvious question: If Corporate Security is so well integrated, why not the rest of the company? Part of the answer may be that the security guards posted throughout the company's campus environment are hourly paid *contract* (temporary) employees hired from an outside security agency. Many of these men and women of ethnic backgrounds work fewer than 40 hours a week and do not qualify for insurance and profit sharing as do all full-time permanent employees. Many companies in the Valley farm out positions for security guards, housekeepers, janitors, and cooks to local temporary agencies. In this manner the corporations "re-purchase" the services at a lower cost without overhead such as insurance, profit sharing, paid holidays, and vacations. Ironically, this is the type of Digital Divide that Reverend Jackson wants to bring to public notice. Contract hourly workers are comprised largely of nontechnical people from ethnic backgrounds, young single mothers, young men without the benefit of a college education, and older semi-retired males. When we

talked about this permanent underclass of people that fulfills *her* departmental needs for diversity, we both became quite uncomfortable. This will be addressed in the section *Critical Analysis Phase*.

During the first dialogue session with Betty, it became apparent that she felt it best to avoid the “ethnicity card.” But she did feel strongly about a former job in another division of the company to admit that “...In the Communications Department I felt like they listened to you more if you were white than if you were latina...”. She talked about her observations relative to diversity in a very detached manner, a nonverbal statement about how she views diversity:

...do we live by our value statements—respect for other people, honesty, integrity, valuing diversity, people are our biggest asset? I think they [the company] are trying...they give out information, and I think they seem to push that on us, but I can only speak for the people that I work with and say “No”...

In many ways, Betty’s talk validated comments from Melanese that “talking” diversity is different than “doing” diversity. Kikoski and Kikoski (1997) state that talking in the workplace about certain topics, i.e., culture, gender, race, ethnicity, can be toxic. But if corporations simply talk about “doing” diversity but never act upon their talk, we will never know whether or not diversity can truly flourish.

For Tina, constructing diversity has been problematic because her HR department assists in the recruiting, but does not have final control over the individuals hired. It was ironic that due to her crazy work pace, she was not even abreast of the “official” number of ethnic people employed. She admits that the company is not sensitive to ethnic diversity and that she is the only latina on staff. Furthermore, it appears that the company routinely hires ethnic people on an “as needed” basis “...We just hired an African-American engineer consultant because they fired the one African-American woman.”

When she talked about the company's mission and values, she could not 138
articulate either one, even though she is part of the HR group. She also talked of
the influence wielded by Sales and Marketing in the company's hiring practices:

The department with lots of influence is Sales and Marketing, they are
all white. They do all their own tech recruiting, their own hiring, so
that means tech support, sales, administrative assistants, everyone in
the group, secretaries and clerks, everyone!

Tina's comments validate the research by Powell (1998). He argues that many
company recruiters view themselves as "good" employees. He reasons, therefore,
that company recruiters look to find job candidates who are similar to themselves.
However, Tina has focused on one department, Sales and Marketing. The Sales
and Marketing departments of most high technology firms are well known for
wielding political clout and for enjoying some of the largest budgets within an
entire company. Unlike many of the younger managers found in research and
design teams, Sales and Marketing senior level executives are typically in their
50s and 60s. These individuals have achieved their positions due to years of
creating networks and alliances, their ability to negotiate, schmooze with clients
and cement megasized contracts. Therefore, Tina is correct in noting that the Sales
and Marketing department ignores abiding by long-term diversity goals. She
noted also that one of the company's core values "we operate with a minimum of
bureaucracy and a never-ending focus on productivity" was a signal that the
company would ignore or avoid abiding by diversity goals.

Veronica and Delia, colleagues and close friends, talked of an incident that
rattled both of their nerves. Veronica was informed by her manager that she could
not attend a major trade show in Sao Paulo because "...In Brazil women aren't
respected as much and men you know they really respect men in positions of
authority...". Furthermore, Veronica challenged her manager by rewording his

argument into a polarization of the genders "... you're going because you're a 139 man, and I can't go because I'm a woman?" This experience, coupled with the fact that she had not received the assignment to represent a South America client, led her to believe that diversity is not fully embraced by the company.

Delia observed that their company has various international clients. Yet, many of the research and development engineering teams are either English dominant or heavily weighted with non-native Asian engineers who speak English as a second language. Her observation is that international telephone calls that others cannot understand are forwarded to her office. Delia noted that an engineer forwarded a call to her from a client in Greece. She was frustrated that "between my Spanish and English, and his Greek, Italian, and French language, we were able to communicate!" Delia observes that the frustration of working in a monolingual office when most high technology corporations have international clients will only worsen until corporations address the issue. It was interesting to note that few if any of the books on diversity management (Carnevale & Stone, 1995; Chemers, et al., 1995; Kikoski & Kikoski, 1997; and Loden & Rosener, 1991), discussed the importance of multilingualism in today's workplace. The lack of talk about bi- or multilingualism implies that English will remain the dominant language of American corporations. But as Reverend Jackson so humorously pointed out "English is a great language but there is nothing sacred about it...Jesus did not speak it!" (Angwin & Castaneda, 1998). It was not until Delia voiced the issue that I, too, became aware of the need for multilingual workers in today's diverse workplace. Her input is one of the many reasons that I now believe that input, experience, and suggestions of the co-participants are as valid and as necessary as published scholarly research to assure a holistic perspective of a topic.

In this phase of the study, the question: “As a latina how does it feel in knowing that your team membership efforts are not completely or are marginally acknowledged?”, will be addressed by how they feel knowing that true diversity has yet to arrive in their organization.

By this phase of our dialogues, each of the co-participants had admitted to feelings of frustrations and for some of them, anger, that the value of diversity is yet to be acknowledged by their companies. In many respects their sentiments are shared by individuals across the nation. Carnevale and Stone (1995) perhaps state it best when they acknowledged that “The American workforce has *always* been heterogeneous, but only recently have differences begun to be recognized and honored.” (p. 1). Change can be problematic especially when individuals have lived *unaware* of the taken-for-granted notion that their (dominant group) needs would receive top priority. And one of the most important needs of the dominant group has always been economic security. This is one of the reasons that Reverend Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition/PUSH agenda state that the Digital Divide is about economics and not race. He notes a widening chasm between rich and poor, a divide that cuts across racial lines (Angwin & Castaneda, 1998). He knows why the people he has talked with throughout the nation are frustrated and angry. Many of these people are the working poor that face the threat of being left behind and of not benefiting from jobs created by the advances in technology.

In a sense, the co-participants, and I include myself, are all in danger of becoming part of the working poor. Not one of us belongs to a group that actually produces the innovations, or creates the new technology. Each of us belongs to a corporate service group that helps to meet the needs of the technology creators and innovators. At the very least, we are all learning to navigate through this

challenging field if at least to prepare us for careers in other industries.

Throughout this project, Melanese remained the most optimistic about workplace diversity. Yet, when she learned that our diversity officer had been transferred to the Texas facility, she truly appeared stymied to explain the situation and was frustrated over his transfer. Furthermore, her resolve ebbed a bit as she talked about the results of an internal survey dealing with various company issues, including diversity:

...You don't even need a survey to reach the same result, *just walk around* and you *see* Anglos and Asians predominate in most of the jobs but the latinas/os do the cooking, clean the bathrooms, sweep our offices every night, mow the lawns...

It was painful to see the shift in her perspective. Melanese would not admit to it but I submit that she feels betrayed. She bought into a "semblance" of diversity which she found within her own department of Corporate Security. Therefore, she couldn't understand why the rest of the company simply did not adopt the progressive policies of her own workgroup. Toward the end of February, 1999, she heard of another action against diversity by senior level management. The manager in charge of our Career Partnership Center which offers classes on workplace diversity, employee development, etc., resigned after encountering many frustrations with senior level management. When Melanese talked about this management level resignation I was stunned. I had expected to work with Janice on setting up a career network web for latinas graduating from the SJSU Communications Studies Department. At this point I realized that Melanese was quite angry. Her nonverbal demeanor was very terse. She responded to my battery of questions with a series of one worded answers, either "yes" or "no." Shortly after our discussion I scanned books and articles on diversity and diversity management, hoping to find a discussion on betrayal or jadedness on

the part of employees in light of conflicting corporate messages. Not one author discussed the situation from the perspective of employees, especially ethnic employees on how they viewed such action from highest level management. This is an issue that could well be addressed by a participatory type research. However, regardless of her resignation I will move ahead with my plans to set up a career network web for latinas graduating from the SJSU Communications Studies Department.

Both Tina and Betty seemed to address this issue through a "I'm leaving so it no longer matters" filter. Tina expressed exasperation that despite her best efforts as an HR representative, the Sales and Marketing department moved ahead with its hiring practices without addressing diversity goals. She appeared resigned that HR was in a such a weakened position that it could not enforce regulations:

...each department needs some type of ethnic representation, but we can't force them, we don't have an EOE or an affirmative action policy in place. Right now we're trying to put together an AA program because we get government tax credits, but we hardly have any minorities...

Tina complained that the Sales and Marketing directors used the excuse that they simply "grew too fast because we had to" to avoid adhering to government regulations. This is a point that was highlighted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* report on diversity. Many of the companies that were in violation of federal affirmative action regulations gave the excuse that their companies "grew too fast." The report initially targeted 54 Bay Area companies. Several companies protested the newspaper's request for information. Eventually the *San Francisco Chronicle* published information on 33 high technology companies in the San Francisco Bay Area. The reporters found that since 1992 a minimum of 12 Silicon Valley high technology firms were cited for failure to comply with affirmative action policies. Ironically, all the firms received government contracts of at

minimum \$50K. Their contracts state that they do not need to hire a certain 143
number of minorities, but the company must be able to show a “good faith effort”
to implement an affirmative action program.

Within this context Tina’s talk of diversity reveals many troubling aspects of a company that employs 115 people, five of which are people of color. First, the company is in violation of federal affirmative action regulations if they receive tax credits for hiring people of color and only about 2.5% of their workforce are people of color. Second, the very wording in the mission, vision, and value statement “we operate with a minimum of bureaucracy” is a nonverbal signal that the company probably will drag its feet in creating either the EOE post or affirmative action policies. Third, she admitted that the HR manager does not have an HR background or knowledge of the field. This speaks volumes as to why the Sales and Marketing departments are unbalanced vis-a-vis hiring practices. Fourth, the fact that the technical recruiter from the Sales and Marketing division is best friends with the CFO raises the possibility that unless change comes by edict or a federal lawsuit, the technical recruiter will not alter his recruitment “practices.” It is no wonder that Tina feels the frustration of working in such a powerless role. She knows that the company’s current infrastructure is not amenable to workplace diversity.

Betty constructed a workplace environment that while not the healthiest, pointed to a tacit agreement that she could live with the dynamics until she found another job.

After re-reading Betty’s transcripts several times, I was at a loss on how to assess her situation. What exactly *were* the parameters of my role as a researcher/co-participant? I felt so hypocritical knowing that my library overflowed with books on the human potential movement, on working the “inner landscape” to

manifest our true dreams. Therefore, once we both returned from the 1998 two-week holiday season, I called her one last time to ask if she had any final comments. The following is an entry from our meeting: 144

...she talked about how she spent the full two weeks of Christmas shutdown thinking about what she wanted to do with her life...I looked at her chubby but youthful face gazing at me in a smile, "I'm going back to school! I can't go on like this, I'm too young. When you said to think of education as an investment in myself, it made sense". (Personal journal, January 7, 1999).

Even as I re-read the entry, it still has a powerful effect on me. These tears of happiness feel good, they feel right! During the Fall Semester of 1997 when I first read the research by Kikoski and Kikoski (1997), I reacted angrily to some results of their research. I vowed to voice my perspective and counter their study. In doing so, it set an entire process in motion but I had no idea where it would lead. As a result of this project, one latina is returning to school!

I do not fault the co-participants for their sense of anger, frustration, confusion, and exasperation in sensing the divide between what their companies profess in contrast with its corporate actions. What is amazing is that they have all maintained such a cheery demeanor at work as they move about making their future plans. There are individuals who would view their cheery attitude as hypocritical in light of what the co-participants have experienced and have reported. But Carnevale and Stone (1995) stress that it is political suicide for employees of color to walk about the company with their attitudes "on their sleeves" (p. 290). While I agree with the authors, it was interesting to note that they did not discuss employees from the dominant culture and how these individuals display their attitudes.

In this third phase the question: “How do *you* perceive diversity in the organization?”, will be addressed via the latinas’ reflections and analysis of how diversity should be constructed within the organization.

For this section, all of the co-participants pointed to a need for training of the employees and management staff on the benefits of diversity. Incidentally, more than one co-participant targeted her comments exclusively to training of the management staff. Furthermore, they advocated that there should be internal processes that gauge how consistently groups, managers, and divisions achieve diversity goals.

From her vantage point, Melanese suggested two ways that she, as a latina, could help the corporation produce an equitable vision of diversity:

For one, be more vocal especially when we attend some of these team meetings about diversity with our peers and within the company.
...implement a benchmarking program similar to Motorola, they have an excellent diversity program and they have proven that if there is diversity in the departments then the company will be very successful...

During our final follow-up sessions, I noticed that her former upbeat and optimistic outlook had returned. Her talk rarely if ever described others in negative or bitter terms. When she was confused by the actions taken by the company with our affirmative action officer and the manager of the CPC, she didn’t criticize individuals, she questioned actions. Therefore, her talk continuously reinforced positive constructions of her social worlds.

One awkward issue that we had to discuss was her obvious pride in knowing that her department practiced diversity along racial, ethnic, gender, age, etc., lines. We had to discuss the implications that many people on her workforce were contract hourly employees. We could not escape the issue that Melanese, as a

manager for corporate security and as an advocate for increased diversity and empowerment of latinas, was employing members of the working poor to reach her departmental goals. She is aware of the corporate politics that eliminated entire service oriented departments such as security, only to rehire the employees on a piecemeal basis. This type of corporate maneuvering has given rise to the large food industries that now feed Silicon Valley workers the latest in nouvelle cuisine. Yet, most of the food service workers themselves cannot afford to buy a cup of Starbucks coffee in the cafeterias they service. Initially, Melanese could not articulate her feelings. Eventually, she admitted that many contract workers require full-time employment that will provide educational benefits before they can experience any improvement in their living conditions.

Tina talked about steps the company could make for the environment to be more diversity sensitive. Her first priority would be to lobby the company to hire an affirmative action officer with the power to enforce government regulations. She then advocates a large-scale training program:

Then train the managers on how to recruit. Because right now they are not aware, they just hire anyone, they aren't aware of these different programs like AA or EOE, they just hire who they want, and most of the time they just hire friends, so it is usually within their own ethnic group, people that they know! But like I said, the technical recruiter is the CFO's best friend, so, that tells you something!

I was continually amazed at how the lived experience of the latinas would eventually be encapsulated in scholarly or mainstream reports on issues surrounding diversity. Each of the co-participants spoke of different dimensions of diversity or ways to improve diversity awareness through proper training. When I read and compared their text with the diversity report from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, I realized that so much of their experiences and first-hand knowledge were reflected in the report. Yet, none of the latinas read the *San*

Francisco Chronicle multi-part series on diversity! As Tina continued her discussion, she revealed that she joined the company via networking with a friend, Cecelia, who eventually hired her. This comment affirms also the finding of the *San Francisco Chronicle* report that up to 60 percent of new hires are employee referrals. Therefore, if a company's employee workforce is predominantly white, it stands to reason that a large portion of the internal referrals will also reflect white job candidates. In this particular instance, Tina reveals an awareness that by the time a company's new job listings are posted, the positions have already been filled. Therefore, "...the hiring managers are just going through the motions." Although her comments may seem dismal, I argue that they are not atypical. Moreover, these are the "excavated politics" that some people encounter in Silicon Valley, in the year 1999 (Conquergood, 1991).

In spite of this assessment Tina feels optimistic about life in Silicon Valley:

We bought our home, Ciera goes to daycare, things are better for us. Sometimes I think "just a little while longer and I'll get a job closer to home."

Veronica and Delia both stressed the need for company mandated diversity training. One area that received Veronica's specific attention was the need for intercultural communication. It was interesting that she felt that Asian and latina employees were as poles apart as were Caucasian and latina employees. She also felt it necessary to state that companies should be aware that their various demographic groups not be weighted toward any particular group:

Well, the organization is culturally diverse but it is mainly made up of Asians and the predominant culture is Anglo. There are very few latinas/os if at all...they can do more to bring in a more diverse culture and not have it be so heavily weighted on White and Asian cultures.

Veronica was also much more critical of senior level management and felt that this group in particular required extensive training:

...the company doesn't have a mission as far as diversity goes that I have seen...I believe that our message should be to have a more multi-cultural organization...I do believe that our executive force does not have a diverse vision and so again, that is where the problem lies so maybe seminars on cultural diversity, programs to promote cultural diversity, and cross cultural communication would be very helpful.

Veronica's comments were similar to comments by African American engineers who were interviewed for the *San Francisco Chronicle* report. Each engineer stated that diversity did not exist at their company, and that this message came from "the top." Therefore, Veronica's comments of senior level executives is quite valid.

From the very outset of the dialogues, Delia felt that in her immediate area diversity was not much of a problem because of the example set by her manager, a Chinese-American. And it is precisely because she accepted a position working for a male executive from Singapore that she contextualized her suggestion:

When I came to this company, nobody told me what it was like to be from Singapore. What I would have like to have known: what is it like, what is their culture like, what do they expect? Nobody tells you anything, so I think that the company needs to look at where do we do business, who best would represent our interests...that is the type of person we need to hire.

She also continued on her theme of hiring multilingual employees whose role would be to act as a United Nations translator, "To me you need to hire people who are multilingual!" In today's global marketplace, bilingualism is definitely a plus. She suggested that companies need to hire people "who are a little more cosmopolitan, who are multilingual, and very good representatives of the organization." In many ways, companies should be grooming a new classification of employees as "ambassadors" for their growing list of international clients.

Finally, Delia had a rather interesting observation of the various work circles of the Asian employees. She stressed that what she observed was not "diversity" but more akin to segregation along work specialization roles. She realized the Asian-American and Asian employees were segregated into discrete work circles:

Well, we have a lot of Asians, and by Asians I mean lots of Chinese and Filipinos, a lot of Filipinos work at the company. They usually work in accounting. Now with this other division that dissolved, some of those people that came over to our division are Asian, they are all Asian. Its kind of interesting that division no longer exists but they were almost completely Asian, 1 out of 20 was not Asian.

Veronica and Delia's experience and talk emphasize the need for a more multi-cultural approach to the company's hiring practices. Furthermore, the company should make an attempt to recruit multilingual engineers, target Spanish-speaking engineers as an HR goal, or hire a band of individuals whose sole function is to translate material, akin to a translator for the United Nations.

The fact that Veronica's boss, Peter, believed he could make a generalizing statement about Brazil and all of Latin America reveals that the company needs knowledgeable consultation with a person well versed in the different cultures south of the border. Last, no amount of HR-produced multicultural programs can address the problem if upper management, both Anglo and Asian, refuse to embrace change and move beyond their personal comfort level.

Veronica's and Delia's talk constructed social worlds open to diversity but with an ethnic bias, individuals of Asian-American and Asian ancestry in addition to Caucasians with engineering or computing skills. Veronica voiced her belief that executive management does not have a diverse vision which exacerbates the issue. It is interesting once again to note that Delia's talk never implicated her boss in the company's diversity issues. I argue that through and in their talk, Veronica and Delia perpetuate the social construction of these different worlds. Last, I believe that Delia's manager plays a significant role in the positive social construction of her workplace.

One of the many joys of this PR project has been to see the increased confidence of the latina co-participants. During our "pre" participatory project

phase meetings, some of the latin@s would venture a comment or offer a suggestion and then look for my feedback. I confessed to them that in many ways I was just as lost and searching for answers. It is true that my background in organizational communication helped to fill some knowledge gaps. Yet, very little of the graduate program with the exception of Dr. Varona's class on managing diversity was directly applicable to this particular project. Therefore, some of the co-participants appeared reluctant to discuss or venture diversity related theories. I could understand their reluctance to keep quiet. Finally, I gave my perspective on theory making "the one with the loudest voice, the most persistent voice, or the most squeaky and irritating voice of the evening, wins! Their theory becomes top-dog until next time!" This perspective would not win approval within academic circles, but we used it as a basis of understanding and as a beginning.

Within a relatively short period of time, each of the latin@s was contributing on a regular basis or placing phone calls to clarify their comments. As we "mapped" our personal experiences, suggestions for why things happened, and thoughts on ways to improve our situations, we began to see the creation and sense-making of our "new knowledge." At this point I am actually choking back the tears. Currently, I am surrounded by books and articles on diversity and related areas. These well-intentioned authors with their books and articles on diversity have yet to experience some of the humiliating lived experiences of the co-participants. The books and articles at best can contribute hypothetical situations with hypothetical people living in a hypothetical world where people speak up for their dignity without fear of retaliation and loss of job and economic security. I often refer to this type of thinking as "sub-micron" level thinking. Sub-micron refers to the lint-free, extremely sterile, and fragile environment where microchips are produced. The employees that work in the environment are not allowed to

wear make-up, perfume, aftershave lotion, hair spray, hand lotion, etc., when 151
they enter sub-micron facilities. They must wear a body, hands, feet, face, and
head covering garment called the "bunny suit." If even one particle of a foreign
substance enters the sub-micron facility, thousands of chips can be damaged.

Therefore, how realistic is it for diversity consultants to write books within
their "sub-micron thinking" that tout the benefits of diversity without paying
homage to why diversity is necessary? Namely, to specifically include real life
incidents of why diversity training is required within organizations. As long as
diversity consultants and scholars persist in publishing such documents, people
will not understand how their steadfast ethnocentricity tramples on the beliefs
and desires of others who are different. As part of this project, I sent an email to
over 50 California organizations listed on the world wide web. I asked if any of
their clients had ever requested diversity training due to problems in the client's
workforce. I received zero responses to my query. And yet, newspaper articles on
a daily basis attest to the fact that women and men of color continue to experience
harassment on the job. This is the main reason why I used very few academic
citations in the *Critical Analysis* section just completed. Very little of the academic
sub-micron thinking was applicable or necessary to substantiate the lived
experience of the latinas. I have lived their experiences, too.

Planning for Action

The fourth research question: "What would you as a latina do to have your
company produce the vision that you believe to be diversity?", will be answered
from their critical reflections and analysis of the tools and knowledge available to
them to bring about workplace diversity.

From my perspective, this section differs from the previous section, *Critical
Analysis* in a slight but important difference. In the previous section, we all made

suggestions of what we thought was important for the company to bring about workplace diversity. In this final section, though it is much shorter, each latina committed to performing one concrete action step. This is a subtle but powerful a change as can be heard when a person states "I will try to do this for you..." versus "I will do this for you" (even if I fail, even if things go wrong, etc.).

Melanese committed to opening a course of dialogue with our HR department to find out why:

- Our affirmative action officer was transferred to Texas, a facility that doesn't need his expertise
- Our Career Partnership Center manager quit in frustration over differences with senior level corporate executives

Melanese is committed to inviting me into the discussions even though I am now a *persona non grata* with Employee Relations for making my own persistent inquiries during the early part of February, 1999.

Tina is committed to polishing and presenting her suggestions for implementing an affirmative action plan and diversity goals to her manager, the CFO. She also admitted to having a good rapport with the president of the company, a female engineer from Taiwan. If the CFO claims to be too busy to read the report, Tina plans to discuss it with the CEO when she encounters her in the coffee room or the ladies room. Furthermore, if she decides to leave the company, a move she is contemplating, she intends to hand over to the CEO, CFO, and HR manager a list describing her differences with company policies.

Betty has committed to complete her high school education. Personally, I see this as a major accomplishment of this study. She was initially so scornful of the necessity of education. But now she realizes that without investing in herself, by not treating herself as she treats the money in her 401K retirement plan, she will lapse further behind in this high technology era.

Veronica committed to challenging senior level management on the competency of her current manager. She loves her career and feels that she has much to offer the organization. Yet, she is also aware of how much damage can be created by a manager with inadequate managing and people skills. As of March 10, 1999, much has changed in her environment. Her manager was asked to resign, along with the woman who referred to him as a "stud." Veronica is now in charge of the public relations department! Nevertheless, Veronica believed that problems must first be addressed at the senior management level. She is also committed to talking about the rewards and challenges of being a public relations manager to other latinas that she meets through her various social organizations.

Delia is committed and has invested a great deal of energy with the race discussion groups that she joined in October of 1998. Not only has she gained a better understanding of other cultures in Silicon Valley, she has also a better awareness of how people from other cultures view her. Delia is committed to networking and consciousness raising through her race discussion groups and through her Pablo Neruda poetry group.

As for myself, when I began this participatory project, I was frustrated by much of what I observed in my workplace environment. At this point I am now committed to help solidify the "beachhead" that we latinas, and so many other solitary latinas scattered throughout Silicon Valley, have established. I am also committed to working with Melanese to find out what happened to our affirmative action officer and our CPC manager. These two individuals represented the core of our corporate diversity thrust and neither of us want to see the initiative fade away. I am also committed to learn to speak Spanish. I am very excited about this. Now that the graduate program nears its end, I have the time to devote study hours to learn the language of my home and heart. By

learning Spanish I can also be a more effective member of different outreach 154
groups that ask for bilingual volunteers, and my future writings can reach a larger
audience. I am also committed to working with Dr. Federico Varona to establish a
networking group for latina graduates of the SJSU Communication Studies
Department. Even though my specialty is organizational communication, I do not
mean to imply that this networking group will refuse to assist individuals in other
areas of Communication Studies. But currently, organizational communication is
my base of knowledge and Dr. Varona and I have yet to sit and list the details.

In essence this participatory research project brought me full circle, back to
where I started: working for a high tech firm deep in the heart of Silicon Valley.
One characteristic that I have learned about myself is that I don't give up very
easily, even when my heart and head are shouting "STOP!" I may or may not be
part of the downsizing of our company to take place between February-June,
1999. And, if I go down with the ship, I will undoubtedly paddle to a life raft and
swim safely to shore. My latina roots have given me this confidence in myself.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*"Why I write now is complicated and
yet simple. I write because I have to,
and because the more I learn,
the more I believe in the power
of the word."*

*Gloria Bird
Reinventing the Enemy's Language:
Contemporary Native Women's
Writings of North America*

Introduction

Long ago, perhaps in another lifetime, a chubby little girl with unruly curly hair watched as her first grade teacher wrote words on the chalkboard. She could not remember the words. Worse, she forgot how to *say* the words. Miss Niven had written the same words on the chalkboard yesterday, but today the little girl could not remember. She stared at the pictures *and* words on the flash cards; this is a C-A-T; this is a H-A-T; this is a B-A-T. But the words on the flash cards and the words on the chalkboard were different. So, she carefully traced the black dotted outline of the words on her paper as the teacher wrote words beginning with "th" across the chalkboard.

"Class" said Miss Niven, "can anyone say these words?" A roomful of first graders at St. Christopher School stared with blank expressions. Miss Niven wrote "th" on the chalkboard in big letters, "can anyone remember how "t" and "h" sound together?" "Remember yesterday when we put our tongue between our teeth and made the "th" sound? How does it sound? Can anyone remember? Donald, how do you say this word," she pointed to each character: "T-H-E"?" No

response. Suddenly, the little girl leaned forward and said, "The...the word is 156
"the"." "Very good, Yvonne, yes, the word is "the!" She looked pleased then
pointed to other words and I quickly responded; they, this, that, them, there. Soon
the class joined the chorus. That afternoon I ran all the way home with five gold
stars on the paper where I had traced the black dotted outline of the "th" words.

I can still remember Miss Niven smiling and encouraging as I answered in
rapid fire succession. From that day forward words empowered my world. They
opened the doors to books, reading, love of school and the desire for an advanced
education. I learned the power of the word at an early age. And yet, the
knowledge and belief in the power of participatory research was more than 30
years into *my* future! Therefore, the reasons that I write are as compelling as those
that led Gloria Bird, the author of the opening quote to this chapter, to write her
works. I write to right the wrongs that have been written about latinas and
latinos, about our communities, about how "different" we are from the dominant
culture. I write to counter tired cliches and stereotypes still too readily available
about *la comunidad* in the academic literature and public policy papers. I write to
vindicate and validate my parent's talk, wincing even now as I remember how
they were belittled or felt ashamed of how they spoke English.

I am not a radical. I do not advocate change through violence. Yet I believe
passionately that a language once used to marginalize us can be co-opted for use
as a tool of *our* advancement. But it is our responsibility to learn the language,
research and write our own experiences, and network in social worlds that can
produce positive social change. This is why I must write. To this end I have
studied a topic of interest, latinas' cultural communication paradigm as expressed
through their "order of talk." I focused on the cultural communication paradigm

because prior research revealed stereotypes based on lack of understanding 157
of our culture, perhaps due to outsider research.

Summary

This study sought to understand how latinas' "order of talk" with management and colleagues constructed perceptions of team membership by sharing examples of such behavior. Furthermore, the study sought to understand how the perception of team membership, as reflected in their "order of talk," influenced the social construction of diversity within their respective workplaces.

Participatory research served as the research methodology for this thesis. Using the PR methodology, I gathered information and assessed the generative themes as manifested by an "order of talk." In doing so, this research created a space for the co-participants to express their constructions of social worlds related to diversity. Their words were recorded in taped dialogue sessions. Through dialoguing, an "order of talk" emerged, engendering an awareness of how "talk" "constructs" knowledge and social worlds of diversity. This study contributes to literature on latinas as we enter a relatively new realm: the high-technology industry. Latinas have much to offer the high-technology industry, as corporate employees *or* technical and engineering consultants. This mode of business partnership is a reality given that since 1990 latinas have established 350,000 new businesses and are the fastest-growing segment among all ethnic groups in the American business community (Andrade, 1998).

A literature review of diversity in an organizational context generally focused on how "Others" have changed the face of the corporate environment previously the exclusive domain of white males. The "Others," once labeled as "minorities and women" now includes the dimensions of age, ethnicity, gender, physical

disabilities, sexual orientation, and work specializations. Scant literature was 158
available on how communication, specifically, *cultural* communication paradigms
enhanced creation of diversity in the workplace. For this reason, the Kikoski and
Kikoski (1997) research was heavily cited throughout this paper. Their research
identified and discussed the cultural communication paradigms of five distinct
cultural groups: African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, white females, and white
males. Not surprisingly the bulk of their study explicated how the four "Other"
groups could successfully communicate with an established white male
communication paradigm. Additionally, the "order of talk" construct, (Shotter,
1993) was forwarded by the authors as enabling communication among the five
distinct cultural communication groups under study.

The literature revealed how past cultural groups have assimilated into the
corporate work arena. This has occurred normally by following or adapting to the
prevailing values and work ethics of the dominant group, white males. This
became most obvious as individuals entered management positions. The Kikoski
and Kikoski (1997) research challenged the belief that corporate employees must
adapt to an established structure, a "fit" or suffer the consequences.
Unfortunately, some of the research foundational to a latina/o communication
paradigm was perceived by this author as wrong or perpetuating stereotypes of
latinas/os. Accordingly, my project sought to understand how latinas' "order of
talk" influenced their social construction of diversity.

This study was conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area, home to hundreds of
high-technology corporations located in Silicon Valley. The San Francisco Bay
Area is one of the more diverse regions in the United States. Therefore, it could be
assumed that employees working within high-technology corporations also
reflect this diversity and inclusiveness. This was not to be the case for the latinas.

Experiences of the co-participants highlight obstacles they face in establishing a credible presence for themselves within the workplace.

Each co-participant engaged in two tape recorded dialogues in which we discussed, reflected on questions and emerging themes. During the analysis phase of transcript review, generative themes became readily apparent. After several readings of the transcripts, four significant themes emerged: a sense of team membership; being the sole or one of the few latinas in the workplace; desire for recognition; and constructing social worlds of diversity.

The latinas expressed different views of team membership. Melanese and Delia enjoyed a more balanced workplace environment than Betty, Tina, and Veronica. This may be due to their respective roles which allowed more control over their environment (Melanese is a manager and Delia is an administrative assistant to a senior vice president). Furthermore, they “talked” of their managers and immediate colleagues in a more positive manner thereby co-creating sense-making that they were worthy team members. Last, their “order of talk” “constructed” both their respective managers as open and committed to diversity.

The order of talk from Betty, Tina, and Veronica constructed workplace environments where they did not feel completely valued as team members. Their examples talked of relying heavily upon non-verbal communication skills to help them fit into the group. Most of their work groups were predominantly Caucasian and Asian-American/Asian male engineering groups. Through their talk, Betty, Tina, and Veronica consistently identified management as setting the tone for the workplace and workplace diversity. Strategies they employed to address the issue were: 1) directly confronting their manager; 2) writing letters outlining specific situations and asking for feedback; and 3) immediately addressing their managers

about the situation in a non-defensive manner. All three latinas agreed that the strategy effectiveness eroded as their sense of team membership declined. 160

The key differences between the co-participants are that from the outset, Melanese and Delia talked in very positive manners of their direct management, of their colleagues and gave specific examples reflecting their sense of satisfaction as valued team members. Whether or not their sense of satisfaction extended beyond the parameters of the immediate workplace is insignificant. The two women felt validated as team members within the department where they were hired and where they spent over most of their workday. Tina, Betty, and Veronica were unable to talk of their management in equally positive terms. Apparently, a non-positive view of management colored their perspective of the immediate workplace and workplace diversity.

All the co-participants talked of their awareness of being the sole or one of the few latinas employed in the company. Once again, however, Melanese's talk was the exception. Melanese took great pains to differentiate her group, which she reiterated to be fully integrated via the dimensions of ethnicity, gender, age, and country of origin. This observation of the workplace was true at both the California and Texas facilities. Yet she acknowledged that outside her immediate workplace, "just by walking around" she observed few to no latinas, especially in high-level professional roles. According to Melanese, there are latinas in high-level professional roles at the Texas facility. This she attributes to an HR department that employs many latina recruiters in addition to employing a latina as a manager. The California facility employs one latina as an HR representative, but does not employ latina recruiters. She blames the management hierarchy within Corporate HR (in California) and does not believe that it will change until the current senior vice-president is "fired."

Relative to the theme for desire of recognition, Melanese talked that as a manager “you don’t get a lot of positive feedback, you just do what you have to do,” and “its not something that I strive for, look for, I just have to do it and go on.” Considering her very high level of satisfaction with the team and the support she receives for her educational goals, she did not feel it necessary to elaborate. 161

Delia believed also that her manager was very supportive and gave her due recognition. Yet, at the outset of our initial dialogue session Delia supplied valuable insight to her work style “I don’t need a lot of strokes, I’m not needy in that way.” Veronica specifically cited that her manager was unable to recognize her efforts regardless of how spectacular her achievements. Yet, eventually Veronica reflected that the President and Founder of the company recognized her work and viewed her as a credible team member.

Betty’s comments relative to a need for recognition were based on the fact that she is a “doer.” She openly discussed how her lack of formal education pushed her to become a “quick learn” to complete various tasks. Her examples of becoming “equals” with an outstanding employee in her former department were discussed with a great deal of pride. Tina has stopped waiting for feedback from colleagues. She is determined to find another position somewhere in Silicon Valley where she won’t feel the need to “act white.”

It should be no surprise that of all the co-participants, Melanese was most optimistic about the future of diversity in her overall organization. Within the past eight months that she has worked at the California facility, she has witnessed the difference between the diversity practiced in her department, and the diversity practiced at the corporate level. She is aware that an upcoming management meeting will soon address diversity issues at the corporate level. Therefore her vision of diversity would urge latinas that we should become more

vocal at team meetings about diversity with peers and within the company; 162
produce by doing, engage in benchmark activities, and understand that
communication barriers are a reality and removing communication barriers is a
learning process for everyone.

Betty wasn't as optimistic but agreed the company was moving in the right
direction. She was aware that employees were attending classes, information was
sent out on a regular basis vis-a-vis diversity, and employees were sent to
meetings to talk about the values, and "walk the talk" classes. She realized that
sometimes even after classes and such, colleagues reverted to former behaviors,
or felt uncomfortable talking and acting in a manner that didn't come naturally to
them. But, relatively speaking, she agreed that her current division was a better
workplace than Communications.

Tina realized that there were several core areas in her company that had to be
addressed for diversity to emerge. She believes that not until there is a wholesale
restructuring of management with proper diversity training will her company be
prepared to create a diverse workplace atmosphere. Furthermore, the company
must hire an officer with the power to enforce federal mandated hiring practices,
in addition to implementing their affirmative action policies.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand how latinas' order of talk with
management and colleagues constructed perceptions of team membership.
Additionally, did the latinas' talk of team membership enable them to construct
sense-making of diversity within the workplace. Unfortunately, few of the latinas
acknowledged that they enjoyed acceptance and team membership at their place
of work. Each gave specific examples within the context of four generative

themes: team membership; sense of being the sole or one of the few latinas in an organization; desire for recognition; and constructing diversity in the workplace, of why they did not feel accepted as team members. The fact that in some instances they cited specific incidences of what they considered ethnic innuendo or outright ethnic slurs placed their respective managers in an even more negative light. Not surprisingly, most of their talk pointed to inadequate training of managers who did not know how to groom all members of their teams or were simply unwilling to treat all team members as equals. Even Melanese, who talked in most positive terms of management and colleagues alike within her specific division, appeared to have reservations about interactions with management and colleagues outside of her division. 163

The fact that the co-participants did not feel accepted as team members had a negative impact on their talk of how diversity is constructed in the workplace. According to four of the co-participants, Betty, Delia, Tina, and Veronica, “diversity” within their four high-tech corporations is synonymous with a *professional* workforce of predominantly Caucasian and Asian-American/Asian males. Caucasian and Asian-American/Asian females comprise the remainder of the professional workforce. With the exception of the Asian-American employees, few of the latinas could speak with confidence of the ethnic origins of the Asian employees. However, Tina was aware of this data from her role as a human resource representative. According to Tina, the ethnic origin of the Asian employees is predominantly of Chinese background. She discussed data not only from her current place of employment but also from her two-month stay at a consulting firm that was hiring illegal Chinese engineer immigrants to work in high-tech firms in Silicon Valley. She also acknowledged that Southasian female

and male engineers are represented to a lesser extent, and that male Vietnamese engineers are carving a definite presence for themselves.

Outside of the professional categories, i.e., engineer, computer professional, managers, etc., the latinas did not perceive there to be too much emphasis upon diversity. The lack of latinas within the support staff categories gave rise to the generative theme: sense of being the sole or one of the few latinas in an organization. Admittedly, there is even less representation of latinos within the support staff. Only one of the co-participants, Tina, talked of a latino employed within the support staff categories. He was employed as a technical writer for the company. Delia referred to three latino salesmen at her place of employment who left the company after their division was part of a reduction in force. Melanese spoke of the ethnic diversity within her organization. But she also commented that all the employees within her security staff are contract workers and not permanent employees of the corporation. All of the latinas admitted that the majority of latinas and latinos they encountered in the workplace were the contract workers who performed the housekeeping and manual labor roles.

Therefore, the conclusions of this thesis are not very positive relative to latinas' perception of workplace diversity. Diversity in the high-tech companies as discussed by the co-participants appeared to manifest along the lines of work role classifications: professional categories and nonprofessional categories. The latinas talked of senior level management and professional categories as being devoid of diversity. However, upon reflection they realized that Asian-American/Asian female and male professionals are now well represented within the professional categories of the high-technology companies represented by this research. Diversity within the non-professional support staff categories is constructed via a predominant population of white females and males. African-American females

and males represent a much smaller number of the population, with latinas 165 comprising the third “largest” group of people-of-color within this category. Most of the latinos, when employed in high tech companies, are employed in manual labor positions or as contract employees and not permanent employees of the organization. None of the latinas knew of Native American female and male employees.

On a positive note, latinas were able to perceive the different orders of talk within their particular work groups. This is not to imply that they understood completely the construct as forwarded by Shotter (1993) or how it was incorporated into the research of Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). However, their complete understanding of the construct was not a stated goal of this research. Yet, through the process of dialogue, they showed an understanding of how broad-based cultural commonalities, whether ethnic, gender, class, age, sexual orientation or work specializations could function as a “grouper” for individuals within organizations. This understanding led Tina to push herself to link her order of talk with her manager which eventually led to a hefty pay increase. By applying her working knowledge of order of talk, Melanese felt more empowered when she interacted with individuals from the HR department. This is in contrast to when we began our dialogues where she felt estranged from the HR group. Betty realized that by listening to the talk of her colleagues, her co-workers were indicating levels of comfort in interacting with employees from outside the workgroup. Although she does intend to leave the company, she realized that ethnicity was not the only factor at work in her workplace.

The conclusions reached through this thesis validate some points that the Reverend Jesse Jackson has argued as part of his PUSH/Rainbow coalition effort. He argues, and I agree, that a major challenge facing implementation of diversity

programs within high technology companies is slowly but surely rising above ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation as core issues. Admittedly these remain important issues but they are not the central issue. Diversity is occurring within high technology but it is occurring along *work specialization roles*, i.e., computer specialists, design engineers, managers. Unfortunately, these work specialization roles are *showing signs of segregation* and are therefore rapidly becoming the most contested sites of inclusion within high-tech companies. *This is the major finding of this thesis.*

The knowledge and information specializations required of the professional categories within high technology now cut across race, ethnic, social class, gender, and sexual orientation lines. Individuals with computer skills, i.e., software programming, hardware networking, telecommunications and telephony skills, database development skills, technical writing skills, and knowledge of how to manage the Internet to a company's profitable advantage are the individuals who will reap the rewards of diversity in the workplace. Of equal importance are the individuals who can successfully market these tools, forge corporate alliances between technology giants such as Microsoft and Intel, Apple and Sun, and market the products to a demanding consumer base. These are the individuals who will also reap the rewards of diversity within high-tech companies.

In Chapter 1 I alluded to the fact that support staffs in all high technology companies exist to support the projects of technology creators and innovators. Currently, the technology creators and innovators are those who are employed within the professional categories: computer professionals, database professionals, telecommunication professionals, information specialists (technical writers), and senior level management. Furthermore, the predominant ethnic

groups employed within these various capacities are list in order of

population representation (as experienced and reported by the co-participants):

- College educated white males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree
- College educated white males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree combined with an MBA degree who are promoted into management positions
- College educated white males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree with an MBA degree that specialize in the marketing of high technology products
- College educated Asian-American/Asian males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree
- College educated Asian-American/Asian females with an engineering or computer science degree
- College educated Asian-American/Asian males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree with an MBA degree that specialize in the marketing of high technology products
- College educated Asian-American/Asian males with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree with an MBA degree who are promoted into management positions
- College educated white females with an engineering or computer science or telecommunications degree

These are of course categories but of females and males of different races, ethnicities, social classes, and sexual orientation that somehow obtained the education necessary to compete successfully for a high-tech position within Silicon Valley during the late 1990s. Each of these individuals possess hopes and dreams of creating the “good life” for themselves and their families in unquestionably the most technologically advanced region in the world. These are not “bad” people. Few of them would consider themselves to be the “new oppressors.” But they are creating a new elite in Silicon Valley and this will undoubtedly occur in other “Silicon Valleys” that are created worldwide. One only has to study the prices of housing real estate to understand that housing

prices are reaching beyond that of most individuals. Eventually members of 168 these elite communities will live, and work, and play in regions surrounded by other professional colleagues. Those who are not part of high-technology professional categories will be relegated to jobs in high-tech support staff positions or to employment within the service sectors. These individuals will be forced, as they are doing so now, to move to outlying areas where real estate is more accessible but their daily commute to and from work will average over an hour each way.

What this implies is that an added tension has entered the dynamics of diversity in high-technology companies. Diversity is emerging with the inclusion of white females, Asian-American/ Asian females and males with the *requisite college education* in the *requisite technological fields* of study. However, the stated focus of the thesis was to assess whether or not latinas order of talk constructed social worlds of workplace diversity. Yet, the latinas often found themselves talking about diversity as an "outsider,." Therefore, my final conclusion is that latinas order of talk does not enable them to place themselves within social worlds of diversity within the workplace of high technology.

Recommendations for Action

While it is true that six latinas are not going to change the nature of high-tech companies, we can place our stake in the ground and make a start.

First we all realized the importance of education, either academic, professional, or self-developed in nature. Therefore, it was gratifying to learn that Betty is returning to school to complete her high-school education. Tina is networking with HR colleagues from different companies to increase her

knowledge about her areas of interest: affirmative action policies and implementing diversity goals in the hiring process.

Second, we realized the need to become more vocal about the benefits of diversity in the workplace to our colleagues and managers. This means we must risk speaking at company meetings or joining company volunteer efforts where we can foreground the benefits of diversity.

Third, we need to find mentors, either inside or outside of our respective companies. This has become a common topic between Melanese and myself. We are making plans to speak or meet with the diversity officer from Motorola and learn some of the strategies she employed to implement diversity goals within her company. As much as we both would prefer mentors of similar ethnic backgrounds, we realize that for the present this is not possible. The goal is to learn from individuals that share “common sensibilities,” (hooks, 1990), and then bring that knowledge back to our company.

Fourth, we also need to continue networking among ourselves. This means also that we must make every effort to invite other individuals with common needs to join us in our venture to create a louder voice and bring about change.

Fifth, we need to change how classes relative to diversity are taught by company officials. Classes offered by company employees only serve to perpetuate the limiting model of diversity as embraced by senior level management.

Sixth, we also need to address how university and college level classes expose students to issues of workplace diversity. This is relevant not only to communication studies but also to management programs. University students need to be exposed to issues of race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, work role specialization, as well as gender issues when dealing with workplace

diversity. Furthermore, the texts must reflect a well-rounded perspective of 170
how the authors perceive diversity goals, who the authors are speaking for as
well as who are their target audiences.

Admittedly this is an incomplete list. But it is a beginning. If in the process of
dialoguing and networking we effect a change, i.e., Betty returning to complete
her high-school education, then may we all be so blessed with such victories.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study discussing how latinas' talk constructs social worlds of diversity
generated a plethora of questions and suggestions for further research. First, each
of the four theme areas could very well serve as a basis for a future research study.
However, to study individual dimensions such as team membership, etc., serves
only to valorize forms of logical positivist research which tells us very little about
the *context* of the latinas' environment. As I now assess the richness of our
interactions, I realize PR provided a sense of meaning and of passionate
involvement never experienced in my other graduate research projects. Yet, at the
core of my passionate involvement were personal political goals which I
recognized were very attainable for each of the co-participants.

Second, Chapter 3 discussed the genesis of this project as based upon research
forwarded by Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). Their book purported to advance
culturally sensitive communication paradigms to dissolve barriers between
individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Their research contained,
unfortunately, information that I considered 1) erroneous; 2) stereotypical; and 3)
both erroneous and stereotypical relative to the growing U.S. latina and latino
population. I stated at the outset of this document that it was difficult to place
myself within text that held little bearing to "my latina" cultural communication

paradigm. After six months of research, I've yet to change my stance. On the ¹⁷¹ one hand there is very little chance that academia will do away with empirical, quantitatively based studies. Therefore, empirical studies will continue to inform future research much as it guided the research of Kikoski and Kikoski (1997). With this certainty, authors such as the aforementioned must *review* of studies used to support "universalisms/essentialisms" claims; i.e., Asian values, African-American values, etc, that undergird much logical positivist work.

For this reason I argue that research used in support of logical positivist approaches, intercultural studies, psychology, sociology, communication studies, etc., be reviewed with an eye toward the contemporaneity of the research. Several dozen conversations with native-born latinas convinced me that this is a necessity. The conversations led me to believe that some of the research for the Hispanic cultural communication paradigms were either outdated, exclusively focused on non-native born individuals, or exclusively focused on individuals of Puerto Rican background *and then generalized* to the larger Mexican-American community. This served to "construct" the ethnic image desired by the authors for purposes of their research. I suggest research should be conducted on the largest ethnic group subsumed under the "latina/o" label, *native-born* Mexican-Americans. This research may support whether or not there *are* verifiable communication style differences between *native-born* latina/o individuals and white males since all three groups are acculturated in the same dominant culture.

Part of my disappointment with the research available on latinas and latinos is that invariably we are cast as living lives without specific goals for education, for stable family relationships, or for investing in our financial future. To this end I concur with Rodriguez who writes that for too long institutions have focused on an "old mythology" when dealing with this population:

In fact, academic studies, in particular, have concentrated almost exclusively on the internal pathologies and external barriers impeding Latino social and economic ascendance. In addition, the perverse nature of the political spoils system has encouraged non-White politicians and activists to present their communities as profoundly disadvantaged, leading even well-meaning Latinos away from focusing attention on social mobility...Instead, the political class, academia, as well as the print and electronic media often confuse the most marginalized parts of the Latino population for the whole. This perception has also been deeply felt among many Latino intellectuals who frequently have defined the essence of Mexican-American identity as working or lower class (1998).

There are several reasons why fewer latinas/os enter the field of high-technology. First, is the fact that most HR recruiters continue to be hired from individuals of Caucasian backgrounds. And, as Tina alluded to in her transcripts, the recruiters tend to hire from their own ethnic groups. Whether or not this is racism can only be addressed via an investigation. The recruiters, however, are operating within their comfort zone and no one is forcing them to do otherwise. Second, many of the positions in high-technology require college degrees in the hard sciences. There must be a concerted effort by latinas/latinos and other like minded individuals to encourage latino youth to remain in *high school*. There is much work to be done in this area.

Third, the awareness of high-technology as a career must be increased in visual and print media. It can be a challenging, frustrating, chaotically demanding field, but the financial rewards and employee benefits are generally higher than in most other industry sectors. In Chapter 4 I discussed the paucity of high-technology advertising geared to the large and growing purchasing audience of *Hispanic* magazine. The December 1998 issue contained advertising from only five high-tech companies. Yet, almost every aspect of our work and personal lives are mediated by the use of high-technology products. I was most troubled that in an entire years' worth of *Hispanic* magazines, the majority of

advertising was geared toward the automobile, beer, liquor, insurance, armed forces, and entertainment industries.

Does this lack of advertising in *Hispanic* magazine on the part of high-technology recruiters imply that latinas and latinos simply aren't part of their target audience? Does this lack of advertising in *Hispanic* magazine indicate a reluctance on the part of the *Hispanic* magazine sales force to aggressively pursue high-technology advertising dollars? Regardless of the reasons, high-technology advertising must become as commonplace in *Hispanic* magazine and other Spanish audience-based mediums as the automobile, beer, liquor, insurance, armed forces, and entertainment industries that currently occupy advertising real estate in the magazine.

Fourth, latina and latino educators, public policy specialists, intellectuals, and critical thinkers must be held accountable for the political agendas they pursue and how they voice these agendas. In September 1998, I attended a MACLA/San Jose Center for the Latino Arts-sponsored function of a gathering of intelligentsia on critical issues for our community. One of the featured speakers was the poet and chicana activist Lorna Cervantes. Cervantes framed the evening's discussion as "Unfinished Business: Latino Culture at the end of the Millennium." She stated that there is much unfinished business and unfinished "liberation" from the 1960s civil rights era. Additionally, she expounded that "education is fine, but learning is better" (Cervantes, September, 28, 1998). I found, and continue to find, her statement irresponsible. As long as political activists push an agenda that "street knowledge" can compete with a four-year college or university degree, we *continue* to devalue education. And by doing so, we *delegitimize* education as a strategic key for rising above the poverty, or living wage rate, or of entire families pooling their resources to purchase a home. Suro (1998) alluded to this situation

in his book. He noted that the “traditional” route of upward mobility for many, but not all immigrants took on average three generations. The first generation worked and scraped at manual labor jobs to provide a home and education for their children. The second generation were then pushed into education that provided entry into the professional ranks and the middle-class. The third generation continued the climb into the middle-class, established webs of networks, in addition to venturing into other professional fields. He argues that education was central to social mobility and living a decent life. Unfortunately, toiling away in manual labor or low-skill positions remains a way of life for too many latinas and latinos. Education as the key to social and financial advancement *and* empowerment cannot be underscored in a place tied to high-technology such as Silicon Valley.

In an article in the *San Jose Mercury News*, high technology leaders joined forces with the power elite from Wall Street to discuss the Valley’s overall health (Herhold, 1999). One of the attendees, a partner with Wall Street’s Goldman Sachs & Co., reported that *U.S. exports increasingly consist of high-technology products* not easily duplicated in foreign countries and are often desired by consumers worldwide. He stated also that the fundamentally better performance by U.S. companies was led in large part by *technology, which has tripled as a percentage of the gross domestic product* over the last seven years. Education and not street knowledge will be the ticket to obtaining higher paying jobs that can purchase homes and send children to college; and to careers with insurance benefits, profit sharing, educational reimbursement, paid sabbaticals, long-term disability, and investment retirement options.

As I write these final lines I cannot suppress my frustration at the work ahead. Yet, neither can I contain my optimism that change and advancement for latinas

and latinos is a very real possibility. However, education must be acknowledged as central to our dreams.

A journal entry of October 1998 attests to my frustration with some of the politics everyone must deal with when working in large corporations:

I am making such a fuss in my office that a colleague stops by, when she asks what I'm researching she gets such a confused look on her face, "why just latinas, why not all women, all women face issues of not being understood by men"...I try to be as pleasant as possible just to get her out of my face!...I won't be here much longer so may as well discuss my positions within the office. (Personal journal, October 14, 1998).

Now, six months later I realize that the way to contribute to advancing education within the community is to remain in the high-technology sector. My first objective is to begin work on a project with my company's Organizational Development Department. This is an opportunity to be transferred into the department as a permanent employee. Working in the ODD will allow me to network with others whose position and influence are key to aggressive recruitment and hiring of latinas and latinos in different high-technology positions. Second, the director of the Career Planning and Partnership department has offered the use of CPP facilities to professional groups and organizations interested in high-technology networking. I intend to make use of her offer. Third, my intensive studies of the past six months have convinced me that networking and discussion groups are the key to awareness and political advancement. To this end I am organizing with other kindred spirits a group for the purposes of discussing LatCrit (latina/o critical theory and authors). By networking and consciousness raising, we can move forward with political action to birth a better future for ourselves.

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